

CLASSIFIERS IN BENGALI

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Classifiers are affixes that categorize entities into common classes on the basis of shared properties. They are characteristic features of many Asian, American, and African languages. Though typically not occurring in Indo-European languages, they can be found in the Eastern group of New Indo-Aryan languages, namely Assamese, Oriya and Bengali. Emaneau¹ pointed out that they probably started to be used under the influence of Southeast Asian languages in India. According to Chatterji² in Bengali they were in use as early as its middle period (1200—1800).

This study attempts to provide information on the present occurrence and usage of classifiers in Bengali. The conclusions are based on the analysis of texts by seven Bengali authors.³ The relevant affixes are regarded as classifiers when they are attached to a noun and as numeral classifiers when they are attached to numerals. In the latter case they occur in various syntactic constructions. Besides their main function of classifying objects into classes Bengali classifiers serve as definitives, substantivizers and noun substitutes.

Key words: Bengali language, classifiers, numeral classifiers

1. Introduction

The Bengali language has a group of affixes that are usually described together in grammars and textbooks of Bengali, but different authors give them different names. None of the authors, except Bykova, as we shall see later, uses the term

¹ EMANEAU, M. B. *India as a Linguistic Area*, pp. 1—16.

² CHATTERJI, S.K. *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, p. 779.

³ Bibhūtibhūṣan Bandyopādhyāy, Mānik Bandyopādhyāy, Sunīl Gangopādhyāy, Bimal Kar, Śīrṣendu Mukhopādhyāy, Upendrakīśor Rāycaudhurī, Rabīndranāth Ṭhākur.



classifiers. Only S. K. Chatterji speaks about numeratives⁴ calling a basic group of these affixes enclitic definitives or numeratives. He gives a list of “common Bengali numeratives” and introduces their characteristics:

1. *khān, khānā*, diminutive *khāni* is used by preference to specialize objects of rectangular or flat form, or objects which have a framework.⁵
2. *gāch, gāchā*, diminutive *gāchi, gāchī* are used with reference to thin and long articles⁶
3. *goṭā*, diminutive *guṭi, guṭi*; in New Bengali its use is considerably curtailed⁷
4. *jan* is used to indicate men and women.⁸

Besides these he lists numerative *thān* and enclitic definitives *ṭā (ṭo, ṭe), ṭī, ṭi*.

Bykova⁹ calls these affixes numeral classifiers when they are connected with numerals. Otherwise she considers them definitive affixes which include *ṭā (ṭe, ṭo), ṭi, khān, khānā, khāni, khānī, gāch, gāchā, gāchi; goṭā, guṭi; ṭu, ṭuk, ṭuku, jan*.¹⁰

Other authors do not use either the term classifier or numeral classifier or numerative. They give these affixes neutral denomination (particles) or call them in accordance with the main function they assign to them.

For instance Page¹¹ calls them particles and introduces the affixes *ṭā, ṭi, khānā, khāni, gāchā, gāchi, kaṛā, jan*.

⁴ CHATTERJI, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, pp. 779-781.

⁵ CHATTERJI, S.K., op. cit., p. 365, gives the etymology of this classifier: *khān, khānā < khāṇḍā* “a piece”. According to him this numerative was established in Bengali by the early Middle Bengali period at least, op. cit., p. 779.

⁶ CHATTERJI, S.K., op. cit., p. 779, says that it means a long piece, a “stick”, a “tree” (MIA *gācchā*); it “seems to be established in its numerative function during late Middle Bengali period”.

⁷ CHATTERJI, S.K., op. cit., p. 780; p. 779: the word is of uncertain origin, B. *guṭi* = a small globe or ball, a pill, a pearl, a pustule, the cocoon of the silk worm; it was extremely common in Early Bengali.

⁸ According to S. K. Chatterji, op. cit., p. 780, it means person and can be either *tbh.* or *ts.* The use of this word is found in early Middle Bengali, and in all likelihood it goes earlier.

⁹ BYKOVA, E.M. Bengali Language, p. 60.

¹⁰ BYKOVA, E.M. op. cit., pp. 59-60.

¹¹ PAGE, W.S. Bengali Language, pp. 115-121.

