

## A Study of Augmentativization in English and Bangla

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This article dwells on the processes of augmentativization in English and Bangla. Augmentativization refers to the processes of formation of words denoting largeness. In this study, the researcher has juxtaposed English and Bangla vis-à-vis their mechanisms in the construction of augmentatives. The present research reveals that the languages under this study have striking similarities in the process of augmentativization. Both the languages use affixation in the construction of augmentatives. Curiously, the two languages employ prefixation to form the bulk of their augmentative vocabulary. Suffixation in augmentativization is very marginal in both the languages. Apart from affixation, the two languages employ compounding to form augmentatives. Still, the two tongues have another category of augmentatives known as frozen or lexicalized augmentatives. The catalogue of identical processes used in the construction of augmentatives does not end here. Borrowing is a good source of augmentative vocabulary in both the languages. English and Bangla have borrowed augmentatives or augmentative markers from foreign sources. Gradation of augmentatives is also possible in both the languages.

*Keywords:* augmentative, augmentizer, frozen augmentative, morphological augmentative, pragmatic function.

*Artikel ini membahas proses augmentativization dalam bahasa Inggris dan Bangla. Augmentativization adalah proses pembentukan kata-kata yang menunjukkan kemurahan hati. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti telah menyandingkan bahasa Inggris dan Bangla dalam kaitannya dengan mekanisme dalam pembentukan augmentatives. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa bahasa-bahasa dalam penelitian ini memiliki kesamaan yang mencolok dalam proses augmentativization. Kedua bahasa tersebut menggunakan afiksasi dalam pembentukan augmentatives. Kedua bahasa tersebut menggunakan prefiks untuk membentuk sebagian besar kosa kata augmentative mereka. Akhiran dalam augmentativization sangat jarang dalam kedua bahasa tersebut. Selain afiksasi, kedua bahasa menggunakan penggabungan untuk membentuk augmentatif. Namun, kedua bahasa tersebut memiliki kategori tambahan yang dikenal sebagai suplemen beku atau leksikal. Katalog proses identik yang digunakan dalam pembentukan augmentatives tidak berakhir disini. Meminjam adalah sumber kosakata augmentative yang bagus dalam kedua bahasa tersebut. Inggris dan Bangla telah meminjam augmentatives atau augmentative marker dari sumber bahasa asing. Gradasi augmentative juga dimungkinkan dalam kedua bahasa tersebut.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Augmentatives literally convey a sense of bigness and may contain affective meaning, especially, a negative connotation. A clichéd example of augmentative in English is found with words using *ultra* as a prefix-, as in *ultra-bright* or *ultra-violet* or *ultra-jerk*. The prefix *ultra* adds a sense of intensity to the first two words and intensification of the emotional sense of disdain to the last example.

From *ultra* let us shift our attention to some prefix multipliers. These days ‘mega-offers’ of ‘super-shops or super-markets’ convert us into shopaholics. ‘Superman’ has emotionally colonized the children of all the continents. No more are we satisfied with *MB* (Mega Byte) or *GB* (Giga Byte), in this rapidly changing digital age we prefer *TB* (*Tera Byte*). Computing professionals have already started to speak about *Peta Byte* level of data storage. ‘Though *mega* has taken on a fashionable role as an intensifier and a superlative of *super* in words like *megastar*, it is primarily derived from the much older sense of ‘large’ as in words like ‘*megalith*’, large stone. There are the very tiniest signs that we may see *giga* following it as linguistic inflation continues – a theme park at Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia is to be called *GigaWorld* because, according to its promoter, “*Mega* is too modest a term” for it’ (Michael Quinion, quoted in Morshed & Akter, 280: 16). All of the words in italics are good examples of English augmentatives. Here we see how Computing and Physics have contributed to the enrichment of English augmentatives.

Compared to diminutives, there is relatively little literature about augmentatives. Dressler and Barbaresi (1994) explain the reasons behind this – augmentatives represent a marked category compared to diminutives. Their claim is supported by the fact that augmentatives are linguistically less common than diminutives. This can be explained by an implicational correlation – ‘If a language has augmentatives, it has diminutives too. The reverse is not true.’ Grandi’s (2002) cross-linguistic survey on augmentatives in the Mediterranean area endorses this – ‘Augmentatives are significantly less widespread than diminutives.’

