Dialectical and Linguistic Variations of Bangla Sounds: Phonemic Analysis

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Abstract : Language has a significant role in recognition of a speaker's behavioral outline, customs, culture, and society. The inventory of human language is well organized by subconscious principles that shape the content of speech sounds and their patterns of occurrence in language. As a pure social science, linguistics attempts to look at human language accurately by providing reliable description and general principles about the usage of it in any speech community. There are a large number of Bangla dialects that reflect the linguistic differences as well as assimilation. According to linguistics, dialect refers to a variety of a language that is the trait of a particular region as well as social class. Dialect as a regionally or socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words or grammatical structures, sometimes separates particular groups of people sharing the same national identity. Within our standard language we can experience meaning differences between different words having different phonetic properties. This linguistic variation in sounds can create meaning differences in Standard Bangla Language though in most case of dialectical variation linguistics differences between sounds have less or no effect in creating remarkable meaning differences. This research study has focused on dialectical and linguistic variations of Bangla sounds through Phonemic analysis.

Introduction

Linguistics traditionally concentrates on building a model of competence at various levels of language organization such as sounds, words, sentences, meaning and use as well as how languages vary from one another. The language used by Bengali people is called Bangla language. It has its origin in Magadhi Prakriti, though it is true that traces of Magadhi in Bengali are extremely difficult to establish with any cogency. Bangla as one of the major Indic or Indo-Aryan languages of South Asia includes variety of languages from different sources. All these have enriched the inventory of Bengali phonemes. The inventory of the phonemes of Standard Colloquial Bengali (SCB) consists of twenty eight consonants, four semivowels and fourteen vowels; in addition there are seven marginal consonants and one marginal vowel which are present only in certain styles of speaking. All these have enriched

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the inventory of Phonemes of Standard Colloquial Bengali. This study has investigated the issue that though linguistic variation from phonemic analysis provides us different words having different meaning in case of Standard Colloquial Bengali, this has very little or no effect in creating major meaning changes for most dialectical changes.

Literature Review

According to Daniel Jones, "A phoneme may be defined roughly as a family of sounds consisting of an important sound of a language, e, the most frequently used member of that family together with other related sounds which takes its place in particular conditions of length and stress." Accordingly, language variation comes into existence, which is a proven as well as documented fact that can be observed in each and every language of the world (Shareah, Mudhsh & AL-Takhayinh, 2015). As multilingualism prevails across the world, variation within a language is a common and natural phenomenon, and it differs from place to place and from group to group in multitudinous ways (Tegegne, 2015). Research reveals that the variations in a language emerge from historical, cultural and linguistic reasons. As such, like other languages of the world, Bengali, the state language of Bangladesh possesses as well as demonstrates a great variety of distinctions in Linguistics signifying different areas and their people though the variation has little or no effect in bringing major changes of meaning.   Bangladesh owns a remarkable dialectical diversity having disparate accents, spellings and pronunciations for the lexis (Chowdhury, 2018). Broadly presented, the varieties of Bangla spoken in different regions of Bangladesh demonstrate variations at multiple categories, i.e. phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic etc. (Faquire, 2020). According to Sunitikumar Chatterji, one of the renowned historical grammarians and linguists of Bangla, the dialects of Bangla language are aptly classified into four fundamental groups namely (i) Rarhi, (ii) Varendri, (iii) Kamrupi and (iv) Vanga (Faquire, 2012). Kibria et al (2020) while doing the acoustic analysis of regional accents of the speakers of Bangla find that the native speakers of Bangladesh have different accents as well as pronunciations depending on the diverse geographical locations in the country.

Significance of the Study:

This research has focused on major acoustic as well as linguistic features of Bangla words and their effect on drawing meaning differences. While doing so this study has also focused on theories of Roman Jakobson, C. Gunner M. Fant and Morries Halle (1951) on these issues like aspiration, nasalization, allophonic variations etc. Since we share different dialects each day, we need to focus on their special areas of phonetic usage and influences as well as their significance in creating meaning difference or not in an insightful way.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative research method that includes content analysis based on Roman Jacobson's Distinctive Feature Theory, and lexical comparisons as well contrast in terms of pronunciations and meanings. This research is also an expository of distinctive issues of dialects that have been viewed from primary

sources as well as secondary sources. The treatment of the subject is mainly synchronic. Based on observations, reflections and findings special attention has been given in identifying the issue that though few linguistic features like aspiration, allophonic variations and nasalization can create meaning differences in standard Bangla words, all these do not bring any such meaning differences in case of few dialectical variations.

