Reduplication in Bengali Language

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Introduction

This paper discusses the reduplication process in Bengali language. It also gives examples from other languages, especially Hindi, Urdu and Panjabi.

Bengali is a language, which originated between 900 A.D. to 1000 A.D. It is now spoken by more than 230 million speakers, mostly from West Bengal, Assam. Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, some part of Andaman in India, and in Bangladesh where it is the national language of that country.

Reduplication

Reduplication is the repetition of all or part of the base with or without internal change before or after the base itself. It is of two types:

A) Morphological &
B) Lexical

A) Morphological Reduplication
Morphological reduplication refers to the minimally meaningful and segmentally indivisible morphemes that are a larger number of expressions used in speech where sound and sense seems to be united. These expressions have been termed as Onomatopoeia such as:

1. Some Acoustic Noises
   - Monkey chattering: U? U?
   - Cat Chattering: Mu? Mu?

2. Noises of Natural Phenomenon
   - Rain pattering: tap tap
   - Thundering Sound: gar gar

3. Noises by Humans
   - Laughing: Ha! Ha!
     - Khick! Khick!

B) Lexical Reduplication

It can be partial or complete at this level. It consists of four types:

a. Echo-Formation

An echo word is defined as a partially repeated form of the base word; partially repeated in the sense that either the initial phoneme which may be either consonant or vowel or the syllable of the base is replaced by another phoneme or another syllable. Here one thing I find that the replacer sound sequences are more or less fixed and rigid.

In Bengali repetition starts with –T, Punjabi –S and Hindi –V. The echo word has neither any individual occurrence nor any meaning of its own in the language. It acquires the status of a meaningful element only after it is attached to a word.

Here are some examples from Bengali. These are also compared with other languages like Hindi and Urdu.
Example of Echo- Formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengali</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nam - tam</td>
<td>nam – wam</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rokto – tokto</td>
<td>khun – Vun</td>
<td>Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sohoj - tohoj</td>
<td>asan – vasan</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fol – tol</td>
<td>Phal – val</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prem – tem</td>
<td>pyar – vyar</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gan – tan</td>
<td>gana- -vana</td>
<td>Song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Echo Formation Used in Sentences:

1. nam – tam: nam – tam jene ki hobe? (Bengali)
   nam – vam: nam – vam pata karke kya karoge? (Hindi)
2. rokto - tokto: rokto –tokto pore na jeno (Bengali)
   khun -vun: khun - vun nikle ki nehi? (Hindi)
3. sohoj - tohoj: sohoj - tohoj prosner uttar age dio (Bengali)
   asan -vasan: asan - vasan question mat kya karo (Hindi)
4. fol-tol : fol -tol khele energy bare (Bengali)
   phal -val : phal - val khared kar wo ghar chala gaya (Hindi)
5. prem -tem : prem -tem koro na porasuna koro (Bengali)
   pyar -vyar : pyar -vyar sab bekar ki cheej hai (Hindi)
6. gan -tan : gan- tan korle mon bhalo thake (Bengali)
   gana-vana: gana -vana gaya karo (Hindi)

(b) Compounds

Compounds refer to the paired constitution in which the second word is not an exact repetition of the first but has some similarity or relationship to the first word either on the semantic or on the phonetic level. A compound may be used independently in a sentence. Here, the paired construction does not have a new meaning.
Example of Compound Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengali</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>utha-bosa</td>
<td>uthna-bathna</td>
<td>Rise - Sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sukhi-dukhi</td>
<td>sukh-dukh</td>
<td>Happy-Sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taka-paisa</td>
<td>dhan-daulat</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compounds Used in Sentences

1. utha-bosa: roj sokale utha-bosa kora bhalo (Bengali)
   uthna-bathna: unke sathmera uthna bathna hai (Hindi)
2. sukhi-dukhi: kokhono sukh kokhono dukhi etai jibon (Bengali)
   sukh-dukh: kiske jindegi mai sukh dukh nehi hai? (Hindi)
3. taka-paisa: taka poisa na thakle songsar chalano kothin (Bengali)
   dhan-daulat: dhaun daulat se kuch nehi hota achche insan banne ki kousis karo (Hindi)

However, some linguists do not wish to include these under reduplication.

