Standard Colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil Dialect: A Comparative Phonological Study

Md. Mostafa Rashel, M.A., M.Phil. Researcher

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Abstract:

Bengali is an Eastern Indo-Aryan language of the Indo-European language family. Bengali has several dialects and sister languages. Chatkhil dialect in Noakhali region is one of them. Chatkhil dialect (CD) is a different dialect in Noakhali district for its individual phonological, morphological and syntactical features. In this paper I have tried to comparison between Standard Colloquial Bengali Language (SCB) and Chatkhil Dialect on the aspects of phonological features. There are some significant rules to determine consonants and vowel phonemes and allophones in this dialect. These entries components are discussed in this paper from the aspects of field linguistics.

Key Words: Dialect, phonology, diphthongs, standard Bengali, diglossia

1. Introduction

Bengali, also called Bangla, is the official language of Bangladesh and the Indian States of West Bengal and Tripura. There are over 200 million native speakers of this language across the world and it has the pride of place as the 5th most spoken language in the world (after Mandarin, Spanish, English and Hindustani (Hindi-Urdu)). Bengali is the second most commonly spoken language in India (after Hindi).

Bengali is an Eastern Indo-Aryan language of the Indo-European language family (Masica; 1991). Its immediate predecessor was 'Magadhi Apabhransha'. From this emerged the three languages – Bengali, Oriya and Assamese. Bangla exhibits a strong case of diglossia between the formal, written language and the vernacular spoken language. This is a situation (diglossia) in a particular society when a language has two forms; the first of a higher prestige and the second of a lower prestige. While the latter is a colloquial tongue, the former is used in more formal contexts such as Government documents. The two standard written forms of Bangla; Shadhubhasha and Choltibhasha stand in sharp contrast with the spoken forms of Bangla, often referred to as Ancholik Bangla (Regional Bangla). Choltibhasha (literally, the current language) comprises the standard pronunciation of Bangla and thus serves as the basis for the orthography of most Bengali writing today. It is modeled on the form of the dialect spoken in the Shantipur region in Nadia district, West Bengal and districts bordering on the lower reaches of the Hooghly River. Three or four periods are identified in the history of the language: Old Bengali (1000 –

1400 AD), Mid-Bengali (1400 – 1800 AD) and Modern Bengali (1800 AD –) (Banglapedia; 2004). However, there are some scholars who believe Bengali is much older, perhaps going back to even 500 AD. Modern Bengali; this period witnessed the development of Bengali language as we speak it today. It developed through the writings, influential poets and many other great writers of Bengal and Bangladesh.

Bengali has several dialects and sister languages. 19th century linguist, Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1926) classified Bangla dialects into four broad groups: Radh, Banga, Kamarupa and Varendra; Sukumar Sen (1939) added one more and defined five groups of dialects: Radhi, Bangali, Kamrupi, Varendri and Jhadkhandi. Radhi is the basis of standard colloquial Bangla, spoken in wide areas of south-western Bengal. More modern classifications have separated twelve different dialects and derivatives spoken mainly in the Eastern regions of India and Bangladesh. The Bengali which is used mainly in Central Bengal around Calcutta and the Nadia districts. Kharia Thar, Mal Paharia, Saraki are derivatives and is the lingua of the tribal's of the Indian states of Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal. Northern Bengali dialects are Koch and Siripuria. Haijong, the official language of Nepal, has very close similarities to these Northern dialects. Other regional dialect of Bengali includes Rajbangsi, Bahe, Ganda, Vanga and Chittagonian. There are some minor differences in the usage of vocabulary and the pronunciation between the standard Bengali of West Bengal and Bangladesh (Shahidullah; 1965).

Dialects of Bengali language are the part of the Eastern Indo-Aryan language group of the Indo-European language family. Barishali (Barishal region), Noakhali, Rongpore, Khulna, Mymansingh, Sylheti (Sylhet region) are major spoken dialects in country. Chittagonian, Chakma and Rohingya are some of the many languages that are often considered dialects of Bengali. Although these languages are mutually intelligible with neighboring dialects of Bengali, they would not be understood by a native speaker of Standard Bengali.

Chatkhil is one of the smallest upazilla (A division of a District) of Noakhali district according to the area. This upazilla was established in February 2, 1977 (Islam; 1998). Chatkhil dialect is somehow the part of the greater Noakhali dialect. The distance from Chatkhil to Maijdi is about 100 sq. kilometers (Banglapedia; 2004). The recent development of communication system is unprecedented. The inhabitants of different areas of greater Noakhali immigrated in this area and put up permanent residence in the past. Most of the immigrant people came from Lakshmipur, Laksham, Camilla, Ramganj etc. A number of people emigrated from far-off greater Chittagong.

