



A Sociolinguistic Analysis of English Borrowing in Selected Bangladeshi Films

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Abstract

This study explored the lexical and contextual nature of borrowed English into Bengali cinema (Films). For the exploration of the subject matter, the study examined five Bengali films based on purposive sampling. The researchers explored the films through Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and the exploration illustrated four types of lexicons, which were ‘words with Bengali equivalents’, ‘words without Bengali equivalents’, words with close Bengali equivalents’, and ‘hybridized words.’ The highest number of words were found from the category ‘words with Bengali equivalents’, which reflects the dominant feature of English lexicon over Bengali counterpart. The researcher also analyzed the contextual use of English in conversation of the films and found that the use of English is mostly in respect to showing power, dominance and reflecting social hierarchy. The study helps to have a deeper look into the borrowing of English in Bengali films are their uses in different context.

Keywords: *Films, English, Borrowing, Lexical, Contextual*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The English language was introduced in the Indian subcontinent by the British rulers during the colonial period (1757-1947). It then gradually solidified its position as the language of administration, power, prestige, and employment while other languages were subjugated (Ali & Hamid, 2021). Considering the significance of English in getting access to administration and jobs, many people chose to learn the language, despite the fact that not everyone could afford to do so. The British Government in India recognized English as a medium of instruction for schools and colleges in 1835 (Bhaskararao, 2002). Even when British rule ended, this legacy persisted on the continent as English has significant roots among the elites of the Indian subcontinent which was perpetuated in both India and Pakistan after their partition in 1947.

A large number of businesses and industries used English names and signs during the Pakistani period (1947-1971) and stores or small enterprises with Bangla names or names written in Bangla script were hardly seen, especially in Dhaka. However, after the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, Signboards with English and/or Urdu names or scripts were eliminated which was basically driven by nationalistic

feelings. Bengali names and scripts were used instead of English and Urdu names, such as Bahadur Shah Park instead of Victoria Park, Udayan Biddyalaya instead of English Preparatory School, and Dhaka instead of anglicized Dacca (Banu & Sussex, 2001). Despite this, English has remained a language of the upper-class or the elites in Bangladesh. English remained a symbolic capital in Bangladesh, just as it had been in most other post-colonial nations. On the other hand, globalization has had a major impact on the widespread adoption of English. After the 1990s, English was heavily promoted in Bangladesh as part of the development strategy of the country (Ali & Hamid, 2021). As a result, English has become increasingly dominant throughout time, and this supremacy can be seen in the daily lives, education, business, entertainment, and literature of the Bengali-speaking population (Banu & Sussex, 2001). This dominance of English has paved the way for a huge lexical borrowing from English to Bangla which in one way can enrich Bangla, while on the other hand, this practice may also contribute to marginalizing the language by replacing some of its lexis. As cinema is a significant domain of language use and practice, it is important to understand the nature and contextual aspects and the semantic features of the borrowed English words in Bengali cinema. Therefore, this paper investigated five Bangla movies that were selected using purposive sampling and the borrowed words were analyzed further to understand their semantic features.

1.2 Context of the Study

The supremacy or dominance of English has influenced the other languages of Bangladesh. Lexical borrowings from English are one such influence; more and more English words are replacing their Bangla equivalents. In this paper, we argue that, while this phenomenon has begun to receive attention from the scholars (Banu & Sussex, 2001; Hoque et al., 2018), only a few pieces of research had been conducted on contextual aspects and the semantic features of the borrowed English words into Bengali cinema (movies and short films). More importantly, nothing is known about the nature of lexical borrowings from English, as well as the domains into which the borrowed lexis may be classified. This article investigated the contextual aspects of English lexical borrowing into Bangla by highlighting the domains in which the borrowing proceeded, considering five Bangla movies as examples. The research provides a deeper understanding of the spread and influence of English on contemporary Bangla cinema.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Foreign words can be borrowed to express a concept or describe an object for which there is no apparent available word in their native language. This kind of borrowing is based on lexical needs and involves single words-mainly nouns (Holmes, 2013). In contrast, Myers-Scotton (1992) stated that all kinds do not occur just for the absence of an equivalent words in the native language, it may happen based on cultural and conceptual aspect along with the issues of social dominance and reflecting power. This study looked into the borrowed English words in Bengali films to explore where those were borrowed to fill up the lexical limitation of Bengali language or it is serving any other purposes.

