

Gemination before liquids in Bangla

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to investigate a specific pattern gemination process in Bangla or Bengali using the optimality theoretic framework. In an earlier work on gemination in Bangla (Kar 2009), I showed three different gemination processes that occur in various strata of this language. In the present research, a detailed analysis of the gemination process involving a liquid is given with a reference to the well-established West-Germanic Gemination (WGG) process.

In Bangla, an intervocalic consonant cluster C_1C_2 where /r/ is the second member of the cluster (C_2), the first member (C_1) is phonetically lengthened. This results in a C_1C_1r sequence with a doubling of the first consonant. Here, C_1 forms a complex onset with a liquid /r/ in the following syllable. Abercrombie (1967) marked this type of phenomenon as “double consonant” which was later renamed as “geminate” by Lehiste (1970). Hankamer *et al* (1989) claims that the geminates in Bangla exist only in intervocalic position and the articulations are always extending across the syllable boundary (hence, heterosyllabic in nature). Following the core-periphery structure of Japanese (Ito & Mester, 1999), the Bangla lexicon is stratified to three strata (depending on the origin of the lexical items) and the stratum-specific gemination processes are investigated here. The emphasis is given on the gemination process involving consonantal /r/ in Bangla while the vocalic /r/ does not show a similar behaviour in standard colloquial Bangla. This phenomenon requires two different constraint rankings for vocalic and consonantal liquids. However, other types of gemination processes would also be taken into account. This study, consequently, shows how the set of constraints and their rankings rearranges according to specific gemination processes in this language.

Key words: Bangla, Bengali, gemination, optimality theory, phonology

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