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Phonological operations behind the prosodic restructuring in terms of reduction: A study of Tripura Bangla morphology

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Abstract

The present paper offers a descriptive outline of prosodic restructuring of Tripura Bangla (TB) morphology in terms of reductionism. With the emergence of shrinkage form, varied strata of morphological input get affected. For in-depth study, the central debate instigates the invisible hidden properties of TB. These hidden properties are nothing but the underlying representation of prosodic behaviours. Stated differently, the study opens up several phonological operations control over the morphological input to give birth to an output i.e., TB. In contrast to TB, SCB does the job of morphological input here. The target of this ad hoc scrutiny is to reveal the intention behind the transformation of morphological input. To reveal the real motif of 'relative' unmarkedness, several repair strategies have been uncovered in this discussion.

Keywords: Tripura Bangla (TB), Standard Colloquial Bangla (SCB), prosodic restructuring, morphological input, unmarkedness

1. Introduction

TB is the only medium of communication among a large number of tribes and non-tribes. The native speakers of TB conceive TB as both non-written and informal medium. From another point of view, they make an image of SCB as both written script and formal medium of communication. As per TB concerns, primary stress falls on the leftmost edge of the prosodic word resulting in disyllabic trochee. In case of tri-syllabic and hexa-syllabic word, one unparsed syllables get place at the right edge. In case of, four and seven syllable words, the two right most syllables outside the parsed syllables, remain unfooted. Strict iterativity does not get any place in TB grammar. Being insensitive language, there is no presence of heavy-light distinction. Instead of coda consonant, vowel gets moraic value to ensure the prosodic need of bimoraic trochee with the additional mora at the moraic level.

2. Representative data

Disyllabic words

k ^b .wai	(k ^b o.wai)	'Khowai'	bi.ɖal	(b ⁱ .ɖal)	'cunning'
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Tetra-syllabic words

ʃi.pa.hi	(ʃ ⁱ .ɸai)	'constable'	bou.ɖi.ɖi	(b ^o .ɖi)	'sister-in-law'
mɔ.ʃɔ.la	(m ^o .ʃ.la)	'spice'	ʃa.li.ka	(ʃ ^a .li)	'sister-in-law'
a.loiʃ.ʃɔ	(^a .li)	'idleness'	ʃ ^a .kur.b ^a i	(ʃ ^a .βai)	'elder brother'
ko.li.ʃa	(k ^o .oil.za)	'lever'	mo.hɔn pur	(μ ^u .n.ɜr)	'Mohanpur'
na.ri.kɛl	(n ^a .ai.hɔl)	'coconut'	konβe.la	(k ^o .m.ba.)la	'which time'

Quadra-syllabic words

bɔ.ɔ.ɖa.ɖa	(b ^o .ɖ.ɖa)	'elder brother'
ʃi.ra.ni.ya	(z ⁱ .rain.)na	'Jirania'
d ^b .rɔ.ni.ya	(d ^b .ɔ.roin.)na	'holder/catcher'
ʃ ^a .ku.ra.ni	(ʃ ^a .ak.rain)	'priest's wife'
ç.m.pɔk.no.gɔr	(s ^o .m.ɸɔ)#no.gɔr	'Champak Nagar'
raʃ.ri βe.la	(r ^a .iʃ.ʃa.)la	'at night'

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er k^han d̪i.ya (‘ɛn.d̪a) ‘through this side’
 kɔ.ʈɔ.gu.li (kɔʈ.t̪.la) ‘how much’
 ɛ.ʈɔ.gu.li (‘ɛʈ.la) ‘so much’

Penta-syllables (Spanning two words)

bou # t̪^ha.ku.ra.ni (b^o.ʈain) ‘elder sister-in-law’
 bra^hm.mɔn # ba.ʈi.ya (b^oaun.bai).ra ‘Brahman Baria’
 mət̪^h # cou.mu.ho.ni (m^os.sɔ).mu.ni ‘Math Choumuhoni’

