

## **Patterns of Gender Assignment to English Nominal Loans in Bangla**

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**Abstract:** This paper aims at unfolding the patterns of gender assignment to English nominal loans in Bangla. By adopting the descriptive exploratory framework, the researchers have culled data from lexicographic and scholarly sources. The data then were qualitatively analyzed. Findings of the study are compatible with the theoretical postulations of Haugen (1969), Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991). Bangla assigns gender to English loan nouns in two ways – by following its own rules and in some cases by complying with the rules of the donor language. In case of the gender inflection of adapted or nativized loanwords, Bangla applies its own rules. The second approach is the inflection of adopted or unmodified borrowings as per the grammatical rules of the source language. Beyond the adopted – adapted binary, there are some special cases where the Banglophones apply language-specific techniques. As these techniques are beyond the ken of typological findings of the trio mentioned above, and no hard and fast rule is followed in these cases of unique feminization, we have collectively dubbed these as the ‘arbitrary approach’. Structurally, after automatically assigning the borrowed item to the strongest gender i.e. masculine gender, Bangla inflects the loanwords by adding feminine suffixes (Daktar – Daktarni), by placing canonical feminine markers before or after the nouns (Mahila Commissioner, Lady biker, Magistrate-patni), in some special cases by zero morpheme (‘Home Minister’ meaning someone’s wife) and lexically (Husband – Wife).

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**Keywords:** Loanwords, loan nouns, natural gender, unmarked gender, inflection

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### **1. Introduction**

Gender is a very perplexing phenomenon in some languages (not only for foreign learners, even for native speakers, especially at the initial phase of language acquisition) while in some it is easier to master. In gendered languages like Spanish, French and German, it is a highly complex system of nominal classification making the languages harder for foreign learners especially learners from L1 with non-grammatical gender system. In this context, we can remember the interesting observations of Mark Twain regarding the gender system of the German language:

- A. In German, a young lady has no sex, while a turnip has. Think what overwrought reverence that shows for the turnip, and what callous disrespect for the girl. See how it looks in print--I translate this from a conversation in one of the best of the German Sunday-school books:

"Gretchen. Wilhelm, where is the turnip?"

"Wilhelm. She has gone to the kitchen.

"Gretchen. Where is the accomplished and beautiful English maiden?

"Wilhelm. It has gone to the opera." (Twain, 1997: 430)

- B. "A person's mouth, neck, bosom, elbows, fingers, nails, feet, and body are of the male sex, and his head is male or neuter according to the word selected to signify it, and not according to the sex of the individual who wears it! A person's nose, lips, shoulders, breast, hands, and toes are of the female sex; and his hair, ears, eyes, chin, legs, knees, heart, and conscience haven't any sex at all..." (Twain, 1997: 435)

From the perspective of the complications of German gender system highlighted by Mark Twain in an entertaining way, the gender system of the English language is much easier for the foreign learners of the tongue. As Bangla and English are genealogically connected and both the languages have a long history of intimate contact, their systems of gender are much similar to each other. Both English and Bangla have a four-class gender system – m, f, n and an additional type dubbed as the 'Common gender'. In both the languages, the statistically strongest gender or the 'unmarked gender' is the masculine gender.

## **2. Theoretical Background: Gender Taxonomy and the Gender-Sex Dichotomy**

### **2.1 Gender**

The literatures of the Social Sciences and Applied Linguistics are replete with definitions of gender. From the plethora of definitions, the ones provided by Ibrahim (1973), Corbett (1991) and Comrie (2008) are noteworthy for their context-specificity. Basing on the works of the afore-mentioned scholars we can infer that gender is a system of the classification of a noun or pronoun on the basis of their having masculine or feminine traits (Ibrahim, 1973; Corbett, 1991; Comrie, 2008). From this definition it is evident that genders are classes of nouns or pronouns. Genders can affect the behaviour of associated words like articles, determiners, quantifiers, numerals, possessives, verbs, adjectives, adverbs etc.

Gender is considered an inherent attribute of the nominal class. They can affect the forms of other associated words. This interaction between nouns and linked words is known as 'agreement'. Nouns are the "triggers" of the process. The words receiving the action of the trigger are the 'targets' of the change. Gender is generally taxonomized into four common classes – m (masculine), f (feminine), n (neuter) and common. Gender division is also made along the line of animacy and inanimacy.

