

Morphophonology of Magahi

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Abstract: Every languages has different types of word formation processes and each and every segment of morphology has a sound. The following paper is concerned with the sound changes or phonemic changes that occur during the word formation process in Magahi. Magahi is an Indo- Aryan Language spoken in eastern parts of Bihar and also in some parts of Jharkhand and West Bengal. The term Morphophonology refers to the interaction of word formation with the sound systems of a language. The paper finds out the phonetic rules interacting with the morphology of lexicons of Magahi. The observations shows that he most frequent morphophonological process are Sandhi, assimilation, Metathesis and Epenthesis. Whereas, the process of Dissimilation, Lenition and Fortition are very Uncommon in nature.

Keywords: Morphology, Phonology, Sound Changes, Word formation process, Magahi, Words, Vowels, Consonants

1. Introduction

Morphophonology refers to the interaction between morphological and phonological or its phonetic processes. The aim of this paper is to give a detailed account on the sound changes that take place in morphemes, when they combine to form new words in the language.

2. Historical and Geographical View of Magahi

Magahi is derived from ‘Magadhi’ and to reach its present name it had to go through a long process which may mentioned as in, मागधी>मागहि>मगही. In the oldest Buddhist literature Pali was referred again and again as Magadhi, the language of Buddha. The historical and cultural evidence also reveals that Magadha contributed a lot in formation of Pali. Magahi is also closely related to Bhojpuri and Maithili, and these languages are sometime referred to as sister languages as it belongs to Indo-aryan Languages. Though, the number of speaker in Magahi is large, it has not been recognized by the constitution of India. It was legally absorbed under the subordinate label of Hindi in the 1961 census. The number of speakers has not really gone down but has simply been swallowed up by the census figures for Hindi speakers and this could be some sociolinguistic factors and attitudes of speakers involved in it (Verma,1985).The number of speakers on the basis of latest census report available in 2001 is 13,978,565 and in 2011 is approximately 20,700,000 which also includes the Khortha speakers. Magahi is mainly spoken in Patna, Gaya, Nawada, Jahanabad, Nalanda and some other districts of Bihar, Jharkhand and west Bengal.

3. Linguistic Characteristics of Magahi

Magahi has ten vowels but only twenty nine consonants, which is lesser than Hindi. All Vowels can be nasalized and nasalization is phonemic. Its syllable contains a vowels as nucleus, followed or preceded by a consonant. Words usually have two or three syllable. Magahi is represented in Kaithi Script and sometimes in Devnagri too.

3.1 The Sources of Magahi Glossary

Magahi has three kind of vocabulary sources;

- i) In the first category, it has those lexemes which has been processed or influenced by Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apbhransh, ect. Like,
धर्म> धम्म> धरम, सर्प> सप्प> साँप
- ii) In the second category, it has those words which are basically found in Vedas, but could not been developed in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhransh or Hindi etc.
- iii) The third category has common words, which we cannot connect it with Vedas. These are plenty in numbers. This category includes words which comes under tadbhav, tatsam, desaj,etc. For example these word categories has some obvious changes like;
भात>भत्ता, हस्त> हाथ> हत्था, बासुरी> बंसुली, चुटी>चुट्टी

4. Morpho-phonemic Alternations in Magahi

4.1 Assimilation

Assimilation has a very precise meaning when its comes to study of languages. It’s phonological process which is quite common in the languages where phonetic speech of a segment become more like another segment in a word. In other words, it’s when a letter (sound) is influenced by the sound before or after it, so that it changes its sound. A common example of assimilation is “don’t be an idiot” were the /n/ and /t/ are assimilated to /m/ by the following /b/, in many accents the natural sound is “dombe an idiot”. Assimilation can be synchronic being an active phonological process in a language at a given point in time or diachronic being a historical sound change. There are four configurations found : the increase in phonetic similarities may be between segments separated by one or more intervening segments; the changes could be In reference to a preceding segment or following one. Even when all four occur, it changes in regard to a following adjacent segment account for virtually all assimilatory changes. Assimilation to an adjacent segment are vastly more frequent then assimilation to a non adjacent one.