The total number of people coming from Hatiya is comparatively less for the cause of natural hindrances. In course of time another dialect i.e., *Chatkhil dialect* of Noakhali is created for these people of different origin living together. Now the individual Phonology, Morphology and Syntactic characteristics of Chatkhil dialect are present in this dialect.
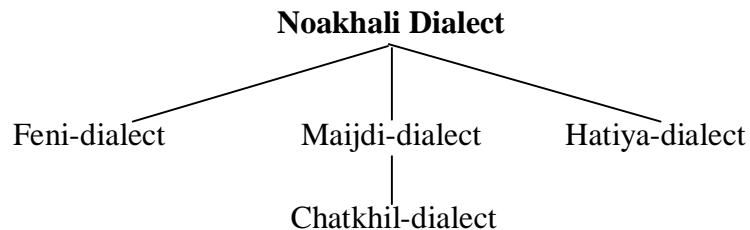
Noakhali Dialect

Feni-dialect   Maijdi-dialect   Hatiya-dialect

Chatkhil-dialect

Figure – 1: The Origin of Chatkhil Dialect

2. Comparative phonological analysis

There are forty-eight letters in alphabet and arranged phonetically beginning with all of the vowels followed by the consonants, the semi-vowels and the breath sound. There are some sounds that are not found in indo-European languages but if care is taken in use of vocal organs the correct sound can be produced. According to the linguist's thoughts, a language can be better understood only if it approached from the perspective of what it sounds like and not how it is pronounced.

There are eleven vowels, twenty five consonants, five semi vowels and seven breath sounds in the alphabet. The consonants can be divided into five groups in accordance with the position of the mouth in which they are produced. The first group is produced at the back of the mouth and so is called *"guttural"*. The second class is produced on the soft palate that is *"palatal"*. The third is produced on the hard palate at the top of the mouth which called *"cerebral"*. The fourth is produced on the teeth, is called *"dental"*. The final group is produced with the help of lips and it's called *"labial"*. (Ali; 2001)

2.1. Consonants

Standard Colloquial Bengali   *Chatkhil-dialect*

/p/ /pʰ/ /b/ /bʰ/ /m/   /p/ /pʰ/ /b/ /m/

/t̪/ /t̪/ /d̪/ /d̪ʰ/   /t̪/ /t̪ʰ/ /d̪/ /d̪ʰ/

/n/ /r/ /l/ /s/   /n/ /r/ /l/ /s/

/c/ /cʰ/ /ɟ/ /ɟʰ/ /ʃ/   /c/ /ɟ/ /ʃ/

/t/ /tʰ/ /d/ /ɽ/ /ɽʰ/   /t/ /tʰ/ /d/ /ɽ/

/k/ /kʰ/ /g/ /gʰ/ /ŋ/   /k/ /kʰ/ /g/ /ŋ/

/y/ /w/ /h/   /h/

It is notable that the pronouncing aspirated consonants [/cʰ//bʰ//ɟʰ//ɽʰ//gʰ/] of standard colloquial Bengali (SCB) are not present in Chatkhil dialect. As a result the contexts of sound are unique in this dialect and they are influenced by other consonants. The matter is discussed below with examples.

bʰ > b: Llabial, plosive, voiceless, aspirated consonants /bʰ/ is turn into the bilabial, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /b/in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[labʰ]	[lab]	Profit
[bʰalɔ]	[balɔ]	Good

t̪ʰ > t̪: Dental, plosive, voiceless, aspirated /t̪ʰ/is turn into the dental, plosive, unaspirated, voiceless /t̪/ after the words in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[mat̪ʰa]	[mat̪a]	Head
[lat̪ʰi]	[lat̪i]	Kick

bʰ > b: Bilabial, plosive, voiceless, unaspirated /bʰ/is turn into the bilabial, plosive, unaspirated, voiced /b/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[bʰat̪]	[bat̪]	Rice
[bʰul]	[bul]	Mistake

d̪ʰ > d̪: Dental-plosive, voiced, aspirated /d̪ʰ/is turn into the dental, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /d̪/in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[d̪ʰan]	[d̪an]	Rice
[d̪ʰar]	[d̪ar]	Borrow

dʰ > d: Palato-alveolar, plosive, voiceless, aspirated /dʰ/is turn into the Palato-alveolar, plosive, voiced, aspirated /d̪/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[dʰal]	[dal]	Bark
[ɔdʰel]	[ɔdel]	A lot of

cʰ > c: Palatal, plosive, voiceless, aspirated /cʰ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the Palatal, plosive, unaspirated, fricatives /c/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[cʰal]	[cal]	Skin of tree
[cʰobi]	[cobi]	Picture

