

DESCRIPTION OF VERB MORPHOLOGY IN COLLOQUIAL BANGLA

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a description of the Colloquial Bangla (Bengali) verb morphology in relation to the Standard Bangla. As researchers begin to conduct studies in various aspects of Bangla, e.g. in computational linguistics or child language acquisition, descriptions of colloquial Bangla are required. An important area of enquiry is the verb inflectional system in the Colloquial Bangla (CB) which is significantly different from the Standard Bangla (SB) with regard to the forms of the grammatical markers. The paper discusses the implications of these differences.

Key words: Bangla, Colloquial Bangla, verb morphology, child language

Introduction

A detailed description of the different components of a language is the foundation for any applied research conducted on that language. Also, in studies where specific linguistic forms are of concern (e.g. child language research that involves children's comprehension and production of language items), descriptions of the language varieties are also of primary importance. However, Bangla, although spoken by a large population, is underrepresented in its linguistic research. With this view, the paper presents a description of the Bangla verb morphology in its 'standard' and 'colloquial' forms. The paper particularly takes into consideration the child language research scenario in Bangladesh, and provides descriptions of the language forms that are considered key for language acquisition studies in this context.

Variety and Forms of Bangla

Bangla is an Indo-Aryan language that shares its linguistic genealogy with Assamese, Hindi, Oriya, Bihari, Maithili and Magadhi. The historical journey of Bangla comprises three distinct stages: Old Bangla (900-1350), Medieval Bangla (1350-1800) and Modern Bangla (1800- to present time) (Banglapedia, 2003). Being a dynamic language as all languages in use are, Bangla is reshaping itself with time, and the form recognised today as

Standard Bangla (henceforth SB) is not the Modern Bangla of the 19th century. A later section of this paper will examine the morphological description of a form of Bangla which moderately differs from the SB with regard to some verb inflections.

Modern Bangla comprises two distinct forms of the language which were used for different purposes. The literary form or *shadhubhasha* (High Bangla) was used among the educated community of the 19th century Bengal for literary purposes, while the colloquial form or *chalitabhasha* (Standard Bangla) was the language of day-to-day communication. By the 20th century, *chalitabhasha* became more important than just the language of everyday communication as it began to receive wider acceptance. This form of the language is now referred to as SB.

The early standardisation of Bangla came from the western part of Bengal since a significant section of the educated class belonged to West Bengal (the present day Pashchimbanga). "The socio-political power in West Bengal of many former Easterners and their mostly left-wing spokesmen has partially easternised the Calcutta-based Indian standard. In the other direction, publications and media material from the West have continued to enjoy a reasonable public reception in the East" (Dasgupta 387). The form originating in western Bengal is equally accepted in both Bengals, and SB is now

not only the language of formal communication, it is also the language used in official documents and literary works in the Bengal region (unless other varieties are particularly required).

Presently, although SB is maintained consistently in writing and in formal oral communication, the day-to-day spoken language varies widely across the Bangla-speaking regions. According to Chatterji (1993), there were four broad dialects of the language: *Radhi*, *Bangali*, *Varendri* and *Kamrupi*. While *Radhi* was spoken in south-western Bengal, and hence is considered the origin of SB, *Bangali* was spoken in the east and south-eastern parts of Bengal. *Varendri* and *Kamrupi* were spoken in the northern and the north-eastern parts of Bengal respectively. A variety of dialects can be found even within the geographical boundary of the present day Bangladesh. The people of north-western Bangladesh speak a dialect that is remarkably different from those found in eastern or south-eastern Bangladesh. The dialects of north-western Bangladesh are very similar to the neighbouring areas belonging to Pashchimbanga, while those of eastern Bangladesh (Sylhet, Noakhali, Chittagong) side with Assamese and some tribal languages in the nearby regions. Therefore, due to the language situation in the Bengal region, educated speakers commonly understand three forms of Bangla: the High Bangla (*shadhubhasha*), Standard Bangla (*chalitabhasha*) and a local dialect (Chowdhury, 1960). However, SB continues to have the wider scope of use since this form is understood by the majority of the Bangla-speaking population and can be used to connect to the speakers of the other dialects of the language.

