Semantic Types of Adjectives and Their Semantic Classification in Bangla

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Abstract

The paper investigates the status of Bangla adjectives in terms of its attributes or properties. Cross-linguistically adjectives show different morphological patterns as well as certain syntactic distribution. In Bangla, the word class adjective possesses several semantic types with idiosyncratic morphological structures; and it has attributive and/or predicative use. Many study concentrate on the morphological and syntactic classification of adjectives. But few of them highlight the classification from the semantic point of view. In the current paper I will present the framework of semantic categorization as proposed by Broekhuis (2013) and apply it in case of existing semantic types of adjectives in Bangla.

Keywords: Adjective, Semantic type, Semantic classification, Bangla.

1. Introduction

Adjectives, in general, are defined as modifiers of nouns. They usually indicate the attributes or properties of the given referents. They are grouped under some prototypical semantic types in languages. Dixon (2006) describes that "the lexical roots in every language can be arranged in a number of semantic types. Certain types have prototypical association with a given word class, while others vary in their word class associations." Ottenheimer (2006) defines semantic domain as a "specific area of cultural emphasis". According to Summer Institute of Linguistics International, "a semantic domain is an area of meaning and the words used to talk about it. A domain is often given a name consisting of a common word in the domain. For instance English has a domain 'Rain', which includes words such as *rain, drizzle, downpour, raindrop, puddle*. We use these words to talk about the rain."

Therefore, a semantic domain consists of a list of words that help people to think of the specific domain or area of a particular language relating to the experience by a certain community in their own world. The semantic types imply some psychological conceptions and perceptions of human mind associated with a particular word class. For instances, nouns are based on the semantic types like *humans* (girl), *body parts* (hand), *flora* (tree) and the like. Verbs are grounded on the semantic types such as *motion* (run), *state* (be) and others. There are also some typical semantic types pertaining to the word class adjective. Matasović (2002) in his cross-linguistic study of adjectives

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and adjective phrases mentioned *dimension, physical property, colour* as some of the prototypical semantic types for adjectives. Dixon (2006) in the typological study proposed various semantic types for the word class adjective prevalent in world languages. Here he presented the instances of adjectives in general belonging to the thirteen semantic types:

  i.   Dimension: 'big', 'small';
 ii.   Age: 'new', 'old';
iii.   Value: 'good', 'bad';
 iv.   Colour: 'white', 'black';
  v.   Physical Property: 'hard', 'soft';
 vi.   Human Propensity: 'happy', 'kind';
vii.   Speed: 'fast', 'slow';
viii.   Difficulty: 'easy', 'hard';
 ix.   Similarity: 'similar', 'different';
  x.   Qualification: 'true', 'possible';
 xi.   Quantification: 'all', 'some';
xii.   Position: 'high', 'low';
xiii.   Cardinal Numbers: 'one', 'two',
          (Ordinal: 'first', 'last').

2. Research Objective

Here the two research statements can be framed briefly to fulfill the aim of this research paper:

  i.   To investigate the semantic types of adjectives in Bangla; and,

 ii.   To establish the semantic classification for the obtainable semantic types of Bangla adjectives.

3. Semantic Types of Adjectives in Bangla:

Here I have tried to find out the instances of the semantic types which are typically associated with the word class adjective in Bangla. The following table will illustrate them.

Table: 1

Semantic Type	Data
Dimension	bɔɾo 'big', lɔmbɑ 'long', bete 'short'
Age	noʈun 'new', puɾono 'old'
Colour	ʃaḍa 'white', kɑlo 'black', lɑl 'red'
Value	bʰalo 'good', kʰaɾap 'bad'
Physical Property	ʃɔkʈo 'hard', nɔrom 'soft', bʰaɾi 'heavy'
Human Propensity	cɑlɑk 'clever', bokɑ 'foolish'
Speed	ḍruʈo 'fast', ḍʰiɾ 'slow'

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Difficulty	ʃɔhoɪ 'easy', kotʰin 'difficulty'
Similarity	æk 'same', pritʰɔk 'different'
Qualification	ʃotti 'true', sad̪ʰaɾon 'common'
Quantification	ʃɔb 'all', ɔnek 'many', ɔlpo 'few'
Position	ucu 'high', nicu 'low'
Cardinal	æk 'one', kuɾi 'twenty',
(Ordinal)	(protʰom 'first', d̪it̪io 'second')

