A Comparative study of the Classifiers in Bangla and Chinese

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ABSTRACT

A classifier, sometimes called as a counter word, is a word or affix that is used to accompany nouns and can be considered to ‘classify’ the noun depending on the type of its referent i.e., affixes that categorize entities into common classes on the basis of shared properties, usually objectively perceived characteristic properties of objects they denote. This paper tries to build a comparative study of the classifier system of Bangla and Chinese. For this purpose, the semantic grouping of classifiers used in the languages is described and it is observed that in both the languages, classifiers show strict syntactic patterning.

1. Introduction

A classifier, sometimes called as a counter word, is a word or affix that is used to accompany nouns and can be considered to ‘classify’ the noun depending on the type of its referent i.e., affixes that categorize entities into common classes on the basis of shared properties, usually objectively perceived characteristic properties of objects they denote [Racova (2016)].

This paper tries to build a comparative study of the classifier system of Bangla and Chinese. For this purpose, the semantic grouping of classifiers used in the languages is described and it is observed that in both the languages, classifiers show strict syntactic patterning.

1.1. Background of the languages:

Bangla: It is an Indo-Aryan group of language of SOV word-order. Bangla consists a phoneme inventory of 35 consonants and 5 vowels. It is a non-tonal, Fusional language. Bangla is spoken in Bangladesh (Official Language) and India (Eastern region: West Bengal, Tripura, Assam). It is spoken by 82,500,000 (2001 census) in India and 178,200,000 (2015 census) in Bangladesh and has total 261,517,930 (2015 census) users world-wide. Bangla has many dialects prevalent. It is a highly developed language taught both in primary and secondary education. Bangla is scripted language. (Source: https://www.ethnologue.com/)

Chinese: The Mandarin dialect of Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan group of language with SVO word order. It consists a phoneme inventory of 24 consonants, 8 vowels and 6 diphongs. Chinese is a monosyllabic, isolating, tonal language (4 predominant tones). It is Logographic in nature and consists
of about 10,000 characters. It is the official language of China, spoken by 1,067,000,000 (2013 census) people in China and 1,091,782,930 (2013) over the world. It is a fully developed language taught in all schools in mainland China and Taiwan. There are 56 official nationalities speaking Mandarin in China but the majority is classified under Han, Manchu and Hui nationalities. (Source: https://www.ethnologue.com/)

1.2. Defining Classifiers

A classifier, sometimes called as a counter word, is a word or affix that is used to accompany nouns and can be considered to ‘classify’ the noun depending on the type of its referent i.e., affixes that categorize entities into common classes on the basis of shared properties, usually objectively perceived characteristic properties of objects they denote [Racova (2016)]. Classifiers are common feature of many Asian, American and African languages. They are not generally seen in Indo-European Languages. Classifiers can be found in the Eastern group of New-Indo-Aryan languages namely Axomiya, Bangla and Odiya [Racova (2007)]. Classifiers play a crucial role in the grammar of East-Asian languages including Japanese and Chinese. Example:

1. zhe4 ben3 shu3 (Chinese)
   This CLF.book
   ‘This book’.
2. Ei boi-ta (Bangla)
   This book-CLF.
   ‘This book.’

Nominal Classifiers can be used to count a noun, such classifiers are called Numeral classifiers. They are closed-class lexical items.

**Numeral classifiers:** In classifier languages, they are often used when the noun is being counted, i.e., when it appears with a **numeral**. Quantity, time and distance are also measured with aid of these nouns. In such languages, a phrase such as ‘three people’ is often required to be expressed as: Three (X) people, Where X= Classifier.

3. san1 ge ren2 (Chinese)
   Tin -jon lok (Bangla)
   Three CLF. Person
   ‘Three people.’

The difference is that in Chinese the classifier ge is a free morpheme and in Bangla -jon is a bound morpheme.

Numeral classifiers have other functions too; in Chinese they are commonly used when a noun is preceded by a demonstrative (this or that). According to traditional grammarians Chinese classifiers are commonly called Measure Words.

4. na4 ge ren2 (Chinese)
   that CLF(X) person
   ‘That person.’

The numeral classifier system is organized differently in different languages. With respect to their functions, Classifiers they are mainly categorized in five types [Bond and Paik (2000)].