[ʃɔ.gɔ.ho.ri.] [mu.ʈa] (z^o.goi).ra.(m^u.ra) ‘Jagahari Mura’
 [ʃɛf.t̪ɔ] [ʃa.li.ka] (z^ɛ.d̪aʃ) ‘wife’s elder sister’

ʃɛr k^han t̪^ha.ki.ya (h^ɛn.t̪ɛ) ‘from that place’
 kɛ.mɔn ko.ri.ya (k^ɛm.bɛ) ‘through what way’

3. Mechanisms behind the prosodic reduction in Tripura Bangla (TB)

The modus operandi of the prosodic reduction triggered by the need for ensuring the model of disyllabic word minimality condition in the name of shrinkage status of TB

words impinging different levels – segment, syllable, foot, word and phrase. All the time the disyllabic requirement could not always be fulfilled, however. This will invite breach in communication. Through reduction, the number of syllables of the underlying form undergoes constriction in the output.

- Segmental Reduction or Weakening (Involving fricativization, devoicing, deaspiration, assimilation, vowel harmony, merger, deletion etc.)
- Syllable Reduction (Through diphthongization, deletion, metathesis-cum-deletion, medial syllable merger, coda deletion etc.)
- Foot deletion (Through syllable reduction, single word born of two-word compounds etc.)
- Word reduction (Through syllable deletion)
- Phrase reduction (Through syllable deletion (Adjective + Noun → Noun), foot deletion, and maximal reduction (Four syllable words → two syllable words))

All the above processes are demonstrated with the preceding data in the following table. The left most column specifies the nature of the reduction and the rightmost column contains the relevant remarks on the process.

Table 1: Mechanisms behind the prosodic reduction in Tripura Bangla (TB)

Sl. No.	Bangla in writing and formal use in Tripura	TB only in informal, spoken form	Gloss	Remarks
i. No deletion	k ^h o.wai	(k ^h o.wai)	‘Khowai’	No deletion: as the base is by default a disyllabic foot.
	bi.d̪al	(b ⁱ .d̪al)	‘cunning’	
ii. Deletion at segment level				
a. C deletion	ʃi.pa.hi	(ʃ ⁱ .ʈai)	‘constable’	CV.CV.CV → CV.CV (‘σσ)σ → (‘σσ); segment deletion = syllable merger
b. V deletion	mɔ.ʃɔ.la	(m ^o ʃ.la)	‘spice’	CV.CV.CV → CV.CV (‘σσ)σ → (‘σσ)
c. V, C deletion	a.loiʃ.ʃɔ	(‘al.ʃi)	‘idleness’	CV.CVC.CV → CV.CV (‘σσ)σ → (‘σσ)
d. Metathesis	ko.li.ʃa	(k ^o oil.za)	‘lever’	CV.CV.CV → CVC.CV (‘σσ)σ → (‘σσ)
e. Metathesis, C deletion	na.ri.kɛl	(n ^o ai.hɔl)	‘coconut’	CV.CV.CVC → CV.CVC (‘σσ)σ → (‘σσ)
iii. Deletion at syllable level				
a. Weak final syllable in trochee deleted	bou.d̪i.d̪i	(b ^o .d̪i)	‘sister-in-law’	Weak syllable in trochee: (‘σ) (‘σσ) → (‘σσ)
b. Final syllable deletion	ʃa.li.ka	(ʃ ^a .li)	‘sister-in-law’	Unstressed, unfooted final syllable: (‘σ) (‘σσ) → (‘σσ)
c. Medial syllable deletion	t̪ ^h a.kur.b ^h ai	(t̪ ^h a.βai)	‘elder brother’	Unstressed syllable in trochee deleted (‘σσ) (‘σ) → (‘σσ)
d. Weak syllable reduction and deletion → foot reduction	bɔ.ʈɔ # d̪a.d̪a	(b ^o ɔd̪.d̪a)	‘elder brother’	(CV.CV) # (CV.CV) → (CVC.CV) (‘σσ) # (‘σσ) → (‘σσ) Two feet are squeezed to one.
e. Full/partial syllable deletion	mo.hɔn#pur	(m ^o un.ɔur)	‘Mohanpur’	Weak syllable in first foot of compound. (‘σσ) (‘σ) → (‘σσ)
f i. Syllable deletion through merger	ʃi.ra.ni.ya	(z ⁱ .rain).na	‘Jirania’	CV.CV.CV.CV → CV.CVC.CV (‘σσ)σσ → (‘σσ)σ
f ii. Same: derived words	d ^h .rɔ.ni.ya	(d ^h ɔ.roin).na	holder/catcher’	CV.CV.CV.CV → CV.CVC.CV (‘σσ)σσ → (‘σσ)σ
g. multiple deletion	t̪ ^h a.ku.ra.ni	(t̪ ^h ak.rain)	‘priest’s wife’	Reduction: segment, syllable deletion σσσσ → (‘σσ) σσσσ → (‘σσ)
	bou.t̪ ^h a.ku.ra.ni	(b ^o .ʈain)	‘elder sister-in-law’	
h. Syllable reduction through coda deletion/relocation	cɔm.pɔk # nɔ.gɔr	(s ^o m.ʈɔ) # nɔ.gɔr	‘Champak Nagar’	CVC.CVC → CVC.CV HH → HL/LL (‘σσ) → (‘σσ) To ensure and ideal trochee.
iv. Foot deletion				
a. Syllable reduction → Foot deletion	bra ^h m.mɔn # ba.ʈi.ya	(b ^o aun.bai).ra	‘Brahman Baria’	Two-word compounds → single word CVC.CVC → CVC, CV.CV.CV → CV.CV