ɟʰ > ɟ: Palatal, plosive, voiceless /ɟʰ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the Palatal, voiced, unaspirated /ɟ/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[ɟʰɔɽ]	[ɟɔr]	Strom
[ɟʰuɽi]	[ɟuri]	Basket

gʰ > g: Velar, plosive, voiceless, aspirated /gʰ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the velar, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /g/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[gʰuɽi]	[guri]	Kite
[gʰam]	[gam]	Suit

ɽ > r: Palato-alveolar, retroflex, voiced consonant /ɽ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the alveolar, plosive, voiced, unaspirated, retroflex /r/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[baɾi]	[bari]	Home
[maɾi]	[mari]	Root of teeth

pʰ > h: Labial, plosive, voiceless, aspirated consonant /pʰ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the glottal, voiceless, aspirated sound /h/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[pʰɔl]	[hɔl]	Fruit
[pʰi̯ṭa]	[hi̯ṭa]	Tape

dʰ > d: Palato-alveolar, plosive, voiced, aspirated consonant /dʰ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the palato-alveolar, plosive, voiced, unaspirated /d/ in this dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[dʰeu]	[deu]	Wave
[dʰol]	[dol]	A tom-tom

Some consonants of standard colloquial Bengali language are turn into another consonant in Chatkhil dialect. These kinds of examples are explained below;

p > h: Bilabial, plosive, voiceless, unaspirated consonant /dʰ/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the glottal, voiceless, aspirated, fricatives sound /d/ in this dialect.

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[pani]	[hani]	Water
[pan]	[han]	Betel-leaf
[pap]	[hap]	Sine

c > ç: Dental, plosive, voiceless, unaspirated consonant /c/ of standard colloquial Bengali language is turn into the palato-alveolar; plosive, unaspirated, fricatives sound /ç/ in this dialect.

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[bacca]	[baicca]	Kids'
[acchₐ]	[aicca̱]	Ok
[cul]	[çul]	Hair

To consider the initial position of words we can see some consonants of standard colloquial Bengali language stand between those consonants of this dialect. Such as;

The sound /p/ is used as a labial plosive voiceless unaspirated consonant both in standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect. The sound /p/ of standard Colloquial Bengali is used in initial, middle and final position in a word. But we get the sound of /p/ in Chatkhil dialect used in the middle and final position in word as a compound consonant. Such as;

	Initial	*Middle*	*Final*
SCB	Side [paʃ]	lungi [t̪ɔpon]	Sine [pap]
Chatkhil-dialect	-	cauliflower [hulkɔpi]	Half [hap]

Though /ɽ/ is used as a rolling sound in both standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect, it is used in the middle and final position of word in standard colloquial Bengali language and /ɽ/ is pronounced in the middle positions in a word in Chatkhil dialect only. Such as;

	Initial	*Middle*	*Final*
SCB	-	Wrapping [moɽano]	root [ʃikɔɽ]
Chatkhil-dialect	-	Small sitting tool [hiɽa/heɽa]	-

It is notable that /ɽ/ sound turn into /r/ in the middle position of word in Chatkhil dialect.

/tʰ/ is used as a palato-alveolar, plosive, aspirated, voiceless in both standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect and only /tʰ/ is used in three positions in a word in standard Colloquial Bengali. But /tʰ/ is pronounced initial position in a word in Chatkhil dialects only. Such as;

	Initial	*Middle*	*Final*
SCB	lips [tʰõt]	field [matʰ]	yard [utʰan]
Chatkhil-dialect	To push [tʰæl]	-	-

/h/ is used as a glottal, fricative, aspirated sound in both standard Colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect. In standard colloquial Bengali /tʰ/ is used in three position (initial, middle, final) in a word. But in Chatkhil dialect /h/ is pronounced only initial and middle positions in a word. Such as;

	Initial	*Middle*	*Final*
SCB	hand [hat̪]	Seheri [seheri]	shaha [saha]
Chatkhil-dialect	Leg [ha]	hell [ɟahannam]	-

Besides these, some consonants of standard colloquial Bengali are especially turn into the different sounds in Chatkhil dialect. The following examples are given beneath.

Somewhere glottal sound /h/of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into /a/ in Chatkhil dialect.

	SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
h > a	[hat̪]	[at̪]	hand
	[haʃi]	[aʃi]	Laugh
	[hãʃ]	[ãʃ]	Duck

An especial feature of Chatkhil dialect is that consonants are used as a vowel sound.

/ʃ/sound of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into /h/in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

	SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
ʃ > h	[ʃiŋ]	[hiŋ]	Horn
	[ʃat̪]	[hat̪]	Seven

/t/sound of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into /d/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

	SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
t > d	[mota]	[moda]	Fat
	[ãti]	[adi]	Bundle
	[ata]	[ada]	Coarse flour

/s/sound of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into /c/in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

	SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
s > c	[sikka]	[çikka]	-
	[sopʰa]	[copʰa]	Sofa

/pʰ/sound of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into /s/in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

	SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
pʰ > s	[ipʰtar]	[istar]	Ifter

2.2 Vowels

The norm of teaching standard colloquial Bengali is that the explanation of vowels deferred till complete understanding of the consonants has been established. This is because a consonant includes a short vowel necessary to its pronunciation. Bengali words are not made up of a number of letters bunched together but of a number of sounds and while it is possible for a vowel to be a sound on its own, it is impossible for a consonant to be so. It is the vowel that determines the *Soor* or utterance of the word.

The number of oral vowels is same both in standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect that means we have got seven vowels during the study of this dialect.
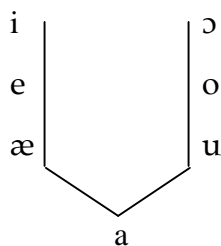

Figure – 2: Oral vowel sound of Standard Colloquial Bengali language and Chatkhil Dialect

Though, they have a similarity according to the numbers of vowels but the vowels of standard colloquial Bengali are pronounced as different vowels from Chatkhil dialect in different positions. The vowel changing process between standard colloquial Bengali language and Chatkhil dialects are described below;

i > æ: High-front vowel /i/ of standard colloquial Bengali is pronounced sometimes as a front low-mid vowel /æ/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[licu]	[læcu]	lichi
[ɟi]	[ɟæ]	Yes

e > a: High-mid front vowel /e/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the sound /a/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[rekʰe]	[rai]	Kept
[nei]	[nai]	Nothing

e > æ: High-mid front vowel /e/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the front low-mid vowel /æ/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[leɟ]	[læɟ]	Tail
[ek]	[æk]	One

o > a: High-mid back vowel /o/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the low-mid vowel /a/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[bʰalo]	[bala]	Fine
[kalo]	[kala]	Black

u > o: Back-high vowel /u/ of standard colloquial Bengali is sometimes turning into the back high-mid vowel /o/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[kumɾa]	[komɾa]	Pumpkin

o > ɔ: Back high-mid vowel /o/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the back low-mid vowel /ɔ/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[polau]	[hɔlau]	Pelau
[bot̪ɔl]	[bɔt̪ɔl]	Bottle

a > ai: Oral vowel /a/ of standard colloquial Bengali is pronounced as [ai] in Chatkhil dialect.

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[car]	[cair]	Four
[kal]	[kail]	Tomorrow

e > o: Sometimes high-mid front vowel /e/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turning into the back high-mid vowel /o/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[gengi]	[gongi]	A vest

a > ɔ: Low-mid vowel /a/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the mid-front vowel /ɔ/ in someplace of Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[na]	[nɔ]	No
[hã]	[hɔ]	Yes
[namaɟ]	[nɔmaɟ]	Prayer

ɔ > i: Low-mid front vowel /ɔ/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the high-front vowel /i/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[camɔc]	[camic]	Spoon

u > i: Back-front vowel /u/ of standard colloquial Bengali is turn into the high-front vowel /i/ in someplace of Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[caul]	[cail]	Rice

o > u: Back high-mid vowel /o/ of standard colloquial Bengali is pronounced as a back high vowel /u/ in Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[koti]	[kudi]	Ten million

a > i: Low-mid vowel /a/ of standard colloquial Bengali is pronounced as a high-front vowel /i/ in someplace of Chatkhil dialect. Such as;

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[mapa]	[mapi]	To measure
[ɟana]	[ɟani]	To know

Sound	SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[i > e]	[liɟu]	[leɟu]	Litchi
[u > i]	[caul]	[cail]	Rice
[e > a]	[rekʰe]	[rai]	Kept
[e > æ]	[beca]	[bæca]	To sale
[o > a]	[kalo]	[kala]	Black
[a > i]	[mapa]	[mapi]	Measure
[e > o]	[gengi]	[gongi]	A vest
[o > u]	[koti]	[kudi]	Ten million
[o > i]	[camɔc]	[camic]	Spoon
[a > ai]	[mar]	[mair]	To bite
[a > ɔ]	[na]	[nɔ]	No
[o > ɔ]	[boʈɔl]	[bɔʈɔl]	Bottle
[u > o]	[kumɽa]	[komɽa]	Pumpkin