The superscripted numbers indicates the tone of the Chinese pinyin. As mentioned earlier Chinese is a tonal language has mainly four tones 1st tone or the level tone, 2nd tone or the rising tone, 3rd tone or the falling-rising tone and 4th or the falling tone. The semantics of the language is highly dependent on these tones. For example: the word ‘ma’ without a tone indicates a ‘modal particle’ with a level tone means ‘mother’, with rising tone means ‘hemp’ with a falling-rising tone means ‘horse’ and with the falling tone means ‘to scold’.
• Event: Classifiers classifying events i.e., number of occurrences

5. \( yi^1 \text{ ci}^4 \) (Chinese)/æk bar (Bangla)
   One CLF.
   ‘Once.’

• Mensural: Classifiers are employed for the measurement of physical properties.

6. \( yi^1 \text{ cun}^4 \text{ bei}^4 \) (Chinese) /æk pa (Bangla)
   one CLF. step
   ‘one step’/’a tiny step’

• Group classifiers: Classify grouping of referents.

7. \( yi^1 \text{ shuang}^1 \text{ xie}^4 \) (Chinese) /æk jora juto (Bangla)
   one CLF. Shoes
   ‘a pair of shoes.’

• Taxonomic: Classifiers effect a generic interpretation of noun phrase.

8. \( zhe^4 \text{ zhong}^3 \text{ ping}^1 \text{ guo}^4 \) (Chinese)/ oi rokom-er apel (Bangla)
   this CLF. Apple
   ‘This sort of apple.’

• Sortal: Classifier indicating the type of referent.

9. \( liu^4 \text{ ge ren}^2 \) (Chinese) /cʰ-jon lok (Bangla)
   six CLF.(animate) person
   six people.

(Data Source: Yue Hui Ting and Francis Bond)

Classifiers vs. Measure words: Measure words play a similar role as Classifiers, except that they denote a particular measurement of something (a drop, a bit etc.) rather than the inherent countable units associated with a count noun. The terminological distinction is often blurred. Classifiers are commonly referred to as Measure words in some contexts (such as while Chinese is taught as a second or a foreign language).

2. Research Objective

In this article, I am trying to compare the classifier system incorporated in these two languages where certain properties overlap. My primary focus is on:

➢ To give an account of distribution and grouping of classifiers in Bangla and Chinese.
➢ The co-reference of Classifiers and Measure words in Chinese.
➢ A comparison of the Classifiers and Measure word usage in these two languages.
3. Theoretical Background

Yamamoto (2000) has shown that in a numeral classifier phrase (consisting of the numeral, classifier, noun and the occasional particle) the numeral always occurs next to classifier. The tighter constituent is hence composed of the classifier and numeral, as the noun constituent may occasionally occur distantly in cases of anaphora [Yue, Bond (2012)]. In Bangla, a usual syntactic construction with a numeral classifier is: (NUM-CLF + N) [Racova (2007)]; an extended construction with an adjective is: (NUM-CLF+adj.+ N). In Mandarin Chinese, possible combinations are DET-num-CL-N, DET-CL-N, and num-CL-N [Yue, Bond (2012)]. But there are exceptions in syntactic constructions in these languages.

An example can be given from Bangla where the position of Classifier is changed due to absence of a Numeral:

10. ei lal boi-ta (Bengali)
   this red book-CLF.
   ‘This red book.’

In mandarin Chinese omission of classifier with definite noun is observed.

11. gou³ hen³ ji³ ling (Chinese)
    dog very smart
    ‘The dog is very smart.’

[An example from Jiang (2015), A Parametric Analysis of Nominal Arguments in Classifier Languages]

One of the major differences in these two languages is that in Bangla Classifiers and Measure words are distinct categories whereas in Chinese they are treated alike (Lam, 2006). Another difference is between the type of noun division in the languages, Bangla does not show the typical mass/count distinction on nouns [Dayal (2011)] i.e. a same classifier can be attached to both mass and count noun but Chinese makes a distinction in between mass-count nouns according to their features [Zhang, N (2012)].

12. jʊl-ta dao               boi-ta dao (Bangla)
    N(m)-CLF.give           N(c)-CLF.give
    ‘Give the water.’       ‘Give the book.’

Another difference is the semantic strategy of grouping of Classifiers. In Chinese ‘tiao²’ has a semantic indication for ‘long and rope-like objects’ [Zhang, H (2007)]. It doesn’t make difference between animate and inanimate objects.