				('σσ) ('σσ)σ → ('σσ)σ
b. Syllable merger →Foot deletion	[mɔtʰ] [cou.mu.ho.ni]	(m'ɔs.sɔ.)mu.ni	'Math Choumu-honi'	('σ) ('σσ)σ → ('σσ)σ
v. Word reduction				Through syllable deletion
a.	[ʃɔ.gɔ.ho.ri.] [mu.rɔ]	(z'ɔ.goi).ra.(m`u.ra)	'Jagahari Mura'	('σσ)σ ('σσ) → ('σσ)σ ('σσ)
b.	[gɔ.nɔ.rɔj] [cou.mu.ho.ni]	(g'ɔn.ras.)so (m`u.ni)	'Ganaraj Choumu-honi'	('σσ)σ ('σσ)σ → ('σσ)σ ('σσ)
vi. Phrase reduction				Via syllable deletion: A + N → N via foot reduction:
a. Syllables deletion	[ʃɛf.tʰɔ] [ʃa.li.ka]	(z'ɛ.dɔf)	'wife's elder sister'	('σσ) # ('σσ)σ → ('σ) ('σσ) → ('σσ)
b. Foot deletion	[kon] [bɛ.la]	(k'om.ba.)la	'which time'	('σ) # ('σσ) → ('σ) ('σσ) → ('σσ)σ
	[raʃ.ri] [bɛ.la]	(r'aiʃ.ta.)la	'at night'	('σσ) ('σσ) → ('σσ)σ
c. Maximal reduction	ɛr kʰan ɔi.ya	('ɛn.dɔ)	'through this side'	σσσσ → ('σσ) ('σσ) → ('σσ)
	kɛ.mɔn ko.ri.ya	(k'ɛm.bɛ)	'through what way'	σσσσ → ('σσ) ('σσ)σ → ('σσ)
	kɔ.ʃɔ.gu.li	('kɔʃ.la)	'how much'	σσσσ → ('σσ) ('σσ) → ('σσ)
	ɛ.ʃɔ.gu.li	('ɛʃ.la)	'so much'	σσσ → ('σσ)σ → ('σσ)

4. Major phonological processes behind the emergence of TB

The followings are the several phonological processes that play the key role behind the projection of the variety of Bangla called Tripura Bangla (henceforth TB).

