Elements/Units of Grammatical Description

-A description of the grammar of a language gives an account of the sentence structures that are possible in that language. In a grammatical description, generally, we find that certain smaller units are combined to make sentences. There is hierarchy of units or elements of grammar in many grammatical description in which sentence/ utterance consists of one or more clauses, which consists of one or more phrases, which consists of one or more words **(Varshney, 2003,p.215).** Sentence, clause, phrase, word and morpheme are the units of grammatical descriptions. In such a case, grammar operates between upper limit and lower limit.

- The relation between the five units of grammatical description is one composition. If we call sentence 'highest unit' and morpheme the 'lowest unit', we can arrange all five units in a rank scale saying that units of higher rank are composed of units of lower rank.) Lyons, 1976, as cited in **Varshney, 2003)**

-**Varshney,** while talking about the elements/ units of grammar states that traditional grammar operates with two fundamental units of grammatical description: the word and the sentence. Traditionally, grammar was built on the words as the basic unit. Some others argue that morpheme as the basic unit but some other believe that neither sentence nor word are the basic units.

1. Utterance

- Utterance is a basic unit of a grammar, which has functional property. It is more primitive than the morpheme, word and sentence. Utterance focuses on acceptability than grammatically. It may include a single word, phrase or incomplete sentence. For example, No, No smoking, Excuse me, May I ask you……

Types: According to Fries (1975)

- A single minimum free utterance

-A single free utterance, not minimum but expanded

- A sequence of two or more free utterance

In general:

Communicative utterance, eg. you are welcome.

-Utterance that regularly elicit oral response, elicit action and conventional signals of attention are communicative utterance.

- Non-communicative utterance- eg- I mean, ..umm.. Ouch…

- The expressions of surprise, sudden pain, prolonged pain, disgust, anger, etc are non-communicative utterance.

2. Sentence

- Sentence is an independent linguistic form. It is the highest most unit/ upper limit of the hierarchy in grammatical description. It is a constitute not constituents. Sentence has been defined in several ways as:

- A word or set of words followed by a pause and revealing an intelligible purpose. **(Gardiner)**

-A grammatical form, which is not in construction with any other grammatical form. **(Hockett, 1988)**

- An independent unit which is not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form (**Bloomfield)**

Characterizing features of a sentence:

- Maximum unit of grammatical description.

- Grammatically complete.

- preceded and followed by infinite pause or silence.

-Usually marked in writing by punctuation marks.

-In speech, characterized by intonation tune.

- Expresses a complete prediction, question or command.

Types- Functional types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory and irregular) and structural (Simple, compound and complex)

3. Clause

- Clause is a unit of grammatical organization smaller that the sentence but larger than words or phrases. It has its own subject and predicate. It may functions as sentence but not always.

Types-

- On the basis of status: dependent and independent

- On the basis of verb used- finite and non finite

- On the basis of function- nominal, verbal and adverbial

4. Phrase

- Phrase is a group of words which functions as a unit. Each phrase is built around a lexical word or sometimes a functional word. The central word at a phrase is head. Head is preceded by pre-modifier and followed by post-modifier.

- According to **Varshney (2003)** - Any group of words which is grammatically equivalent to a single and which does not have own subject and predicate is phrase.

Types of Phrase:

- Noun Phrase: eg Old fashionable lady

- Verb phrase: eg- has been built

-Adjective phrase: eg- extremely difficult

- Adverb phrase: eg- very slow

- Prepositional phrase: eg- with a beautiful blue sari

- The traditional distinction between phrase and clause was drawn on the basis of the distinction between word like and sentence like groups of words within sentences.

5. Word

- Word is an element of speech. It is the smallest unit of written discourse. It is a fundamental unit, verbal expression. It can be segmented into their constituent part or can be divided into smaller grammatical unit. eg- Morpheme. A word may be defined as the union of a particular meaning with a particular complex of sounds

capable of a particular grammatical employment. A word functions as subject, predicate and complement in syntactic analysis.

Various ways on words:

- Words are the tokens current and accepted for conceits **(Bacon)**

- Words are daughter of earth and the things they refer are the sons of heaven**. (Johnson)**

- Only linguistic fragments, the products of an advanced linguistic analysis**. (Malinowski)**

- the minimum free form of a language**. (Bloomfield)**

-Units which are put together or combined in a sentence **(Varshney)**

Types:

On the basis of structure:

-Simple: eg- cut, walk

-Compound: eg- blackboard, greenhouse

- Complex: eg- greenhouse effects, blackboard writing

On the basis of word class:

- Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjectives, Adverbs, Prepositions, etc.

On the basis of nature:

-Variable (i.e changed by affixation)

- Invariable (i.e. appearing in only one form)

words can be represented in phonological, orthographical and grammatical forms. In conclusion, words are the structural units which are composed of one or more than one morpheme.

6. Morpheme

- Morpheme is minimal grammatical unit. The combination of morpheme forms a word. Morpheme are of two types. Lexical and functional. They can be free morpheme, i. e. lexical and functional and bound as inflectional and derivational.