The prototypical augmentative in most of the languages is a noun or adjective. It implies that an augmentative is a complex noun or adjective derived from another noun or adjective by affixation. Through the process of augmentativization, the augmented word does not change its class. The resultant word is a new noun or adjective denoting bigness.

As an augmentative is mainly formed by affixation or compounding creating new words with new meanings, it is a morphological category. In linguistics, it is discussed in ‘Evaluative Morphology’. Augmentatives are also a very important component of ‘Morphopragmatics’ as they carry affective meaning.

As augmentatives are important part of language universals, all languages share some frequently used processes of augmentativization. English and Bangla, two Indo-European (IE) languages, have some common and language-specific formula for the formation of augmentatives.

This article includes some terminologies necessary to review briefly. Evaluative Morphology (EM) refers to sub-branch of Morphology in which the formation processes of

words denoting smallness and bigness are discussed. In addition to diminutives and augmentatives, EM also includes ‘pejoratives’ and ‘amelioratives.’ It also goes by the names of ‘Affective Morphology’ and ‘Expressive Morphology’. Diminutives refer to words denoting smallness. The notion of smallness is connected with attitude. Augmentatives refer to words denoting bigness. They deal with size, dimension, age etc. While diminutives in most of the cases have appreciative meanings, augmentatives generally bear negative emotive meanings.

Augmentizers are augmentative markers. They are triggers of the semantic meaning of ‘bigness’. Frozen augmentatives are lexicalized augmentatives i.e. single words denoting big size.

Morphological augmentatives are augmentatives formed through the processes of affixation are called morphological augmentatives. Pragmatic function refers to the emotive meanings of augmentatives (or diminutives) such as contempt, appreciation or affection etc.

Even though a considerable corpus of works exists in research on English and Bangla lexicology, phonology and grammar, very little research has been conducted on English and Bangla evaluative morphology, especially on the processes of augmentation in the two languages. With the end in view of filling the gap, we have based this study on augmentativization in English and Bangla.

The concept of size, or dimension is part of language universals. This modificational category is expressed in two ways; lexically and morphologically: Lexically is normally done by the use of adjectives. (Indicated in Universal # 1196; originally No.#1200, stated by Dixon, 1977). If any other semantic types are expressed by adjectives, then members of this group i.e. age, dimension, colour etc. are likely to be expressed by the same word class. Morphologically is when the bulk of the diminutives and augmentatives are formed morphologically. The morphological process does not necessarily impose any restriction on the word category. Lexical expression of dimension or size is expected to occur universally. On the other hand, morphological expression of smallness, bigness etc. seems to be restricted and language-specific.

## **METHOD**

This is an exploratory research on augmentativization in English and Bangla. As there is a visible paucity of materials on Bangla Evaluative Morphology, the researcher has utilized his native speaking status in collecting data on augmentativization in Bangla. Researcher’s observation as an authentic source of data was introduced by Weinreich (1963). According to Weinreich, the best data can be collected through the observation of a good researcher. Bangla monolingual materials used in this study include *Bangla Academy Songkhipto Bangla Obhidhan* (Sharif, ed. 2015), *Bangla Academy Sohoj Bangla Obhidhan* (Rashid, ed., 2015), *Songkhipto Ek Kothai Prakash Obhidhan* (Islam, 2015) and *Bangla Byakaran O Nirmiti* (Rahman & Haider, 2016).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Augmentation in English**

According to Dressler and Barbaresi (1994), augmentatives represent a marked category. Their observation is endorsed by the fact that augmentatives are cross-linguistically less common than diminutives. Grandi's (2002) cross-linguistic survey on augmentatives also concludes that augmentatives are tangibly less widespread than diminutives. Hence, literature on augmentative is scanty in comparison with diminutives.

The English language can form augmentatives both morphologically and lexically. But in terms of productivity, the former one far outsmarts the latter.

### **Morphological augmentation**

Morphological augmentation refers to the process of augmentation through affixation which includes prefixation and suffixation.

