

## Syntax of Standard English and Bangla: A Bilingual Study of Simple Declarative Sentences

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper explores much of the basic and background knowledge of English and Bangla (i.e. Bengali) sentence patterns as well as tries to compare and contrast between these two very languages of identical origin at the sentential level. Since it is known the concept of basic sentence structures is necessary for classroom teaching and learning to perceive the subtleties of language at the highest unit of grammar, this study is expected to facilitate the understanding of bilingual relationship between English and Bangla (as a native/foreign language) for researchers, teachers, learners and/or speakers of both the languages. The ideas drawn from the findings in this paper will also help one in the field of translating amid these two languages which is pedagogically very significant as well. For a few dissimilarities, we often notice greatly faulty grammatical constructions both in English and Bangla when learners or users shift from one to another. So, this study of the two types of sentence patterns along with their components will be of considerable use to many, specially to those who teach, learn or use these languages.

### INTRODUCTION

It is evident in history that the origin of English and Bangla (Bengali) is the Indo-European family of languages. However, with the passage of time, these languages underwent a lot of changes in various ways and aspects. English was by and large dominated by Greek and Latin, whereas Bangla was greatly influenced by English, specially in some areas of grammar during the British regime in the Indo-Pak-Bengal subcontinent. Moreover, Bangla grammar was based on Sanskrit grammar. In English, the term 'grammar' comes from Greek meaning 'study of words' and its Bangla synonym is 'বাক্যরূপ' /bækərɔn/ which receives the meaning 'analysis'. It is worth mentioning that the sentence pattern in the two languages is well-fixed. This study aims at the comparative analysis of the structures of simple declarative sentences (i.e. statements) of the English and Bangla languages in the standard variety. The necessary phonetic transcriptions are incorporated in this study for non-native speakers of Bangla also.

### Research Questions

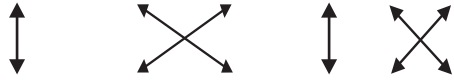
The innermost objective of this research is to find the answers to the following questions within the domain of comparative linguistics, such as-

1. How to attain a good solution for English and Bangla word order discrepancy
2. How to determine apposite Bangla modifiers for English
3. How to resolve the gaps between the inflexions of verbs in the two languages
4. How to show the function of grammatical terms in English and Bangla etc.

### Method of the Study

The grammar of English and Bangla shares some noticeable common features. But if we compare and contrast between English and Bangla sentences, we can find some similarities and various differences too. To define a sentence in both the languages is almost the same. In English, the 'sentence' refers to a group of words arranged in such an order so that it makes a complete sense. And in Bangla, the 'sentence' is a collection of words (or inflected words) that expresses a complete sense about a topic. Nevertheless, the sentence in the both languages varies largely in terms of their structures – in the sequence or order of words. For instance, to compare and contrast between typical English and Bangla sentences, we can show it by representing in the following structure:

**English:** Subject + Verb (vt) + Object: Najin tells fables.



**Bangla:** Subject + Verb (vt) + Object: নাজিন উপকথা বলে।  
|| nadʒin upokotha bole ||

Here, we can see that the position of the transitive verbs (vt) and the objects in both the languages is exactly the opposite though the two subjects remain in similar places. This is also the same for intransitive verbs (vti) and complements. Moreover, for English the subject being the third person singular number and in the simple present tense, the verb receives a suffix ‘-s’ or ‘-es’ and the Bangla verb has also some suffixes like ‘-ই’ /i/, ‘-ও’ /o/, ‘-এ’ /e/ and ‘-ন’ /n/ (to show respect to agents) for different persons and numbers which is discussed later in ‘conjugation of verbs’. Let us look at the other structures of English and Bangla sentences:

**Structure:** Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object

e.g. Najin tells us fables. (Without any prepositions)

Here, since ‘tell’ is used as a causative verb, the Bangla verb ‘বলে’ /bole/ becomes ‘শোনায়’ /ʃonaɔ/. So, it should be as:

**Structure:** Subject + Indirect Object + Direct Object + Verb

e.g. নাজিন আমাদের উপকথা শোনায়।

|| nadʒin amader upokotha ʃonaɔ ||

Though the same Bangla sentence is shown without any prepositions, it would be viewed in English as:

**Structure:** Subject + Verb + Direct Object + Preposition + Indirect Object

e.g. Najin tells fables to us. (With a preposition ‘to’)

To construct a grammatically correct and complete sentence in English, there must be an explicit or expressed verb but in Bangla, there are some sentences where the verbs (usually linking verbs, not exactly the verb ‘to be’) are often omitted or understood from the context. e.g.