Gupta speaks about articles and introduces *ṭā, ṭi, khānā, khāni; gula, guli, gan; jan*.¹²

Ray, Hai, Ray call them determiner suffixes which include *ṭā (ṭo, ṭe), ṭi, ṭuk, ṭuku, ṭukun, ṭukuni, khānā, khāni, gāchā, gāchi, phālā, phāli, gulo, guli, rā, der*.¹³

Zograf gives them the name *opredelitelno-ukazatelnye chastitsy* and introduces *khān, khānā, khāni, khānī, jan*.¹⁴

Radice considers them in connection with articles (*ṭā, ṭi, gulo, gulo; jan, khānā*).¹⁵

Chevkina pays special attention to the distribution of the affix *ṭā* and calls it the determiner.¹⁶

Alekseeva mentions *ṭā, ṭi, ṭī, gulo, guli* when she speaks about the suffix of definiteness.¹⁷

As can be seen in the following table, some affixes are listed by all authors and some only by several of them. The widest range of these affixes is listed by Ray, Hai, Ray who concentrate on their role of determiner affixes. They assign this function also to the affixes *rā, der* and *gulo, guli* in addition to their function of plural indicators.

Table

	<i>ṭā/ṭi</i>	<i>khānā/khāni</i>	<i>gāchā/gāchi</i>	<i>jan</i>	<i>karā</i>	<i>gulo/guli</i>	<i>ṭuk/ṭuku/...</i>	<i>goṭā/guṭi</i>	<i>rā/der</i>	<i>gan</i>	<i>phālā/phāli</i>	<i>thān</i>
SKC	+	+	+	+				+				+
Page	+	+	+	+	+							
Gup	+	+		+						+		
RHR	+	+	+			+	+		+			+
Byk1	+	+	+				+					
Byk2	+	+	+	+			+	+				
Zog		+		+								
Rad	+	+		+		+						
Chev	+											
Alek	+					+						

From the understanding of these affixes by different authors as well as from Bengali texts it follows that they have various functions. They not only classify

¹² DAS GUPTA. Learn Bengali Yourself, p. 58.

¹³ RAY, P.S. – HAI, M.A. – RAY, L. Bengali Language Handbook, pp. 36-37.

¹⁴ ZOGRAF, G.A. Morfologicheskii stroy novykh indoariyskikh yazykov, p. 65.

¹⁵ RADICE, W. Teach Yourself Bengali, pp. 63, 72-73.

¹⁶ CHEVKINA, L.M. Distributivnye osobennosti determinativa *-ṭā* v sovremennom bengali, p. 189-193.

¹⁷ ALEKSEEVA, E. A.: Učebnik bengalskogo yazyka, pp. 38-39.

referents on the basis of some shared, objectively perceivable property, which is considered a basic definition of classifiers, but can serve, as we shall see later, also as definitives, substantivizers and so on. And, strictly speaking, the very frequent affixes *ṭā*, *ṭi* cannot even be considered as classifiers in the sense of the above definition because they hardly help to categorize referents into classes on the basis of some shared characteristics. On the other hand, they occur in the same position as classifiers and can freely stand for them.

2. Classifiers, numeral classifiers and numeratives

2.1 Classifiers

Classifiers are affixes which categorize nouns into noun classes on the basis of shared, usually objectively perceived characteristic properties of objects they denote. In Bengali, these affixes make a semantic classification of entities based on personality, shape, and size. They are attached to nouns postpositionally. They are added directly to a noun (*mukhkhānā* “the face”, *gurujan* “the teacher”, *sutogāchi* “the thread”). They become a part of the denomination, attach to it agglutinatively, preceding eventual case suffixes, the emphasizing morpheme *i* or the inclusive morpheme *o*: *baikhānā* “the book”, *baikhānār* “of the book”, *baikhānāri theke* “just from the book”, *baikhānāro theke* “also from the book”.

Classifiers are a closed class. As Jugal points out, “it is not possible to add to the list of classifiers in a language”¹⁸. Although it could seem that in Bengali the same role as a classifier could also be played by some other words, for instance *maṇḍal* “circular or spherical area, a sphere, a circle” which is, by some authors, in fact systematically attached to the word *mukh* “face”, or the word *mānuṣ* “man” which is attached to the words *meṃe* “girl”, *chele* “boy”, and *puruṣ* “man”. These words differ from the classifiers mainly by the fact that they do not become a part of a numeral classifier.

2.2 Numeral classifiers

Classifiers are attached directly to a noun only when they denote a unique object (*loḳjan* “the person”, *mukhkhānā* “the face”, *lāṭhigāchā* “the stick”). When denoting a sum of homogenous objects a classifier is attached to a numeral (definite or indefinite). A numeral plus a classifier constitute a numeral classifier in which the numeral gives a number of classified objects (*ekjan lok* “one person”, *dukhānā mukh* “two faces” *cārgāchā lāṭhi* “four sticks” *kayekjan meṃe* “several girls”).