Prefixation:

English basically performs augmentation through the morphological process of prefixation:

- Arch: Archrival, archangel
- Super: Superpower, supermarket
- Hyper: Hyperactive, hypertension
- Mega: Megacity, megastar
- Grand: Grandmaster, grandparent
- Ultra: Ultraviolet, Ultrationalist
- Poly : Polyglot, Polygamy

The German prefix *uber* has gained popularity in the English language since the 1990s. It has proved to be very productive in English:

Uber-rich, uber-editor, uber-regulator, uber-liberal.

Suffixation:

Augmentation in English, though rare, can also be done through suffixation. The word 'Godzilla' has penetrated the active vocabulary of English speakers with the phenomenal popularity of the film bearing the same title. 'Godzilla' which is of Japanese origin, as a metaphor, now refers to something extremely enormous among its group members.

From the blockbuster film, the English language has borrowed the suffix 'zilla' meaning, 'of monstrous proportion'. 'Zilla' has been very fertile since its coronation into the realm of the English language:

Augmentative offspring of 'zilla' in English –

- Hogzilla (Gigantic hog)
- Bridezilla (Bride-monster)
- Blondzilla ( A blonde of exceptional stature)

- Catzilla (Enormous cat)
- Bitchzilla ( A huge bitch)
- Bagzilla (Big garbage bag)
- Snowzilla (Large snowstorm)
- Fedzilla (US federal government seen as a big predator)

‘Zilla’ as a morpheme has shown considerable productivity in the creation of new words related with the cyber world –

Mozilla, Chatzilla, Chipzilla, Bugzilla, Filezilla, Podzilla, Feedzilla, Quizilla, Shopzilla, Go!Zilla, Davezilla.

It is, however, not only confined to the realm of softwares. ‘Zilla’ has caught on the imagination of English language users so strongly that a Japanese restaurant in Sydney calls itself, ‘Shushizilla’. What a ‘zilla’ leap from the cyber domain to the world of gastronomic delight!

### **Frozen or lexicalized augmentatives**

The English language has some single word augmentatives. They are not formed through the morphological processes of prefixation, suffixation or infixation. These are dubbed as ‘frozen or lexicalized’ augmentatives. For example, the word ‘tome’ means ‘a big, heavy and scholarly book’. Here ‘tome’ is a frozen or lexicalized augmentative. Some other examples of this category in English are –

Mass

Crowd

Host

Colossal

Gigantic

Mammoth

Million

Gazillion

Bajillion

### **Compound augmentatives**

In the process of augmentativization, English also uses compounding. For example, when the word ‘achievement’ is preceded by ‘great’, we get ‘great achievement’. ‘Big boss’ ‘big brother’, ‘Olympian height’, ‘monstrous being’, ‘huge gathering’ are some other examples of compound augmentatives we regularly use in our daily interactions.

### **Gradation of augmentatives in English**

Some augmentative words can be graded in the English language. English adjectives have a three stage system of gradation – indicative, comparative and superlative. Let us think of the comparative and superlative forms of big, tall, great and high –

Big – Bigger – Biggest

Tall – Taller – Tallest

Great – Greater – Greatest

High – Higher - Highest

Gradation is also possible in other ways which do not fit into the above-mentioned three-tier system –

Dear – Very dear

Respected – Much respected

These are normally used in respectful salutations. For example – Very dear Sir!

### **Augmentation in Bangla**

Bangla as an IE language, shares many features of augmentativization with other fellow languages. It also shares a number of features with unrelated languages within universal linguistic contexts.

Bangla does not have an affluence of evaluative morphological elements. Bangla has several augmentative suffixes and they are of limited distribution and functionality. Like her second cousin i.e. English (Hudson, 1965), Bangla does not abound in augmentative morphs. Yet Bangla has her own language-specific and typological ways of augmentation. Bangla, like the English language, can augmentize both morphologically and lexically. In augmentativization, Bangla also uses compounding.

### **Morphological augmentativization**

Bangla uses prefixation and suffixation in morphological augmentativization.

Prefixation:

Bangla, like the English language performs most of the cases of augmentation by prefixation.

The Bangla augmentative markers in this category include *Oti, Pora, Pro, Odhi, Ram* etc.

