

Syntactic Manifestation of Phrase Structure Grammar and Immediate Constituent Analysis in Marathi

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Abstract

Language works, among other features, on syntactic substance. It forms the foundation of linguistic workings. Syntax works at sentence level. Sentence formation implies interrelationship among constituents of sentence. The intertwining relations among linguistic units fulfill the eligibility of sentence to get formed become grammatical. Traditional and modern linguistics have different perspectives in analyzing units of sentence. However, they do not neglect the existence of rules that govern Phrase Structure Grammar and Immediate Constituent Analysis. The paper discusses the theory of phrase structure grammar and immediate constituent analysis in Marathi with reference to English syntax. The paper has two prime objectives. First, it attempts to mark peculiarities of phrase structure grammar and immediate constituent analysis in Marathi syntax. Second, it tries to analyze sample linguistic data of Marathi and draw attention towards how phrase structure grammar and immediate constituent analysis govern syntax of Marathi.

Key Words: Syntax, IC analysis, PSR, Linguistics

Introduction

Syntax is the system made up of rules and categories that allow words to form sentences. Similarly, Chomsky considers syntax as the part which accounts for the regularities governing the combination of words. The tacit assumption is that syntactic structure of a sentence can be explained by specifying the units it is composed of and the order in which they are put together. Thus, the child hears his/her parents and people around and finds structural regularities and rules that govern such regularities time and again. The child uses the same regularities to construct new sentences, some of them never uttered and heard before. Franz Boas (1858-1942) in his introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages* published in 1911 put forth his view with the support of examples from **Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **17:8 August 2017**
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many North American languages about peculiarity of each language. He comments that every language has its own grammatical structure and it is the task of the linguist to discover for each language the categories of description appropriate to it and should not blindly model on other language systems. Likely, it is difficult to accept that structural manifestation of one language possibly accounts for the syntactic workings of other languages.

Phrase Structure Grammar/Immediate Constituent Analysis

Noam Avram Chomsky first introduced the theory of Phrase Structure Grammar, (*hereafter PSG*) in his seminal book *Syntactic Structures* (1957). The theory proposes to describe and explain combination and order of words in larger units than word in sentence. Specifically, it analyses the syntactic construct of sentence and generate finite rules that govern these constructs. Chomsky contributed to the theory of PSG by means of formalizing a system of generative rules that govern PSG. Nonetheless, Chomsky critically acknowledged his own theory of PSG by saying it as suitable only for simple structures. It potentially cannot be used in analyzing complex structures without being clumsy and inconspicuous. Thereby, he proposed the theory of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG).

Bloomfieldian School of Linguistics, due to Leonard Bloomfield's unprecedented contribution in establishing American Linguistics, and later by its followers proposed a different term to analyze syntactic structure of sentence. They term it as Immediate Constituent Analysis (*hereafter ICA*). It is a top-bottom approach. Words are treated as constituents of sentence it is composed of. As we go down analyzing from largest units to the smallest at the word level, the former units dominate the later ones and so on. ICA helps to analyze such structural ambiguity. In linear structural analysis, ambiguity is not easy to solve.

Marathi Syntax

The combination and the order remain different in all languages. However, the theory of phrase structure grammar (Chomsky's term) and immediate constituent analysis (Bloomfieldian term) can account for these combinations thereby generate rules of their governance. It is true that all human languages share certain syntactic properties. But each syntactic system does show variation and sets itself different from other language systems. Now it is interesting to see how theory of PSG/ICA can account for syntactic structures of Marathi language. Discussion that follows based on examples would make this clear.

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Phrase Structure Grammar

The examples used for the present purpose are taken from a book on Marathi Grammar written by M. R. Walambe. They have been selected randomly.

1. Taj Mahal khup sundar aahe. (p.147)

Taj Mahal is very beautiful.

Sub. (N) + Predicate (*Adv. + Adj. + Verb*)

Sub. (N)+ Predicate (*Verb+ Adv. +Adj.*)

Marathi	English
Sentence ----- NP + VP	Sentence ----- NP + VP
NP----- N	NP----- N
VP----- <i>Adj. P + V</i>	VP----- <i>V + Adj. P</i>
Adj. P ----- Adj. + Adv.(Intensifier)	Adj. P ----- Adj. + Adv.(Intensifier)

2. Shikashk mulanna shikavatat. (p.110)

Teacher teaches the children.

Sub. (N *sing/plu.*) + Predicate (*N+ Verb*)

Sub. (N)+ Predicate (*Verb +Det. +N*)

Marathi	English
Sentence ----- NP + VP	Sentence ----- NP + VP
NP ₁ ----- N (<i>sing / plu.</i>)	NP ₁ ----- N (<i>sing.</i>)
VP----- <i>NP + V</i>	VP----- <i>V + NP</i>
NP ₂ ----- <i>N (no determiner)</i>	NP ₂ ----- <i>Det. + N (plu.)</i>

3. To Engraji changale boloto. (p.92)

He Speaks English well.

