Parameter Clustering in Bangla Dialects

Pritha Chandra

IIT Delhi

Syn-Diversity & Change at

Preeti Kumari

Chandni Dutta

Sayantani Banerjee

Meso-level variation in major Eastern Indo-Aryan Languages: Assamese, Awadhi, Bangla, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithili, Odia
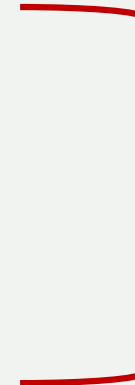
EIA Cluster of Properties

SOV

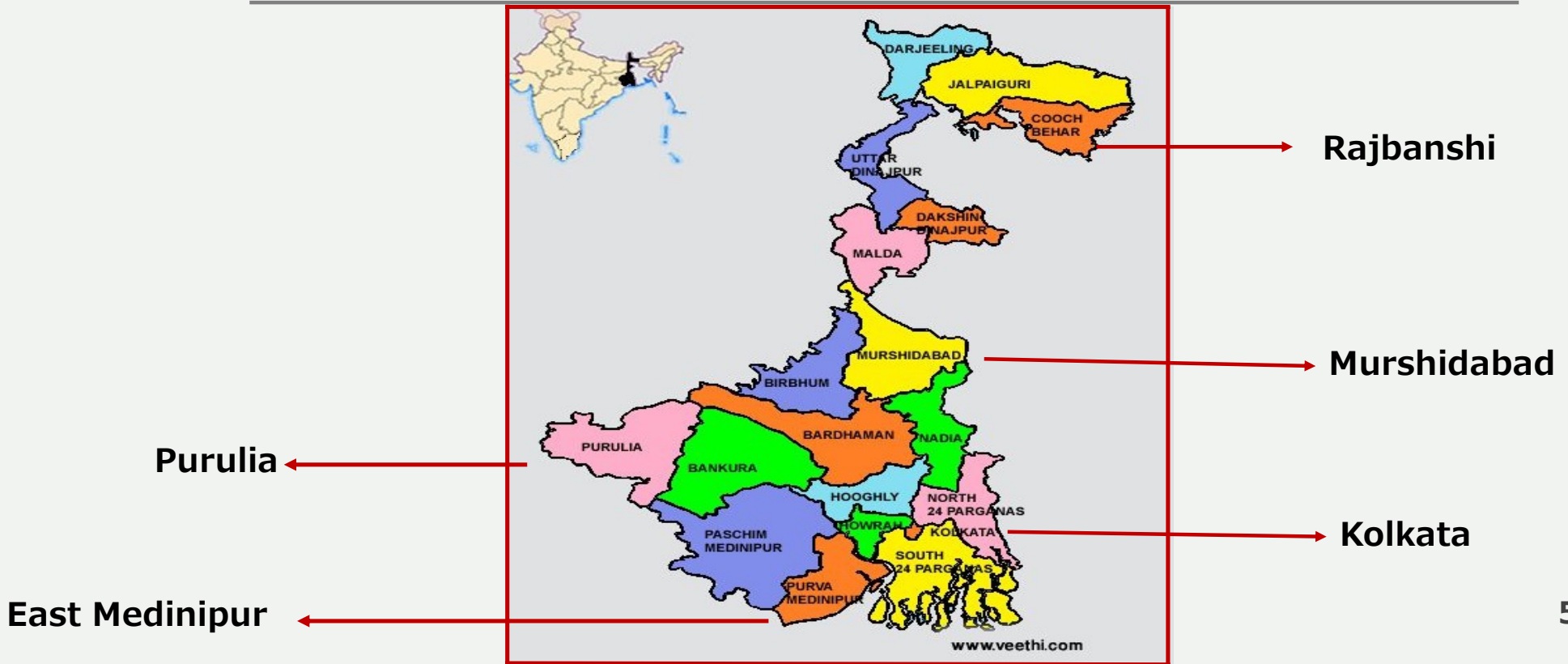Nom-Acc

+P,-N,-G

+Hon

+Cl

EIA meso-level variation

-G, +/-N

+Hon/Alloc

CL#

Bangla Dialects

Rajbanshi

Murshidabad

Purulia

Kolkata

East Medinipur

Dialect Features

Bangla Dialects	Number	Gender	Classifier	Honorificity
Rajbanshi	✗	✗	✓	✗
Murshidabad	✗	✗	✓	✗
Kolkata	✗	✗	✓	✓
East Medinipur	✓	✗	✓	✗
Purulia	✗	✗	✓	✗

Objectives

i) Describe and analyze each phenomenon (-N, -G, +CL) carefully.

ii) Explain if and how these phenomena (-N,-G,+CL) are related, and the reasons underlying micro-level variation (± Hon).

Broad Objective

- The broad aim is to explain more with less technology (aka **Parameter Clustering** due to Fukui (1986), Kuroda (1988); also see Platzack and Holmberg (1989), Baker (1996, 2008), Roberts and Holmberg (2010) among others).