**English:** Najin is fabulous.

**Bangla:** নাজিন (?) চমৎকার। || nadʒin ʃomotkar ||

Here, the implicit or unexpressed verb (?) in Bangla is ‘হয়’ /he/. The other forms of the same verb ‘হন’ /hon/ can be used here in order to show respect to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person subject, but ‘হও’ /hou/ is used in the second person and ‘হই’ /hoi/ is in the first person. Now, we may have a very clear comparison between the English verb ‘to be’ and its Bangla equivalent verbs- ‘হই’, ‘হও’, ‘হয়’, ‘হন’ etc in conjugation as revealed in the following diagrams:

**Present Tense: Verb ‘to be’ vs. Verb ‘হই/হও/হয়/হন’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I am	We are	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমি হই	আমরা হই
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You are	You are	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তুমি হও	তোমরা হও
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin is	They are	3 <sup>rd</sup>	সে/নাজিন হয়	তারা হয়

The past forms of English verb ‘to be’ (was/were) and Bangla verb ‘হওয়া’ /hoa/ (with some suffixes like ‘-লাম’ /lam/, ‘-লে’ /le/, ‘-ল’ /lo/, ‘-লো’ /lo/ and ‘-লেন’ /len/ (i.e. to show

respect) could be shown in the diagram here:

**Past Tense: Verb ‘to be’ vs. Verb ‘base + -লাম/-লে/-ল/-লো/-লেন’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I was	We were	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমি ছিলাম	আমরা ছিলাম
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You were	You were	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তুমি ছিলে	তোমরা ছিলে
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin was	They were	3 <sup>rd</sup>	সে/নাজিন ছিল	তারা ছিল

Like English, Bangla has no exact equivalent to English modal auxiliary verbs. But some words or expressions are often used in Bangla, such as ‘পারা’ /para/ for ‘can’, ‘হয়তো’ /heto/ for ‘may’ and a few Bangla suffixes like ‘-বে’ /be/, ‘-বো’ /bo/, ‘-বা’ /ba/ or ‘-বেন’ /ben/ for ‘shall’ or ‘will’, ‘উচিত’ /ujit/ for ‘must’, ‘have to’ or ‘ought to’ etc. The English modals have corresponding past forms which cannot show past tenses in any ways by themselves. Let us have a look at the diagram below with English and Bangla examples:

**Future Tense: Verb ‘to be’ vs. Verb ‘base + -বো/-বা/-বে/-বেন’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I shall be	We shall be	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমি হবো	আমরা হবো
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You will be	You will be	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তুমি হবা	তোমরা হবা
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin will be	They will be	3 <sup>rd</sup>	সে/নাজিন হবে	তারা হবে

The English verb ‘to have’ (indicating possession or ownership) is almost the same in usage and meaning for Bangla too. They are shown in the following diagrams:

**Present Tense: Verb ‘to have’ vs. Verb ‘base + -ছে’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I have	We have	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমার আছে	আমাদের আছে
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You have	You have	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তোমার আছে	তোমাদের আছে
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin has	They have	3 <sup>rd</sup>	তার/নাজিনের আছে	তাদের আছে

**Past Tense: Verb ‘to have’ vs. Verb ‘base + -ছিল/-ছিলো’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I had	We had	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমার ছিল	আমাদের ছিল
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You had	You had	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তোমার ছিল	তোমাদের ছিল
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin had	They had	3 <sup>rd</sup>	তার/নাজিনের ছিল	তাদের ছিল

**Future Tense: Verb ‘to have’ vs. Verb ‘base + -ব’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I shall have	We shall have	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমার থাকবে	আমাদের থাকবে
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You will have	You will have	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তোমার থাকবে	তোমাদের থাকবে
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin will have	They will have	3 <sup>rd</sup>	তার/নাজিনের থাকবে	তাদের থাকবে

Bangla has no English like auxiliary verbs to denote the progressive and perfective tenses and aspects. These are done in Bangla by adding some suffixes to verb bases, such as ‘-ছি’/tʃhi/, ‘-ছো’/tʃho/, ‘-ছে’/tʃhe/, ‘-ছেন’/tʃhen/ (to show respect) etc (present); ‘-ছিলাম’/tʃhilam/, ‘-ছিলো’/tʃhilo/, ‘-ছিলেন’/tʃhilen/ (to show respect) etc (past) and ‘-বো’/bo/, ‘-বা’/ba/, ‘-বে’/be/, ‘-বেন’/ben/ (to show respect) etc (future). e.g.