Usage of ‘tiao²’:

a. yi¹ tiao² she² (one CL-tiao snake, 'one snake')

b. yi¹ tiao² tui³ (one CL-tiao leg, 'a leg')

c. yi¹ tiao² kuzi⁴ (one CL-tiao pants, 'a pair of pants')

d. yi¹ tiao² he² (one CL-tiao river, 'a river')

e. yi¹ tiao² ban³ deng⁴ (one CL-tiao bench, 'a bench')

(Data from: Zhang, 2012, Numeral classifiers in Mandarin Chinese)

In case of Bangla ‘gacʰ’ (CLF. For Long and slender objects) can only combine with inanimate objects [Racova, (2007)].

*jap-gacʰ (the snake) is an ungrammatical construction in Bangla.

3.1. Bangla Classifiers: Bangla allows the attachment of classifier to bare noun forms such as (boi-ta) ‘the book’. The classifiers are attached to the nouns as bound morphemes such as –ra (generic classifiers for animate objects), -gulo (plural, indefinite), -jon (human generic) etc. The classifiers are directly attached to a noun when they denote a unique object [muk-ka ‘the face’, latʰi-gacʰ ‘a ‘the stick’]. The definite classifier raises to numeral (cʰar-te boi) and act as a numeral classifier.
In Bangla, a usual syntactic construction with a numeral classifier is: (NUM-CLF + NOUN) [Racova(2007)]

13. cʰar-jon + manus
   four-CLF. Man
   ‘four men’.

With demonstratives the construction is:

14. sci cʰar-jon + manus
   those four-CLF. Man
   ‘Those four men.’

Chatterji (1926) gives examples of a rare syntactic construction. (CLASSIFIER - NUMERAL+NOUN) : jɔn-dui manus OR (NOUN+CLASSIFIER - NUMERAL): manus jɔn-dui

According to him these sequences indicates the meaning of vagueness and indefiniteness as to the number. (jɔn-dui manus/ manus jɔn-dui = ‘about some two men’).

Semantically Bangla classifiers are divided into 3 groups. [Racova(2007)].

![Classifier Diagram](image)

**Fig 1: Semantic grouping of Bangla Classifiers**

**Animacy:** Animacy is a primary characteristic of objects, on the basis of this criterion the classified entities are divided into the class of animate and inanimate objects. Although in Bangla the animate Classifier only refers to human and other animate entities get the Classifier ‘-ta’ for definiteness and ‘-gulo’ for indefiniteness. The classifier is jon/ jɔn.

![Usage Diagram](image)

**Fig 2 Usage of jon/ jɔn in Bangla (Data: Anna Racova, Classifiers in Bengali, 2006)**

But *Kukur-jon is ungrammatical instead it will be kukur-ta (the dog) or kukur-gulo (dogs).

**Shape:** (-)Human inanimate referents are categorized into classes on the basis of their shape. kʰana/kʰani for denoting Broad and flat objects and gacʰa/gacʰi for Thin, long and slender objects. The original classifiers for round objects were gota/guti were extremely common in early Bangla as mentioned by Chatterji (1926) in his book ‘The origin and development of the Bengali language’ but such usage is obsolete now.

The occurrence of classifiers kʰana/kʰani, gacʰa/gacʰi are very common although kʰana is the most used inanimate classifier.
On the contrary khana/khani are also added to abstract referents baepar-khani (an incident) ekta-khani haﬁ (a bit of smile).

**Size:** Another property of an object is its size. The variants of Classifiers khana and gacha namely khani and gachani are added to small objects which serve as diminutives (involves speaker’s intension)[Racova(2007)]. This usage of a classifier in diminutive form does not exclude an explicit expression of smallness. Ex: boi-khani, c’oto boi-khani (the small book).

**Usage of ta:** By the basic definition of Classifier (which classifies referents on the basis of some shared properties) ta/ti cannot be termed as classifiers in Bangla [Racova (2007)] because it is hard to categorize these morphemes into properties of Classifiers. But they occur in same position as Classifiers and their functioning are similar as classifiers. So, they are considered as classifiers in Bangla. ‘-ta’ marks definiteness in Bangla. It also the default Bangla Classifier because of its vast and varied usage in the language. Its uses go far beyond that of an article and also effects word classes other than nouns. Although ta is by itself a singular Classifier, it also combines with numbers and gender.