Gender

- Gender (agreement) is obligatorily missing.

Kolkata Bangla

(1) a. *chhele pore* **gaechhe**
　　 boy　　fell　 go.3p.pst
　　 'The boy fell down'

b. *meye pore* **gaechhe**
　 girl　fell　go.3p.pst
　 'The girl fell down'

c. *Tebil pore* **gaechhe**
　 table fell go.3p.pst.
　 'The table fell down'

Nominal Gender-Marking

- Gender marking on nouns is rare and not very preferable.

Bangla (all 5 varieties)

(2) a. *maasTaar*   b. ?*maasTaar-ni*

      Teacher (M)   Teacher (F)

(3) a. *daaktaar*   b. ?*daaktaar-ni*

      Doctor (M)   Doctor (F)

Nominal Gender Concord

- There are very few instances of nominal gender concord – they are either remnants of Old Bangla (cf. Chatterjee 1923) or borrowed from Hindi-Urdu (*chhuuTkii* / 'younger one').

Purulia Bangla

(4) a. *daen**gaa** chhuaa*   b. *daen**gii** maijheo*

     tall.m   boy   tall.f.   girl

Murshidabad Bangla

(5) a. *mo**Taa**   haajii*   b. *mo**Taa**/muT**kii**   haejen*

     fat.m.   pilgrim(M)   fat.m./fat.f   pilgrim(F)

No Gender head

- Gender concord and agreement are not productive, and hence G is not coded as a functional head (GenP) or a formal feature.

- The 'non-functional' nature of Gender is supported by the fact that the gender forms *ii/kii* create new categories with new meanings in Bangla varieties.
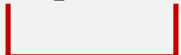
Purulia Bangla

(6) ***muTkii***
  'The sweet one' (need not be fat; endearing)

Gender on N

- For Bangla dialects generally, gender is coded on N (Ritter 1993), in contrast to Kramer's (2015) n-gender or Sigurdsson's (2019) D-gender.

(7) [… [ZP [XP [**AP** A [NP **N$_G$**]]]]]   (feature sharing)

- Adjectives are placed adjacent to N and form a constituent (cf. Syed 2015).

Number/Plural

- There is no plural verbal agreement in the varieties.

Kolkata Bangla

(8) a. *ek-Taa   meye khaabaar* **khaaye**
    one-CL girl   food   eat.3p.impf
    'One girl eats food'

  b. *paanch-jon meye khaabaar* **khaaye**
    five-CL   girl   food   eat.3p.impf
    'Five girls eat food'

Nominal Plural-marking

- East Medinipur variety has plural marking on nouns, but no number agreement.

East Medinipur Bangla

(9) a. *chhuaa-**mene** school ku* ***jai thila***

      boy-pl   school to go be-3p.pst.

      'Boy(s) went to school'

   b. *chhuaa school ku* ***jai thila***

      boy   school to go be-3p.pst.

      'A boy went to school'

No Plural Agreement

- The number marker in East Medinipur Bangla is borrowed from Odia, which has number agreement.

Odia (Banerjee 2023)

(10) a. *Ram skul ku* **jaa-e**
     ram school to   go-3sg.pres
    'Ram goes to school'

  b*. pila-**manne** skul*   *ku* **jaa-nti**
    boy-pl.   school. to go-3pl.pres.
    'The boys go to school'

Alternative form: Plural classifier

- Bangla dialects have a marker *gulo/gula/gulae/gulaen* that is used as a plural.

- It is also called a count/additive/plural classifier (Dasgupta 1983, Bhattacharya 1999, Dayal 2014).

Murshidabad Bangla

(11) *chhele-**gulae**/goRu-**gulae**/tebil-**gulae***
     boy-pl.   /cow—pl.   /table-pl.
     'Boys/cows/tables'

No PL-CL agreement

- Plural Classifiers do not trigger verbal agreement.

Kolkata Bangla

(12) a. *chhele pore* **gaechhe** b. *chhele-**gulo** pore* **gaechhe**

      boy   fell   go-3p.pst   Boy-pl   fell go-3p.pst

      'A boy fell down'   'Boys fell down'

PLP with a PL-CL

- Assuming that *gulo* is hosted on a PL(ural)P, the NP raises to a pre-PL-CL position.

(13) [PLP **NP** [**PL-CL *gulo*** [N̶P̶]

NP-*gulo*

Num(eral) Classifiers

- Classifier *Taa/Te* can appear on numerals and with all types of nouns (human, animate/inanimate).

(14) *tiin-**Taa/Te*** *chhele/meye/goruu/tebil*

    three-CL   boy /girl /cow /table

    'Three boys/girls/cows/tables'

CL as definite N

- *Taa* can also attach to nouns directly, yielding a definite reading.

(15) *chhele-**Taa**/meye-**Taa**/goRuu-**Taa**/tebil-**Taa***

      boy-CL   /girl-CL   /cow-CL   /table-CL

      'A definite boy/girl/cow/table'

Num-CL, NP-CL

- *Te/Taa* is hosted on a separate CL head, between the Num(eral)P and the NP (Biswas 2013, Dutta 2023 among others).