1.4 Research Questions

For the evaluation of the subject matter, the researchers looked for the answer of two specific questions:

1. What are the lexical categories of borrowed English words in Bangladeshi films?
2. What are the contextual uses of the borrowed English in Bangladeshi films?

2. Literature Review

In this modern world, English exerts tremendous influences on other languages including Bangla, like borrowing words or “**loan words**”. In addition, borrowing from English into Bangla is particularly conspicuous in the fields of science and information technology.

When a word is borrowed, it often undergoes phonetic modification according to the pronunciation patterns of the borrower language. From the sociolinguistic view, this paper closely has examined what kinds of change took place during lexical borrowing from English to Bangla language.

Being the language of globalization, English has been promoted across the world through trade, science, and technology in the age of modernization. The concept is what Kachru termed as ‘**Englishisation**’ (Kachru, 2005; Sridhar, 2008), which refers to the mass popularization and incorporation of English into another language. According to them,

“Englishisation is a contact-induced phenomenon between English and other languages. The languages of the Indian sub-continent came in significant contact with the English language in the seventeenth century. Subsequently, the English language acquired a superior position in relation to social, linguistic, literary, and ideological domains in the subcontinent.”

To accomplish the research goals, they have used a long paragraph of modern Bengali prose texts along with a catalogue of English lexis of the last few years. There they have critically observed and illustrated that:

*“..... These borrowings naturalized in Bangla have taken place in two broad ways: (a) adoption and (b) adaptation, at three levels (a) phonology, (b) morphology, and (c) lexicon. In simple observation, adoption usually takes place for those words (e.g., **cricket, politics, party, ball, club, cycle, arts, science, sentiment, naughty, etc.**), where application of the existing Bengali phonological and morphological processes is not much feasible. On the other hand, adaptation takes place for those words (e.g., **benci < bench, tebil < table, lampha < lamp, anti < aunt, etc.**) where, borrowed English words have been undergone with phonological and morphological operations applicable in Bengali.”*

Similarly, Mostafa and Jamila (2012) showed and discussed **500 English loan words** in their paper collected from different Bengali short stories, novellas, daily newspapers and oral discourse, such as talk shows, interviews and news broadcasts on TV and radio. Additionally, they have written down them whenever they hear them in daily conversation.

From the sociolinguistic perspectives, they have claimed that the phenomena of increasing the use of English loanwords with adaptation and without adaptation are clearly presented in their paper, though the focus of their study is identifying English lexical borrowings in their consequent impact on Bangla.

According to them, the majority of English words entered into Bengali lexical stock from the fields of medicine, science and technology, business and commerce, dress and ornaments, transport and tourism, entertainment, games and sports, communication, and administration, etc.

A few studies are found on the English lexical borrowings into Bangla in recent years. Significantly, in an empirical research study, focusing on the “**Naturalization**” of English words into Bangla, the famous linguist Dash (2013) has tried to identify how a huge number of modern English words and terms crept into the modern Bengali vocabulary within last few decades, and from the analytical perspectives, how these lexical items are gradually replacing the existing Bengali words and terms as well as creating effects on the existing Bengali vocabulary to fill in the lexical gap.

Furthermore, it has been observed that Dash (2013) has focused on the enrichment of Bengali lexical stock through naturalization of English words and terms. Unlike the current research, he has mentioned the fear of Bengali lexical shift due to the incorporation of English counterparts. But that study, like the present study, has analyzed both adopted and adapted forms of English lexis.