(c) Word Reduplication

Word reduplication refers to those paired constructions when a single word or a clause is repeated once in the same sentence without any phonological or morphological variation. This word reduplication is of two types:

- Complete Reduplication
- Partial Reduplication

i. Complete Reduplication
When both the parts have meanings and are meaningful, then the reduplication is called a complete reduplication.

Examples of Complete Reduplication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengali</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cholta – cholta</td>
<td>chalte – chalte</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aste – aste</td>
<td>dhire – dhire</td>
<td>Slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhalo – bhalo</td>
<td>achche –achche</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sada – sada</td>
<td>safed – safed</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chhoto – chhoto</td>
<td>chhote – chhote</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compounds Used in Sentences

1. cholta – cholta : cholta cholta hafie gelam (Bengali)
   chalte – chalte : bas chalte chalte ho gaya (Hindi)
2. aste – aste : aste aste cholle kobe poucho? (Bengali)
   dhire – dhire : bus bohut dhire dhire chal raha hai. (Hindi)
3. bhalo – bhalo : aj canteene bhalo bhalo khabar achhe (Bengali)
   achche –achche: Sufia achche achche Pakora banati hai (Hindi)
4. sada – sada : sada sada kagoje likho (Bengali)
   safed – safed: safed safed kapra pahna karo (Hindi)
5. chhoto – chhoto : chhoto chhoto mach gulo amake dao (Bengali)
   chhote – chhote : chhote chhote alu le lo (Hindi)

These examples are called complete reduplication because here single word or a clause is repeated once in the same sentence without any phonological and morphological change.

(ii) Partial Reduplication
Partial reduplication in the sense that here only one word or free morpheme is meaningful other word is meaningless.

**Examples of Partial Reduplication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengali</th>
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<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pani – tani</td>
<td>pani – wani</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaj – taj</td>
<td>kam – wam</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cha-ta</td>
<td>chawye-waye</td>
<td>Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pan- tan</td>
<td>pan-wan</td>
<td>Betel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Partial Reduplication Used in Sentences**

1. **pani - tani**: pani-tani khao tarpor cholo (Bengali)  
   pani -wani: pani-wani hamesha saf pya karo (Hindi)
2. **Kaj - taj**: aj besi kaj -taj korbona (Bengali)  
   kam -wam: kam-wam khatam karo phir ghar chalo (Hindi)
3. **cha-ta**: cha-ta khabe naki? (Bengali)  
   chawye-waye: chawye-waye ho jaye? (Hindi)
4. **Pan-tan**: pan-tan to 60 bochorer burira khai (Bengali)  
   Pan-van pan-wan khake kya karoge? (Hindi)

**Discontinuous Reduplication**

It is the reduplication with inter-fixion of a syllable which could be a vowel or VC or CV which is termed as discontinuous reduplication.

**Example of Discontinuous Reduplication**
1. criss–cross: karor songe criss-cross khela thik na (Bengali)
criss-cross: kisike sath criss-cross mat khela karo (Hindi)

2. zig-zag: rastata khub zig-zag lagchhe (Bengali)
zig-zag: ye rasta zig-zag hai (Hindi)

3. tip-top: tip-top thakle loke bhalo bole (Bengali)
tip-top: hamesha tip-top raha karo (Hindi)

Conclusion
Now, a question arises in our mind whether reduplication structures are arbitrary or not? Actually, there are no inherent relationships between the linguistic or non-linguistic sign and the real world. So, reduplications are arbitrary.

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References


Hurch Bemhard: Studies on Reduplication. Google Books

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Colophon

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