

Abstract Title: Clause Structure and NP Modification in Bangla: Syntax-Semantics Interface

Keywords: Bangla syntax, Noun modification, Modifier licensing, Clause structure

This study is an investigation into the relationship between syntactic structures and semantic roles in NP modification in Bangla (also known as Bengali), addressing the influences of clause structure and semantic relations on the construction and interpretation of modified noun phrases. The primary focus of this paper is to see how these are manifested and dealt with in syntax in Bangla, using semantic valency, transitivity and modification.

Modification includes elements which are semantically peripheral and to which further extensions of description could be added to the primary function within clauses (Teramura, 1992). Further within the syntax of Bangla, noun modification is opened up by adjective phrases, prepositional phrases, and relative clauses. Consider the following examples:

1. a) kena aam
 bought (by someone) mango(es)
- b) aam kena
 mango(es) buying

In example 1.a) and 1.b), the position of “kena” determines what type of modification occurs in the clause. In both examples, the clause provides separate situations where the clause evokes two distinguished frames based on the specific roles. 1.a) illustrates the attribute of the “aam” (mangoes) through the “kena” (bought), while 1.b) demonstrates the procedure of purchasing “aam” through “kena”. In both cases, the head noun “aam” does not define the frame. If the head noun is aligned with one of the conveyed meanings licensed by the predicate’s frame, the construction is accepted as grammatical in Bangla.

2. a) bola golpo
 told (by someone) story(ies)
- b) golpo bola
 story(ies) telling

In 2.a) and b), the noun works as the host, even though the position of the verb influences the meaning. Here, the function of the noun is to contain the proposition and the modifying verb represents a bit of imagined context associated with the noun. Unlike example 1, the clause looks more complete and the noun indicates an informational object.

This study observes closely whether syntactically or semantically, these modifiers were incorporated into larger constructions as strict definitions of what is precisely Bangla NP modification is (Keenan & Comrie, 1977). Recent studies mention that argument structure and its valency are the most crucial variables in the construction of clauses. For example, Bhattacharya (2020) expanded the semantics of modified numerals in Bangla, considering more interactions between quantificational phrases and syntactic structures. Syed and Simpson (2017) further stir the debate regarding the DP and NP position of noun projections in Bangla by asserting the presence of a DP layer in Bangla against a previous proposal made for article-less languages. This ultimately leads to NP modifications, especially as far as issues of definiteness and specificity are concerned. On the other hand, relative clause constructions in Bangla are generally patterned into specific forms. Ishikawa and Yoshida (2024) systematically study relativisability in New Indo-Aryan languages along with Bangla, thus exposing hierarchies of

macro roles that can be relativised. It thus gives a detailed picture of modification strategies in Bangla NPs. Bhadra (2023) researched Bangla evidentiality, especially the particle “naki”, and showed that it is sensitive to syntactic position and can convey different evidential flavours. This shows the nuanced nature of interaction between syntax and semantics in Bangla clause structure. Halder (2021) deals with the syntactic distribution of the particles, which are comprehended in restricted and unrestricted positions, each resulting in different semantic interpretations, thus enhancing the perspective in understanding modification and coordination in the syntax of Bangla.

A qualitative descriptive approach rooted in formal linguistics has been adopted in this research, combining generative grammar frameworks with semantic theory. The chief query of this study is: *How does the interface between syntax and semantics manifest in the interpretation of clause structures involving NP modification?*

To get the answer to the query, the data for this research have been collected through: a) Textual Corpus Analysis, b) Elicitation and Judgement Tasks and c) Experimental tasks. For the textual corpus, a diverse corpus of contemporary Bangla texts (Aalm, 2018) has been used, which includes literary works, newspapers, and online sources. It provides authentic examples of NP modification and clause structure. In addition, native speakers of Bangla participate in elicitation and grammaticality judgment tasks to validate syntactic structures and semantic interpretations identified through textual analysis. Along with this, a controlled experimental elicitation using linguistic stimuli to test specific assumptions related to semantic ambiguity and syntactic flexibility in NP modification.

The data analysis framework of this study comprises structural analysis, which helps illuminate the hierarchies of clause and NP structures, and semantic role analysis that examines argument structures, valency, and transitivity, with respect to comparative semantic analysis using truth-conditional semantics for restrictive and descriptive modification. This analytical study marks the syntactic configuration onto the semantic interpretation, thus exposing the constraints and interactions that govern the syntax-semantics interface in Bangla.

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