¹⁸ JUGAL, K.K. Shape Schematization in Assamese Classifiers, p. 3.

A noun in the phrase with a numeral classifier is always in the singular form (*tinjan meye* – three-clf. girl “three girls”).

As a rule no morphemes are added to a numeral classifier in this construction. They are attached to the noun that denotes a classified object: *ekjan mānuṣer* “of a man”, *ekjan mānuṣke* “to a man”.

In Bengali, a usual syntactic construction¹⁹ with a numeral classifier is numeral-classifier + noun:

(1) *tinjan mānuṣ* (three-clf. man).

When a syntactic construction with a numeral classifier is extended – including an adjective, this, as a rule, stands between a numeral classifier and a noun: numeral-classifier + adjective + noun

(2) *tinjan bara mānuṣ* (three-clf. big man).

Demonstrative, possessive pronoun or noun in the Genitive case playing the rôle of an attribute usually precede a numeral classifier in the phrase:

(3) *sei tinjan mānuṣ* (that three-clf. man)

(4) *āmār duikhānā bai* (my two-clf. book)

(5) *gāyer tinjan meye* (of the village three-clf. girl).

The construction noun + numeral-classifier is also quite common:

(6) *mānuṣ tinjan* (man + numeral.clf)

A syntactic construction in which a numeral classifier comes after a noun is also quite common in Bengali. In this case further morphemes (case suffixes) are attached to a numeral classifier and the phrase acquires a new shade of meaning. S. K. Chatterji gives the example *dujan mānuṣer* “of two men” compared to *mānuṣ dujaner* “of the two men”.²⁰

Chatterji draws our attention to an obviously rare syntactic construction classifier-numeral + noun

(7) *jandui mānuṣ*

or noun + classifier-numeral:

(8) *mānuṣ jandui*

According to him the sequence with classifier before numeral instead of after it indicates the meaning of vagueness and indefiniteness as to the number: *jandui mānuṣ*, *mānuṣ jandui* = “about, some two men.”²¹ Such use of numeral classifiers has not occurred in our texts.

¹⁹ The term syntactic construction is used in the sense as introduced by Jones in his paper Classifier Construction in Southeast Asia.

²⁰ CHATTERJI, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, p. 778.

²¹ CHATTERJI, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, p. 778.

As can be seen, the syntactic structures with numeral classifiers are subject to variation in Bengali. Here the Bengali language differs from the languages of Southeast Asia that are supposed to be a source of the spread of classifiers into Bengali. In these languages the syntactic constructions with numeral classifiers do not mix. There occurs either the syntactic construction numeral-clf. + noun or noun + numeral-clf.²² The variant use of syntactic constructions with numeral classifiers can be considered evidence of the fact that the usage of classifiers in Bengali is not original. This can also be proved by frequent occurrence of syntactic constructions in which a numeral showing a number of objects does not connect with a classifier.

A special role is played by the numeral *ek* (one) + classifier. It can tell us how many objects there are (i.e. one object) and in this case it is used as a numeral classifier (*ekkhānā bai* "one book", *ekjan mānuṣ* "one person"). But the same syntactic construction, i.e., *ek*-classifier + noun may be employed as an "indefinite article" (*ekkhānā bai* "a book", *ekjan mānuṣ* "a man"). The meaning of this construction follows from the context.

Numeral classifiers are usually added to countable referents. An exception is the numeral classifier with *ekṭu* "a little" or *anek* "much" occurring in the place of numeral (*ekṭukhāni tāmāk* "a little tobacco", *ekṭukhāni tel* "a little oil", *anekkhāni jal* "much water").

2.3 Numeratives

Quantity, time and distance are often measured with the aid of nouns called numeratives (*du boṭal jal* two-bottle-water "two bottles of water"). Jones calls them "measure words" and draws our attention to the fact that "such measure words probably occur in all languages in one form or another." But "they are relevant to a study of classifiers only in those languages which also make use of classifiers of the first type", namely of the type which "consists of those bound morphemes which, broadly speaking, are sometimes shape-specific, but often arbitrary, and whose use is obligatory". And further "it can be taken for granted that wherever the true classifiers /.../ occur the measure words will follow the same pattern. The reverse is not true."²³

This is valid also for Bengali where many measure words occur: *ek pyākeṭ tās* "a packet of cards"; *ekguccha keś* "a bunch of hair", *kayek hānṛi miṣṭi* "some pots of sweets", *biś hāt lambā ekṭā kumir* "a twenty hands long crocodile", *ekhātu kādā* "mud up to knees", *du boṭal jal* "two bottles of water",

²² JONES, R.B. Classifier Construction in Southeast Asia, p. 3.