### **2.2 The Gender-sex Dichotomy**

Although 'gender' and 'sex' are interchangeably used, there are some subtle differences between the two. Sex refers to some biological attributes in living entities. Among the features are genes, chromosomes, hormonal level and function and reproductive anatomy. Sex is traditionally treated to be binary, composed of the male and

female elements. The basic difference between sex and gender is that while sex is rooted in biology, gender has its roots in society. In short, gender is a social construct. It generally refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours and identities. Gender identity, unlike sex, is not confined to the male-female binary; nor is it static. It has its unique dynamics and it can change over time.

### **2.3 Natural Gender**

Definitions of natural gender are copious. Among them, Corbett's (1991) definition bears special significance to the context of the present research. According to this researcher, the gender that corresponds to the sex of the referent can be called 'Natural gender' (Corbett, 1991). In simpler terms, we can say that when a noun refers to male entities, we say that it is 'masculine', when it refers to female beings we call it 'feminine'. When a noun refers to something that is neither masculine nor feminine, its gender is thought to be 'neuter'. Natural gender is the opposite concept of grammatical gender. English and Bangla follow natural gender.

### **2.4 Grammatical Gender**

Grammatical gender is a noun class system with two or three types (Hartman and Stork, 1972; Crystal 1985; Dixon, 1968). Nouns having human male and female referents in a language with grammatical gender tend to be in separate classes. These separate classes include masculine and feminine. Nouns affiliated to grammatical gender without any correlation to sex distinction is the third member of grammatical gender. It is dubbed as 'Neuter gender'. So, we see that Grammatical gender is composed of three constituent elements – Masculine (m), Feminine (f) and Neuter (n).

## **3. Literature Review**

Researchers like Haugen (1969), Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991) have made significant contributions towards the unfolding of gender assignment patterns followed by human languages with reference to the adaptation of nominal loanwords. According to Haugen (1969:448), "the underlying assumption is that normally loan nouns are assigned to the statistically strongest gender or the default/unmarked productive gender. In most languages for which the phenomenon has been studied a clear tendency is seen to assign loanwords to one particular gender unless specific analogies intervene to draw them into other classes". The unmarked gender in languages under study here i.e., English and Bangla is the masculine gender.

On the other hand, Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991) maintain that loan nouns follow the gender assignment rules of the recipient language. Nominal borrowings comply with the rules followed by their native counterparts. In other words, we can say that loanwords are automatically given a gender by the native speakers of the borrowing language. This assignment of gender is done in accordance with the gender system of the recipient language. The gender assignment of the loanword, however, can also be

determined by the donor language as well. So, we see that gender assignment of the nominal loan can be done in two ways -

- Gender assignment by the rules of borrowing language
- Gender assignment by the rules of the donor language

## 4. Gender in Bangla

### 4.1 Mechanisms of Gender Inflection in Bangla

Gender, as we have already discussed in the preceding sections, is the classification of a noun or pronoun as masculine or feminine. Therefore, it is based on biological sex excluding the case of grammatical gender. Typically, Bangla has a three- class gender system – m, f and n. An additional class is also used in Bangla which is known as the ‘common gender’.

Some common examples and mechanisms of gender inflection in Bangla are given below (Islam et al, 2018):

- A. Words denoting husband and wife: Chacha (চাচা) – Chachi (চাচী); Mama (মামা) – Mami (মামী); Jeley (জেলে) – Jeleni (জেলেনী)
- B. Words denoting males and females: Chheley (ছেলে) – Meye (মেয়ে); Pagla (পাগলা) – Pagli (পাগলী); Gayak (গায়ক) – Gayika (গায়িকা)
- C. Inflection of Sanskrit words: Kanishthho (কনিষ্ঠ) – Kanishthha (কনিষ্ঠা); Gunoban (গুণবান) – Gunobati (গুণবতী); Karta (কর্তা) – Kartri (কর্ত্রী)
- D. Gender inflection through the use of suffixes: Chakor (চাকর) – Chakrani (চাকরানী); Kamar (কামার) – Kamarni (কামারনী); Kangal (কাঙ্গাল) – Kangalini (কাঙ্গালিনী)
- E. By using different words: Nabab (নবাব) – Begum (বেগম); Mia (মিয়া) – Bibi (বিবি); Bhut (ভূত) – Petni (পেত্নী)
- F. By adding words indicating feminine before or after the noun: Pulish – Mahila pulish; Kobi (কবি) – Mahila kobi (মহিলা কবি); Dhopa (ধোপা) – Dhopa bou (ধোপা বউ)
- G. By substituting the masculine portion of a compound word with a feminine marker: Bhodrolok (ভদ্রলোক) – Bhodromahila (ভদ্রমহিলা); Purushmanush (পুরুষমানুষ) – Meyemanush (মেয়েমানুষ); Betachhele (বেটাছেলে) – Meyechehele (মেয়েছেলে)