3. Methodology

The researchers followed Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method to evaluate the subject matter and find out the answer to the research questions. QCA was developed by Charles Ragin in the 1970s as a mathematical data analysis theory to analyze the causal relationship between different factors resulting in one outcome. In context to this study, the researcher looked for the reasons and outcome of lexical and contextual borrowing of English in Bengali films. Hence, QCA was the most feasible approach in this context.

3.1 Sampling

The researcher selected five Bengali films through random simple random sampling. Which were 1) Mayer Odhikar (1996) 2) Daruchini Dwip (2007) 3) Koti Takar Kabin (2006) 4) Guerrilla (2011) 5) Black money (2015). The films were collected from the open-source public domain (YouTube) and watched thoroughly to understand the context and their specific use of English words in a different context.

3.2 Data Analysis

We have analyzed the borrowing of English both from a lexical and contextual perspective. For lexical analysis, we have noted down the used English words or sentences when watching the films and then classified them into four different groups 1) which has Bengali equivalents 2) which has close Bengali equivalents 3) which does not have Bengali equivalents, and 4) Blended use of Bengali and English. The words which have direct Bengali translated counterparts such as *cantonment* (সেনানিবাস) were classified under category-1. The words which have close Bengali counterparts such as *train line* (রেল লাইন) are classified under category-2. The words which have no Bengali counterpart such as *Coffee* are classified under category-3 and the hybridized words such as *Uncultured*+ মানুষ are classified under category-4.

Moreover, after the lexical classification of words, we watched the films again to analyze the contextual use of English and those are presented through ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Findings

4.1 Lexical Category

From the thorough analysis of the five films under study, we have found a total 86 English words which are classified based on their category in the following table.

Table 1: Lexical Categories of Borrowed English Words

Category of Words	List of Words	No of words (Percentage)
Words with Bengali Equivalents	Thanks, dinner, office, murder, energy, language, knowledge, large, balance, map, marketing, campus, civil, democracy, position, quality, refugee, emergency, scientist, ultimately, highlight, job, creative, highway, violation, weather, journalist, zone, correct, best, embrace, death, qualify, knock, accident, account, conversation, broken, consultant, expert, income, complete, letter, complicated, meanwhile, photo, signal, train, short, recover, psychology, collection, process, noise, mad, joke, innocent, history, graduate, faculty, emphasize, dimension, crucial, basically, absence.	65 (75.58%)
Words without Bengali Equivalents	Dial, shoot, lest, channel, motor, flask, alcohol	7 (8.13%)
Words with close Bengali Equivalents	Sir, hotel, bandage, beer, parcel, air gun, lounge, mam, pump	10 (11.62%)
Hybrid Words	Uncultured+মানুষ, বাজে+ behave, school+ শিক্ষক, নিচু+standard	4 (4.65%)
Total		86

As presented in the table, the largest number of borrowed English words (75.58%) possess Bengali equivalents which was followed by words of close Bengali equivalents (11.62%) and words without Bengali equivalents (8.13%). In addition, the least number of words were hybridized ones consisting only 4 words (4.65%) from 5 films.

4.2 Contextual Perspective

We have already discussed the lexical categories of borrowed English words but the use of English in Bengali films is largely consequential in their contextual use. Lakoff (1996) stated that the use of English in bilingual countries are mostly in contexts of exercising power, prestige and social hierarchy. We have identified these contextual domains of using English in the selected films as well. Those are discussed as following.

Social Hierarchy

One conversation between the male protagonist (MP) and female protagonist (FP) in film Koti Takar Kabin (2006) is directly presented below. The male protagonist is a day labourer and the female protagonist is a college student.

FP: Oh my god! You are a day labourer and you know English?

MP: Don't talk to me without respect. Consider yourself lucky that people like work under the burning sun so that people like you can study in good college by the money of our taxes. Now get lost! Get lost!

FP: I am sorry. I did not know that you are so much educated.

From this conversation, we can clearly understand that the tone of FP changed as soon as she came to know that the MP knows English. Moreover, the line “*You are a day labourer and you know English?*”

reflects that it is kind of unusual that a day labourer will know English as it is the language of people with higher social hierarchy.