Sub.(pro.) + Predicate (*Noun+ Adverb+ Verb*) Sub. (pro.)+ Predicate (*Verb+ Noun+ Adverb*)

Marathi	English
Sentence ----- NP + VP	Sentence ----- NP + VP
NP ₁ ----- N (pro.) (mas.)	NP ₁ ----- N (pro.)
VP----- <i>NP₂+ Adv. P. +V (mas.+ Numb.)</i>	VP----- <i>V + NP₂+ Adv. P.</i>
NP ₂ ----- N (sing.)	NP ₂ ----- N (sing.)
Adv. P----- Adv. (manner)	Adv. P----- Adv. (manner)

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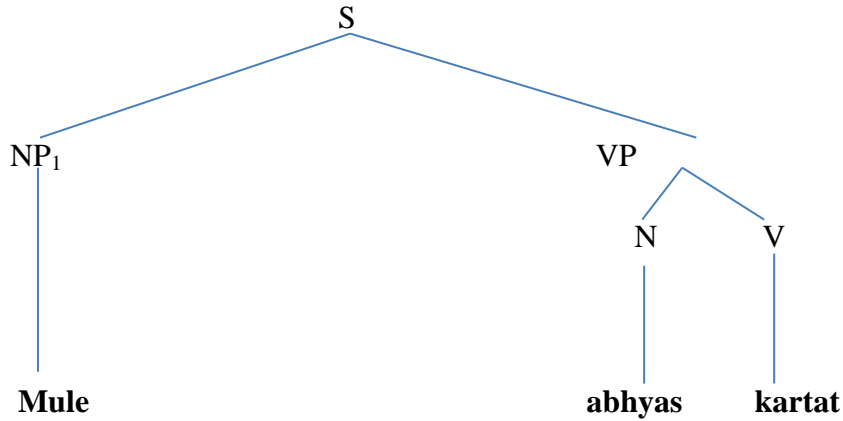
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Immediate Constituent Analysis (ICA)

Here are three more examples taken from the same grammar book to account for ICA in Marathi. I intend to use tree diagram to analyze syntactic organization of the sentences in relation to ICA.

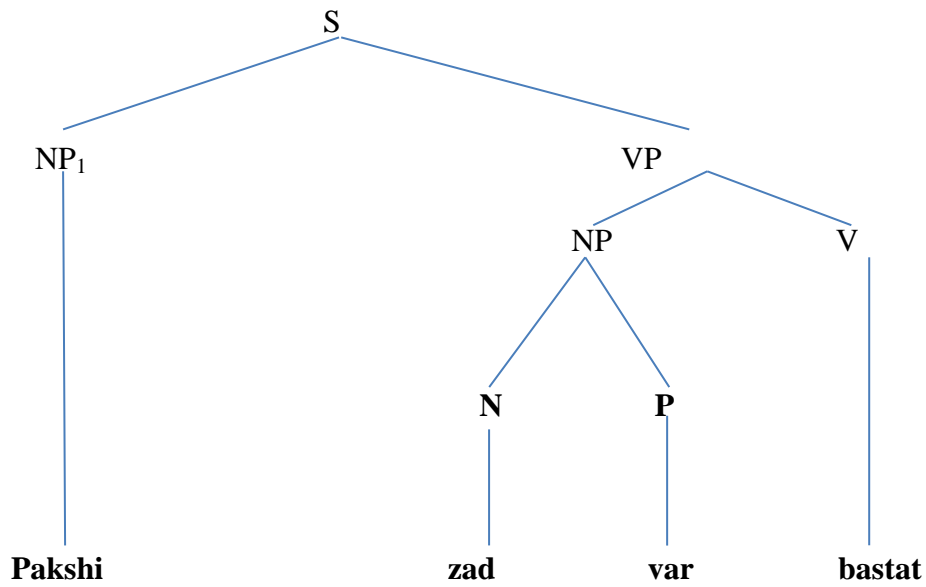
4. Mule abhyas karatat. (p.85) English: Children study.
5. Pakshi zadavar bastat. (p.37) English: Bird/s nest/s on the tree.
6. He aadhunik lokshahiche yug aahe. (p.140) English: This is the age of modern democracy.

4. Mule abhyas kartat. (p.85)



- The immediate constituents of the sentence (S) are NP and VP. N is the IC of NP, N and V are the IC of VP.