**English** (Present progressive): Najin is telling fables.

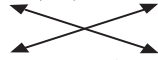
**Bangla** (Present progressive): নাজিন উপকথা বলছে।

|| nadʒin upokathā bolchhe ||

Here, ‘is’ in English is the auxiliary verb to help show progressive (present or past) tenses by adding the suffix ‘-ing’ to the verb base ‘tell’. But this is not needed or found in Bangla. For Bangla, it is usually done by adding only some suffixes, such as ‘-ছি’/tʃhi/, ‘-ছো’/tʃho/, ‘-ছ’/tʃh/, ‘-ছে’/tʃhe/, ‘-ছেন’/tʃhen/ (to show respect) etc to the Bangla verb base ‘বল’/bol/.

In both the languages, the function of adjectives is attributive and predicative though it differs in adverbs. In English, the adverb follows the principal verb, on the contrary in Bangla, the adverb precedes the verb (i.e. principal verb). e.g.

**English:** Najin tells (sth) fabulously.



**Bangla:** নাজিন চমৎকারভাবে (sth) বলে।

|| nadʒin ʃomotkarbābe bole ||

The order or sequence of persons in English is usually as second, third and first (e.g. You, He and I), but in Bangla, it is as first, second and third. e.g. ‘আমি’/ami/, ‘তুমি’/tumi/ and ‘সে’/se/. In English, the negative conversion of sentences are formed, when there is no verb ‘to be’, verb ‘to have’ or modal auxiliary verbs, with the help of ‘Do’-operators (shown below with an underline). But for ‘negative conversion’ in Bangla, there is neither any need nor any existence of such operators like English. e.g.

**English Declaratives (Neg):** Najin does not tell fables.

**Bangla Declaratives (Neg):** নাজিন উপকথা বলে না।

|| nadʒin upokathā bole na ||

In the above negative sentences, the negative word ‘not’ or ‘না’/na/ is put after auxiliary verbs (i.e. do, be, have and all modals) in English, but at the end of Bangla sentences.

It should be well noted that English has another ‘Do’ verb which is categorized as a principal verb meaning ‘performing some action’ or ‘doing something’. e.g.

**English:** Najin does his homework at night.

**Bangla:** নাজিন রাতে তার বাড়ির কাজ করে।

|| nadʒin raṭe ṭar baḍir kaḍ korē ||

English has only two tenses, in contrast Bangla has three. For example, the English verb ‘tell’ has only two tensed forms: ‘tell/tells’ (present tense) and ‘told’ (past tense). But in Bangla, there are three tensed verb forms for ‘tell’, such as the verb base and a suffix: বল/bol/+ ‘-ই’/i/, ‘-ও’/o/, ‘-এ’/e/, ‘-ন’/n/ (to show respect) for present tense; বল/bol/+ ‘-লাম’/lam/, ‘-লা’/la/, ‘-লে’/le/, ‘-লো’/lo/, ‘-ন’/n/ (to show respect) for past tense and বল/bol/+ ‘-বে’/be/, ‘-বো’/bo/, ‘-বা’/ba/, ‘-ন’/n/ (to show respect) for future tense. The diagrams here show it:

**Present Tense: Verb ‘to tell’ vs. Verb ‘বল + -ই/-ও/-এ/-ন’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I tell	We tell	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমি বলি	আমরা বলি
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You tell	You tell	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তুমি বলো	তোমরা বলো
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin tells	They tell	3 <sup>rd</sup>	সে/নাজিন বলে	তারা বলে

**Past Tense: Verb ‘to tell’ vs. Verb ‘বল + -লাম/-লো/-লা/-লেন’**

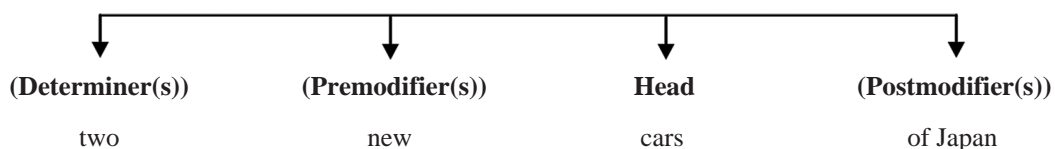
English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I told	We told	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমি বললাম	আমরা বললাম
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You told	You told	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তুমি বললো	তোমরা বললো
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin told	They told	3 <sup>rd</sup>	সে/নাজিন বললো	তারা বললো

**Future Tense: Verb ‘to tell’ vs. Verb ‘বল + -বো/-বা/-বে/-বেন’**

English			Bangla		
Person	Singular	Plural	Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I shall tell	We shall tell	1 <sup>st</sup>	আমি বলবো	আমরা বলবো
2 <sup>nd</sup>	You will tell	You will tell	2 <sup>nd</sup>	তুমি বলবা	তোমরা বলবা
3 <sup>rd</sup>	He/She/ Najin will tell	They will tell	3 <sup>rd</sup>	সে/নাজিন বলবে	তারা বলবে