Some examples of the common gender in Bangla are – Bachcha (বাচ্চা), Shikarthhi (শিক্ষার্থী), Manush (মানুষ) etc. In Bangla, we do not have gender-specific pronouns as we notice in the English language. Unlike Hindi, verbs in Bangla do not change with gender. However, some adjectives are seen to change in Bangla along with the change of gender. For example, think of the word ‘Buddhiman (বুদ্ধিমান, a male intelligent person)’. The female counterpart of the word is ‘Buddhimati (বুদ্ধিমতী, a female intelligent person)’.

Some other examples of this class include Rupban (রূপবান, Handsome) - Rupabti (রূপবতী, Beautiful), Sundar (সুন্দর, Handsome) -Sundari (সুন্দরী, Beautiful) etc.

#### **4.2 Common Rules Used in Bangla for Gender Inflection**

Bangla follows three rules to convert masculine into feminine – Lexical, Morphological and Syntactic. They are discussed below –

1. Lexical inflection: Some masculine forms are changed into feminine lexically. For example, Baba (বাবা, father) – Ma (মা, Mother), Chhele (ছেলে, Boy) – Meye (মেয়ে, Girl) etc.
2. Morphological inflection: Some masculine forms are converted into feminine form by affixing feminine suffix to the words. For example, Mama (মামা, Maternal Uncle) – Mami (মামী, Maternal aunt), Chacha (চাচা, Paternal uncle) – Chachi (চাচী, Paternal aunt), Kamar (কামার, Blacksmith) – Kamarni (কামারনি, Female blacksmith), Dhopa (ধোপা, Washerman – Dhopani (ধোপানি, Female launderer), Thakur (ঠাকুর) – Thakurani (ঠাকুরানি)
3. Syntactic inflection: Masculine and feminine contrast may also be achieved by adding pre-nominal modifier to the nominal head – Putra santan (পুত্রসন্তান, Male child) – Konna santan (কন্যাসন্তান, Female child), Purush protinidhi (পুরুষ প্রতিনিধি, Male representative)– Mohila Protinidhi (মহিলা প্রতিনিধি, Female representative), Purushmanush (পুরুষ মানুষ, Male person) – Meyemanush (মেয়ে মানুষ, Female person)

### **5. Materials and Method**

This study is qualitative descriptive. The basic data for this research have been collected from different sources including dictionaries, recognized textbooks of Bangla grammar, specialized lexicons and scholarly publications. As the researchers are native Bangla speakers, their status has also contributed to the enrichment and diversification of the data. The native status of the researchers has also helped in lending authenticity to the data collected from secondary sources. Researcher observation as a research tool has been considered to be instrumental by theoreticians like Weinreich (1953). The researchers have amply used their observations as a strong tool in the preparation of the paper.