Table – 1: Changed of vowel sound of standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect

2.3. Nasalized Vowel: Standard Colloquial Bengali & Chatkhil Dialect

There are seven nasalized vowel in standard colloquial Bengali, which means all oral vowels have nasalized form present. These are given beneath-
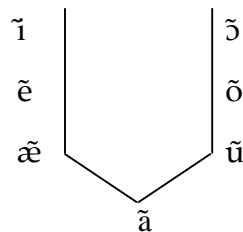

Figure – 3: Nasalized vowel sounds of standard colloquial Bengali

But in Chatkhil dialect we have got four oral vowels those have nasalized form during the study. These are;
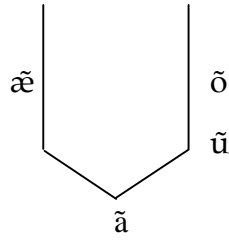
Figure – 4: Nasalized vowel sounds of Chatkhil dialect

	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
/ã/	[ãi]	I
	[hãp]	Snake
/õ/	[hõa]	Cucumber
	[tʰõd]	Lips
/æ̃/	[tæ̃a]	Taka (money)
	[bæ̃a]	Curve
/ũ/	[t̪ũi]	You

The nasalized vowel /ã/ of standard colloquial Bengali is become extinct of its nasalization in Chatkhil dialect.

SCB	Chatkhil-dialect	Meaning
[cãd̪]	[can]	Moon
[fãd̪]	[hand̪]	Trap
[bãd̪ʰa]	[band̪a]	Tide up
[kãca]	[kaca]	To green
[ãti]	[adi]	Bundle

4. Syllable Structure

The syllable structure of synonym words which are used in both standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect is given beneath –

Meaning	SCB	Syllable Structure	Chatkhil Dialect	Syllable Structure
Today	[aɟ]	vc	[aiɟ]	vvc
No	[na]	cv	[nɔ]	cv
Tomorrow	[kal]	cvc	[kail]	cvvc
Boy	[cʰele]	cvcv	[hola]	cvcv
Yellow	[holud̪]	cvcvc	[ɔild̪a]	vvccv
Bed	[bicʰana]	cvcvcv	[bicna]	cvccv
Sun	[ʃurɟo]	cvccv	[ʃuruɟ]	cvcvc
Bone	[haɽ]	cvc	[addi]	vccv
Stone	[pat̪ʰor]	cvcvc	[hat̪r]	cvcc
Medicine	[ouʃɔd̪ʰ]	vvcvc	[oʃud̪]	vcvc
Gave	[d̪iecʰilo]	cvvcvcv	[d̪icilo]	cvcvcv

Table – 2: The comparative syllable structure of words used in SCB and CD (Dissimilarly)

The differentiation of synonyms words are highlighted in the following examples which are used in standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect. But we have got same syllable structure of words between these two. Such kinds of examples are shown beneath –

Meaning	SCB	Syllable Structure	Chatkhil Dialect	Syllable Structure
Net	[ɟal]	cvc	[ɟal]	cvc
Home	[baɽi]	cvcv	[bari]	cvcv
We	[amra]	vcvc	[amra]	vcvc
Eat	[kʰai]	cvv	[kʰai]	cvv
Fan	[palɔk]	cvcvc	[lalɔk]	cvcvc

Table – 3: The comparative syllable structure of words used in SCL and CD (similarly)

There are some differences of words sound in standard colloquial Bengali and Chatkhil dialect but sometimes these are showing the same syllable structure, sometimes it observed differences in some places.

Conclusion

Chatkhil dialect has distinct characteristics in constructing words and pronunciation. It has much more similarities with Noakhali dialect (Chatkhil dialect is a sister language of Noakhali) than standard colloquial Bengali regarding phonological features but they have more differences from the manner of pronunciation, such as the aspirated sound of standard Colloquial Bengali never pronounced in this dialect. So far the contexts of sound are unique in this dialect than Standard Colloquial Bengali and influenced by other consonants.

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Md. Mostafa Rashel
Senior Lecturer
Department of English
Daffodil International University
4/2, Sobhanbag, Prince Plaza 3rd Floor, Dhanmondi
Dhaka-1207
Bangladesh
mmrashel2012@gmail.com
md.mostafa_rashel@hotmail.com