Phonological Analysis of Mymensingh Dialect, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangla is an Eastern Indo-Aryan language which belongs to the Indo-European Language family. Bangla has several sister languages. Mymensingh dialect is a sister language of Bangla. The native speakers of Mymensingh use Bangla in their everyday communication. The phonological, morphological, and syntactical features of Mymensingh dialect have a clear discrepancy from Standard Bangla. This paper aims to present Mymensingh dialect on the aspects of phonological features. It is found that there are dialectical differences between standard Bangla and Mymensingh dialect concerning place and manner of articulation of consonants. The aspirated sound is profoundly absent in Mymensingh dialect. One vowel turning into another is a common feature in Mymensingh dialect.

Keywords: Standard Bangla, Mymensingh dialect, consonants, vowels.

Introduction

Speculation about the language and dialect has been going for decades. It is not an easy task to make a barrier between a language and a dialect as Haugen (1966) opines that "language and dialect are ambiguous terms. Ordinary people use these terms quite freely in speech; for them a dialect is almost certainly no more than a local non-prestigious (therefore powerless) variety of a real language" (cited in Wardhaugh,2010. pp 24). Language is a mix of dialects as Reed (1967) opines that "languages normally consist of dialects, or special varieties of usage within the range of a given linguistic system, according to the social or geographical disposition of its speakers." Geographical distance is not an only criterion to define a dialect. There are

many other factors must be concerned to define a dialect than geographical ones as different social or economic classes use different languages according to their own requirements.

Mymensingh is one of the districts of Dhaka division in Bangladesh. It is situated in the north area of Bangladesh. It is bordered by Meghalay state of India to the north, Gazipur district to the south, Netrokona and Kishoreganj district to the east and Sherpur, Jamalpur, Tangail district to the west and the district covers an area of 4,394.57 square kilometers (Wikipedia, 2015, "Geography", para.2). According to Shuchi (2013), Bangladesh has a number of dialects which may be categorized into four groups:

(1)   North Bengal dialects including those of Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Bogra and Pabna.
(2)   Rajbanshi, the dialect of Rangpur.
(3)   East Bengal dialects which include those of a) Dhaka, Mymensingh, Tripura, Barisal and Sylhet, as well as b) Faridpur, Jessore and Khulna and
(4)   South Bengal dialects including those of Chittagong and Noakhali and the dialects of Chittagong Hill Tracts, such as those spoken by Chakmas and Murongs.

Grierson (1966) divided the varieties of Bangla into two groups: Eastern and Western (in Haldar, 1986). Grierson (1966) accepts the dialect of Dhaka as standard (in Islam, 1998). He also includes Mymensingh dialect within western group. Chatterjee (1926) grouped the varieties of Bangla into four large bodies: Rarh, Banga, Kamarupa and Varendra (in Islam, 1998).According to him, Mymensingh dialect is the subgroup of Bango. Professor Shahidullah (1965) includes Mymensingh dialect within the South-East group (in Islam, 1998). Sen (1975) classifies Mymensing dialect into a part of Bongali group (in Islam, 1998). According to Poreshchandra (1962), Mymensing dialect falls into Esatern Bangio group (in Islam, 1998).

There have been numerous studies in connection with dialects of Bangladesh in the past. Mizan (2014) conducted a research on phonological patterns in Standard Colloquial Bangla and Netrokona dialect. This study of Mizan (2014) is synchronic as both Standard Bangla and Netrokona dialect are spoken at the present time. The phonological sections were broadly divided into general sub-sections in the study. The researcher categorized the inventory of

consonant phonemes. Vocalic and consonantal features of Standard Bangla and Netrokona dialect have been explained. The researcher found thirty consonant phonemes in Standard Colloquial Bangla. According to Mizan(2014), voiced aspirated sounds are /g^h/,/j^h/,/d^h/,/ d̪^{h} /,/b^h/ and voiced unaspirated sounds are /g/, /j/, /d/, /d̪/, /b/.Voiceless aspirated sounds are/k^h/,/c^h/,/t^h/,/t̪^{h}/,/p^h/. The researcher added that voiced aspirated sounds for example /g^h/, /j^h/, /d^h/, / d̪^{h} /, /b̃^{h}/ and voiceless aspirated sound /ph/ are not present in Netrokona dialect. Back-mid vowel /o/ is turned into back-half close vowel /u/ in Netrokona district. Netrokona district is very close to Mymensingh. Both of the districts have similarities in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Rashel (2012) has tried to make a comparison between Standard Colloquial Bengali Language and Chatkhil Dialect on the aspects of phonological features, such as, consonants, and vowel phonemes and allophones. The researcher used minimal pair test to accomplish his study. During the study Rashel (2012) found twenty-four consonants and seven vowels that are used in this dialect. Besides, there are four nasalized vowel sounds, five semi-vowels and twenty diphthongs. The researcher found that the aspirated sounds are less frequent in Chatkhil dialect.