**Distribution of Classifier System incorporated in Bangla:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER</th>
<th>USAGE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ta/ to/te</td>
<td>General classifier for count nouns, definiteness, specificity and familiarity affects.</td>
<td>æk- ta/ du- to/ car te one/two/four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jon/ jon</td>
<td>Classifier restricted to humans.</td>
<td>kæk- jon lok ‘some people’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khana/khani</td>
<td>Classifier restricted to inanimate or count nouns.</td>
<td>boi-khana/kapor- kana ‘the book’/‘the cloth’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### gacʰa/gacʰi
Classifier denoting thin, long and slender objects.

### mondol
Classifier for spherical or circular area.

### gulo/guli
Plural classifier applicable to all count nouns and mass nouns, animacy, abstract notions and quantifiers.

### ra/era
Plural generic classifier restricted to animate entities.

| Table: 1 Distribution of Classifier System in Bangla (Concept from Veneeta Dayal, *Bangla Classifiers: Mediating between kinds and objects, 2011* and Anna Racova, *Classifiers in Bengali, 2007*) |
|---|---|---|
| **Measure words in Bangla**: Measure words in Bangla are used to measure Quantity, time and distance. They follow the numeral and precede the noun [Racova (2007)]. For ex: 15. æk jora juto  one MW Shoes.  ‘a pair of shoes.’ |
| **MEASURE WORDS** | **MEANING AND USAGE** | **EXAMPLES** |
| guccʰa | ‘bunch’ measure word for inanimate objects. | æk- guccʰa ful  one-MW flower  ‘A bunch of flowers’ |
| gočʰa | ‘Pile’, measure word for flat objects. | æk - gočʰa pata  one-MW-leaf  ‘a pile of leaves’ |
| ōra | Another variant of ‘pile/heap’ used for papers. | æk- ōra kagoj  one-MW-paper  ‘a heap of papers’ |
| bar | Number of times. | æk- bar  one-MW  ‘once’ |
| boṭol | Bottle | du- boṭol jol  two-MW-water  ‘two bottles of water’ |
| peala | Cup | æk- peala ca  one-MW-tea  ‘one cup tea’ |
| fōta | drop | æk- fōta jol  one-MW-water  ‘a drop of water’ |
Table: 2 Measure Words in Bangla

3.2. Chinese Classifiers

Chinese is a classifier language like many Sino-Tibetan languages including the Mandarin dialect and has an extensive system of numeral classifiers (As per statistics, mentioned in He, Jie. 2000. *Xian dai Han yu liang ci yan jiu*. Introduction, 789 different noun classifier has been reported). In Chinese, Classifiers occur between a head noun and a pronominal numeral or a demonstrative (zhe’ ge ren’). In modern Mandarin, classifiers are obligatory with numbers or demonstratives [Lam oi man (2006)]. The syntactic structure is: (DEM + NUM + CLF. + Noun) [Lam oi man(2006)].

16. nei⁴-san¹+zhi¹+ mao¹
those+three+MW+cat
‘Those three cats.’

Numeral classifiers are called liang⁴ ci² (measure word). Chinese grammars have not distinguished the Classifiers and Measure words diachronically. There are two traditions regarding this topic:

- The classical view which do not distinguish between Classifiers and Measure words.
- The new tradition [Tai and Chao (1994)] which points out the semantic distinction between Classifiers and Measure Words.

Although in Chinese language teaching (as a second or foreign language) Classifiers and Measure words are treated alike due to their occurrence with numerals and demonstratives. Here, in this paper the traditional view of Classifiers in Mandarin dialect of Chinese is followed.

In Chinese, Measure words are divided into four categories [LAM oi man (2006)]:

- Nominals
- Verbals
- Double-function meaning
- Compound measure words

In this paper, only Nominal Measure words in Chinese are observed.

Chinese classifiers are grouped semantically. For the simplicity of this paper, properties which forms three main classes have been used [Lam oi man (2006)].:

- Animacy
- Physical properties
- Function

*Fig: 5 (Semantic grouping of classifiers in the Mandarin dialect of Chinese)*

**Animacy:** A basic property to distinguish entities is animacy. For animacy, we can separate them into two classes: Animate and inanimate.
**Physical properties:** Under the section of physical properties shape, size, position are parameters. Chinese is highly context sensitive in distinguishing physical properties by Measure words.

![Diagram](image1.png)

*Fig: 6 Distinction of Classifiers via Animacy in Chinese (From Lam oi man *The Typology of Classifiers*, 2006)*

**Functional properties:** Functional properties are distinguished according to the function of the object. Functional properties are highly culture specific in Chinese [Lam oi man (2006)]. There are classifiers for means of transport, clothing, and housing etc.