²³ JONES, R.B.: Classifier Construction in Southeast Asia, pp. 1-12.

ek joṛā juto “a pair of shoes”, *ekgochā kāgaj* “a heap of papers”, *ek kāp cā* “a cup of tea”, *ek glās jal* “a glass of water”, etc.

The function of these words as numeratives is proved by the fact that neither the determinatives *ṭā*, *ṭi* nor any other classifier can be added to the numeral when it is a part of numerative (*du boṭal jal* “two bottles of water” = numerative “quantity of water” in contrast to *duṭi boṭal jal* = numeral classifier “the number of bottles with water”).

3. Classes of Bengali classifiers

Bengali classifiers are divided into groups on the basis of the personality, shape, and size of entities they classify.

3.1 Personality

Personality is a primary characteristic of objects.²⁴ On the basis of this criterium the classified entities are divided into the class of personal and the class of nonpersonal. The nonpersonal class includes not only inanimate objects but also animate objects (animals).

Personal referents take the classifier *jan*. In fact it occurred only with three various nouns in our texts (*mānuṣjan* “man”, *lokjan* “person”, *gurujan* “teacher”) and once it was added to the adjective *apar* “other, another” (*aparjan* “another one”).

On the other hand, the classifier *jan* functions more frequently as a numeral classifier, since it is added to the numeral which indicates the number of personal referents: *ekjan aphisar* “one/an officer”, *duijan meye* “two girls”, *tinjan cāsī* “three ploughmen”. (Ṭhākur often writes the numeral *ek* used with the classifier *jan* separately: *ek jan bhadralok* “a gentleman”, *ek jan mānuṣ* “a man”).

A personal referent can be expressed by a personal pronoun, as a rule in the syntactic construction pronoun + numeral-classifier: *tāhārā tinjane* “they three ones”, *āmrā duijanā* “we two”.

²⁴ In Bengali the opposition personal – nonpersonal is more important than the opposition animate – inanimate. It is reflected not only in the choice of classifier but also in the grammatical category of case. Personal nouns take the suffix *-ke* in the Accusative sg., while nonpersonal nouns have a zero suffix. Similarly the personality and nonpersonality is reflected in the choice of the indicator of plural of the noun. Personal nouns take the suffix *-rā/der*, nonpersonal nouns take the suffix *gulo/guli*.

As stated above the pattern noun + numeral classifier is also possible: *chokrā tinjan* young man three-clf. *āmār sahapathī bandhu kayekjan* my classmate friend some-clf.

Gupta's conviction that "To imply *jan* respect is used with both the numbers singular and plural; as: *ekjan bhadralok* – one gentleman, *tinjan mahilā* – three ladies, *pāñcjan paṇḍit* – five scholars"²⁵ has not been confirmed. In texts the classifier *jan* was added to nouns also in cases where the author's intention obviously was not to express respect. Moreover, the classifier *jan* is added only to a noun in the singular. Plural is indicated by a numeral higher than one.

A classifier added to nonpersonal inanimate referents is chosen on the basis of their shape (see below).

There is no special classifier for nonpersonal animate referents (animals) in Bengali.

3.2 Shape

Nonpersonal inanimate referents are categorized into classes on the basis of their shape. They can be classified either as broad and flat or as long and thin.

Broad and flat objects are characterized by the classifiers *khānā*, *khāni*.

The classifiers *gāchā*, *gāchi* are added to nouns denoting thin and long objects.

The original classifiers for round objects *goṭā*, *guṭi*, *guṭī*, extremely common in early Bengali,²⁶ are evidently used very sporadically in new Bengali. There was no incidence of them in our texts.

The occurrence of the classifiers *khānā*, *khāni*, *gāchā*, *gāchi* has also been very sporadic. However, the incidence of the classifiers *khānā*, *khāni* have been greater. In the sample of 105,000 words by seven analysed authors (15,000 by each) these classifiers and numeral classifiers occurred 7x in Ṭhākur, 17x in Rāycaudhurī, 8x in Kar, 14x in Gangopādhyāy, 17x in M. Bandyopādhyāy, 59x in B. Bandyopādhyāy, and 10x in Mukhopādhyāy. In many cases the same noun with the same classifier have been used by different authors as if they were a fixed combination, for instance *mukhkhānā* "the face", *hātkhānā* "the hand", *gharkhānā* "the room/house", *kāpaṛkhānā* "the dress", *ciṭhikhānā* "the letter", *cādarkhānā* "the cadar".

