

Degree iii, (English Honours)

Paper – VIII

Section – 3

Subject- **Linguistics**

## *Syntax*

The word **syntax** is derived from a Greek word meaning ‘**ordering together**’, ‘**systematic arrangement**’, or **putting together**. It is the study of sentence building, of the ways in which words are arranged together in order to make larger units. A syntactic analysis is generally concerned with sentences and the constituents of the sentences. Briefly speaking syntax is the grammar of sentences; it is the science of sentence-construction. It is perhaps best to define syntax negatively, as the study of the combination of such morphemes as are not bound on the levels of either inflection or derivation.

There are two quite distinct areas of syntax, one related to morphology and the other wholly and largely unrelated to it. In the past morphology dealt with the ways in which words are built up and syntax with the ways in which they combine with each other to form sentences. According to Charles Hockett, “Morphology includes stock of segmental morphemes, and the ways in which words are built out of them”. **Syntax** includes the

ways in which words, and suprasegmental morphemes are arranged relative to each other in utterances. It was Saussure who pointed out that morphology has no distinctly autonomous object. It cannot be said, be distinguished from the syntax. It was Saussure, too who demonstrated that lexicography cannot be isolated from either syntax or morphology, syntax and lexicology interpenetrate because every synchronic fact is identical. No line of demarcation can be drawn in advance.

However, the chief concern of the **syntax** is the sentence which is the maximal unit of grammatical analysis, and the minimal syntactic level is the morpheme. Sentence may be analysed segmentally into phonological units called **phonemes and syllables**; into morphological units called **morphemes and words**; and into syntactic units called **phrases and clauses**. At the same time sentence may be described suprasegmentally in respect of the prosodies of **length, stress and pitch** and intersegmentally in respect of the prosodies of syllable **transition and juncture**. Some linguists, notably of the school of **Transformational-Generative Grammar** are trying to study the maximal linguistic units through the fusion of all these approaches. They have closely interrelated all the components of language: the phonological the syntactical or grammatical (fusing morphology and syntax together) and semantic.

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