![Diagram](image2.png)

*Fig: 7 Distinction via Physical property (Figure from Lam oi man *The Typology of Classifiers*, 2006)*
### Chinese Nominal classifiers/Measure words (selected):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>PINYIN</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>USAGE</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>个</td>
<td>ge</td>
<td>ɡə</td>
<td>Individual things, people — usage of this classifier in conjunction with any noun is generally accepted if the person does not know the proper classifier.</td>
<td>yí ge shūbāo. One-MW-schoolbag a schoolbag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>把</td>
<td>bǎ</td>
<td>pa</td>
<td>&quot;handful&quot;, &quot;fistful&quot;-objects that can be held or grabbed (knives, scissors, keys; also chairs)</td>
<td>yì bă dăo. One-MW-knife. One knife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>杯</td>
<td>bēi</td>
<td>bei</td>
<td>&quot;cup&quot;-drinks</td>
<td>yì bēi shuǐ. A cup of water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>次</td>
<td>cì</td>
<td>tsʰiː</td>
<td>&quot;time&quot;-opportunities, incidents</td>
<td>sān cì. Three times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>滴</td>
<td>dī</td>
<td>ti</td>
<td>&quot;droplet&quot;-water</td>
<td>yì dī shuǐ. A drop of water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>堆</td>
<td>duǒ</td>
<td>tuo</td>
<td>flowers, clouds</td>
<td>yì duǒ huā. One flower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>份</td>
<td>fèn</td>
<td>fan</td>
<td>newspapers, jobs</td>
<td>yì fèn báo. A newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>根</td>
<td>gēn</td>
<td>ɡən</td>
<td>thin, slender objects</td>
<td>yì gēn zhēn. A needle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>家</td>
<td>jiā</td>
<td>cia</td>
<td>Gathering of people</td>
<td>yī jiā rén. A family of people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Fig: 8 Distinction via Functional property (Figure from Lam oi man *The Typology of Classifiers*, 2006)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>PINYIN</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>USAGE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>片</td>
<td>piàn</td>
<td>pʰiɛn</td>
<td>&quot;slice&quot; - any flat object,</td>
<td>yì piàn yèzi. One leaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>瓶</td>
<td>píng</td>
<td>pʰiŋ</td>
<td>&quot;bottle&quot; - drinks</td>
<td>yì píng xueba. One bottle sprite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>台</td>
<td>tái</td>
<td>tʰai</td>
<td>Heavy-objects (TVs, Computers etc.)</td>
<td>yì tái diannao. One computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>条</td>
<td>tiáo</td>
<td>tʰao</td>
<td>long, narrow, flexible objects</td>
<td>yì tiáo yú. One fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>位</td>
<td>wèi</td>
<td>wei</td>
<td>polite classifier for people (honorific usage)</td>
<td>yì wèi lǎoshī. A professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>张</td>
<td>zhāng</td>
<td>tʂʰɑŋ</td>
<td>&quot;sheet&quot; - square or rectangular flat objects</td>
<td>yì zhāng zhǐ. One piece of paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>只</td>
<td>zhī</td>
<td>tʂ́i</td>
<td>one of a pair of animals</td>
<td>yì zhī gòu. One dog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>种</td>
<td>zhòng</td>
<td>tʂʰʊŋ</td>
<td>types or kinds of objects, ideas</td>
<td>zhè zhòng júzi. This type of orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>栋</td>
<td>dòng</td>
<td>tʊŋ</td>
<td>building object</td>
<td>yì dòng fáng zi. One house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
寸 cùn tsʰuⁿ Mensural classifier cùn bù. A tiny step.

棵 kē kʰə Classifier for trees yī kē shù. A tree

Table: 3(Data source:https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Chinese_(Mandarin)/Lesson_5)

4. Methodology

The paper is mainly based on the article written by Racova "Classifiers in Bangla." (2007) and the research paper The Typology of Classifiers by lam oi man in 2006. The data is collected mostly from various books and articles, also internet. The comparison of data is done by observing similarities and dissimilarities in the languages.

4.1. Data Comparison:

Indefinite use of numeral-classifier phrases: In Bangla ‘-ta’ is added to ‘æk’(one), which precedes the noun and in Chinese the contextual Classifier/Measure Word follows ‘yi’(one) and precedes the noun to mark a count noun as indefinite.