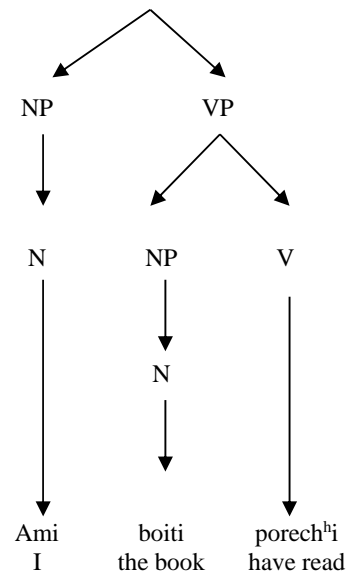
The diglossic situation in Bangladesh, which was once present with the coexistence of the *shadhu* and the *chalitabhasha*, has now adopted a different shape. The linguistic experiences of the people in this region have paved the way for a colloquial form that is understood by the majority of the people, but is not accepted in written documents or in formal spoken contexts. Thus, educated Bangladeshis today are commonly found to use SB in their workplaces and schools, and while speaking to less familiar people, but they use the relatively colloquial form while speaking to family members and friends. However, this is not a uniform situation, and today in many educated families SB is still the norm.

Syntax and Word Order

The canonical sentence structure and the word order of Bangla are briefly presented in the following sections for interpreting the morphological properties that are discussed later.

Sentence structure. Bangla simple sentences usually comprise the following components: subject, main verb, direct and/or indirect object, quantifier, article, temporal expression and spatial expression. The structure of a basic sentence is illustrated below:

- (1) S (Ami boiti porech^{hi}/ I have read the book)



Bangla follows a head final word-order (Hayes & Lahiri, 1991); at the phrasal level, the principal component has the right most position and the tree branches out to the left that incorporates the other elements of the phrase. An example of a relatively elaborate sentence is given below:

- (2) Ayon gotokal ama-ke upohar-ta di-l-o
 Ayon-Nom yesterday me-Dat gift-Art give-Pst-3p

Ayon gave me the gift yesterday.

Following the head-final word order, the verb phrase in the sentence above contains the temporal verb, the indirect object, the direct object, and finally the verb. Similarly, a noun phrase is noun-final. For example,

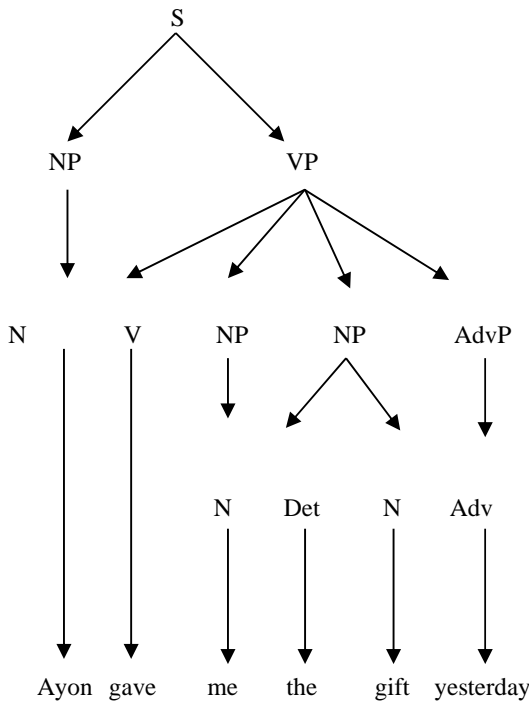
- (3) Ami lal jama-ti por-b-o
 I-Nom red dress-Art wear-Fut-1p

I will wear the red dress.

Thus, the word order of Bangla sentences is generally Subject- Temporal phrase- Locative phrase- Indirect object- Direct object- Adverbial Phrase- Verb (Banglapedia, 2003).