### **6. Data**

- A. The following examples have been collected from Moitree (2004), Islam et al (2018), Biswas (2009) and Rashid (2017) -  
Daktar (ডাক্তার) - Daktarni (ডাক্তারনি, Female doctor)  
Master (মাস্টার)- Mastarni (মাস্টারনি, Female master or teacher)

Footballer (ফুটবলার) - Pramila footballer (প্রমীলা ফুটবলার, Female footballer)  
Magistrate (ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট) - Mahila Magistrate (মহিলা ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট, Female magistrate)  
Judge (জাজ) - Mahila Judge (মহিলা জাজ, Female judge)  
Athlete (এথলেট) - Mahila athlete (মহিলা এথলেট, Female athlete)  
Cricketer (ক্রিকেটার) - Mahila cricketer (মহিলা ক্রিকেটার, Female cricketer)  
Scientist (সায়েনটিস্ট) - Mahila scientist (মহিলা সায়েনটিস্ট, Female scientist)

B. The following examples of gender inflection of English loanwords in Bangla have been collected from Musa and Ilyas (2002):

Advocate (অ্যাডভোকেট) – Mahila advocate (মহিলা অ্যাডভোকেট)  
Lecturer (লেকচারার) – Mahila lecturer (মহিলা লেকচারার)  
Police commissioner (পুলিশ কমিশনার) – Mahila police commissioner (মহিলা পুলিশ কমিশনার)  
Medical officer (মেডিক্যাল অফিসার) – Mahila medical officer (মহিলা মেডিক্যাল অফিসার)  
Stepfather (স্টেপফাদার) – Stepmother (স্টেপমাদার)

C. Amin (2019) has recorded the following ones in his dictionary:

Sir (স্যার) – Madam (ম্যাডাম)  
The compiler has used the word ‘Ardaly’ (nativized form of the English word ‘Orderly’) as an instance of common gender.

D. Goswami (2020) shown that the following words in Bangla exclusively refer to the members of the feminine gender:

Appel (from English ‘Apple’. A beautiful woman)  
Taxi (An unchaste woman)  
Home minister (A very powerful housewife)  
Red flag (A woman during her menstrual period)

E. The following words have been included in Basu (2009):

Red signal (A married woman)  
Signboardwala (A married woman)  
Boma from English ‘bomb’ (An attractive girl)  
Piece (A beautiful girl)  
Double decker (A pregnant woman)  
Teenu from English ‘Teenager’ (A young boy or girl)  
Cupboard (An obese woman)  
Chocolate hero (A hero with a feminine appearance)  
Item (A beautiful girl)  
English (An ultramodern girl)

## 7. Qualitative Analysis of Data

The first loanword in our data (A) ‘daktarni’ is an example of phonologically adapted loanword. In complete conformity with the hypothesis of Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991), this loan noun is affixed with the native feminine marker suffix ‘-ni’ resulting in the feminine form ‘daktarni (lady doctor)’. The second example ‘mastarni (lady teacher) also follows the same process as has been by the first one.

Apart from the use of feminine morpheme as we have seen in the two previous examples, Bangla also uses ‘words denoting feminine’ before loan nouns. The English loanword ‘Magistrate’ (A) has been feminized by the use of ‘mahila (lady)’ before it. The same process is followed by loan nouns like ‘Judge’, ‘Athlete’, ‘Cricketer’, ‘Lecturer’, ‘Advocate’ ‘Police commissioner’, and ‘Scientist’.

Amin (2019) shows that we frequently use the gender inflection of ‘sir’ as ‘madam’. But he points out that the word ‘madam’ has undergone semantic change in Bangla. ‘Madam’ often pronounced as ‘mam’ by the speakers of Bangla means ‘A woman of European origin.’ The English loanword ‘Orderly’ which has been phonologically nativized as ‘Ardaly’ (আর্দালি) generally refers to a ‘peon who is by assumption a male person’.

Goswami (2020) has recorded some interesting examples of gender inflection of English loanwords in Bangla. The nouns ‘Apple’, ‘Taxi’, and ‘Red flag’ (Data – E) are all examples of neuter gender in English. But in Bangla all of these words, besides their source language identity, have been assigned to the feminine gender. In their specialized meanings, the words in the recipient language mean ‘a beautiful woman’, ‘an unchaste woman’ and ‘a woman in her menstrual period’. Apart from these connotative meanings, as we have already implied, the borrowed items are also used in their denotative senses. The remaining word ‘home minister’ belongs to the common gender in English. It has retained the same gender role in Bangla as well. For example, let us consider these sentences - ‘হোম মিনিস্টার এখন মিটিংয়ে ব্যস্ত’, and ‘হোম মিনিস্টার মহোদয়া বিশ্রামে আছেন’. Here, ‘home minister’ has been used as masculine gender (by assumption) in the first sentence while in the second one it has been inflected into feminine gender syntactically. But in the following sentence ‘home minister’ has been exclusively assigned to the feminine gender – ‘সংসারের খুঁটিনাটি বিষয় আমি কিছুই জানিনা – এসব বিষয় আমার হোম মিনিস্টারই সামলান’. Here ‘home minister’ means ‘wife’. So, the loan item ‘home minister’ in this special sense belongs to the feminine gender in Bangla.