(16) [NumP Num-**3** [CLP CL-***Taa*** [NP **N**]]]   **3-*Taa* NP**

- The NP can also raise to CL and become NP-CL (definite reading).

(17) [NumP ...[CLP **NP** [CL-***Taa*** [~~**NP**~~]]]]   **NP-*Taa***

Interim Summary

- All 5 varieties have representation (18), with short NP-raising:

(18) [...[NumP **Num** [PLP/CLP **PL-CL/CL** [NP **N$_G$**]]]]

- Question: what explains the clustering of these properties (-N, -G, +CL)?

A macro-difference

- Ritter (1993) presents a "non-unified" account of number and gender for Hebrew and Romance languages:

(19)

a) $[\mathbf{Num_{Pl}} \quad \cdots \quad [\mathbf{N_G}]]$ (Hebrew)

b) $[\mathbf{Num_{Pl+G}} \quad \cdots \quad [\mathrm{N}]]$ (Romance Languages)

A Parameter

- If Ritter's observations were to be rephrased in terms of a parameter:

(20) A (formal) Gender Feature piggybacks on (formal) Plural, otherwise it is 'semantic' G coded on NP.

Parametric Values

- Bangla (EIA) sets the parameter as G on NP, since there is only PL-CL.

(21) [DP D [NumP Num [PLP **PL-CL** [NP **N$_G$**]]]]

- Hindi (WIA) sets the parameter as G on PL.

(22) [DP [NumP Num [PLP **PL+G** [NP N]]]]

- Hindi indeed combines plural and gender.

(23) a. *laRk-**e***
     boy-pl.m
     'Boys'

b. *laRk-**iyaan***
     girl-pl.fem
     'Girls'

PLD and Clustering Effects

- The cluster of properties (-PL, -G, +CL) emerges from a single trigger and may have also developed concurrently. The PL-CL possibly served as the PLD, substituting the formal PL feature and pushing the G over to N.

(24) [NumP Num [PLP **PL-CL** [NP **N$_G$**]]]]

Explaining dialect differences

- Recall that Kolkata Bangla differs from other varieties in being the only one to allow honorific agreement.

- Interestingly, Kolkata Bangla also allows (longer) NP-raising with a Num-CL present, an option unavailable to other dialects.

(25) *aam,   tiin-Te ~~aam~~*

    mango, 3-CL   ~~mango~~

    'Those 3 (specific) mangoes'

Long NP-raising

- When a Numeral is present in the structure, only Kolkata Bangla allows NP-raising to a position higher than Num.

(26) [DP D [**NP** [NumP Num-*3* [CLP CL-***Taa*** [~~NP N~~]]]]]

NP 3-CL

Long NP-raising and Honorificity

- Long NP-raising in Kolkata Bangla has implications for honorificity.

- Honorificity is SAP/CP/cP-level (left periphery/discourse-related) phenomenon, decided from the speaker's perspective (Alok and Baker 2022, Kumari 2022 among others)

(27) [SAP **Speaker$_i$** [TP [vP [**Hon$_{i/j}$** [**DP-NP$_j$**]]]]]

Honorificity Agreement

Conclusion

- Bangla (EIA) clusters may be described and refined further with more dialect data.

- Both strong correlations and variables should be accounted for within the parametric theory.

- Stronger correlations for Bangla (EIA) clusters result from the presence of PL-CL.

- Variable Hon results from an extra step allowed for some varieties.

Way Forward

- To enable more dialect surveys, IIT Delhi is currently in discussions with Asiatic Society of Kolkata, and WB state universities including Jadavpur University in Kolkata and North Bengal University in Siliguri.

Thank You

Appendix I: Old to Late Middle Bangla

Formative or Old Bangla	900- 1200 AD
Transitional age of Middle Bangla	1200-1300 AD
Early Middle Bangla	1300-1500 AD
Late Middle Bangla	1500- 1800 AD
New Bangla	1800 AD onwards

Appendix II:
Gender in Early Middle Bangla

1.(a)   *ge**li**, chali**li**   Rahi*
         go.F   walk.F Radha.F
         'Radha went'

   (b) *tārå pisi¯ niyōji**lī***
         'Her aunt was appointed'

   (c) *brāhmåṇ-ēr-**i** nārī*
         'A Brahman's   wife'

                              (Chatterjee 1923, SKK)

Appendix III:
Plurality in Early Middle Bangla

- Chatterjee (1923) mentions *-an* as a plural morpheme appearing in older varieties.

(1)a. *gula-**n**/guli-**n***   b. *sakkalai-**n***

    gulo-Pl   sakal-Pl

    'Group'   'All'

  c. *sang-**an**-gar*   d. *mit-**an**-rake*

    friend-pl-gen.   friend-pl-to

    'For Friends'   'To Friends'