On the other hand, English is a head-initial language with exceptions of some head-final instances. For example, sentence (2) in English has the following representation:

- (2a) Ayon gave me the gift yesterday.



A verb phrase in English begins with the verb which is followed by the other components of the phrase. However, in a noun phrase containing an article, an adjective, and a noun, the head ends the phrase. Therefore, English can be called both right-branching and left-branching with the former dominating the trend, whereas Bangla is primarily left-branching.

Bangla word order. A canonical Bangla sentence has the following word order: Subject-Object-Verb

(SOV). However, Bangla allows exceptional flexibility with word order. For example,

- (3a) Ratri Bishakha-ke mar-l-o
 Ratri-Nom Bishakha-Acc hit-Pst-3p
 Ratri hit Bishakha.
- (3b) Bishakha-ke mar-l-o Ratri
 Bishakha-Acc hit-Pst-3p Ratri-Nom
 Ratri hit Bishakha.
- (3c) Bishakha-ke Ratri mar-l-o
 Bishakha-Acc Ratri-Nom hit-Pst-3p
 Ratri hit Bishakha.

In each of the sentences presented above, irrespective of the word order, *Ratri* and *Bishakha* are assigned the roles of the agent and the patient respectively, and the sentences essentially convey the same meaning. On the other hand, the word order is key to deriving the meaning of the sentences in English. Hence, “Bipul avoided Shimul” and “Shimul avoided Bipul” convey opposing meaning. Also, a change of word order among the primary components of the sentence may result in ungrammaticality in English. For example, in English one can say, “Shimul avoided Bipul”, but not “Avoided Bipul Shimul”.

Bangla has a fairly rich morphological paradigm with agglutinative features (see Kar, 2009 and Mazumdar, 1920 for agglutination in Bangla). The inflections containing the grammatical information attach themselves with the lexical entities in the sentences, and stay within the same lexical unit withstanding any change in word order. Therefore, an unambiguous meaning can usually be derived irrespective of the word order. However, alteration in the word order may bring in stylistic differences.

Verb Morphology in SB

Bangla verbs are marked for tense and aspect, and they agree with the nominative subjects in person. Bangla person markers are determined by an honour feature (Thompson, 2012), which is regulated by whether or not the agent of the action is deemed superior in any respect.

Bangla verbs exhibit agglutinative features in their morphological paradigm (Kar, 2009; Mazumdar, 1920). The verb inflections carrying the grammatical information are suffixed to the stems incrementally. For example, the inflected verb form ‘dek^hech^hilam’ (had seen) contains the verb root

/dek^h-, the perfective aspect marker /-ech^hi-/, the past tense marker /-l-/, and the first person marker /-am/. Also, the verbal paradigm is linear and transparent to a great extent. The representation of these verb inflections are illustrated below.

- 4) Amra roj ek ghonta **hat-i**
We-Nom everyday one hour walk-1p
We walk for an hour everyday.
- 5) Ch^hatra-ra monojog diye **lik^hch^hi-l-o**
Student-Plu attention with write-Prog-Pst-3p
Students are writing attentively.

Sentences 4) and 5) show that any inflected finite verb can be marked for aspect, tense and person. They always occur in the same sequence with the root followed first by the aspect, then the tense and the person markers. The inflected verb form in 4) contains the verb stem /hat-/, and the 1st person marker /-i/, while the verb form in 5) contains the

verb stem /lik^h-, the progressive aspect marker /-ch^h-, the past tense marker /-l-/, and the 3rd person marker /-o/. Note that not all inflectional markers have explicit realisations on verb forms always. A simple present verb form only has a verb root and the person marker, because tense and aspect are considered to be Ø (null) in this form (see sentence 4)).

