CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM AND SCOPE

The present thesis attempts to make a contrastive analysis of Bengali and Oriya on the phonological level to reveal those points of contrasts which underlie the difficulties involved in pronunciation and to suggest ways in which these difficulties may be overcome. For this purpose, the comparison of Bengali and Oriya sound systems are presented in two different ways: (i) in physical term and (ii) in functional term. To be more explicit, the sound segments of both Bengali and Oriya are analysed in terms of production or articulation and function or distribution in the respective languages. The phonetic study of Bengali and Oriya speech sounds will help the learner to have a clear notion of the difficult or different speech sounds they will have to produce in the process of learning.
the target language. It will also ultimately contribute both to the effectiveness and rapidity in his learning. Comparison of the phonemic systems of both Bengali and Oriya will make the learner aware of the facts of how the sound segments functionally or distributionally differ in these two languages. The end result will give the learner an insight into both the languages.

In order to make the contrastive study comprehensive, this study first discusses in details the phonetic and phonemic representations of the sound segments of Bengali and Oriya and then undertakes a contrastive analysis of the two languages in the light of the findings of systematic phonological descriptions. Thus, the proposed study is divided into eleven chapters. The first chapter introduces the purpose of the study, its methodology, selection of languages under study at phonological level, historical background of the languages, methods of data collection and relevance of the study. The second chapter discusses the speech sounds of both Bengali and Oriya on the basis of the mechanism involved in their production. The vowel sounds of these two languages are compared with reference to cardinal vowels. The consonant sounds are compared in terms of productions. The third chapter establishes the phonemic status of Bengali vowels by minimal pairs. The distribution of these vowel phonemes as single entities and in sequence are also shown. In the fourth chapter similar
measures are taken to establish the phonemic status of Oriya vowels. The distribution of these vowel phonemes are also shown. The fifth chapter compares the phonemic systems of vowels of both the languages in terms of similarity and difference. The sixth chapter discusses the phonemic system of Bengali consonants. The seventh chapter studies the phonemic system of Oriya consonants in a similar way. The eighth chapter compares the phonemic systems of consonants of both the languages in terms of similarity and difference. In the ninth chapter there are discussions on syllabic structures of Bengali and Oriya. The syllabic structures are also compared in terms of similarity and difference. The tenth chapter discusses the supra-segmental phonemes of both Bengali and Oriya and compares them. The eleventh or last chapter is conclusion. This chapter discusses the summary of the findings chapterwise. This chapter also predicts some of the learners problems and suggests a few necessary steps for preparing remedial lessons.

1.2 CONTRASTIVE STUDY

In the field of language teaching many new techniques have come up in recent times. But it has become academically fashionable now-a-days to have a contrastive analysis from the pedagogical point of view. Contrastive analysis compares the systems of two languages and finds out the areas of similarities
and differences. The comparison of two languages may be undertaken in two different ways for two different purposes. The one is called diachronic comparison, that is the comparison of two or more linguistic systems with a view to classifying the languages into families and determining the degrees of relationship or reconstructing a parent language from which related languages have developed. The other approach is called synchronic comparison. This is the comparison of two or more linguistic systems as they exist today or on a particular point of time. In this kind of contrastive study two languages are, first of all, analysed completely and then the facts of the languages selected are compared item by item keeping the objective in view that either of them is or may be taught to those who have one or the other as their mother tongue. This kind of study mainly used for the purpose of language teaching may be undertaken at any or all levels—phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, cultural, etc. However, the present thesis aims at a synchronic comparison between the phonological systems of Bengali and Oriya.

Contrastive study finds its suitability and usefulness in certain respects. This kind of study leads to the identification of the problem areas in second or foreign language learning. It predicts the difficulty of a second or foreign language learner. Moreover, the insights gained from a contrastive study can be utilised in the preparation of second or foreign language teaching materials.
1.3 SELECTION OF LANGUAGES UNDER STUDY AT PHONOLOGICAL LEVEL

The selection of Bengali and Oriya for our purpose of study resulted mainly from the cross linguistic and cultural considerations. Bengal and Orissa are two contiguous states in the eastern part of the Indian territory where Bengali and Oriya languages are spoken respectively. Due to the linguistic and cultural similarity people of one language background learn the other for their own purposes. There is another important reason for the selection of these two languages for comparison. Though two long separated languages are best suited for comparative and contrastive study, it must also be kept in mind that this separation should also be within a reasonable limit. Two extremely separated languages which have no connection at all cannot yield productive result in the sense that no insight can be gained from such a contrastive study. For example, a contrastive study of say Bengali and Bantu is bound to be counterproductive. But if a reasonable degree of connection and genetic relation is there, we can bring the objects under the microscope of comparison.