Magahi also has this phonological process. Though this process is not very frequent in this Language, since it is influenced by Hindi so it has some lexemes which has assimilation process, e.g.

- i) c^həʈ+ upər > c^həppər (Roof)
- ii) t^hor+ palis > t^hoppalis (Lipstick)
- iii) səʈ+ʃənwa > səʃnwa (Good person)

Here the last consonants of the first syllables get assimilated with the first consonants of the second syllables. In Magahi, It often happens completely and becomes voiced or voiceless and exact as the following consonants.

4.2 Sandhi

Sandhi refers to a wide variety of phonological processes that occur at morphemic level or word boundaries. It can simply be described as the fusion of the sounds across word boundaries and the alternation of the sounds due to neighbouring sounds or due to the grammatical function of adjacent words. Though, sandhi is basically a part of Sanskrit grammar, so it occurs particularly prominently in the phonology of Indian languages. Therefore, sandhi is one of the important phonological process in magahi also. For example:

- i) pəɾəm+ifwər > pəɾmɛʃwər (God)
- ii) pəɾʃi+ek > pəɾʃek (Each)
- iii) mōni+indar > mune:ndər (Name)
- iv) səʃja+indər > səʃendər (Name)

Here two similar vowels whether both short or long or one short and one long, become the corresponding long vowel.

4.3 Metathesis

Metathesis could be define as re-arranging of sounds or syllables in a word, or of words in a sentence. It is a process in which the vowel or the consonant may shift from one place to another place. The original form before metathesis may have been deduced from older forms of words in the language's lexicon, or, if no forms are preserved, from phonological reconstruction. The term has been derived from a Greek word which means "I put in a different order": in Latin it is the re-arranging of sounds or syllables in a word and mostly it refers to the switching of two or more adjacent sounds. Magahi also has this metathesis morphophonological process,

- i) əḍəmi > əmɗi (Man)
- ii) əmrɥd > əmɗor (Guava)
- iii) ɪsək > ɪkəs (Love)
- iv) kəssət > səkkət (Tight)

It can be notice in the above given examples that metathesis process is undergoing in each lexeme but never changes the meaning of a word, it changes only the phonetic property of the word. Many languages have words that show this phenomenon, and some use it as a regular part in their communication. The process of metathesis has altered the shape of many familiar words in the English language, as well.

4.4 Dissimilation

In this process the consonant like or nearby consonant. In phonology, particularly within historical linguistics,

dissimilation is a phenomenon whereby similar consonant or vowel sounds in a word becomes less similar. For example, when one /r/ sound occurs before another in the middle of a word in rhotic dialects of English, the first tends to drop out, as in "beserk" for berserk, "supprise" for surprise, "paticular" for particular, and "govenor" for governor (Nevis, 2010).

Though the dissimilation process is frequent in Hindi but Magahi rarely finds this morphophonological process in its lexemes. I can state some rare examples here,

- i) kəʈ+ p^horwa > kaʈp^horwa (Woodpecker)
- ii) səʈ+guru > səḍguru (Trueguider)

4.5 Lenition

In Phonology, lenition refers to a kind of sound change that alters consonant, making them more sonorous. The word lenition means "softening" or "weakening". Lenition can happen both synchronically and diachronically. It has been taken from the latin word 'lenis' which means 'weak', thus it simply changes a consonant considering 'stronger' into the 'weaker'. Lenition is a kind of consonant mutation that appears in many languages. Along with assimilation, it is one of the primary sources of historical changes of languages.

Lenition generally involves Voicing or sonorization as in [f] -- [v]; affrication or spirantization (turning into an affricate or a fricative), as in [t] -- [ts] -- [s]; debuccalization (loss of place), as in [s] -- [h]; degemination, as in [k:] -- [k]; deglottalization, such as [kʰ] -- [k], etc are the common types of lenition. These may occur one after the other in the history of a language. Eventually, consonants may be lost completely, which is the ultimate lenition. Lenition, then, can be seen as a movement on the sonority hierarchy from less sonorous to more sonorous, or on a strength hierarchy from stronger to weak. say for example:

- i) gəli-gələj > gəriqələj (Abusing etc.)
- ii) kələja > kərəja (Heart)
- iii) Dhul-kheli > dhurkheli (playing with dust or mud)
- iv) Teen-tees > tettis (thirty three)

Here the examples shows that sonority hierarchy is working more for the change, and sometimes there is a complete loss in the fourth example which could be termed as ultimate lenition.