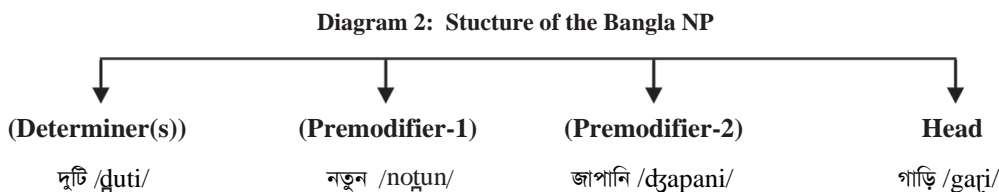
The sentence is broadly divided into subjects and predicates or noun phases (NP’s) and verb phases (VP’s) in the two languages. The structure of English NP’s is shown here:

Diagram 1: Structure of the English NP

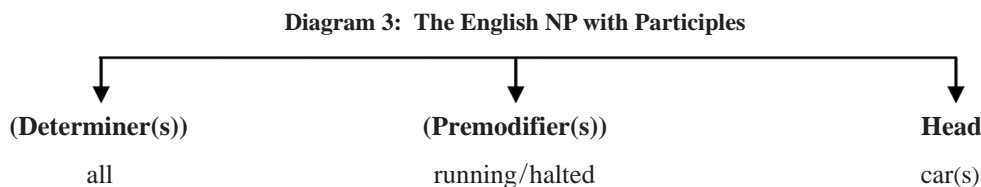


In both the languages, the subject and predicate can be one word or a group of words. Items in brackets are optional.

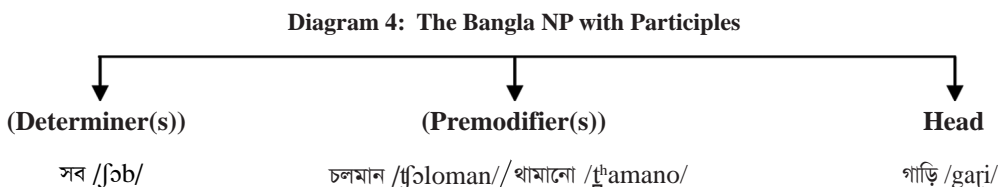
But the structures of the English and Bangla NP's are quite different. Although in Bangla, there is no such an NP like English, we can represent it in the following diagram as postmodification is hardly found in the Bangla NP:



In both the languages, the Head(word) of noun phrases (NP's) could be premodified by present or past participle(s). The English NP can be shown below in the diagram with the modification of participle(s):



Similarly, the Head of a Bangla noun phrase (NP) may be premodified by any number of present or past participles. It could be graphically represented in the following diagram for the Bangla NP:



Unlike the Bangla NP, the English NP has to accompany some determiner(s) with a singular common noun. e.g.

**English:** a/the book

**Bangla:** – বই /boi/

With the plural determiner(s) or premodifier(s), the NP in English takes plural nouns (Head), on the other hand, the NP in Bangla usually has the same structure for both singular and plural determiner(s) or premodifier(s). e.g.

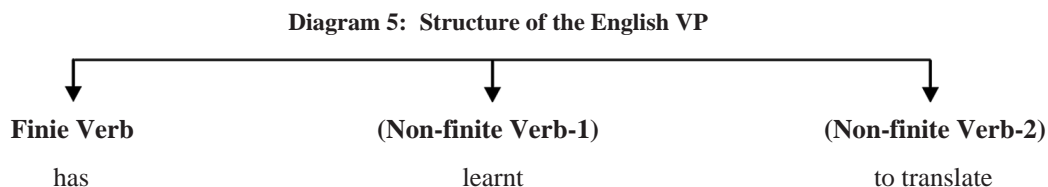
**English:** three books

**Bangla:** তিনটি বই /tinti boi/

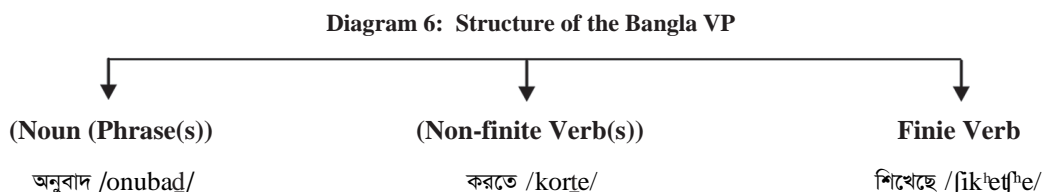
Again, there are no changes in the singular forms in the Bangla language for the Head ‘বই’ /boi/. e.g.