4.1 Metathesis

Trask (1996:222) defines metathesis as “Narrowly, an exchange in the positions of two segments in a word, either as a historical change or as a synchronic rule.....” Through metathesis, the location of the two segments in a word undergoes transposition. A sample of data related to this are cited in (1).

1.	Input	Output	Gloss
	na.ri.kɛl	(n'ai.ɔl) σσσ → ('σσ)	'coconut' (V metathesis + C deletion)
	ʃi.pa.hi	(ʃ'i.ʃai) σσσ → ('σσ)	'constable' (V metathesis + C deletion)
	ʃo.ri.ʃa	(ʃ'ɔiʃ.ʃa) σσσ → ('σσ)	'mustard' (V metathesis + C assimilation)
	mo.ri.ca	(m'oic.ca) σσσ → ('σσ)	'rust' (V metathesis + C assimilation)

4.2 Merger

Merger is a sort of phonological process through which syllable merger takes place through metathetical relocation of monophthongs into diphthongs. Consequently, longer sequences turn into smaller ones i.e. moving towards unmarked. For illustration, some TB words are presented in (2) below.

2.	Input	Output	Gloss
	ʃi.ra.ni.ja	(z'i.rain).na σσσσ → ('σσ)σ	'place name'
	ɔʰo.rɔ.ni.ja	(d'ɔ.roin).na σσσσ → ('σσ)σ	'holder/catcher'

4.3 Segmental weakening

For the sake of speech simplification, some feature drop out in replace of another neighbouring feature in the name of segmental weakening which is supposed to be a licit form of universal vocabulary. TB also follows the same route. The

mapping between SCB or SB and TB show how the transformation occurs by the weakening processes (i.e. aspiration to deaspiration, voicing to devoicing and plosive to fricativization). This weakening happens both in dominant and non-dominant position. For illustration, look at (3).

3.	Input	Output	Gloss
	pap	(ʃ'aʃ)	'sin'
	ɔʰan	(ɔ'an)	'paddy'
	rɛ.ga	(r'ɛ.ha)	'REGA'
	pũ.ʃi	(ʃ'u.ɔi)	'kind of fish'

4.4 Vowel harmony

Vowel harmony is a kind of structural idiosyncrasy, the influence of which the quality of vowels of the underlying forms gets affect through sharing certain features with contrastive vowels in a phonological words or phrases. The followings are the ideal instance of vowel harmony in TB. In (4i) o transforms to u to harmonize with the vowel of the following syllable by complete assimilation. In (4ii), ɔ becomes u by adopting the feature [+High] from the high vowel i in the first syllable.

4.	Input	Output	Gloss
	i. mo.hɔn # pur	(m'un.ʃur) σσσ → ('σσ)	'Mohapur'
	ii. [bri.hɔʃ.pɔ.ʃi].[bar]	(b'i.ʃuʃ).bar σσσσ → ('σσ)	'Thursday'

4.5 Assimilation

Assimilation is a feature alternation of phonological segments in a word or phrase. For phonetic convenience, one segment turns into more similar to other nearby segment. It is a common phonological process regardless of diachronic and synchronic study in linguistics. The journey from the morphological input (compatible to SCB) to output (i.e., TB) shows the same phonological process. In support of the above statement, some considerable examples from TB have been projected below.

5.	Input	Output	Gloss
	i. [mɔtʰ] [cou.mu.ho.ni]	(m'ɔs.sɔ.) mu.ni	'Math Choumuhoni'
	ii. [ʃɛf.tʰɔ] [ʃa.li.ka]	(z'ɛ.dɔf)	'wife's elder sister'

In (5) the input segments t and c alter into s in (5i); and (5ii) represents the alternation of the input segment t^h into d (i.e., output).

4.6 Deletion: Segment, syllable, foot, coda

Deletion (elision) is a type of phonological process on condition of structural well formedness triggering the omission of one or more segment from a word or phrase. This depletion affects every prosodic tier (such as segment, syllable, foot, prosodic word and prosodic phrase etc.). The key role behind this is to project the well-formed structure of the word in the form of shrinkage condition. For relevant data, consider the examples (6-12) below.