Oti : Otimanab/otipriyo

Pora: Porashakti/porakranta/porakashtha/porabhab

Pro: Progar/probol/prosar

Odhi: Odhipoti/odhishthan/

Ram: Ram chhagol/ramda/ramdhonu

The above aug markers when prefixed to nouns and adjectives convey senses of size, dimension, dominance and contempt.

Suffixation:

Bangla can also express the notion of largeness by suffixation. Bangla usually employs the Sanskrit suffixes ‘tar’, ‘tam’ to create comparative and superlative forms of adjectives –

Uchcha – Uchchatar – Uchchatam

Adhik – Adhikatar – Adhikatam

Priyo – Priyotar – Priyotam

Brihoth – Brihattar - Brihattam

### **Augmentative compounding**

Many augmentatives are formed in Bangla through the process of compounding. For example, Pad (Post) – Bara pad (Big post)/ unchu pad (High post); Beton (Salary) – Mota beton (Handsome salary). Some other popular example of this category includes -

Shiksha (Education) – Uchchashiksha (Higher education)

Adalat (Court) – Uchachaadalat (High court)

Taroka (Star): Mohataroka (Superstar)

Jonosobha (Gathering): Bishal jonoshova (Huge gathering)

### **Lexicalized augmentation**

Bangla possesses a number of lexicalized augmentatives. The following frozen augmentatives have been collected from Islam (2015) -

Brihothkheponi: patropal

Brihothtorongo: ullol

Brihothpushkorini: dighi, baapi

Boroelach: bhodrela

Boro o govirpukur: torak

Boro gung: gangur

Boro gang: kosba

Boronouka: kisti

Boropotli: bochka/potla

Boro hat: golahat

### **Syntactic augmentation**

Bangla can express the notion of largeness through periphrastic constructions as well. In this category, generally an adjective is added to the base word. Some examples of augmentatives formed through syntactic modification are given below -

Brihodantra

Bohumot/Jonomot

Bishaljonosobha

We find another good example of this type of augmentation in the *Bangla Academy Songkhipto Obhidhan* (1992: 155) – ‘Gondogram’ meaning a ‘big village’. ‘Gondogram’, however, is a contranym or autoantonym which also means ‘a very small or remote village’. ‘Gondomurkho’ invariably refers to a ‘big stupid’.

### **English augmentative loans in Bangla**

The Bangla language is inundated with anglicisms. Though the process started with the British colonization of India, even after 1947, English has vigorously maintained its donor status. Musa and Ilyas (2002) have shown that Bangla has borrowed approximately 3500 words from the

English language. Bangla has further intensified its recipient status in the wake of the internet revolution.

In Bangla, we see the widespread use of some English augmentatives. These loan augmentatives belong to the domains of Computing, Physics and Marketing. For example, we see frequent use of binary prefixes like MB, GB, KB etc. in the data bundle offers of mobile phone companies in Bangladesh. The advertisement pages of Bangladeshi print media are criss-crossed with words like ‘mega offer’, ‘super sale’, ‘super nova’ ‘mega star’ etc. Whenever we see a person of huge stature, we refer to him as a ‘Gulliver’. To refer to gigantic size, we infallibly use the word ‘Jumbo’. These are good examples of English augmentative loans to Bangla.

### **Idiomatic or metaphorical augmentation in Bangla**

Bangla at times augmentizes using idioms and metaphors. To refer to any brazen act of theft, in Bangla we say, ‘pukur churi’ (theft of a pond). A great stupid is called ‘gomurkha’. A huge quantity of food is referred to as ‘hatir khorak’ (Sufficient food to satisfy the hunger of an elephant).

### **Gradation of augmentatives**

Augmentatives are sometimes gradable in Bangla. Bangla usually uses the Sanskrit suffixes ‘tar’ and ‘tam’ to create comparative and superlative forms –

Brihath – Brihattatar – Brihattam

Adhik – Adhikatar – Adhikatam

Shiksha – Uchchatar shiksha – Uchchatama shiksha

Adalat – Uchachatar adalat – Uchachatam adalat

Shreshtha – Shreshthatar – Shreshthatama

Gradation can also be done by prefixation –

Pradesh - Desh – Mahadesh

Upasagar - Sagar – Mahasagar

Lexical gradation is also noticeable in Bangla –

Thana - Zilla – Bibhag

Kua - Pushkarini – Dighi

Kosha - Nouka – Kisti

Khan (2012) in his scholarly discussion on Bangla comparative and superlative forms, points out that the clichéd Bangla word ‘preyoshi’ is the comparative form of the word ‘priya’. According to him, the gradation of the word ‘priya’ is – Priya – Preyoshi – Preshta