4. Framework

Broekhuis (2013) proposed a semantic categorization for adjectives. He categorized them into four classes based on the semantic features: *qualifying* and *kind-of relation* which have binary values either positive or negative. They are *set-denoting adjectives*, *relational adjectives*, *evaluative adjectives* and the *residue*. He has applied this in Dutch, a west-Germanic language. The set-denoting adjectives possess both the semantic features. The relational adjectives have only the *kind-of relation* and the evaluative adjectives include the semantic feature *qualifying*. But the final class of adjectives lacks both the semantic features. Not only the mentioned semantic features determine the above classification but also the syntactic distribution of adjectives is in use. As a result, set-denoting adjectives are those types of adjectives which are placed in the prenominal position to attribute qualifying properties to the given referents (noun phrases) and also are used predicatively making a kind-of relation. *Big*, *small* etc. are instances of set-denoting adjectives in English. The relational adjectives only establish a kind-of relation between two entities (nouns) and occur only in the attributive position. For example, *'daily'* is a relational adjective in English. The evaluative adjectives imply positive or negative value of the property ascribed to the nouns and they occur exclusively in the prenominal position, that is, in the attributive place. As for example, I can say *'inflammatory speech'*. Here *'inflammatory'* may signify a positive value of the property attributed to the given referent *'speech'* in a specific context. Finally, the residue does not indicate any of the semantic features as well as it occurs attributively like the relational adjectives and evaluative adjectives. *'Probable'* is an example of the residue group of adjectives. Now the instances from Bangla can be shown with respect to this semantic categorization.

- **Set-denoting Adjectives:** The adjective *ʃund̪oɾ* 'handsome' firstly has the attributive feature which modifies the referent *cʰeleta* 'the boy'. Besides, the same adjective is placed in the attributive and predicative position respectively in the examples (1) and (2).
1. ʃund̪oɾ   cʰele-ta   .
   handsome   boy-CLA
   'the handsome boy'
2. cʰele-ta   ʃund̪oɾ
   boy-CLA   handsome
   'the boy is handsome'

- **Relational Adjectives:** The following instance in (3) signifies that the behaviour is done by a

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person who is not a father but acts like a father. Thus, the adjective *piʈriʃulɔbʰ* 'fatherly' makes a relation between a man other than a father and his behaviour to others in a way. This kind of adjectives has only the attributive use.

3. piʈriʃulɔbʰ   ɑcorɔn
   fatherly   behaviour
   'Fatherly behaviour'

4. *ɑcorɔn-tɑ   piʈriʃulɔbʰ
   behaviour-CLA fatherly
   'the behaviour is fatherly.'

- **Evaluative Adjectives:** The given adjective in the example (5) signifies an evaluation of the referent *uɖahɔron* 'example'. Such evaluative adjectives occur exclusively in the prenominal position but their predicative use results in ill-formed constructions.

5. ɟɔlonʈo uɖahɔron
   burning example
   'burning example'

6. *uɖahɔron-tɑ ɟɔlonʈo
   example-CLA burning
   'The example is burning.'

- **The Residue:** Bangla possesses good amount of instances belonging to this class of adjectives. The adjective *ʃɔmbʰabbo* 'probable' in the example in (7) is not a property, does not make any relation and even does not imply any evaluation of the given referent. Therefore, it goes under the residue.

7. ʃɔmbʰabbo gʰɔtonɑ
   probable   fact
   'probable fact'

8. *gʰɔtonɑ-tɑ ʃɔmbʰabbo
   fact-CLA   probable
   'The fact is probable.'

5. Data Analysis

As the research objective mentioned above, the current paper attempts to ascertain the semantic classes of adjectives available for the semantic types (of adjectives) in Bangla. This section analyses each semantic types pertaining to adjectives in Bangla to carry out the aim.

- **Dimension:** The adjective *bɔro* 'big' relating to the semantic type *dimension* has the qualifying feature and it occurs both attributively and predicatively. So, it is a set-denoting adjective.

9. bɔro gʰɔr
   big   room

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'big room'

10. gʰɔɾ-tɑ   bɔɾo
    room-CLA big
    'The room is big.'

- **Age:** Having the qualifying feature, the adjective *noʈun* 'new' of the semantic type *age* is a set-denoting adjective. It is used in attributive as well as predicative places.

11. noʈun gʰɔɾ
    new   room
    'New room'

12. gʰɔɾ-tɑ   noʈun
    room-CLA new
    'The room is new.'

- **Value:** *bhalo* 'good' which possesses a positive value is a set-denoting adjective. This indicates a quality which is assigned to the referent *meje* 'girl'. The examples (13) and (14) demonstrate its two syntactic usages.

13. bʰalo meje
    good girl
    'Good girl'

14. meje-tɑ   bʰalo
    girl-CLA good
    'The girl is good.'

- **Colour:** Likewise, the instances from the semantic type *colour* have the qualifying feature and can be applied both attributively and predicatively. So, they must belong to the class set-denoting adjective. For example,

15. ʃobuɟ pɑʈa
    green leaf
    'Green leaf'

16. pɑʈa-tɑ   ʃobuɟ
    leaf-CLA green
    'The leaf is green.'

- **Physical property:** On the one hand, *gɔɾom* 'hot' denotes the semantic type *physical property*. On the other hand, it modifies the present noun *baʈaʃ* 'air' and can occur in both the syntactic positions. Therefore, it is a set-denoting adjective.