Table 1 displays the range of the verbal system in SB. To begin with, /-l-/ is reported to be the past marker in SB (Chatterji, 1993). Sentences in the present tense do not have any overt tense marking. However, following the verb form in *shadhubhasha*, many researchers identify /-il-/ to be the past marker instead (korilam > korlam). There are three distinct person markers in Bangla. As presented in Table 1, the person markers /-i/, /-o/ and /-e/ in present tense forms become /-am/, /-e/ and /-o/ in the past tense forms respectively.

Table 1: Representation of the Verbal Paradigm in the SB

Verb root 1 (ending in a consonant): /por-/ (to read)		Verb root 2 (ending in a vowel): /k ^h a-/ (to eat)	
	Present tense		Past tense
Simple	Ami boi pori .	1st person	Ami boi porlam .
	por- Ø- Ø-i		por- Ø- l-am
	Ami k^hai .		Ami k^helam .
k ^h a- Ø- Ø-i	k ^h e- Ø-l-am		
Progressive	Ami boi porch^hi .		Ami boi porch^hilam .
	por-ch ^h - Ø-i		por-ch ^h i- l-am
	Ami k^hachch^hi .		Ami k^hachch^hilam .
k ^h a-chch ^h -Ø-i	k ^h a-chch ^h i-l-am		
Perfect	Ami boi porech^hi .		Ami boi porech^hilam .
	por-ech ^h - Ø-i	por-ech ^h i- l-am	
	Ami k^heyech^hi .	Ami k^heyech^hilam .	
k ^h e-ech ^h - Ø-i	k ^h e-ech ^h i-l-am		
Simple	Tumi boi poro .	2nd person	Tumi boi porle .
	por- Ø- Ø-o		por- Ø- l-e
	Tumi k^hao .		Tumi k^hele .
k ^h a- Ø- Ø-o	k ^h e- Ø-l-e		
Progressive	Tumi boi porch^ho .		Tumi boi porch^hile .
	por-ch ^h - Ø-o		por-ch ^h i- l-e
	Tumi k^hachch^ho .		Tumi k^hachch^hile .
k ^h a-chch ^h -Ø-o	k ^h a-chch ^h i-l-e		
Perfect	Tumi boi porech^ho .		Tumi boi porech^hile .
	por-ech ^h - Ø-o	por-ech ^h i- l-e	
	Tumi k^heyech^ho .	Tumi k^heyech^hile .	
k ^h e-ech ^h - Ø-o	k ^h e-ech ^h i-l-e		
Simple	She boi pore .		She boi porlo .
	por- Ø- Ø-e		por- Ø- l-o
	She k^hae .		She k^helo .
k ^h a- Ø- Ø-e	k ^h e- Ø-l-o		

Progressive	She boi porch^he . por- ch ^h - Ø-e	3rd person	She boi porch^hilo . por-ch ^h i- l-o
	She k^hachch^he . k ^h a-chch ^h -Ø-e		She k^hachch^hilo . k ^h a-chch ^h i-l-o
Perfect	She boi porech^he . por- ech ^h - Ø-e		She boi porech^hilo . por-ech ^h i- l-o
	She k^heyech^he . k ^h e-ech ^h - Ø-e		She k^heyech^hilo . k ^h e-ech ^h i-l-o

As presented previously, Bangla also has some inflections containing aspectual information. Lahiri (2000) suggests that these aspect markers (/ch^h-, /ech^h-/ etc.) are reduced forms of the auxiliary verb /ach^h-/ (to be). The aspect markers are not governed by person. However, they change for tense. The progressive markers for present and past tense are /ch^h-/ and /ch^hi-/ respectively and the perfective markers are /ech^h-/ and /ech^hi-/. As stated previously, the verb roots ending in vowels and in consonants behave differently in the process of suffixation. In standard Bangla, the progressive /ch^h-/ and /ch^hi-/ markers become /chch^h-/ and /chch^hi-/ respectively when added to a verb root ending in a vowel. For example, root /pa-/ (to get) takes /chch^h-/ and /chch^hi-/ as progressive markers (in present and past tense) instead of /ch^h-/ and /ch^hi-/. According to Lahiri (2000), the geminated form is the original shape that degeminates for verb roots ending in consonants. On the other hand, Bhattacharya (1993) mentions them just as variants. Here, Lahiri's view seems more tenable because with verb roots ending in consonants it is impossible to attach clusters like /chch^h-/ and /chch^hi-/ in pronunciation, because of which they eventually degeminate for verb roots with consonantal endings.

