A morphological profile of Tripura Bangla

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Spoken in the Indian state of Tripura, Tripura Bangla (TB) displays some unique morphological properties even as it shares many with Standard Colloquial Bangla (SCB). In this maiden endeavour, the author seeks to showcase some such facts. TB morphemes attest bound morphemes in plenty in the forms of prefixes and suffixes used both in derivation and inflexion. No other affixes are attested. Underived content words – Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective and Adverb function as base in both.

Inflection: Nominal: No prefixes are used. Suffixes are deployed to signify Number and Case. Number markers for plural are: -ɖi (+ definiteness), -ɸain/-ɸan, -aiʈ/-ainʈ, -ra, etc. in a decreasing order of preference; for singular: -Ø, -ɖa (+ definiteness). Pronouns take the *only* plural markers -ra and - ʈara.

Case markers (for both singular and plural) consist of – Nominative: -Ø, -e; Accusative: -re; Instrumental: -e (**ɖa, ɖia are postpositions); Dative: -Ø; Ablative: -ʈɛ/-ʈe, (**ʈʰaɪkka is postposition); Genitive: -er/-r; Locative: -e, -ʈ.

Pronominal inflection: Same as those used for Noun excepting that in Locative Case only -ʈ is used and that too very restrictively. Use of Gender markers is very restrictive and non-productive; few such as -i/-bi, -a, -ni help in forming feminine from masculine.

Verbal inflection: Number and gender are not marked on verbs. Tense and Person markers appear in the fixed sequence [[[Root]Tense]Person] = Output. Tense markers are: Present Indefinite Ø; Present Continuous -ʈas; Present Perfect -s; Past Indefinite -l; Past Continuous -ʈasl/-ʈas(i)l; Past Perfect -l]Person]#ga; Future Indefinite: -b, -m (only for first person); Future Continuous ([[Root]ʈe/ʈa/ʈo] # [[[ʈʰak]b/m]Person]). Complex forms like Perfect Continuous is not expressed by bound morphemes: separate words are employed.

Adjective: Adjectives are inflected only for degree in SCB with -ʈoro for comparative and -ʈomo for superlative. In TB a distinct quantifier *arɔ* 'more' is used before the base for both the purposes.

Adverb: 'Adjective + baβe/koɪra = Adverb' in TB. Adverbs, thus formed, are inflected only for comparative degree by placing the quantifier *arɔ* before the composite base: arɔ bala koɪra/baβɛ 'in a better way'. Superlative adverbs are construed contextually.

Derivation**:** In derivation, both prefixation and suffixation are allowed. Derivational prefixes are usually class maintaining and some of them are: ɸoʈi-, ɸɔ-, ɸɔra-, ɔɸɔ-, ɔβɔ-, bɔd-, nir-, paʈi-, ɔ-, bi-, ɸori-, ku-, ʃu-, oβi-, onu-, ʃɔŋ- na- ɖur- etc. Class changing derivational prefixes attach to Nouns to form Adjectives: ʃɔ-, ɖur-, bɛ- in the main.

Derivational suffixes are many. Representative few are mentioned here.

N→N: -a, -i, -la, -ɔl, -ɔʈa/-ʈa, -ani, -ʈɔ, -ɔla, -kʰur, -ɖar, -giri, -ʈija, -ali, -gɔr, -ɖani

N→A: -a, -aɪnna, -la, -i, -in, -ija, -ik, -ɔ, -iʈɔ, -aʈɔ, -li, -uk, -ani, -ʈija, -βaz, -man, -βan, -βoʈi

N→ADV: -aja; A→N: -ami, -ɔʈa, -ana, -i, -giri; V→N: -a, -ɔn, -ani, -oni, -oɪnna, -na; V→A: -uk, -ɔʈ, -ʈi, -ua, -iʈɔ; V→V (causative): -a; ADV: -ija.

Compounding is a process of word formation in TB: N + N→N, N + V→V, V + N→N, N + V→Adj, Adj + Adj→Adj, N + Adj→Adj.

Reduplication is also very productive. By reduplicating adjectives TB pluralizes the following Noun as is done in SCB too. Illustrations are given in plenty in the article.

Above all, the survey stumbles on the use of High tone to distinguish otherwise homophones! TB replaces aspiration on plosives using High tone albeit with restrictions. And it is a unique and upcoming phenomenon for eastern Bangla dialects providing ample scope for illustrating tonogenesis. Due focus is paid to exploring this phenomenon too.