For the most part the entities with the classifiers and numeral classifiers *khānā*, *khāni* can be arranged into a few groups:

²⁵ DAS GUPTA. Learn Bengali Yourself, p. 73.

²⁶ CHATTERJI, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, p. 780.

1. parts of human body: *mukhkhānā* “the face”, *hātkhānā* “the hand”, *pākhānā* “the foot”, *kapālkhānā* “the forehead”, *cokhkhānā* “the eye”, *bukkhānā* “the chest”, *dāntkhānā* “the tooth”
2. buildings: *gharkhānā* “the house/room”, *bārikhānā* “the house”, *maṇḍapkhānā* “the pavilion”, *kurekhānā* “the hut”, *grihakoṇkhānā* “the corner of a house”, *matkākhānā* “the tusser”
3. cloth: *kāpaṛkhānā* “the clothes”, *cādarkhānā* “the cadar”, *ghomṭākhānā* “the veil”, *gāmchākhānā* “the napkin”, *mādurkhānā* “the mat”
4. instruments with a blade: *kṣurkhānā* “the razor”, *kāstekhānā* “the sickle”, *jhinukkhānā* “the spoon”
5. objects of paper: *ciṭhikhānā* “the letter”, *khāmkhānā* “the envelope”, *baikhānā* “the book”, *nabhelkhānā* “the novel”, *kāgajkhānā* “the paper”, (*mahābhāratkhānā* Mahābhārata)
6. other: *pattarkhānā*, *pātākhānā* “the leaf”, *kulokhānā* “the winnowing platter or tray”, *thālākhānā* “the plate”, *jutākhānā* “shoe”, etc.

In opposition to an ideal conception²⁷ that the classifiers *khānā*, *khāni* are used with a noun denoting a broad and flat object, they are also added to abstract referents: *byāpārkhānā* (Th, MB) “an incident, a matter”, *atakhāni jñāner paricay* “so much wisdom reputation”, *anekkhāni ṭhāṇḍā* “much cold”, *ekkhāni kaiśor bibāho* “an adolescent marriage”, *etakhāni jñānarjan* “acquirement of knowledge”, *ekṭukhāni hāsi* “a little laugh”, *etakhāni subidhā* “so much happiness”. It contradicts Allan’s view, based on his study of many languages, that there is a universal restriction for classifiers, namely that “the characteristics denoted by the categories of classification must be perceivable by more than one of the senses”.²⁸ This rule is not valid for Bengali.

The classifiers *gāchā*, *gāchi* occur only five times in our sample of texts, mainly in accordance with an ideal notion on their usage with the names of thin and long objects: *lāṭhigāchā* “the stick”, *lāṭhigāchṭi*, *ekgāchā suto* “the thread”, *ekgāchi śāk* “the creeper”, *ekgāchā kāñcī* “the bamboo twig”. Of interest is here the example *lāṭhigāchṭi* where the definitive affix *ṭi* is unusually added to the classifier.

3.3. Size

A further objectively perceivable property of an object is its size. The variants of nonpersonal classifiers *khānā* and *gāchā* ended in *i*, namely *khāni*, *gāchi* are

²⁷ The idea of ideal usage is used by JUGAL, K.K. in his paper Shape Schematization in Assamese Classifiers.

²⁸ ALLAN, K. Classifiers, p. 298.

added to small objects, they serve as diminutives (here also another aspect – attitude of the speaker – inferior or, on the contrary, dear, plays a role). In fact, there is not the opposition big – small here, but the opposition neutral – small. There is no classifier for a big object – augmentative – in Bengali.

The usage of a classifier in the diminutive form does not exclude an explicit expression of “smallness”: *baikhāni, choṭa baikhāni* “the small book”.

4. The interchanging of classifiers

As has been shown, nouns are divided into classes on semantic bases, that is according to shared characteristic features of the objects they denote, therefore it could be expected that the classifiers would not interchange. In the main it is true: different classifiers are not used with the same noun. Nonpersonal classifiers *khānā, khāni, gāchā, gāchi* are never used with personal referents, the personal classifier *jan* is never used with nonpersonal inanimate referents. However, when a speaker wants to communicate a special meaning or to achieve a special effect, nonpersonal animate (animals) can get into the class of personal referents under certain circumstances. They can take the classifier *jan*; most frequently it happens in fairy tales or fables where animals behave like people: *emni kare tārā du-jane* (i.e. *śijāl* jackal and *bāgh* tiger) *śiyāler garter kāche ela*.²⁹ Thus they two came to the jackal’s hole.