Honorific markers. Bangla verbs occasionally bear another agreement marker: the honorific markers. In 2nd and 3rd person contexts, these markers appear with the verbs in agreement with the Subjects of the sentences. There are three inflections that mark honorifics in the 2nd person: /-o/ (neutral), /-en/ (formal) and /-ish/ (informal), and two in the 3rd person: /-e/ (informal and neutral) and /-en/ (formal). Unlike the neutral markers, the others mostly maintain the same form in the corresponding past forms. Table 2 presents the verb forms with different honorific markers.

In this paper, honorific markers are presented as units of markers replacing the usual person markers. For example, in the neutral or the default honorific situations, /-o/ is the person marker in 2nd person present tense contexts, while /-ish/ and /-en/ are the 2nd person-honorific markers in the intimate and formal honorific situations respectively (Table 2). Alternative suggestions can also be found in the literature suggesting that honorific markers attach after the person markers and the surface inflected forms are obtained by undergoing phonological processes (e.g. vowel deletion) within the verb unit (Mondal, 2014).

Table 2: Bangla Honorific Markers on Verb Root /por-/ (to read)

Person/ Tense		Present tense		Past tense
2 nd person	intimate	simple	Tui boi porish . por-Ø- Ø- ish	Tui boi porli . por- Ø-l-i
		progressive	Tui boi porch^hish . por- ch ^h - Ø-ish	Tui boi porch^hili . por-ch ^h i-l-i
		perfective	Tui boi porech^hish . por-ech ^h - Ø-ish	Tui boi porech^hili . por-ech ^h i-l-i
	neutral	simple	Tumi boi poro . por- Ø- Ø-o	Tumi boi porle . por- Ø-l-e
		progressive	Tumi boi porch^ho . por-ch ^h - Ø-o	Tumi boi porch^hile . por-ch ^h i-l-e
		perfective	Tumi boi porech^ho . por- ech ^h - Ø-o	Tumi boi porech^hile . por-ech ^h i-l-e

	formal	simple	Apni boi poren. por- Ø- Ø-en	Apni boi porlen. por- Ø-l-en
		progressive	Apni boi porch^hen. por-ch ^h - Ø-en	Apni boi porch^hilen. por-ch ^h i-l-en
		perfect	Apni boi porech^hen. por-ech ^h - Ø-en	Apni boi porech^hilen. por-ech ^h i-l-en
3 rd person	neutral	simple	She boi pore. por- Ø- Ø-e	She boi porlo. por- Ø-l-o
		progressive	She boi porch^he. por-ch ^h - Ø-e	She boi porch^hilo. por-ch ^h i-l-o
		perfect	She boi porech^he. por-ech ^h - Ø-e	She boi porech^hilo. por-ech ^h i-l-o
	formal	simple	Tini boi poren. por- Ø- Ø-en	Tini boi porlen. por- Ø-l-en
		progressive	Tini boi porch^hen. por-ch ^h - Ø-en	Tini boi porch^hilen. por-ch ^h i-l-en
		perfect	Tini boi porech^hen. por-ech ^h - Ø-en	Tini boi porech^hilen. por-ech ^h i-l-en

Phonological variation. Although the verb inflectional paradigm is considerably linear, some degree of allomorphy can be observed in the morphological system in question. While the verb root is /k^ha-/, it changes to /k^he-/ in perfective contexts (Present Perfect, Past Simple, and Past Perfect forms) (Table 1). According to Lahiri (2000), the final sound in the verb root, /a/ interacts with the initial sound of the suffix and results in a phonologically altered form. For example, when /k^ha-/ attaches the perfective aspect marker /-ech^h-, *k^haech^hi* becomes *k^heyech^hi*. If this is the case, one might wonder why the 1st person Past Simple form should be *k^helam* and not *k^halam*, since the root /k^ha-/ is followed by the consonant /l/. Here the suggestion is that the past form was originally *k^hailam* in *shadhushasha*, from where the present SB (the then *chalitabhasha*) has been derived, and the use of the form *k^helam* is retained from the *shadhushasha*. Such assimilation is not found when the root is followed by a consonant (Present and Past Progressive forms).

