CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1   Preliminaries:

·   This dissertation is a corpus-based study of one of the most important aspects of English grammar: CONDENSED NOUN PHRASES (CNP's for short) in English for science and technology (EST). The noun phrase is one of the multi-functional units in English grammar. Considerable attention has been paid to the study of post-modifying clauses in English (see for example Haan (1989)). These clauses were traditionally called attributive clauses. These clauses attribute some characteristics to the head nouns. They give some additional information about a noun or qualify or modify a noun.

There are certain premodifying elements in English Noun Phrase. These premodifying elements also give certain information about a noun or qualify or modify a noun. These are most important constituents in a noun phrase. And these elements have also been studied in some detail. The structure of premodification in CNP's comprises the items placed before the head; e.g. adjectives, adverbs, nouns,--- etc. These premodifying elements add to the complexity of NP's. The more the premodifiers the more the complexity. This phenomanon has been described in some detail in the following chapters.

Kachru, long recognised as a world authority on Indian English, has observed that Indian English has a tendency toward using complex noun and verb phrases and rather long sentences (Kachru, 1983: 77-78). It has been observed that the scientific writers pack a lot of information into CNP's. Particularly, Indian scientific writers use more CNP's in their writings.

1.2   Aim:

This study is concerned with the condensed noun phrases in EST with special reference to Indian English. It is a corpus-based study. This study gives the details of basic noun phrases, complex noun phrases and condensed noun phrases. It aims at investigating the features of condensed noun phrases in English for science and technology in general and those of Indian EST in particular.

Special attention will be paid to the following:

   i) The structure of the CNP's in EST.

   ii) The constitutents of the CNP's.

   iii) The order of the constituents in the CNP's.

   iv) Occurrences of the CNP's in the Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English (texts of EST in J category).

   v) Occurrences of the CNP's in the LOB corpus of British English (texts of EST in J category).

   vi) Comparative (i.e. qualitative and quantitative) study of the occurrences.

   vii) Potentiality of shifting postmodifiers to pre-position.

1.3   Indian English:

Indian English is now widely regarded as a variety of English in its own right rather than as a corrupt form of native English. Though the basic linguistic systems are the same in the British English and the Indian

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English, the Indianness of Indian Englishes lies in certain distinct phonological, lexico-semantic and syntactic features.

Today, India is estimated to have over 18 million people using English as an additional language for various purposes. Though 18 million is a small fraction as compared to the whole population of India, the users' of IE are leading figures in economic, industrial, professional, political and social life of India.

As mentioned earlier, there are certain phonological, semantic and syntactic features of IE. Among the syntactic features the use of CNP's is a striking one in general and in scientific writing in particular. One of the conclusions that Quirk has drawn in the Survey of English Usage (see Chapter III, Table No. 2) is that the scientific writing differs greatly from the other styles in having a distinctly higher proportion of noun phrases with multiple complexity.

1.4   Corpus:

The present study is based on the two corpora, viz; The LOB Corpus of British English and The Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English. So, it may be appropriate to discuss briefly the concept of corpus.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1967) gives the following definition of 'corpus': 'A body of utterances or sentences assumed to be representative of and used for grammatical analysis of a given language or dialect'. W.N. Francis the chief compiler of the Brown Corpus broadens the definition to read: "A collection of texts assumed to be representative of a given language, dialect or other subset of a language to be used for linguistic analysis". This way more facts are

accounted for in a corpus such as "a corpus may be purposely skewed—
toward legal or scientific language— and that it may be used for
phonological, graphic, lexical or semantic as well as grammatical analysis"
Francis (1979). The method of using a corpus was practised by
lexicographres as early as in the 18th century and by writers of
compendious grammars such as Jespersen, Visser, etc. Even the monumental
Comprehensive Grammar of English, Quirk et al (1985) is based on the Survey
of English Usage which is located at the University College London— a
corpus of present day Written and Spoken English.

1.4.1 American and British Corpora:

The first general purpose corpus of American English was compiled in
1961 at Brown University (Francis et al 1964). The compilers at the time
hoped that it would serve as source material for all sorts of linguistic
studies of Amrican English— lexical, grammatical, stylistic and so on.
Within a decade of the building of the Brown Corpus, British scholars were
attracted by the idea and a parallel corpus of Bitish English, the LOB
corpus, was built in the seventies by Geoffrey Leech and others (Johansson,
1978). The hopes of the compilers of these corpora may be said to have been
more than fulfilled as we have over 500 scholarly studies on the aspects of
British and American English that have appeared (see ICAME News No.10 for a
comprehensive bibliography).

Reviewing the practice of linguistic description Leech (1990) says
that "there have been two highly influential and opposing views on the
value of a corpus in linguistics over the past thirty or forty years.
Firstly, post-Bloomfieldian structural linguists. such as Fries, Hill and
Harris, regarded the corpus as the only valid source of linguistic

evidence, indeed as the fundamental reality which linguists had to describe. For them, intuition was an invalid source of evidence. Later, Chomsky and his co-workers turned this view upside down, by arguing that a corpus is of little or no value, and that the only sound source of evidence was the intuition of the native speaker. Since then, the Chomskyan view has persisted in practice, although it has been increasingly under attack from linguists".

Leech argues that "a corpus is important as a source-- though not as the only source of evidence for linguistic descriptions". He suggests that "there is a kind of corpus evidence which is essential to linguistic competence of the native speaker, which is derivable from a corpus and which is not accessible to the unaided intuition of the native speaker". According to him, the importance of a corpus, as a basis for linguistic study is self-evident.

All this he does in retrospect in support of his using the LOB Corpus for pointing out certain semantic nuances of the language exemplified in the use of certain pairs of synonyms such as 'almost' and 'nearly'.

1.4.2 The Indian Corpus:

Thus the use of corpus in linguistic description has gained ground once again. We have discussed the idea of Brown and LOB Corpus of American and British English, as source material for linguistic studies. Let us now turn to the Indian English Corpus. The first concerted effort towards a systematic and comprehensive description of Indian English may be said to be the building of The Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English parallel to the

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LOB and Brown Corpora of British and American English in the early eighties (see Shastri et al 1986). in the early eighties. It is a million-word computer corpus of Indian English representative of sample texts printed and published in 1978. The texts were largely selected by stratified random sampling process. The corpus consists of 500 texts of 2000 running words distributed over 15 genres of writing representing differnt styles. The composition of texts in the Indian Corpus and the LOB Corpus are given in the chapter IV table No. 1.

1.5 Concluding Remarks:

The foregoing account of building and using computer corpora is intented to justify the use of corpus materials in this study.