Like Goswami (2020), Basu (2009) has also recorded some curious cases of gender assignment to English loanwords in Bangla. Some items which are neuter in English, but assigned feminine gender in Bangla in their special senses include – ‘red signal’ (A married woman), ‘boma’ (adapted from the English word ‘Bomb’ meaning an attractive girl), ‘signboardwalla’ (A married woman), ‘piece’ (A beautiful girl), ‘double decker’ (A pregnant woman), ‘cupboard’ (An obese woman), ‘item’ (A beautiful girl) and ‘English’ (An ultramodern girl). Rashid (2017) in his dictionary has included the word ‘dynamite’ along with ‘boma’ in the sense of ‘an attractive girl’. All these words, in their specialized senses, have been assigned to the feminine gender in Bangla. From the remaining words, ‘teenu’ refers to both ‘young boys and girls’ and hence it belongs to common gender.

‘Chocolate hero (An effeminate hero)’ as it is evident belongs to the masculine gender class. The loanwords, in their specialized senses, tend to be assigned to the feminine category. The data both from Goswami (2020) and Basu (2009) attest to this fact.

In the section titled, ‘Patterns of Gender Assignment to Loanwords’, we have seen that there are two major patterns of gender assignment to loanwords. Our data, though very limited, show that Bangla employs first pattern in assigning gender to English loanwords. In inflecting the English loanwords ‘Daktar’ (Doctor) and ‘Mashtar’ (Master), Bangla has used its own morphological rule by adding the native feminine marker suffix ‘-ni’ to the lexical borrowings to feminize them. Here, it is noticeable that both the words have undergone phonological adaptation. As it has been observed by researchers including Haugen (1969), adapted loanwords follow the gender system of the borrowing language. The validity of this hypothesis has been attested by our data.

The second type of words like ‘footballer’, ‘cricketer’, ‘magistrate’, and ‘scientist’ are adopted loanwords i.e. they have been accepted by Bangla without any change. Unmodified or unassimilated loanwords in Bangla are not morphologically inflectable. They are, as a rule, syntactically processed by adding lexemes before or after them. As we see, in case of ‘footballer’, the feminine marker word ‘pramila’ is used before the loanword which results in the new form ‘Pramila footballer’. An example of another type of feminization can be ‘Magistrate-patni’. Here the word ‘patni (wife)’ has been placed after the loanword ‘magistrate’ to result in the feminine form ‘Magistrate-patni’. Loanwords normally tend to take the unmarked gender of the borrowing language. Haugen (1969) also endorses this view in a roundabout way – he postulates that loanwords are assigned to the statistically strongest gender. In Bangla, the masculine gender is the unmarked gender. So, when we borrow an unmarked noun from the English language, in the new abode the loanword is assigned its equivalent counterpart. So words like ‘footballer’, ‘cricketer’, ‘scientist’ when borrowed are automatically assigned the unmarked gender, which in Bangla is the masculine gender. As the masculine form is treated as the base form in Bangla, the borrowed form is morphologically or syntactically processed to get the feminine form. So, to feminize the unassimilated loanwords like ‘footballer’, ‘scientist’ etc., we adopt the syntactic process and get the feminine form by placing feminine word ‘mahila’ before them. In case of the adapted loanwords like ‘Daktar (Doctor)’ and ‘Mashtar (master), we also automatically assign the unmarked gender in Bangla i.e masculine to the lexical borrowings and inflect them by adding the native feminine marker suffix ‘-ni’ to them. So, in Bangla we see that in case of both the assimilated and unassimilated borrowings, we assign the unmarked marked gender to them and afterwards get the feminine form (or in a few cases, the reverse) by morphological or syntactic processing.