Distinctive Feature of Variation

Although many theories on distinctive feature have been propagated in the last two decades, there has been an attempt to bring a conceptual integration in the area of defining these special characteristics. In an attempt to analyze speech it has been stated that Harvard features have only twelve units that can be sufficient to define all the phonemes of world languages. They will be known as the "ultimate distinctive entities of language" and there will be no more division in them (Roman Jakobson, C. Gunner M. Fant and Morries Halle (1951). Later, these researchers adopted nine distinctive features to analyze the theories of language. Whereas all the world languages contain more or less thirty to forty phonemes, if these nine distinctive features can be appropriate to define them, it will save enough labor and time of the phoneticians.

A review of the literature indicates that in suggesting unique features of distinction, these researchers stress articulatory phonetics, acoustic phonetics and auditory phonetics. Depending on it we have got these distinctive features as popularly known Harvard Features. Roman Jakobson was a member of the Prague school of linguistics and worked closely with Trubetzkoy. Distinctive feature theory, based on his work and the work of Trubetzkoy, was first formalized by Roman Jakobson in 1941 and remains one of the most significant contributions to phonology making him one of the most influential linguists of the twentieth century. The features of phonemes of Jakobson, Fant and Halle are divided into three parts known as configurational features, expressive features and distinctive features. The distinctive features are again divided into two parts as inherent features and prosodic features. Jakobson's original formulation of distinctive feature theory was based on the ideas of resonance features. Inherent features are the fundamental features. The prosodic features are secondary features. On the basis of fundamental features, the contrast of phonemes occur as [+vocalic, − consonantal], Consonants[−vocalic, + consonantal], Liquids [+vocalic, + consonantal],Glides [−vocalic, − consonantal].

Aspiration in Dialectical Variation of Bangla Language

In analyzing a language in which aspiration plays an important role as it does in Bengali and most other languages of South Asia, we have to consider whether the sounds are distinctive or redundant. "Aspiration" as a phonetic term has been defined as the articulation of a sound "with considerable force and noticeable puff of breath" (Danicl Jones, 1960,).Aspiration is a sound the pronunciation of which involves an intensity in the expulsion of air from the oral cavity. According to Linguistics aspiration of plosives is a distinctive feature in Bangla and it is separately shown with an /h/ after the plosives which are aspirated in accordance with the

recommendation of IPA. Bangla words are characterized by a two term distinctions of aspiration and non-aspiration. The users of Bangla usually have separate letters having separate meanings for unaspirated and aspirated consonants though in case of few dialectical changes meaning remains the same. The unaspirated Bangla consonants are called 'alpapranavarna' and the aspirated ones are 'mahapranavarna'. The first and third words of each varga are characterized by soft articulation therefore they are called alpaprna (exasperated) and the second and fourth sounds are characterized by hard articulation, they are, therefore called mahaprana. Aspirated stops creating meaning difference are distinctive in Bengali as [kal] কাল or 'time' and [khal] খাল or 'canal' are two different words or [kʰ] in [kʰata] খাটা or work or [k] in [kata] কাটা or 'cut' are two different words.

There is full contrast between unaspirated and aspirated stops and between h and zero in initial position. The aspirated stop is generally a voiceless or voiced feature of release depending on the voicing of the stop. There are cases where the aspiration is a partial or complete spirantization of the stop and accordingly is simultaneous with the features of labiality, voice etc. rather than successive to them. In the same way we find non-aspiration or aspiration in medial positions like /paka/ /পাকা /and /pa k̃ha / /পাখা/ or /kata //কাটা/, and /kãthã / /কাঁথা /or word final positions as in probas /প্রবাশ/ and provat/প্রভাত/. This aspiration has created meaning differences in standard Bangla language. But in case of dialectical variations aspiraion can have a limited role in creating any meaning differences. For example, we notice the replacement of aspirated plosive 'ফ' [pʰ]as voiceless plosive 'প' [p]inKolkata creating different dialects,like the word অফিস is pronounced in Kolkata as/আপিশ/. Even in our country we can observe changes of few words as well as initial sound with the replacement of aspirated one as the Standard Bangla word 'পাই''in Noakhaliis pronounced as 'ফাই'. Here in the words 'পাই'and 'ফাই'both aspiration and nasalization have taken placebut no meaning changes has occurred as they are simply dialectical variations of same word /পাই/ .