4.6.1 Coda deletion

Coda deletion means deletion of the marginal consonant of the right side in a syllable. Cross-linguistically, this is much unmarked practice and TB is also in touch with it. For example-6.

Input	Output	Gloss
i. $c\acute{o}m.p\acute{o}k \# n\acute{o}.g\acute{o}r$	$(s'\acute{o}m.\phi\acute{o}) \# n\acute{o}.g\acute{o}r$	'Champaknagar'
ii. $n\acute{o}n.d\acute{o}n \# n\acute{o}.g\acute{o}r$	$(n'\acute{o}n.d\acute{o}) \# n\acute{o}.g\acute{o}r$	'Nandannagar'
iii. $ra.nir \# ba.zar$	$(r'a.ni) \# ba.zar$	'Ranirbazar'

The above data shows that CV is preferred over CVC in the foot internal structure. As per present context of TB, coda consonant of non-head position of the disyllabic trochee undergoes deletion or depletion. In words (i), (ii), (iii) of the section (6) underlying CVC in the weak second syllable of the disyllabic trochees goes to CV under the prosodic onus of an ideal trochee of ($\acute{C}VC.CV$) or ($\acute{C}V.CV$).

4.6.2 Syllable deletion

In the name of phonological process, morphemic input gets affect under pressure from prosody in deletion at the syllable level. Syllable deletion takes place in respect of gaining shrinkage form through several syllable positional deletion in a word: weak final syllable deletion, medial syllable deletion, partial syllable deletion and full syllable deletion and so on. The following of TB are the considerable evidence of the above statements.

7.			
Input	Output	Gloss	
$bou.d\acute{i}.d\acute{i}$	$(b'o.d\acute{i})$	'sister-in-law'	(Final syllable deletion)
$t^h a.kur.bai$	$(t^h a.\beta ai)$	'elder brother'	(Medial weak syllable deletion)
$mo.h\acute{o}n \# pur$	$(m'un.\phi ur)$	'Mohanpur'	(Part of the syllable deleted)

4.6.3 Segment deletion

Segment deletion means the loss of consonant or vowel or both consonant and vowel as per contextual requirement. From the following data (8), it is to be noted that segment deletion arise alongside metathesis to reduce the large sequences in a word.

8.			
Input	Output	Gloss	
$a.loi.f\acute{o}$	$(a'l.f\acute{i})$	'idleness'	
$na.ri.k\acute{e}l$	$(nai.h\acute{o}l)$	'coconut'	

$m\acute{o}.f\acute{o}.la$ ($m\acute{o}.f.la$) 'spice'

4.6.4 Foot deletion

Through foot deletion, one or more syllable undergoes deletion to attain the minimum word requirement. Hence, the following data projects how the outputs have been gained via inputs in terms of reductionism.

9.			
Input	Output	Gloss	
i. $(m'\acute{o}t^h)(c'\acute{o}u.mu.)ho.ni$	$(m'\acute{o}s.s\acute{o}).mu.ni$	'Mathchoumuhoni'	
ii. $(d^h'an)(c'\acute{o}u.mu.)ho.ni$	$(d^h'an.s\acute{o}).mu.ni$	'Dhanchoumuhoni'	

In (i) & (ii) of (9) shows two coterminous trochaic foot of the underlying forms get shortened into one at the overt form. Alongside, the unfooted first syllable (ho) in the second phase undergoes deletion. Assimilation crops up in case of the coda of the initial monosyllabic foot in (i) and onset of the second foot in (i) & (ii).

4.7 Word reduction

Word reduction refers to the reduction of word of longer sequence into a smaller one. Through word reduction, one or more syllable lose their existence in a particular word domain. Relevant TB data are cited in (10) below.