## **8. Findings**

The data that we have collected and used in the preparation of this paper is not exhaustive, yet it is representative. The following are our findings from the analysis of this rather anorexic data –

- Gender is assigned to English loanwords in Bangla depending on their status in the recipient language.



- Assimilated or partially assimilated English loanwords in Bangla are affixed with native feminine marker suffixes to inflect the loan noun to feminine.
- Adopted English loan nouns in Bangla are converted to feminine form by adding feminizing word before or after the loanword.
- In Bangla, the masculine gender is the ‘unmarked gender’ while the feminine gender is treated to be the ‘marked gender’.
- To inflect nominal loans for gender, Bangla follows the two global patterns of gender assignment to loanwords.

**Table 1**

*Summary of the Gender Inflection of Some English Loan Nouns in Bangla*

Loanword	As written in Bangla	Type of loanword	Gender in English	Assigned gender in Bangla	Inflected form & gender	Global Processes of inflection	Local process of inflection
Daktar (from Doctor)	ডাক্তার	Adapted	Masculine	Masculine	ডাক্তারনি; feminine	Morphological	
Magistrate	ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট	Adopted	Masculine	Masculine	মহিলা ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট ; feminine	Syntactic	
Footballer	ফুটবলার	Adopted	Masculine	Masculine	প্রমিলা ফুটবলার; feminine	Syntactic	
Home minister	হোম মিনিস্টার	Adopted	Common	Feminine (special cases)	হোম মিনিস্টার; feminine		Arbitrary
Double decker	ডাবল ডেকার	Adopted	Neuter	Feminine (special cases)	ডাবল ডেকার		Arbitrary
Teenu (from teenager)	টিনু	Adapted	Common	Common	টিনু; Common		
Taxi	ট্যাক্সি	Adapted	Neuter	Feminine	ট্যাক্সি; Feminine		Arbitrary

- Apart from compliance to the two global patterns of gender assignment to loan nouns, Bangla also assigns gender to some nominal loans arbitrarily. For example, ‘double decker’ and ‘red signal’ are gender neutral in English. But curiously enough in Bangla they mean ‘a pregnant woman’ and ‘a married woman’ respectively and hence they are assigned to the group of feminine gender. The same arbitrary gender assignment pattern is noticeable in words like ‘Home minister’, ‘English’, ‘Boma (from Bomb)’, ‘Item’, ‘Cupboard’, ‘Piece’ and ‘Appel (from Apple)’. In English, the first two belong to the common gender group while others are gender neutral. But in Bangla, they are arbitrarily assigned to the feminine category.

- So, in Bangla we see three patterns of gender assignment to English loanwords – Morphological, syntactic and arbitrary. Morphological pattern is used for assimilated or partially assimilated borrowings, the syntactic one is used for adopted or unchanged loanwords while both adapted and adopted loanwords are used in the arbitrary pattern.

### **8.1 Why are Some Loanwords Morphologically Inflected While Others are Not?**

In Bangla, we notice the frequent use of the feminine form ‘daktarni’. The feminine form has been derived from the adapted English loanword ‘daktar (from doctor)’. In the same way, we have got the loan feminine form ‘mastarni’. The question that can plague the curious mind is that why don’t we have inflected forms like ‘magistrateni’, ‘judgni’, ‘advocateni’, ‘commissionarni’? The linguistic answer to this question has been provided by researchers like Haugen (1969), Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991), among others. When nominal loans undergo some changes and subsequently become adapted to the recipient language, in their inflections for number and gender, the rules of the borrowing language are followed. On the other hand, when words are borrowed without any change, in the inflections of these adopted words, the rules of the source language are followed. This is the linguistic reason why in Bangla we morphologically inflect the word ‘daktar’ to feminize it but to get the feminine form of ‘magistrate’, we inflect it syntactically i.e. we follow the rules of the donor language.

### **8.2 The ‘Marked’ and ‘Unmarked’ Gender in Bangla**

In Bangla, like the English language, the masculine form is not overtly represented. For example, when we use the word ‘Kobi’ (কবি, Poet), we automatically think of a poet who is male. To feminize the word, we employ the syntactic technique and the resultant word is ‘Mahila kobi’ (মহিলা কবি) meaning a ‘Poetess’. By affixation we get ‘Goalini (গোয়ালিনী, Milkmaid)’ from ‘Goala (গোয়াল, Milkman)’. So, it is clear that in Bangla the masculine form of nouns is the base to which feminine markers or suffixes are added for gender inflection. As the masculine form is the base, it is inflected by nothing or by ‘Zero morpheme’ in complete contrast to overt feminine markers. Hence, we can postulate that Bangla masculine form is the unmarked gender while feminine gender is the marked category.