4.6 Fortition

Fortition is a consonant mutation in which a sound is changed from a weak sound to a strong one we can call it the opposite of lenition. Although, It is a less frequent than lenition in languages of the world, but word-initial and word-final is not uncommon. Basically, Fortition is a consonantal change from a 'weak' sound to a 'strong' one. For example, a fricative or an approximant may become a plosive as [v] becomes [b] or [r] becomes [d]. Although not as typical of sound change as lenition, fortition may occur in prominent positions, such as at the beginning of a word or stressed syllable; as an effect of reducing markedness; or due to morphological leveling. In English, the extremely common approximant sound [j] is sometimes subject to

fortition; since it is a semivowel, almost any change to the sound other than simple deletion would constitute fortition. Fortition also frequently occurs with voiceless versions of the common lateral approximant [l], which are usually source from combinations of [l] with a voiceless obstruent. The product is a voiceless alveolar lateral fricative [ɬ]. Examples of Fortition in Magahi is given below,

- i) kəri>kəɖʰi (Curry)
- ii) jaɖəv>jaɖəv (A Surname)
- iii) ca:nɖmamu> ca:nmamu (Moon)
- iv) vijal>bisal(Huge)

4.7 Epenthesis

It is a very common process in morphophonology and it has been derived from ancient Greek as ep- 'on', + en 'in', + thesis 'putting'. It is the addition of one or more sounds to a word, especially in the interior word. Epenthesis is divided into two types:

- a) Excrescence -if the added sound is a consonant, and
- b) Anaptyxis -if the sound added is a vowel.

Epenthesis is used to ease pronunciation. Some of the languages and their phonotactics don't permit some particular consonant cluster. Thus a consonant or vowel may be added to make pronunciation easier. Two of the English examples which are used by Magahi speakers very frequently.

- i) Kreviŋg>kəreviŋg (Craving)
- ii) ɖrai> ɖərai (Dry)

In magahi the process of Epenthesis is very common, there is a kind of common rule of inserting vowel and consonant in the real words. For example;

- i) kəuci> kəuŋci (what)
- ii) murkʰ> murəkʰ (Fool)
- iii) sva:ɖ> suwa:ɖ (Taste)
- iv) behuɖa> behuiɖa (Mannerless)

4.8 Elision

Elision is a the morphological process where omission of one or more sounds in a word or phrase, such as a vowel, a consonant, or a whole syllable; producing a result which would be easier for the speaker to pronounce. Elision is normally unintentional, but it could also be deliberate sometime. Its result may be impressionistically described as 'slurred' or 'muted'. It is also known as syncope, but this term is most often associated with the omission of vowels between consonants. Another form of elision is apheresis, which refers to the omission at the beginning of a word, generally of an unstressed vowel. While explaining elision, It has to be kept in mind that the omission of a word from a phrase or sentence is not elision but ellipsis or, more accurately, elliptical construction. Some of the English examples to make it clear like 'natural' to 'natral' and 'vegetable' to 'vegtable' while pronouncing it.

Magahi has many examples of process of elision given which is given below;

- i) surəɟmukʰi>surəɟmukʰi (Sunflower)
- ii) bəɖɖi> bəɖə (Very Much)
- iii) ɖənikkosun> tanəkosun (Little bit)

- iv) cʰoɖa>cʰoɖə (Small)

The above examples shows the Elition process in Magahi Morphology as the vowels in the words are getting deleted.

5. Conclusion

The paper has attempted to look for all morphophonological process that are present in Magahi. The paper finds out that Magahi has Eight types of Morphological Process i.e Assimilation, Sandhi, Dissimilation, Metathesis, Linition, Fortion, Epenthesis, Elision. The most frequent or productive morphophonological process is Sandhi, assimilation, Metathesis and Epenthesis. Whereas, the process of Dissimilation, Linition and Fortition are very Uncommon in nature. Although, some of the process are mostly influenced by the interference of Hindi.

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