It should be noted here that both Bengali and Oriya have a number of dialects. According to Sukumar Sen (1975, p. 21) modern Bengali has at least five dialect-groups of which three belong to Bangla Desh. The two dialect-groups spoken in West Bengal have local varieties or sub-dialects. They are as follows:
(a) east-central (Presidency Division), (b) West-central (South 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Burdwan and East Bankura Districts), (c) North-central (Murshidabad, Nadia and South Malda districts), (d) east-south western (Midnapore district) and (e) West South Western (West Bankura and old Manbhum districts). According to K.B. Tripathi (1962, p. 213) modern Oriya has four major dialects, such as, (a) the dialects of Ganjam and Koraput in the south, (b) the dialects of Sambalpur in the west, (c) the dialects of Balasore in the north, and (d) the standard dialects of Cuttack and Puri districts. However, in our analysis only the standard colloquial forms of these languages are taken into consideration.

The selection of our contrastive study on their phonological levels resulted mainly from language teaching consideration. Learning a language involves learning the systems governing the organisation of sound segments in the target language. The major difficulty of a learner is to encode and decode the sounds and systems of the target language. This difficulty can be stated as the difficulty in pronunciation as well as perception. The difficulty of learning the pronunciation of the target language reflects the degree of difference in the ways the mother tongue and the target language organise their sound systems. Therefore, the results obtained from the phonological level are of great practical value for the diagnosis of learners' problem and accordingly preparation of teaching materials.
1.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BENGALI AND ORIYA

Bengali and Oriya are two languages genetically related to each other. Both these languages belong to the eastern division of Indo-Aryan group. Thus, they are ultimately derived from the eastern branch of Proto-New-Indo-Aryan or what was called 'Eastern Magadhan' by Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1979, p. 92) in his magnum opus 'The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language'. The languages sharing geographical contiguity are sufficiently long separated from each other. As a result, both the languages flourished independently under different linguistic and extra-linguistic conditions. Bengali is the language spoken in the state of West Bengal in India and Bangla Desh. Bengali separated itself and emerged as a distinct language in about 1000 A.D. from the other languages of the Eastern Magadhan group (Chatterji 1979, p. 93). Oriya is spoken in the province of Orissa in India. It has been established that Oriya has been separated from Assamese-Bengali before Assamese and Bengali separated from each other. Oriya separated itself and emerged as an independent language in 10th century A.D. (Dash, G.N. 1982, p. 1). Thus, it becomes apparent from the evidences that differences between these two languages have developed during the period of their long separation and whatever similarities they have are due to their genealogical relationship. The obvious affinity between our two languages
selected here is evident from most of the sounds and systems which are common in both the languages. The uncommon sounds and systems clearly indicate the individual distinctiveness of each language.

1.5 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

In this study the data presented for the analysis is from Bengali and Oriya. The data in Bengali used here is mainly taken from the investigator's intuition about the language as it is his mother-tongue. I have further checked and rechecked the data in Bengali from my relatives, friends, teachers and students staying at Calcutta, 24-Parganas and Nadia districts. The data in Oriya was collected from a selected number of speakers residing at Bhubaneswar. These were generally collected from the informants through direct method. In some cases speeches of these informants were recorded with the help of a tape recorder and were analysed later. This investigator during his stay at Bhubaneswar from February, 1981 to May, 1987 had, to a reasonable extent, learned the standard colloquial Oriya spoken in Cuttack and Puri districts. Therefore, the responses of the informants which were initially transcribed phonetically, were reproduced by the investigator to check whether the informants accepted the utterances as natural or not. Thus, the whole data in Oriya was also checked and rechecked.
1.6 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The present contrastive study of Bengali and Oriya Phonology is significant from the theoretical standpoint and practical utility. Recently, many language teachers-cum-linguists have taken up the contrastive study of two languages for the purpose of making the task of language teaching and language learning easier, simpler and effective. The present study points out the nature of the linguistic individuality of Bengali and Oriya and the identity between the two at the phonological level. It also indicates the scope of further research in the historical evolution of the sound systems of the two languages beginning from their ancestral inheritance.

India is a multi-lingual country. Here, people learn languages other than their mother-tongue for various reasons, such as literary pursuits, business interests, pleasures of travels or for other practical necessities. Some of them learn another language at an early age because it happens to be a part of the school curriculum. Others, who cannot avail themselves of that opportunity, learn another language either by self-taught materials or attending spoken language-classes. The great importance of learning another language beside the mother-tongue in a country like India cannot be gain-said. By imparting training in different languages to the people of different language backgrounds India's unity and integrity can be strengthened. Therefore, the need for learning different
languages of India is urgently felt. In this context, the present contrastive analysis of Bengali and Oriya phonology will be of great practical use for the preparation of instructional materials, the diagnosis of learners’ problem and preparation of remedial lessons for the purpose of language teaching effectively which will ultimately help the speaker of one of these languages learning the other language.