Another form of phonological assimilation is reported by Dasgupta (2007). “Vowel harmony” along the height dimension is ubiquitous in Bangla. For instance, the root /ken/ (to buy) has the inflected form/kini/ (Present Simple for 1st person), which is motivated by the following higher vowel /i/. For the same reason, the root /ken-/ does not alter in forms like *keno* and *kene*. However, this account does not explain the forms *kinech^ho* (Present Perfective for 2nd person),

kinech^he (Present Perfective for 3rd person), and *kinch^he* (Present Progressive for 3rd person). The explanation may lie in the fact that these forms are derived from *shadhushasha* in which the stems were followed by a high vowel (*kiniach^ho*, *kiniach^he*, and *kinitech^he* respectively).

Verb Morphology in CB

The colloquial variety is predominant in the Dhaka region which is one of the heavily populated areas in the country. This particular form of the CB distinguishes itself from the SB primarily with regard to its verbal inflections.

Table 3 presents an extended representation of the verb inflections in both the SB and CB, with reference to the same verb roots presented earlier. The same person markers as those in the SB are maintained in the CB, with the exception of 2nd person past contexts. The tense marking is retained without any alteration. The differences between the two varieties lie mainly in their representation of the aspect markers. Like their SB counterparts, the aspect markers in the CB do not change with the person markers. The present and the past progressive markers are /-tes-/ and /-tesi-/, whereas their perfective counterparts are /-s-/ and /-si-/. These tense, person and aspect markers maintain a fair amount of uniformity with those from the SB with regard to their sequence and the process of attaching to other members.