17. gɔɾom baʈaʃ
    hot   air
    'Hot air'

18. baʈaʃ-tɑ gɔɾom

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air-CLA hot
'The air is hot.'

- **Human Propensity:** The instance *calak* 'clever' belonging to the semantic type *human propensity* has the qualifying semantic feature and has both attributive and predicative usages. Hence, *calak* 'clever' is a set-denoting adjective.

19. cɑlɑk bekʈi
    clever man
    'Clever man'

20. bekʈi-ti   cɑlɑk
    man-CLA clever
    'The man is clever.'

- **Speed:** But the adjective *ɖruʈo* 'fast' is only used attributively. Its predicative use is not allowed in Bangla. This is not a set-denoting adjective, not a relational adjective nor an evaluative one. So, it is classified under the residue.

21. ɖruʈo goʈi
    fast   speed
    'Fast speed'

22. *goʈi-tɑ   ɖruʈo
     speed-CLA fast
     'The speed is fast.'

- **Difficulty**: Unlike the semantic type *speed*, the adjective *ʃɔɾol* 'simple' of the semantic type *difficulty* is a set-denoting adjective.

23. ʃɔɾol   mon
    simple heart
    'Simple heart'

24. oɾ mon-tɑ   ʃɔɾol.
    Her heart-CLA simple
    'Her heart is simple.'

- **Similarity**: In the same way, *priʈʰɔk* 'different' is a set-denoting adjective.

25. priʈʰɔk   boi-gulo
    different book-PLU
    'Different books'

26. boi-gulo   priʈʰɔk
    book-PLU different
    'Books are different.'

- **Qualification**: *ʃɔmbʰabbo* 'probable' is not a set-denoting adjective rather it belongs to the

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residue class of adjectives like the semantic type *speed*.

27. ʃɔmbʰabbo gʰɔtonɑ
    probable   fact
    'Probable fact'

28. * gʰɔtonɑ-tɑ ʃɔmbʰabbo
    fact-CLA probable
    'The fact is probable.'

- **Quantification**: Quantifiers are not set-denoting adjective rather they pertain to the residue class. For instance,

29. ʃɔb kɑgoɟ
    all paper
    'All papers'

30. *kɑgoɟ-gulo ʃɔb
    paper-PLU all
    'Papers are all'

- **Position**: *ucu* 'high' is a set-denoting adjective similar to the adjectives of *dimension, age* etc.

31. ucu   ɟomi
    high field
    'High field'

32. ɟomi-tɑ   ucu
    field-CLA high
    'the field is high.'

- **Cardinal**: Interestingly, cardinal numbers which occur with classifiers in Bangla within noun phrases pertain to the class residue. They can only appear in the prenominal position as found in the example (33).

33. æk-tɑ   pakʰi
    one-CLA bird
    'One bird'

34. * pakʰi-tɑ   æk
    bird-CLA one
    'bird is one.'

- **Ordinal**: Like cardinal numbers, ordinal ones also come under the residue class. They only have attributive use.

35. proṯʰom ḏin
    first   day
    'First day'

36. * ḏin-tɑ   proṯʰom

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day-CLA first

'The day is first.'

Now the above-stated analysis can be summarized in the succeeding chart.

Chart: 1

Semantic Type	Set-denoting	Relational	Evaluative	Residue
Dimension	+	-	-	-
Age	+	-	-	-
Value	+	-	-	-
Colour	+	-	-	-
Physical Property	+	-	-	-
Human Propensity	+	-	-	-
Speed	-	-	-	+
Difficulty	+	-	-	-
Similarity	+	-	-	-
Qualification	-	-	-	+
Quantification	-	-	-	+
Position	+	-	-	-
Cardinal (Ordinal)	-	-	-	+

6. Findings

The above chart clearly shows the semantic categorization of Bangla adjectives belonging to the various semantic types with the help of plus (+) and minus (-) signs. The '+' sign indicates to which semantic category each semantic type of adjectives in Bangla belong. The '-' sign specifies that there is no adherence to a particular semantic category of the given semantic types. From the given analysis, it is evident that all the semantic types like *dimension, age, value, colour, physical property, human propensity, difficulty, similarity, and position* pertain to the semantic class of set-denoting adjectives except *speed, qualification, quantification,* and *cardinal numbers* including *ordinal* ones. These exceptions go under the semantic category residue. Interestingly, there are no semantic types of Bangla adjectives relating to the other two semantic classes: relational class or evaluative class. Therefore, it can be rightly stated that semantic types of Bangla adjectives either belong to the set-denoting class or the residue.

[**Representation of Data:** Here two languages Bangla and English are referred to. English data is presented in Roman script. Bangla data is transcribed by means of IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols with slight modifications. As for instances, unaspirated dental stops: t̪ (voiceless), d̪ (voiced) and aspirated dental stops: t̪ʰ (voiceless), d̪ʰ (voiced).

Abbreviation: CLA = classifier.

Symbol: * indicates ill-formed structures.]

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