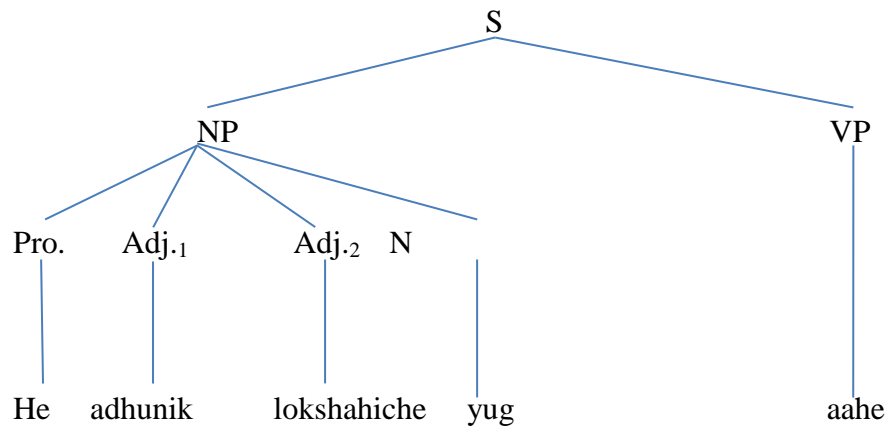
5. Pakshi zadavar bastat. (p.37)

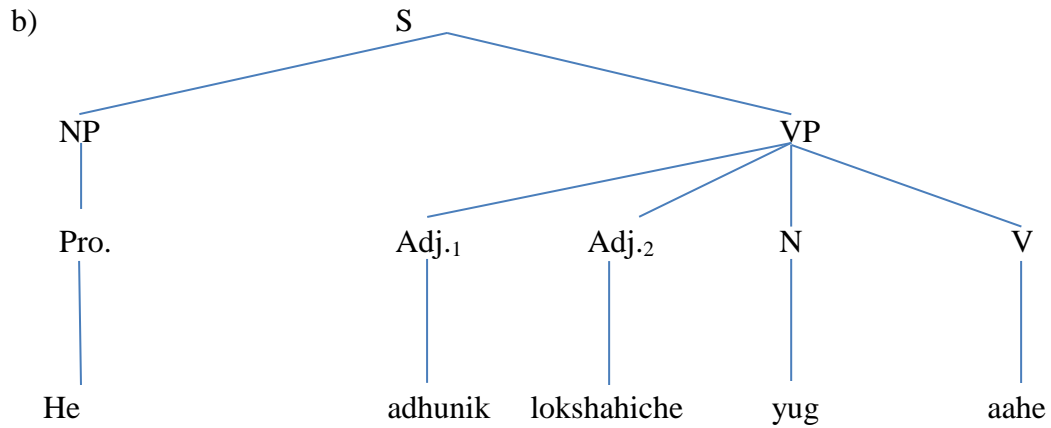


- The immediate constituents of the sentence (S) are NP₁ and VP. N is the IC of NP, NP₂, and V are the IC of VP, and N and P (preposition) are the IC of NP₂.

6. He aadhunik lokshahiche yug aahe. (p.140)

a)





- The immediate constituents of the sentence (S) are NP and VP. N (pro.) is the IC of NP, Adj.1, Adj.2 N and V are the IC of VP.

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of sentences of both Marathi and English and comparing them at the level of syntactic organization has surfaced crucial points of similarities and differences. These similarities and differences make the two systems peculiar in their own sense. The discussion that follows makes explicit account of features characteristic to these syntactic systems. The analysis has put forth six features of Marathi syntax not similar to English syntax.

First, the distinction of singular and plural subject is based on subject. Second, verb position always remains at the final position of sentence as seen in given sentences (*example 1*). Third, singular and plural aspects of subject are suggestive in some cases by same word with cataphoric reference to verb (*example 2*). Fourth, determiner is generally absent, if present, it is not article (*example 2*). Fifth, aspects of gender, number and person are verb based (*example 3, 4 and 5*). Sixth, preposition is glued to noun thereby changing the composition of basic form of noun rather than having independent place (*example 5*).

I am doubtful that I might have overlooked some other characteristics of syntactic structure of given examples. Thus, there remain potential possibilities open for in depth analysis. This analysis is based on a few representative examples from Marathi language. Other examples may display variations of any sort possible.

Conclusion

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Every language reflects its peculiarities at different levels. The present attempt has been to look into peculiarities that Marathi language reflects at syntactic level in relation to English syntactic level. The discussion above made this somewhat clear as to how Marathi syntax works with different compositions and order. Features characteristics to Marathi syntax are distinctive in one way or the other. Singular and plural distinction based on subject and verb, singular and plural manifested by same subject, order of words, absence of determiner in NP, etc. are a few of them. The peculiarities discussed here are not exhaustive. More linguistic data of Marathi would give rise to myriad variations.

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