

## A Contrastive Analysis of Bangla and English Determiners

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**ABSTRACT :** This paper attempts a contrastive analysis of the subsystems of the determiners in Bangla and English language, in terms of their uses, functions and meanings in order to find the similarities and differences between Bangla and English language which may pose difficulties or ease in foreign language(FL) learning. Determiners in both languages include articles, quantifiers and demonstratives. The paper shows that there are similarities and differences between these two subsystems of the determiners in Bangla and English. The paper also indicates that determiner is a probable problematic area for the Bangali who learn English as a foreign language (EFL). This study has pedagogical implications which will help EFL teachers in designing materials, improving teaching techniques and preparing exercises to eliminate errors their students make in the use of determiners.

**KEY WORDS:** article, determiner, demonstrative, quantifier, contrastive analysis

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

The main idea of contrastive analysis, as propounded by Robert Lado in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957), is that it is possible to identify the areas of difficulty a particular foreign language generally presents for native speakers of another language by systematically comparing the two languages and their cultures. Where the two languages and their cultures are similar, learning difficulties are generally not expected, where they are different, then learning difficulties are to be expected, and the greater the difference, the greater the degree of expected difficulty. On the basis of such analysis, it is believed, teaching materials should be tailored to the needs of learners of a specific first language (L1). Johansson and Hofland (1994:25) state that "language comparison is of great interest in a theoretical as well as an applied perspective. It reveals what is general and what is language specific and is therefore important both for the understanding of language in general and for the study of the individual languages compared". Schuster (1997) indicates that English learners of German or German learners of English are destined to have a positive transfer because the two languages do have many similarities. On the other hand, the theory stipulates that learning is quite difficult, or even unsuccessful, when the two languages are different. Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a predictive technique. This means that by looking at the structures of two or more linguistic systems, we can predict the difficulties learners are likely to encounter. It does not mean that for all errors a learner makes in FL, L1 habits alone are responsible. CA is useful in discovering language universals, studying problems in translation and studying language types.

### II. THE SCOPE OF STUDY :

The aim of the study is to reveal the differences and similarities between the determiners of Bangla and English language in order to make aware EFL teachers and learners of the subsystems so that Bangali teachers and learners of EFL in teaching and learning English determiners may identify those areas where L1 inference occurs which pose difficulty. The study constraints simple theoretical description of determiners of Bangla and English regarding their position, function and usage. Article, quantifier and demonstrative determiners are brought under our discussion.

### III. DETERMINERS:

The words which come before a noun and modify the noun are called determiners. A determiner is an obligatory part of a noun phrase. According to Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1991: 19) as a special class of words determiners limit (or determine) the nouns that follow them. They could be found in a sentence in the form of articles or demonstratives or quantifiers or possessives. Structurally, a determiner directly comes before a noun. For example, 'This man is a poet'. In the sentence *this* is a determiner (demonstrative) which is placed

before the noun *man*. If there are adjectives in the noun phrase they (determiners) are placed before the adjectives. For example, ‘This old man is a poet’. In the sentence *this* is placed before the adjective *old*.

#### IV. ARTICLE SYSTEM IN BANGLA AND ENGLISH

In English *a / an* is used as indefinite article and in Bangla *akti / akta* is used as indefinite article. In English *the* is used as definite article and in Bangla *ti/ ta/ khana/ khani/ gulu* etc. are used as definite articles.

##### Position of articles in English and Bangla

In English, the indefinite articles are placed before references.

- 1) Ayman has bought *a* car.
- 2) John is *an* European.

In examples (1) and (2), the indefinite articles *a* and *an* are placed before the references (car and European).

Similarly, in Bangla, the indefinite articles are placed before references.

- 3) ami *akti* laptop kinechi  
I a laptop have bought.
- 4) tar *akta* kukur ache  
He a dog has.

In examples (3) and (4), the indefinite articles *akta* and *akti* are placed before the references (laptop and kukur).

In English, the definite article occurs before references.

- 5) I’m looking for *the* watch that I wanted to show you.
- 6) *The* President is coming to Chittagong today.

In examples (5) and (6), the definite article *the* is used before the references (watch and president).

But, in Bangla, the definite articles are used after references.

- 7) Samiun amar mobileta nieche.  
Samiun my mobilethe has taken.
- 8) tumar boigulu amake dao.  
Your bookthe me give.