Morshed (1985) has shown the following monophthongs /i/, /e/, /æ/, /a/, /ɔ/, /o/, /u/, /ĩ/, /ẽ/, /æ̃/, /ã/, /ɔ̃/, /õ/, /ũ/. Hai (1967) showed the following monophthongs: /i/, /e/, /æ/, /a/, /ɔ/, /o/, /ou//u/. Daniul Hoque (1990) showed the same number of monophthongs as Abdul Hai showed. According to Ali (2001), Bangla have the following 14 monophthongs /i/, /e/, /æ/,/a/, /ɔ/, /o/, /u/ , /ĩ/, /ẽ/, /æ̃/, /ã/, /ɔ̃/, /õ/, /ũ/ (including nasalized monophthongs).

Methodology
Respondents

The method adopted in this paper is the observation method. Since this research is based on observation method, the researcher's first work was to select speakers. The researcher tried to participate in such a situation where many people talk to themselves. The native speakers of Mymensingh district are the main participants of the study. Literate, illiterate; male, female; employed, unemployed, young and old; all are the subjects of the study.

Observation Method

The researcher uses observation method to collect data. Kothari (2004) opines " Observation becomes a scientific tool and the method of data collection for the researcher, when it serves a formulated research purpose, is systematically planned and recorded and is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability" (p.96). Here the researcher is the "keen observer" of data record. To get firsthand experience with informants, the researcher acts as a member of the subjects of the study while observing and keeping notes of the speech of the subjects.

The data collected for this research are from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are collected directly from the native speakers of Mymensingh. Olympus VN-7200 Digital Voice Recorder has been used to record the surreptitious speeches of the natives of Mymensingh. Secondary data are collected for this study from different sources: books on dialect studies, published articles on different journals, published online journals on dialects, different grammar books regarding Bangla language studies.

This researcher spent fifteen days as a participant observer with the people of Mymensingh district. During this time the researcher actively participated in the gossip made by a group of people to record the data.

Data Analyses

Observation data are transcribed and written out from Bangla to English for comparative analysis. The recorded speeches of Mymensingh dialect have been compared with that of Standard language on the basis of phonology.

Data Collection on Phonological Variation

Mymensingh dialect is quite divergent from Standard Bangla in terms of phonology. The variation in consonant is quite typical in Mymensingh dialect. Though the native speakers of Mymensingh use same written standard, the way they speak differs from in different degrees.

Variation in **Consonant:**

There are some significant differences of consonant between Standard Bangla and Mymensingh dialect. It is well established that there are dialectical differences concerning place and manner of articulation of consonants. In Mymensingh dialect, one consonant is often substituted for another consonant. Data on this issue are presented here:

/Kʰ/turning into /k/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
khata	/kʰhata/	kata	/kaṯa/	sheet
khabar	/kʰabar/	kabar	/kabar/	food
khela	/kʰæla/	kela	/ kæla/	play
khal	/kʰal/	kal	/kal/	canal
khub	/ kʰub/	kub	/kub/	very

In this table, aspirated /Kʰ/ is changed into unaspirated /k/.

/bʰ/turning into /b/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
bhokto	/bhɔktɔ/	bokto	/bɔktɔ/	disciple
bhondo	/ bhɔndɔ/	bondo	/ bɔndɔ/	vagabond
bhodro	/bhɔd̪rɔ/	bodro	/bɔd̪rɔ/	gentle
bhoy	/bhɔy/	boy	/bɔy/	fear
bhut	/bhut/	but	/but/	ghost

In this table, labial, plosive, voiceless, aspirated consonants /bʰ/ is turned into the bilabial, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /b/in Mymensingh dialect.