Table 3: Representation of the Verbal Paradigm in the SB and CB

Verb root 1 (ending in a consonant): /por-/ (to read)					
Verb root 2 (ending in a vowel): /kha-/ (to eat)					
	Present tense			Past tense	
	Standard	Colloquial		Standard	Colloquial
Simple	Ami boi pori . por- Ø- Ø-i	Ami boi pori . por- Ø- Ø-i	1 st person	Ami boi porlam . por- Ø- l-am	Ami boi porlam . por- Ø- l-am
	Ami k^hai . k ^h a- Ø- Ø-i	Ami k^hai . k ^h a- Ø- Ø-i		Ami k^helam . k ^h e- Ø-l-am	Ami k^hailam . k ^h ai- Ø-l-am
Prog	Ami boi porch^hi . por-ch ^h - Ø-i	Ami boi portesi . por-tes- Ø-i		Ami boi porch^hilam . por-ch ^h - l-am	Ami boi portesilam . por-tesi-l-am
	Ami k^hachch^hi . k ^h a-chch ^h -Ø-i	Ami k^haitesi . k ^h ai-tes-Ø-i		Ami k^hachch^hilam . k ^h a-chch ^h -l-am	Ami k^haitesilam . k ^h ai-tesi-l-am
Perf	Ami boi porech^hi . por-ech ^h - Ø-i	Ami boi porisi . por-s- Ø-i		Ami boi porech^hilam . por-ech ^h - l-am	Ami boi porisilam . por-si-l-am
	Ami k^heyech^hi . k ^h e-ech ^h - Ø-i	Ami k^haisi . k ^h ai-s- Ø-i		Ami k^heyech^hilam . k ^h e-ech ^h -l-am	Ami k^haisilam . k ^h ai-si-l-am
Simple	Tumi boi poro . por- Ø- Ø-o	Tumi boi poro . por- Ø- Ø-o	2 nd person	Tumi boi porle . por- Ø- l-e	Tumi porla . por- Ø- l-a
	Tumi k^hao . k ^h a- Ø- Ø-o	Tumi k^hao . k ^h a- Ø- Ø-o		Tumi k^hele . k ^h e- Ø-l-e	Tumi k^haila . k ^h ai- Ø- l-a
Prog	Tumi boi porch^ho . por-ch ^h - Ø-o	Tumi boi porteso . por-tes- Ø-o		Tumi boi porch^hile . por-ch ^h - l-e	Tumi boi portesila . por-tesi-l-a
	Tumi k^hachch^ho . k ^h a-chch ^h -Ø-o	Tumi k^haiteso . k ^h ai-tes- Ø-o		Tumi k^hachch^hile . k ^h a-chch ^h -l-e	Tumi k^haitesila . k ^h ai-tesi-l-a
Perf	Tumi boi porech^ho . por-ech ^h - Ø-o	Tumi boi porso . por-s- Ø-o		Tumi boi porech^hile . por-ech ^h - l-e	Tumi boi porсила . por-si-l-a
	Tumi k^heyech^ho . k ^h e-ech ^h - Ø-o	Tumi k^haiso . k ^h ai-s- Ø-o		Tumi k^heyech^hile . k ^h e-ech ^h -l-e	Tumi k^haisila . k ^h ai-si-l-a
Simple	She boi pore . por- Ø- Ø-e	She boi pore . por- Ø- Ø-e	3 rd person	She boi porlo . por- Ø- l-o	She boi porlo . por- Ø- l-o
	She k^hae . k ^h a- Ø- Ø-e	She k^hae . k ^h a- Ø- Ø-e		She k^helo . k ^h e- Ø-l-o	She k^hailo . k ^h ai- Ø-l-o
Prog	She boi porch^he . por- ch ^h - Ø-e	She boi portese . por-tes- Ø-e		She boi porch^hilo . por-ch ^h - l-o	She boi portesilo . por-tesi-l-o
	She k^hachch^he . k ^h a-chch ^h -Ø-e	She k^haitese . k ^h ai-tes- Ø-e		She k^hachch^hilo . k ^h a-chch ^h -l-o	She k^haitesilo . k ^h ai-tesi- l-o
Perf	She boi porech^he . por- ech ^h - Ø-e	She boi porse . por-s- Ø-e		She boi porech^hilo . por-ech ^h - l-o	She boi porсила . por-si- l-o
	She k^heyech^he . k ^h e-ech ^h - Ø-e	She k^haise . k ^h ai-s- Ø-e		She k^heyech^hilo . k ^h e-ech ^h -l-o	She k^haisilo . k ^h ai-si- l-o

Often in the process of being inflected, the verb root /k^ha-/ changes to /k^hai-/ (Table 3). In all person marker contexts, the past forms presented here as well as the Present Perfect form warrant the change in the verb stem. One possibility is the additional /i/ could be part of the aspect marker following the root. Therefore, one could suggest that the aspect markers in colloquial Bangla are /-ites-/ and /-itesi-/ (Present and Past Progressives respectively), and /-is-/ and /-isi-/ (Present and Past Perfectives

respectively). However, the tenability of this argument can be questioned since, firstly, the /i/ is not present in the aspect markers for verb roots ending in consonants, and secondly, the Past Simple form without any overt aspect marking displays the same pattern in the verb stem. Another explanation of this asymmetry can be found in relation to the corresponding forms in the *shadhushasha*. In that variety, the inflected verb root /k^ha-/ has the following forms: *k^hailam* (Past

Simple), *k^haitech^hi* and *k^haitech^hilam* (Present and Past Progressive), and *k^haiyach^hi* and *k^haiyach^hilam* (Present and Past Perfective). It is possible that these colloquial forms in question are motivated by *shadhubhasha*.