This notion of gender ‘markedness’ and ‘unmarkedness’ is maintained by Bangla in case of English nominal loans as well. Let us think of the English loanwords ‘Magistrate’ and ‘Daktar’. As loanwords, they generally refer to male persons involved in the administrative/judicial and medical jobs. The female counterparts of the two lexical borrowings in Bangla are ‘Mahila magistrate’ and ‘Daktarni’. So, we see that the masculine forms have been derived by using ‘zero morphemes’. On the other hand, by treating the masculine forms as the base, the feminine forms have been created syntactically and morphologically. Hence, we can draw the conclusion that even English loan nouns in Bangla conform to the native tradition of gender ‘markedness’ and ‘unmarkedness’. This is in line with the observation of Weinreich (1953) and Comrie (2008). They have agreed

that when foreign nouns are borrowed and nativized, they are generally treated as native nominal forms in the recipient language.

## **9. Implications**

This research is a qualitative descriptive study based on a limited data set. Yet from this study between English and Bangla on the issue of English loan noun acceptance in Bangla and the assignment of gender to the borrowings, we have got some insights. We have traced that Bangla applies the rules of its own gender system in allocating gender to the nominal loans. This gender assignment is done in two ways, morphologically and syntactically. As both English and Bangla use natural gender, this behaviour cannot be expected to take place in cases of lexical transaction, for example, between Persian and Bangla or Bangla and Arabic or between Bangla and Urdu. As these languages have made significant contributions to the Bangla lexicon, research on gender assignment of loan nouns from Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Hindi and Turkish demands special attention. Extensive researches on those languages in relation to their nominal loans to Bangla will reveal whether Bangla follows the same route as it follows in accepting loan nouns from English or different routes in assigning gender to loan nouns from those languages.

## **10. Concluding Remarks**

Nouns have always been found to be the most frequent category in the corpora of lexical borrowings (Canon, 1998; Matras, 2009). Hence inflection of nominal category is one of the most important morphological properties of the borrowing language. Researchers like Weinreich (1953) and Comrie (2008) have agreed that when a foreign noun is nativized, it should be dealt with as any other native nominal form of the recipient language. The first two examples of the collected data conform to the postulation of Weinreich (1953) and Comrie (2008). The second pattern of gender assignment to English loan nouns followed by Bangla endorses the view of Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991) by implication.

In case of assigning gender to unchanged or adopted English loan nouns, the second pattern which we call the syntactic process, is employed. A canonical feminine marker lexeme is added before the unassimilated English noun and thus we derive the feminine form of the loan noun. For example, Magistrate – Mahila Magistrate (Lady Magistrate). This respect and conformity of English loan nouns to Bangla gender system can be found in the fact that in the spoken language of the educated class we frequently notice the use of ‘lady doctor’. We have never seen the use of the inflected form of ‘doctor’ as ‘doctorni’. But use of ‘daktarni’ is copious and attested by both lexicographic and literary sources. So why do we not use terms like ‘doctorni’ and ‘teacherni’? How can we account for this phenomenon? This native inflection of the words do not take place because these words are not adapted rather they are adopted. As they have not been nativized, quite in complete unison with the observation of Weinreich (1953), Comrie (2008), Ibrahim (1973) and Corbett (1991), these words are not affixed with Bangla feminine morpheme. They undergo feminization syntactically.

Besides the use of the two global patterns of gender assignment to English loanwords, Bangla also makes use of a language-specific technique which we have dubbed as the ‘arbitrary’ process. In the arbitrary process, the Banglophones sometimes assign an English neuter noun like ‘taxi’ (meaning a woman who provides sexual pleasure to many men) and a common noun like ‘home minister’ (meaning wife) to the feminine category. This kind of arbitrary gender assignment takes place in the conversations of educated people or in creative domains like plays or fictions.

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