5. (Non)obligatory usage of classifiers

As it follows from a low occurrence of classifiers in texts, in Bengali, in contrast to true classifier languages, the usage of classifiers is not obligatory.

The appurtenance to a class on the basis of shape is implicit and so is appurtenance to a class on the basis of personality. However, it is reflected in a text in the choice of the Accusative case suffix and in the choice of plural indicators. The smallness and greatness are commonly expressed explicitly with the aid of adjectives such as *baṛa, brihat, masta, biśiṣṭa, pradhān* for big and *choṭa, alpa, kṣudra* for small.

But when an author uses a classifier, its usage is neither fortuitous nor arbitrary. He must adhere to settled circumstances. These circumstances include both the appurtenance of an object to one of the three above mentioned classes, and, primarily, the definiteness, taking an object out from a group of similar

²⁹ This intersection also manifests in case endings: *Duṣṭu biṛāl dānt khinciye gāche lāphiye uṭhe ṭunṭunike* (A pers.) *dharte pārla nā* (UR).

objects, its concreteness and individualness in contrast to unconcreteness and generality.

We must agree with authors who regard definiteness as the most general meaning of all postpositional particles (including classifiers). For instance *hārgāchā* differs from *hār* as "already known (that) necklace" from a "necklace" about which the speaker has no concrete idea.³⁰

Some authors, for instance Bykova, put this very function of classifiers in the first place and regard them as definitive affixes.

Also due to this function the classifiers can be substituted by the definitive affixes *ṭā*, *ṭi* which are regarded as the most important definitives by Chatterji.³¹ Their use was already established in the early Middle Bengali period.³²

The definitive affixes *ṭā*, *ṭi* are indifferent as regards personality and shape therefore they can stand for both personal and nonpersonal classifiers and in the case of nonpersonals for all shapes. Their usage is even much wider. The variant with *i* (*ṭi*) has the same function as the diminutive classifiers *khāni*, *gāchi*. Moreover, it can be attached to personal nouns in this function. (The personal classifier *jan* has no diminutive form.)

Classifiers can function as substantivizers of other parts of speech, most frequently of adjectives, but also of numerals and demonstratives (naturally, in a known context): *Cārjane chuṭiyā āse*. The four ones are running here. *Barakhānā cāi; e choṭokhānite kichu habe nā*. I want that big one; this little one be no use.

Classifiers can serve as substitutes for nouns: *āmāder cenā ek bhadraloker kāch theke ceye nilen ekṭā rūpor ṭākā, ār ekjaner* (i.e. *bhadraloker*) *kāch theke ekṭā āmṭi*. He asked for a silver rupee from a gentleman we knew, and a ring from someone else.

In these functions the classifiers are frequently substituted by the definitive affixes *ṭā*, *ṭi*.

The classifiers constitute an important and interesting part of the Bengali language. However, they are used rarely, it even seems that their usage is in retreat. The meaning of a qualitative (also emotional) evaluation and the

³⁰ ZOGRAF, G.A. Morfologicheskii stroy novykh indoariyskikh yazykov, p. 66.

³¹ CHATTERJI, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, p. 780.

³² The origin of this affix is not quite clear. According to Chatterji, op. cit., p. 685, it comes from the old Indo-Aryan *varta* (< *vrt*) which changed into *vatt* in MIA and later to *ṭ*. From it the suffix of nouns and adjectives *ṭā*, the feminine *ṭi*, *ṭī* has arisen. In the New Bengali period the category of gender of adjectives was lost and *ṭi*, *ṭī* had become the diminutive affixes.

meaning of definiteness combine in them. In the function of definitives, substantivizers, emphasizers, and noun substitutes they are often substituted by the much more frequent affixes *ṭā*, *ṭi*. They differ from known classificatory languages by their non-obligatory usage and by varied and not quite stable syntactic constructions numeral-classifier + noun. It could be understood as evidence of the fact that classifiers are not an original phenomenon in Bengali. Increased attention should be paid to them by native linguists who have both the theoretical knowledge and a feeling for different nuances in their usage mainly as regards various syntactic constructions with numeral classifiers.

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