Need for Describing Bangla and the Colloquial Variety

As described before, verb morphology in Bangla is characterised by agglutination and regularity of suffixation. Verbs, in finite contexts, typically contain tense, aspect, person and honorific markers, each attaching itself to the verb stem in a fixed order. Due to these embellishments, Bangla verbs can be regarded to be fairly rich. These morphological qualities of Bangla verbs present a fascinating case for language acquisition studies. Earlier research in both typical and atypical language development has generated important findings with regard to agglutination and richness of the morphological paradigm. Children speaking morphologically rich languages have been reported to have relatively higher accuracy rates of verbal inflections than children speaking sparse languages (Aksu- Koç & Slobin, 1985, Turkish; Bedore & Leonard, 2001, Spanish; Xanthos *et al.*, 2011). Also, children's errors have been reported to manifest in a particular way in agglutinative and null-subject languages (Phillips, 2010). Deviating from the target forms only by one feature, these errors have often been 'near-misses' (Bedore & Leonard, 2001; Lukács, Leonard, Kas, & Pléh, 2009). These properties, also found in Bangla, offer opportunities to evaluate the current proposals (i.e. Extended Optional Infinitive: Wexler, 1994; Morphological Richness hypothesis: Lukács, Leonard, Kas, & Pléh, 2009) vis-à-vis Bangla child language. Very few studies have paid particular attention to exploring the nature of development displayed in Bangla or any structurally similar language (cf. Acarlar & Johnston, 2011, Turkish; Chakraborty & Leonard, 2012, Bangla). Therefore, Bangla verb morphology is thought to be of interest to researchers of children's early morphosyntax.

As far as the pertinence of the colloquial variety is concerned, it needs to be stated that, compared to the SB, the scope of the CB is somewhat restricted. It is not used by everyone nor can it be used in every context. Although it is comprehended by most people in Bangladesh, SB is still more ubiquitous. However, the reference to this variety of Bangla is indispensable with regard to a range of

applied research in Bangla. For example, studies on computational linguistics or language acquisition need to attend to the specific varieties of the language in order to obtain output suitable to the particular linguistic contexts. With specific references to the research in language acquisition, studies on developmental linguistics typically entail communicating with very young children and eliciting language samples from them. In situations where the child is exposed to the colloquial variety at home, he/she is not likely to understand and produce the SB verb forms. Therefore, the research methods need to take the colloquial variety into consideration and have it incorporated in the testing tools. Similarly, the appropriate variety needs to be reflected in the intervention services designed for children with language difficulties.

Also, studies in language acquisition have often found that the surface properties of the ambient language determine the developmental trends in that language (Leonard, 1989; Leonard, Eyer, Bedore, & Grela, 1997). This implies that a more perceptually salient marker is likely to be easily noticed, and therefore acquired faster by children. Acquisition data in English have consistently found support for the claim in the finding that the English progressive *-ing*, a prominent and syllabic unit, is mastered much earlier than the past *-ed* that has a brief presence. Surface features of a particular language variety may have similar contributions to make in a linguistic study. With regard to the two varieties discussed in the paper, the aspect markers used in these varieties differ in terms of salience. While the perfective aspect marker in the SB (*/-echh-/*) is perceptually more salient than the corresponding marker in the CB (*/-s-/*), the progressive aspect marker in the CB (*/-tes-/*) is significantly more prominent than that in the SB (*/-chh-/*). This could lead to possible differences in the outcomes of the research conducted in Bangla.

Conclusion

A morphological description of Bangla is presented in this paper which is an important linguistic documentation as well as a useful foundation for research in other related areas, e.g. in computational linguistics and in child language acquisition. The paper has attempted a morphological description of the CB, since this variety is commonly in use and is representative of a considerably large Bangla-speaking population. The linguistic documentation of the variety is an

essential prerequisite for further research. Research frameworks need to accommodate the colloquial forms whenever the studies are likely to involve use of any variety other than the “standard”.

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