Languages in Contact: A Comparative Study of Anaphors in Bangla and Toto

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 23/11/2017
Received (revised form) 23/11/2017
Accepted 23/11/2017

Keywords:
anaphor
language contact
binding theory
Bangla
Toto

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I have discussed the anaphora constructions of Bangla an Indo Aryan Language and Toto, a Tibeto Burman language and tried to show how the language contact takes place. Consequently, constructions are borrowed from one language to another and borrowing leads to contact induced strategies.

ারাংশ

এই প্রবন্ধটির আলোচ্য বিষয় বাংলা এবং টোটো ভাষায় ব্যবহৃত এারাফোরা কনস্ট্রকশন। বাংলা ইন্দো-ইউরোপীয় গোত্রভুক্ত এবং টোটো তিব্বতী-বমীয়। এই দুটি ভাষা একে অপরের সালিদে থাকায় এারাফোরা কনস্ট্রকশনের ব্যবহারে কিছু বৈশিষ্ট্য লক্ষ্য করা যায়। এই প্রবন্ধটিতে এই বিষয়টিতেই আলোকপাত করা হয়েছে।

1. Introduction

The similarities or the differences between the literatures or literary structures of two different communities show parallelism in terms of the language structures of the said communities. The motif of this paper is to show one such parallelism between Bangla a widely spoken Eastern Indo-Aryan Language and Toto, an endangered language of the Tibeto Burman family spoken in the same region (Totopara village of the Madarihat Block of Alipurduar district) of West Bengal.

2. Methodology

At the onset, my objective is to show the constructions containing anaphors from the said language and then I am going to take up the language and literature contacts from a historical perspective. The data was collected from the field by using the Berlin Utrecht survey (Dimitriadis, 2004).

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2.1 Demography of the Languages

According to UNESCO Language Atlas, Toto is one of the endangered languages of India spoken in Dhunchipara, Panchayatpara, and Subhapara areas of the Totopara village on the Indo-Bhutan border. As per the current estimate by SIL there are only 1400 people who speak Toto. The other dominant languages of the regions are Bangla and Nepali. Almost all the Toto speakers can speak Bangla and or Nepali along with Toto.

Therefore this is a language external factor of Toto being endangered and Toto literature being highly influenced by Bangla and Nepali.

Bangla also known as Bengali is an eastern indo Aryan language spoken in Goalpara and Dhubri districts of Assam, Dhanbad, Manbhum, Santal Parganas, and Singhbhum Jharkhand in the states of Bihar, Odisha, Tripura and West Bengal apart from Bangladesh. According to 2001 Census the population of Bangla L1 speakers is 82,500,000.
3. Historical perspective on contact: Case study from literature

Let us consider first the contact in terms of the literature. It is argued that English literature and language has evolved through language contact. Alexander (2000) notes that English poems existed even before the English script and writing came into existence. The first conceivable English poem was presumably the boat songs sung by the sailors to conquer Britannia noted by Andrew Marvell. Consider the sketch shown below for the evolution of English.
There are large scales of lexical borrowing in English from different languages. As an instance, in the table below a few borrowings from Scandinavian and French into English is cited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>Modern English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ofre</td>
<td>Bank (Scandinavian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ea</td>
<td>River (French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tid</td>
<td>hour (French)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of Bangla another major language spoken in the sub continent Lexical borrowing is also quite common.

From the figure quoted above it can be observed that Bangla has taken words from Arabic to English and the current literature shows use of these borrowed words extensively.

3.1 Language contact in specific aspects: Looking into The anaphors

Matras (2010) notes language contact as the practice of communicative communication. When the speakers of a particular region are essentially bilingual and multilingual it is observed that in certain contexts people tend to do code mixing more than others. This leads to a language convergence (pattern replication) or borrowing.

4. Anaphors
There are mainly two sets of reflexive pronouns: Reflexives and Reciprocals. They are interpreted in terms of principle A of the Binding Theory as proposed by (Chomsky, 1981).

**Principle A:** An anaphor must be bound in its binding domain.

Consider the following example from English.

**Reflexives**
1. Bill hits himself.

**Reciprocals**
2. They are hitting each other.

Bill and they are the antecedents.

In these examples *himself* and *each other* are anaphors which are bounded within the clause.

In case of Bangla and Toto, consider the examples below:

3. Bil nije-ke marche  
   Bill self-ACC hit-CONT-PRS  
   ‘Bill is hitting himself’.

4. ʃanti-ha ḍaṭi-raŋ yacpa-diŋ-na (Toto, Own data, 2016)  
   santi self–NS hit-CONT-PRS  
   ‘Santi is hitting herself.’

The difference is in English the antecedent Bill cannot be dropped whereas in Both Toto and Bangla the antecedents can be dropped. Thus we observe that Toto and Bangla look similar in this aspect.

In case of the reciprocal constructions consider examples below:

5. tara eke ṣporer/porosporer paʃe boʃe ache. (Bangla)  
   They one another side sit AUX-PRS  
   ‘they are sitting one after another.’

6. ɕbiha ebe ebe-ja ga-diŋ-na (Toto)  
   they one one-LOC sit-CONT-PRS  
   ‘They are sitting one after another’.

7. i dₜeabi tₜajibilɔrai-hiŋ tₜe-diŋ-na (Toto)  
   these people each other-ACC touch-CONT-PRS  
   ‘They are touching each other.’

We notice that in Bangla the form *porosporer* is least preferred by the Bangla speakers these days. For reciprocal constructions, *eke ɔnnoke, eke ɔporke* are frequently used. Similarly in case of Toto we have found that the most of the Toto speakers prefer *ebe ebe* instead of *tₜajibilɔrai* which is less used for such constructions. In fact this is also noted in their respective literatures.

5. **Conclusion**

I propose the following Developments due to language contact between Toto and Bangla. Due to convergence the reciprocal construction undergo a whole sale readjustment in their morphosyntactic pattern which might further lead to typological shift.
Stage 1. Bangla and Toto initially had a monomorphemic word for reciprocals
Stage 2. Bangla speakers primarily use a compositional strategy.

Contact between Bangla and Toto
Stage 3. Toto also adopts same strategy like Bangla
Stage 4. porospor and tgilirai might be lost in future
Stage 5. eke önnoke and ebe ebe will become the sole strategy

The support comes from the following diagnostic test known as Kinds of linguistic transfer proposed by Heine and Kuteva (2010). They argue that linguistic transfer can happen due to form meaning units or a combination of form meaning units. They proposed a Task oriented approach and showed that this kind of grammatical patterning can also arise because of task oriented approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>routine communication within family</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication in trade and business</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation (Intergroup communication)</td>
<td>Compositional strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What I have shown above is that both Bangla and Toto have a lexical marker for the reciprocals as well as a compositional strategy such as eke önnoke and ebe ebe. What results due to various tasks as shown in the scale of occurrence above is that due to intergroup communication, the compositional strategy becomes predominant and with growing contacts, it becomes the default strategy.

Colophon

I am indebted to Shanti Toto, Shova Toto, Bhabesh Toto, Bhugol Toto and Sanchita Toto for their constant support and help me analyzing the Toto examples during a field trip in 2016. The trip was partially sponsored by School of Languages and Linguistics, Jadavpur University.

Bibliography