/d̪ʰ/ turning into/d̪/

Standard Bangla	(Transcription)	Mymensingh dialect	(Transcription)	Meaning in English
dhadha	/d̪hãd̪hã/	dada	/d̪ad̪a/	puzzle
dhormo	/ d̪hɔrmɔ /	dormo	/d̪ɔrmɔ/	religion
dhan	/d̪han/	dan	/d̪an/	paddy
dhap	/ d̪hap/	dap	/ d̪ap/	phase
dhora	/d̪hɔra /	dora	/d̪ɔra/	hold

In this table, dental-plosive, voiced, aspirated /d̪ʰ/is turned into the dental, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /d̪/in Mymensingh dialect.

/dʰ/ turning into /d/

Standard Bangla	(Transcription)	Mymensingh Dialect	(Transcription)	Meaning in English
dhol	/dhul/	dul	/dul/	tom-tom
dhile	/dhile/	dile	/dile/	Loose
dhipi	/dhipi/	dipi	/dipi/	mountain
dhal	/ dhal /	dal	/ dal/	narrow
dhaka	/dhaka/	daka	/daka/	Dhaka, Capital of Bangladesh

Palato-alveolar, plosive, voiceless, aspirated /dʰ/ is turned into the palato-alveolar, plosive, voiced, aspirated /d/ in this dialect.

/cʰ/ turning into /c/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
chok	/cʰɔk/	cok	/cɔk/	chalk
chorcha	/cʰɔrcʰa /	corca	/cɔrca/	practice
chola	/cʰɔla/	cola	/cɔla/	cooker
chobi	/cʰɔbi/	cobi	/cɔbi/	picture
chacha	/cʰacʰa/	caca	/caca/	uncle

In this table, palatal, plosive, voiceless, aspirated / cʰ/ is changed into the palatal, plosive, unaspirated, fricatives /c/ in Mymensingh dialect.

/ɟʰ/ turning into /ɟ/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
jhor	/ɟhɔɽ/	zor	/ɟɔɽ/	storm
jhorna	/ɟhɔrna/	zorna	/ɟɔrna/	shower
jhapsha	/ɟhapʃa/	zapsha	/ɟapʃa/	blur
jhil	/ɟhil/	zil	/ɟil/	lake
jhal	/ɟhal/	zal	/ɟal/	spicy
jhol	/ɟhol/	zol	/ɟol/	water

In this table, palatal, plosive, voiceless / ɟʰ/ of standard Bangla is turned into the palatal, voiced, unaspirated /ɟ/ in Mymensingh dialect.

/gʰ/ turning into /g/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
Ghor	/ gʰɔr/	gor	/gɔr/	home
Gham	/gʰam/	gam	/gam/	sweat
ghori	/gʰoɽi/	gori	/gori/	watch

In this table, velar, plosive, voiceless, aspirated /gʰ/ of standard Bangla language is turned into the velar, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /g/ in this dialect.

/ɽ/ turning into /r/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
ghori	/gʰoɽi /	gori	/ gori/	watch
Juri	/ ɟuri/	Juri	/ɟuɽi/	pot
Gari	/baɽi/	bari	/bari/	rain

Palato-alveolar, retroflex, voiced consonant /ɽ/ of standard colloquial Bangla language is turned into the alveolar, plosive, voiced, unaspirated, retroflex /r/ in this dialect.

/p/ turning into/pʰ/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
Pani	/pani/	fani	/pʰani/	water
Patla	/paʈla/	fatla	/ pʰaʈla/	thin
Pora	/ pɔɽa/	fora	/pʰɔra/	study

In this table, bilabial, plosive, voiceless, unaspirated consonant / p/ of standard Bangla language is turned into labial, plosive, voiceless, aspirated consonant / pʰ/ in this dialect.

/t̪ʰ/turning into /t̪/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect Transcription	Transcription	Meaning in English
matha	/mat̪ʰa/	mata	/mat̪a/	head
thama	/ t̪ʰama /	tama	/t̪ama/	stop

In this table, palato-alveolar, plosive, aspirated, voiceless /t̪ʰ/ is turned into palato-alveolar, plosive, unaspirated /t̪/ in Mymensingh dialect.

/h/turning into/a/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
hasi	/haʃi/	asi	/ aʃi/	laugh
hash	/hãʃ/	ash	/ãʃ/	duck

In this table, glottal sound /h/of standard Bangla is turned into /a/ in Mymensingh dialect.

/ʃ/turning into/h/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
sin	/ʃiɳ/	hin	/hiɳ/	horn
shat	/ ʃat̪/	hat	/hat̪/	seven

Here, the consonant /ʃ/ is turned into glottal sound /h/ in Mymensingh dialect.