একটি বই /ekti boi/

The structures of the predicate (VP) in the two languages are not similar. But in both the languages, predicates must contain at least one finite verb or ‘সমাপিকা ক্রিয়া’ /somapika kria/. But any number of non-finite verbs or ‘অসমাপিকা ক্রিয়া’ /osomapika kria/ may be present or absent as it does not matter for any structures to be correct. Now, the structure of the English VP is shown here in the following diagram:



The Bangla verb phrase (VP), on the contrary to English (i.e. the position of the finite verb in the English verb phrase verb phrase (VP) has the finite verb at the end of the phrase is in the beginning) which is demonstrated below:



Thus, the simple sentences of English and Bangla are defined as having only one subject and one finite verb. But sometimes in Bangla, the finite verb may be unexpressed or implied because Bangla is not a verb oriented language. e.g.

**English:** Najin is fabulous. (Number of verbs is one)

**Bangla:** নাজিন  $\emptyset$  চমৎকার।। nadzin  $\emptyset$ comotkar।।

(Number of verbs is  $\emptyset$  = zero)

Again, there may be more than one verb in the predicate (VP) of the two languages (certainly with only one finite verb). So, the total number of verbs in English VP's may be from two to five (in the passive mode); but in Bangla, it is from one to four (in the passive mode) and all other verbs in the predicate (VP) except the finite verb are non-finite. e.g.

**English:** The bandit will have been being caught by the police. 1 2 3 4 5

(Number of verbs is five)

**Bangla:** পুলিশ কর্তৃক ডাকাত ধৃত হয়ে যেতে থাকবে।

1 2 3 4  
(Number of verbs is four)

। pulif kortrik dakat dhrito hce zete thakbe।।

Here, 'will' in English and 'থাকবে' in Bangla are finite verbs.

### An Analysis of Simple Declaratives with Extended NP's & VP's: English vs. Bangla

**English Declarative:** Our farmers lead a very poor life.

**Bangla Declarative:** আমাদের কৃষকরা অতি দরিদ্র জীবন যাপন করে।

। amader kriʃokra oti doridro dzibon zapon kore।।

Here, the affirmative sentences are shown below as Subject & Predicate forms:

Subject		Predicate	
Subject/Head(word)	Attributes/Adjuncts	Verbs	Adjuncts of Predicate
<b>English:</b> farmers	Our	lead	a very poor life.
<b>Bangla:</b> কৃষকরা	আমাদের	যাপন করে।	অতি দরিদ্র জীবন
/kriʃokra/	/amader/	/zapon	/oti doridro
		kore/	dzibon/

**English Negative (Conversion):** Our farmers do not lead a very poor life.

**Bangla Negative (Conversion):** আমাদের কৃষকরা অতি দরিদ্র জীবন যাপন করে না।

। amader kriʃokra oti doridro dzibon zapon kore na।।

Here, the negative sentences are shown below as Subject & Predicate forms:

Subject		Predicate	
Subject/Head(word)	Attributes/Adjuncts	Verbs	Adjuncts of Predicate
<b>English:</b> farmers	Our	do not lead	a very poor life.
<b>Bangla:</b> কৃষকরা	আমাদের	যাপন করে	অতি দরিদ্র জীবন
/kriʃokra/	/amader/	না।	/oti doridro
		/zapon	dzibon/
		kore na/	

### Outcome of the Study

This study is intended for helping the researchers, teachers and the learners of English or Bangla as a native, second or foreign language as a way to understand the bilingual relationship of the two languages, English and Bangla at their sentence levels. So, it will be of great value to the teachers and course designers for classroom techniques in a language teaching and learning process. If one knows the similarities and differences between the sentences of these two languages, one will be able to translate to and from one language into another effectively. This study, in fact, offers a contrasting picture of the sentence in the two languages. Nevertheless, a few researches have been conducted so far to efficiently recognize the natural English and Bangla sentences.

### CONCLUSION

A sentence is the largest unit of grammar. Since we use it as an instrument of expression in our day to day life, it is very necessary to have the comparative knowledge of the sentence in the two languages in order to make our communication as clear and accurate as needed. It is hoped that both the Bangla speaking English learners and the English speaking Bangla learners will be immensely benefited from this research because this comparative study will reveal some remarkable features of the two languages. However, a further research could provide us with some more essential information, materials as well as prescribed guidelines in this field.

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