17. æk- ta tikit (Bangla)
   one-CLF. ticket
   ‘A ticket.’

18. yi¹ zhang¹ piao⁴ (Chinese)
   one CLF. Ticket
   ‘A ticket.’

Definite use of classifier phrases: In Bangla ‘-ta’ is added to a noun to mark it definite and in Chinese the Classifier/Measure Word is omitted.

19. Kukur-ta kʰub buddʰiman (Bangla)
   Dog-CLF. very smart
   ‘The dog is very smart.’

20. gou³ hen³ ji¹ling (Chinese)
   dog very smart
   ‘The dog is very smart.’

With demonstratives: In case of demonstratives in Bangla ‘-ta’ is added directly to the noun which follow the demonstrative and in Chinese the Classifier/Measure Word follows the demonstrative.

21. ei boi-ta (Bengali)
   this book-CLF.
   ‘This book.’

22. zhe³ ben³ shu⁴ (Chinese)
   this CLF. book
   ‘This book.’

With count nouns: With count nouns the Classifier attaches directly to the numeral in Bangla and it follows the Numeral in Chinese.

23. car-jon lok (Bangla)
   four-CLF. person
With quantifiers: The classifier attaches to the quantifier in Bangla and it follows the quantifier in Chinese.

24. si⁴ ge ren² (Chinese)
   four-CLF.man
   ‘Four people.’

25. kɔɛk-ta pakʰi (Bangla)
   quant-CLF. bird
   ‘A few birds.’

26. ji³ zhi³ niao³ (Chinese)
   Quant CLF bird
   ‘A few birds.’

Plural classifiers: In Bangla the plural-classifier attaches to the noun and in Chinese the plural is marked by plural marker instead of a Classifier.

27. aj am-ra bajar-e jab-o (Bangla)
   today we-CLF(pl) market-case go-tense
   ‘We will go to market today.’

28. Jin¹ tian¹ wo³-men qu¹ le chao¹ shi⁴ (Chinese)
   Today I–pl go asp. market
   ‘We will go to market today.’

Measure words in Bangla and Chinese in comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH EQUIVALENCE</th>
<th>BANGLA</th>
<th>CHINESE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONE CUP TEA</td>
<td>æk- peala ca</td>
<td>yì bēi chá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE BOTTLE</td>
<td>æk- boṭol</td>
<td>yī píng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A PAIR OF SHOES</td>
<td>æk jora dʒ uṭo</td>
<td>yī shuāng xiē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A DROPLET OF WATER</td>
<td>æk- fōta jol</td>
<td>yì dī shuǐ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 4 Comparison of Measure Words
While it is said in traditional Chinese that Classifiers and Measure words are same, an exception to this concept is found.

A bunch of flowers \{ æk-guccʰ a ful (one-MW flower) \\
                                yī shu huā (one-MW flower) \}

Instead the measure word/classifier of flower is duō.

Also, \{ æk-gocʰ a boi (one-MW book) \\
                                yī duī shu (one-MW book) \}

Instead, the measure word/classifier of book is bèn. One thing can be said that the change of measure words in these cases can be the reason of the concept of “heap” and “pile”.

5. Discussions

**Similarities:**
Both the languages allow bare nouns to take classifier which is a universal property of Classifier Languages.

Similar patterns of classifiers are observed for indefinite nouns, count nouns and sentences with quantifiers.

Chinese default classifier ge(个) is similar to Bangla default classifier ‘ta’.

One of the most important similarity is that in both languages classifiers are context sensitive [semantic grouping strategies of the languages] i.e., personal classifier cannot be altered with a shape classifier or animate with inanimate.

**Dissimilarities:**
Definiteness in Bangla requires classifiers whereas in Chinese it is optional.

With numerals Bangla alters the classifier position, Chinese doesn’t.
Bangla classifiers are bound morphemes and measure words are free morphemes and Chinese classifiers/measure words are free morphemes (though they can’t operate without a noun).

Chinese doesn’t have plural classifiers like Bangla but it marks plural with ‘men’ (们) only for humans.

6. Conclusion

Both Chinese and Bangla being Classifier languages share certain common properties out of which many are universal for all Classifier Languages. Classifier positioning change is not prevalent in Chinese because of the strict word-ordering nature of the language while in Bangla word-ordering is common. Bangla classifiers are bound morphemes because it is a Fusional language and Chinese being an Isolating language doesn’t have the notion of Bound morpheme.


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