10.			
Input	Output	Gloss	
i. $[J\acute{o}.g\acute{o}.ho.ri.] [mu.r\acute{a}]$	$(z'\acute{o}.goi).ra.(m'u.ra)$	'Jagaharimura'	
ii. $[g\acute{o}.n\acute{o}.raJ] [cou.mu.ho.ni]$	$(g'\acute{o}n.ras).so.(m'u.ni)$	'Ganaraj choumuhoni'	

Data (i) of 10 shows multiple phonological processes under word reduction such as assimilation ($J \rightarrow z$) and diphthongization via metathesis ($\acute{o} \rightarrow oi$). Data (ii) manifests merger or metathesis via vowel deletion ($g\acute{o}.n\acute{o} \rightarrow g\acute{o}n$), assimilation ($J \rightarrow s, ou \rightarrow o$), and syllable deletion (ho).

4.8 Phrase reduction

Phrase reduction refers to the state of being reduction of two adjacent feet signifying two phrases at the syntactic level. It occurs through foot/syllable merger and syllable deletion. The following data reveals $[AP] + [NP] \rightarrow [NP]$ via reduction in the internal make-up of the phrases i.e. feet.

11.				
Input	Phrases	Feet	Output	Foot
i. $[kon] [b\acute{e}.la]$	$(k'on)$	$(b'\acute{e}.la)$	$(k'om.ba.)la$	'which time'
ii. $[ra\acute{t}.ri] [b\acute{e}.la]$	$(r'a\acute{t}.ri)$	$(b'\acute{e}.la)$	$(r'ai\acute{t}.ta.)la$	'at night'
iii. $[J\acute{e}f.t^h\acute{o}][\acute{a}.li.ka]$	$(J'\acute{e}f.t^h\acute{o})$	$(\acute{a}.li.ka)$	$(z'\acute{e}.d\acute{a}f)$	'wife's elder sister'

4.9 Maximal reduction

Through maximal reduction, underlying phrases have been reduced into minimum prosodic word of one syllabic trochee in the output. In due course, it affects segments, syllables and feet by triggering merger or deletion. The following TB data (12) are the considerable evidence of the above statement.

12.

Input Phrases	Feet	Output Foot	
[kɔ.ɔ̃][gu.li]	(k'ɔ.ɔ̃)(g'u.li)	(k'ɔ̃t̃.la)	'how much'
[ɛ.ɔ̃][gu.li]	(ɛ.ɔ̃)(g'u.li)	(ɛ̃t̃.la)	'so much'
[ɛi][kʰan][ɖi.ya]	(ei)(kʰan)(ɖi.ya)	(ɛ̃n.ɖa)	'through this side'
[kɛ.mɔ̃n][ko.ri.ja]	(k'ɛ.mɔ̃n)(k'o.ri.ja)	(k'ɛm.bɛ)	'through which way'

5. Objectives of the study

- The research will seek to find out the secret behind the systematic reduction of the SB/SCB words and morphemes.
- The immediate hypothesis is that a mass reduction wave is at work underlying to fulfil the demands of a disyllabic trochee as the ideal minimal word in the output in TB. Hence, TB adopts various alterations causing multiple phonological changes to the morphological input to satisfy the disyllabic word minimum.
- This reductionism dictated by prosody opens up a vista of research possibilities in the area of 'Movement towards the Prosodically Unmarked'. In this respect, the present research aims to pinpoint the core properties of UG that are operative in TB.

6. Finding

The major findings have been recapitulated in the following-

- TB is the spoken and informal variety of Bangla used in Tripura as a lingua franca.
- Compared to the formal variety found in the written and standard communication, TB displays a massive transformation through restructuring of the formal inputs.
- This restructuring is a reduction at the prosodic level dictated by the 'latent' prosodic grammar of TB.
- This reduction process is extremely systematic and rule-governed.
- These latent and deep-rooted factors work behind the screen in accomplishing the attested reduction processes operating on input morphemic sequences at the levels of segment, syllable, foot, word and phrase.
- These contraction processes are at par with Universal Grammar and are cross-linguistic. These are not idiosyncratic features of TB.
- The findings of the work will help the TB speakers to be more careful and motivated while attempting to learn any Second Language including English.

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