Allophonic Change in Dialectical Variation of Bangla Language

Logically speaking, allophones must be treated by the speakers of a language in two ways, not one. In phonological terms, different allophones realize the same phoneme and thus they should count as a single perceptual object; at the same time, the allophones must be distinct in production even though their origin is from a single element "phone". Phones are phonetic units and appear in square brackets. Modern theories of phonology tend not to include phoneme as a theoretical object, positional variants, traditionally known as allophones what can in turn create meaning differences in standard bangle sounds though it has no effect in dialectical variations of Bangla sounds. For example /স/ and /শব/ are different words though they sound like the same. So they can create meaning difference within standard Bangla language but in case of few dialectical variations it has no effect in meaning changes. For example,   the sounds খ [th] and ত [t̪] refer to the same phoneme ত [t̪] in Kolkata. They are used differently in Dhaka where it is 'কথা', and in Kolkata 'কতা'

which has the same meaning (to talk,n. /v.or adiscussion, n. / to discuss,v.). In Rajshahi,the word 'কথা' meaning a word or words spoken or pronounced as 'কতা'. On the other hand the word 'কতি' indicates 'কোথায়'. Instead of 'কোথায়জাইবা?' (Where will you go?), some people of Rajshahi say 'কতিজাইবা ?' though it does not create any such meaning differences.

Nasalizationin Dialectical Variation of Bangla Language

Nasalization has become an essential feature associated with the nasal consonants in Bengali even though it has no phonemic value. But nasalization of vowels without complete association with any nasal consonant has phonemic value in Bengali. In words like [p$\bar{a}$:k] /পাঁক/ and [na:k]/নাক/, the latter has no nasalization. Moreover the nasal [ŋ] and [ɲ] being in complementary distribution with [n] can be considered as allophones of the phoneme n (ন) and represent as /ন/or /n/.Whereas in Bangla nasalization is not limited for any consonant or vowel sounds and it creates meaning differences within standard Bangla sounds.

In Bangla language Nasalization is noticed more prominently in the spoken form of Kolkata rather than Dhaka as in the Bangladeshi spoken 'বাবা' (non-nasalized) which is spoken as 'বাঁপু' (nasalised) in the sentence 'জানিনা বাঁপু' in Kolkata. In Chattogram,in many initial sound nasalization takes place as আঁই (আমি) (myself), আঁর (আমার) (my), তুঁই (তুমি) (you), কুঁআর (কুমার) (a young boy), ছঁই (ছিম) (a portable covering made of straw for a boat) etc. Nasals and nasalization in the Sanskrit languages raise fundamental questions of phonetic and phonological theory and also create problems for roman transcription. There are also some foreign words included in Bengali which have nasalized sounds such as,

> যাঁতী j$\tilde{a}$ti - a small double knife to cut betel nuts
>
> যাঁতা j$\tilde{a}$t$\tilde{a}$ -mill,quern (yantra)
>
> কেঁড়েলী k$\tilde{e}$r$\tilde{e}$li -impertinence
>
> শুঁড়ী s$\tilde{u}$r$\tilde{i}$ -wine dealer

Nasalization has very limited effect in meaning changes in terms of dialectical variations though it has significant role in changing meaning in terms of Standard Bangla Language. For example, কাটা (To Cut) , কাঁটা (thorn) are two different words having two different meaning in SBL but in case ofবাঁপুandবাপুWe donot get different words having different meaning as they are simply regional variation of standard Bangla word বাবা(father).

Vowel Length in Dialectical Variation of Bangla Language

In some provinces of Bangladesh vowel sounds take lengthened feature though create no meaning differences. Vowel length is non-variant in Bangla. For example somepeople of Barisal division utter /আইতেআছি/ insteadof /আসিতেছি/. This variation of /আইতেআছি/has no written form though spoken form is popular there. From phonemic analysis we have found no effect of these words in creating meaning differences as they are simply dialectical variation of standard Bangla words.

Suggestions for Future Researchers

To find out the inseparable connection between different Bangla dialects and linguistics there should be more in-depth studies. The future researchers may collect more examples of colloquial Bangla words along with their association between meaning variations. The researchers can also concentrate on kinesthetic and acoustic observation by recording Bangla speech sounds. However, the phonemic study of dialectical variation is worthy one.

Conclusion

In fine, we can say that dialectal variation does not occur due to any single reason. Our history, cultural patterns, linguistics theory, changes in lifestyle, particular vernaculars, and geographical location are significant reasonsfor dialectical variation. All in all, establishing a distinct identity is the prominent cause of dialectical variation.

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