In examples (7) and (8), the definite articles *ta* and *gulu* are used after the references (mobile and boi).

##### Uses of articles in English and Bangla

**Indefinite article:** It is grammatical in English to use an indefinite article before any reference (singular countable), when the reference is mentioned for the first time in any context.

- 9) Rakib Ahmed gifted me *a* book. The book is about the life of Ibn Khaldun.
- 10) Anika is *an* engineer. She works at a private farm.

Similarly, in Bangla, it is also grammatical to use an indefinite article before any reference (singular countable), when the reference is mentioned for the first time in any context.

- 11) khorshed amake *akti* laptop dieche. se eti dubai teke patieche.  
Khorshed me a laptop has given. He it dubai from has sent.
- 12) ami *akta* mobile peachi. mobileti kar?  
I a mobile have got. mobilethe whose?

**Definite article:** After the first mention of any reference as many times as it is mentioned in any context, definite article is used with the reference in English. It may be called the use of definite article determined by grammatical factor. (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1985):

- 13) Jahed bought a laptop and a tab, but he returned *the* tab.

In the same way, in Bangla, after the first mention of any reference as many times as it is mentioned in any context, definite article is used with the reference.

- 14) ami gotokal akti boi kinechi. boiti Bangladesh er nodnodi nie rochito.  
I yesterday a book bought. bookthe Bangladesh of rivers about written.

It is grammatical in English to use definite article with any unique reference. Nouns premodified by superlatives, ordinals, and similar restrictive items such as *sole* will thus be made logically unique. (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1985):

- 15) Who is *the* next person?  
16) Anika is *the* best girl of the class.

- 17) *The* Prime Minister is coming to Chittagong today.

- 18) *The* sun gives us light and heat.

But Bangla has no such usage of article.

- 19) poroborti bakti ke?  
next person who?  
20) anika classer shera balika.  
anika classof best girl.  
21) prodhanmontri aaj chittagong aaschen  
primeminister today chittagong is coming.  
22) surjo amader aalo o tap dey.  
sun us light and heat give.

In English, definite article can be used to make a reference generic.

- 23) *The* leopard is a ferocious animal.  
24) *The* mobile has become a constant company of us.

But Bangla has no such usage.

## V. QUANTIFIERS

Quantifier is a type of determiner that indicates quantity. *all, some, many, few, a lot, no* etc. are examples of quantifiers.

### Position of quantifier in Bangla and English

In English, quantifiers occur before nouns.

- 25) She has *a few* friends.  
26) *Many* people left the place.  
27) He has *much* money.

In examples (25), (26) and (27), the quantifiers *a few*, *many* and *much* occur before the nouns (friends, people and money).

Similarly, in Bangla, quantifiers occur before nouns.

- 28) tar *kichu* bondhu ache.  
He a few friend has.

- 29) *onek lok* sthanti tag korlo.  
many people placethe left.

In examples (28) and (29), the quantifiers *kichu* and *onek* occur before the nouns (bondhu and sthan).

**Uses of the quantifiers in English and Bangla:** In English, there are some quantifiers which are only used with plural countable nouns such as *many*, *few*, *several* etc., some only with singular countable nouns such as *each*, *every* etc., some only with non count nouns such as *much*, *little* etc., some with both countable and uncountable such as *all*, *some* etc.

- 30) He can give you *little* information about him.  
31) *Each* boy was given a book.  
32) I took *a few* books from him.

In example (30), the quantifier *little* occurs with non count noun *information*.

In example (31), the quantifier *each* occurs with singular count noun *boy*.

In example (32), the quantifier *a few* occurs with plural count noun *book*.

But, in Bangla, there is no restriction in using quantifiers like English language. For example, Bangla equivalent for English *many* or *much* is *onek*. This *onek* is used with both count and non count nouns.

- 33) tar *onek* bondhu ache.  
He many friend has.  
34) kolshitite *onek* pani ache.  
In the jar much water has.

In example (33), the quantifier *onek* is used with countable noun *bondhu*.

In example (34), the same quantifier *onek* is used with non count noun *water*.

There are some quantifiers in English which are used with both count and non nouns.

- 35) Give me *some* rice.  
36) *Some* students left the class.  
37) *All* children should receive education.  
38) *All* meat is rich in protein.