/t/ turning into /d/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
mota	/mot̪a/	moda	/moda/	fatty
pitha	/ pitʰa/	pida	/pida/	cake

In this table, Palato-alveolar, plosive, unaspirated and voiceless /t/ is changed into palato-alveolar, plosive /d/ in Mymensingh dialect.

Regarding consonants, it is notable that the pronouncing aspirated consonants /Kʰ bʰdʰ t̪ʰd̪ʰ cʰɟʰgʰ ɽ/of Standard Bangla do not present in Mymensingh dialect.

Variation in Vowel

Standard Bangla and Mymensingh dialect differ greatly in the phonetic characteristics of their vowels. Mymensingh dialect and Standard Bangla have the same number of vowels. But it

is notable that in Mymensingh dialect, a vowel that occurs in a word is replaced by another vowel in the same word. The people of Mymensingh region generally omit nasalized sounds.

/i/ tuning into /æ/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
Nirash	/niraʃ/	narash	/næræʃ/	frustration
Jibon	/jibɑn/	Jabon	/jæbɑn/	life

In this table, front-close vowel /i/ is turned into front-half open vowel /æ/.

/e/ turning into /æ/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
neta	/net̪a/	nata	/næt̪a/	leader
Tel	/ t̪el/	tal	/t̪æl/	oil
Net	/net/	nat	/næt/	net
Bikel	/bikel/	bikal	/bikæl/	afternoon
Desh	/deʃ/	dash	/dæʃ/	country

In this table, front mid-vowel /e/ is turned into front-half open vowel /æ/.

/e/ turning into /a/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
biye	/biye/	biya	/biya/	marriage
Kheye	/kʰeye/	khaya	/kʰaya/	eat

In this table, front mid-vowel /e/ is turned into central-open vowel /a/.

/ɑ/ turning into /o/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
oshim	/ɑʃim/	oshim	/oʃim/	limitless
Sathik	/ʃɑʈʰik/	sotik	/ʃoʈik/	right
Kamiti	/kɑmiti/	komoti	/komiti/	committee
Kafi	/kɑfi/	kofi	/kofi/	coffee

In this table, back-half open vowel /ɒ/ is turned into back-mid vowel /o/.

/o/ turning into /u/

Standard Bangla	Transcription	Mymensingh Dialect	Transcription	Meaning in English
gol	/gol/	gul	/gul/	round
Chor	/cʰor/	chur	/cʰur/	thief
Bhor	/bʰor/	bur	/bur/	dawn
Poka	/poka/	puka	/puka/	insects

In this table, back-mid vowel /o/ is turned into back-half close vowel /u/.

Conclusion

This study explores the extent of variations of Mymensingh dialect from Standard Bangla in terms of phonology. These variations have some incentives as reasons. Users have different dimensions of tendencies to use such forms. It is found that the dialect used in Mymensingh district is more likely to differ from Standard Bangla.

There are large-scale differences in the mode of pronunciation between the Standard Bangla and Mymensingh dialect. Regarding consonants, it is notable that the aspiration of sound is not present in Mymensingh dialect. The researcher finds same vowels both in standard Bangla

and Mymensingh dialect. But the vowels of Mymensingh dialect are pronounced as different vowels from standard Bangla in different Positions. This type of confusion regarding pronunciation is permanent because of the 'freezing' of the speakers when the speakers do not want to overcome his present status as Mclaughlin(1987) opined that 'freezing' is "the state of affairs that exists when the learner ceases to elaborate the interlanguage in some respect, no matter how long there is exposure , new date, or new teaching (p.61)".Varshney (1985) mentioned in his book that "the pronunciation of a language varies every six miles because of geographical and cultural reasons."

The speakers of other regions from Bangladesh should be concerned about the pronunciation of Mymensingh dialect as the local people of Mymensingh district use a lot of words not pronounced in standard Bangla. In case people coming from other area do not listen carefully, it can easily create confusion among them. The people from other regions should keep in their mind that the natives of Mymensingh generally omit aspirated sounds. Meaning ambiguity can occur as a result of these distorted structures.

It is said that standard language is also a dialect. That is why we cannot dispirit a dialect speaker to modify his language. But as far as rightness is concerned in official circumstances, all phonological variations may be regarded as blunders. This article may perform a vivacious role to boost the inhabitants of Mymensingh to exterminate their faulty phonological practices of language in a formal condition.

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