Khan (2012:131) supplies some other examples of graded augmentatives in Bangla – Borishtha (Borishtha odhyapak), Gorishtha (sankhyagorishtha), Jyasthya, Papishtha etc. Interestingly, some superlatives in modern Bangla have lost their original meaning. Rather than denoting superlative semanticity, they simply mean big size or intensification. For example, ‘Bolishtha’ no more



means ‘the strongest arms’, it just means ‘strong arms’. In the same vein, the superlativity of ‘Papishtha’ has eroded. The word now refers to ‘an ordinary sinner’.

The gallantry awards conferred on our valiant freedom fighters by the Bangladesh government are nice examples of graded augmentatives in Bangla -  
Bir Pratik – Bir Bikram – Bir Uttam - Bir Shreshtha.

From the above discussion, we see that in the English language the major process of augmentativization is affixation. Augmentatives in English are formed through prefixation and suffixation. To be specific, the absolute majority of English augmentatives are the product of prefixation. Only a handful of augmentatives are formed through suffixation. Apart from affixal augmentatives, English has some frozen augmentatives. The global lingua franca, we have seen, also forms augmentatives through compounding. When we shift our attention from the big guns of English evaluative morphology, we find that Bangla has striking similarity with her metropolitan peer in the construction of augmentatives. The bulk of augmentatives in Bangla, as it is the case with the English language, are formed through affixation. And in complete unison with English, the majority of the augmentatives in Bangla are formed by prefixation. Bangla has in its stock some suffixal augmentative markers but they are very limited in number. In addition to affixal augmentation, Bangla can augmentativize by compounding and periphrastic construction. Moreover, augmentatives can be graded in Bangla. Interestingly, this gradation is possible in the English language as well.

Another curious fact demands our attention here – Bangla has some loan augmentatives from English but the reverse is not true. Even though this one-way incident belongs to the domain of sociolinguistics warranting elaborate discussion, we can precisely say that this happens because of the different statuses of the two languages. In the interactions among the Banglophones and Anglophones, English enjoys super-stratum status while Bangla is reduced to sub-stratum position.

Although augmentation is a common phenomenon in Bangla, during this research it became evident that the extent of descriptive and theoretical materials on this topic is rather modest, limited to very brief mentions in grammar textbooks. Augmentativization has not received detailed treatment at the hands of grammarians and morphologists. Contrary to the paucity of research materials on augmentation in Bangla, English has a substantial wealth of research works on the topic. This is attributable to the unique status and global dispersal of English. Despite the plethora of works on contrastive evaluative research in English and other languages, studies in English and Bangla has not so far been done. As this is a beginning research on the topic, it needs further spade work.

In this study, the researcher has discussed the mechanisms of the formations of augmentatives in English and Bangla. The pragmatic aspect of augmentativization has been kept out of the scope of this study because of time and space constraints.

Teaching and learning of a foreign language is significantly affected by the knowledge of the similarities and dissimilarities existing between the two languages concerned. The acquisition of the target language is expedited by the knowledge of similarities. On the other hand, the

knowledge of dissimilarities helps students avoid the pitfalls. This study on the hitherto neglected area of evaluative morphology will help English and Bangla language practitioners to identify and use identical elements of augmentation in English and Bangla.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals striking similarities between Bangla and English in augmentativization. Both the languages can express quantitiveness lexically and morphologically. Most of the augmentative words in Bangla and English are formed morphologically. When we juxtapose the morphological processes of augmentation in English and Bangla, we notice that the two languages show greater productivity in augmentativization using prefixation. One of the reasons behind this sameness of augmentation in English and Bangla can be attributed to their genealogical connection. Amid this wealth of typological convergence, there lies a small point of language-specific divergence. Bangla borrows augmentatives or augmentative markers from English while the reverse does not happen. At this front, visibly enough, the tie between the two cousin tongues is not symbiotic.

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