In example (35), the quantifier *some* is used with non count noun *rice*.

In example (36), the quantifier *some* is used with count noun *student*.

In example (37), the quantifier *all* is used with count noun *child*.

In example (38), the quantifier *all* is used with non count noun *meat*.

### Determiner – Noun Agreement

In English, the quantifier that precedes a noun needs to agree with the noun itself.

When quantifiers denoting plurality are used with any noun, the noun must be kept in plural form. It is a grammatical rule in English.

- 39) *Many* students left the class.  
40) I took only *a few* books from the library.

But, in Bangla, when quantifiers denoting plurality are used with any noun, the noun must be kept in singular form. It is a grammatical rule in Bangla.

- 41) *onek* chara class tag korlo.  
Many student class left.  
42) Ami library teke *kichu* boi nilam.  
I library from some book took.

## VI. DEMONSTRATIVES

Demonstratives are those determiners which indicate the nearness or distance of objects or persons from where one is. It can also particularize things.

Examples of demonstratives in Bangla include *ei* – this/ these, *oi* –that/ those etc.

### **Position of the demonstratives in English and Bangla**

In English, demonstratives are placed before nouns.

- 43) *That boy* is the best student in the class.
- 44) Give me *these pens*.

In examples (43) and (44), the demonstratives *that* and *these* occur before the nouns (boy and pen).

Similarly, in Bangla, demonstratives are placed before nouns.

- 45) *oi balokta* classer shera chatra.  
That boythe classin best student.
- 46) *ei kolomgulu* amake dao.  
These penthe me give.

In examples (45) and (46), the demonstratives *oi* and *ei* occur before the nouns ( balok and kolom).

### **Uses of demonstratives in English and Bangla.**

In English, some demonstratives are used to indicate distant objects or persons from where one is such as *that* and *those* etc. *that* is used with singular count nouns or non count nouns and *those* is used with only plural count nouns.

- 47) *That man* is my brother.
- 48) I bought *those books* from the fair.

But in Bangla, only *oi* is used with both count and non count nouns to indicate distant objects or persons from where one is and in Bangla, it is grammatical to add definite article to the noun with which a demonstrative is used.

- 49) *oi lokta amar bhai*  
That manthe my brother.
- 50) ami *oi boigulu mela teke kinlam*.  
I those bookthe fair from bought.

In English, demonstratives like *this/ these* are used to refer to an object or person which or who is nearer to from where one is. *this* is used with singular count and non count nouns and *these* is used only with plural count nouns.

- 51) *This man* is my brother.
- 52) I bought *these books* from the fair.

But in Bangla, only *ei* is used with both count and non count nouns to refer to a nearer object or person and in Bangla, it is a grammatical rule to use definite article to the end of the noun with which a demonstrative is used.

- 53) *ei lokti amar bhai*.  
This manthe my brother.
- 54) Ami *ei boigulu mela teke kinlam*.  
I these bookthe fair from bought.

## **VII. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION**

It is an inherent habit of FL learners to use the existing rules of their L1 in producing utterances or sentences in the FL they are learning. This influence of L1 on the learners' intended use of FL is known as transfer. If the rules of any grammatical item of learners' L1 are different from those of FL, they may make error and this phenomenon is termed as *negative transfer* or *interference*. Again, when similarities exist in any grammatical item between L1 and FL, there happens *positive transfer* and this is called *facilitation* (Ellis, 1997). Corder (1978) suggests that the L1 of learners may facilitate the development process of learning FL by helping them to progress more rapidly along the universal route when L1 is similar to FL.

Through a contrastive analysis on different grammatical items between L1 and FL, the differences can easily be identified where learners are likely to make error while learning the language. If the FL instructors have clear knowledge on the various aspects of learners' L1, it will be possible for them to take necessary steps such as giving remedial exercises to the learners in order to reduce their linguistic errors.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has indicated that there are differences and similarities between Bangla and English determiner systems regarding their usage, position etc. So, FL instructors are expected to make learners know the differences in order to avoid probable problems which the learners may encounter in producing sentences or utterances in English language. EFL teachers can take special care in designing course materials focusing on the similarities and differences between the determiners of Bangla and English. Teachers may use different techniques such as repetition drills in order to reduce L1 interference and establish new habits.

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