In addition, there is another scenario in the same film where the MP urges to FP in a high tone that

“No, you are wrong and your idea is absolutely wrong. Enough, what do you think? Are you only educated and gentle guy? I have completed my Honours in English as well. I know how to talk in English.”

From this conversation as well, it is well evident that the ability to speak in English reflects the education of people as well as the social hierarchy. English speaking ability is working as a judging scale of people.

Prestige

The use of English as a distinct prestigious issue is also seen on the selected films. In the films *Black Money* (2015), the MP teased some village girl with the quote *“the village girls are uneducated and uncultured.”* In reply one of those village girls replied *“hey, stupid man, what do you think of yourself. We are highly educated and we can also speak in English.”* The distinction is very clear here that English reflects one’s culture and educational level. If someone is quite good in speaking English, then it is a common thought that s/he will also be highly educated and possess high cultural sense.

Power and Dominance

In addition to social hierarchy and prestige, English is often used in Bengali films to exercise power and dominance over others. For example, in the film *Mayer Odhikar* (1996) a conversation between two protagonists is as following,

Protagonist 1: How dare to teach me manners? You uneducated.

Protagonist 2: You see! I am not uneducated; I am not illiterate. I am well thought, mister. If anyone slaps on your cheeks and gives a blow on your face this is how I will react.

The significant factor of this conversation is that both the protagonists were talking in Bengali and suddenly switched to English when the issue of literacy came. Thus, it is like a clear intinction that the ability to speak in English is directly connected with someone’s literacy.

From the thorough evaluation of all these contexts, it is clear and quite understandable the contextual use of English in Bengali films is not mere use for communication rather to portray social hierarchy, prestige, power and dominance; which align with the Lakoff (1996)’s theory on empowerment of English language.

5. Discussion and Summary

The researchers looked into the use of use of English in the five selected Bengali films both from lexical and contextual perspective and the findings were quite enchanting. We have found 86 words used repeatedly in all the five films in different contexts. The lexical and contextual use of those words are discussed as following according the research questions of the study.

Question 1: What are the lexical categories of borrowed English words in Bangladeshi films?

The researchers have found the use of borrowed English words in all four categories as 1) Words with Bengali equivalents 2) words with close Bengali equivalents 3) words without Bengali equivalents and 4) Hybridized words. The highest number of borrowed words are with Bengali equivalents which indicates the film makers deliberate use of English words though Bengali counterparts are available. Moreover, the borrowing was not due to the lexical limitation of Bengali lexicon rather an intentional use,

which reflects the ‘dominance hypothesis’ of Kachru (2005). Due to the dominant feature of English words the film makers used the English one though Bengali counterpart is available. The second highest number of words were close equivalent of English followed by very few hybridized words. This phenomenon of hybridization also corresponds with the term ‘nativisation’ of Kachru (2005).

Question 2: What are the contextual uses of the borrowed English in Bangladeshi films?

The researchers have found the use of English lexicon in different contexts but the use of English as language of conversation was used only in context to reflecting power, dominance and superiority. Among the five selected films, the earliest one was from 1996 (*Mayer Odhikar*) and we have found the use of English to reflects social hierarchy as well. And in the films *Koti Katar Kabin* and *Black Money* the use of borrowed English was ample and in different context but reflecting the same elements of social hierarchy and dominance. In contrast, there were no contextual use of English in the films *Daruchinidwip* (2007) and *Guerrilla* (2011), but some lexical uses.

English is a by product of globalization and in 21st century it is inseparable. And in context of globalization, English has significantly influenced Bangladeshi society (Ali & Hamid, 2021). Though the use of the language by mass people started as a means of filling lexical gap in Bengali, it is now used as a language to reflect social hierarchy, dominance and power. The noticeable impact of English is found in the Bengali films as well, as English is being used in Bengali films both from lexical and contextual perspective.

Conclusion

In the field of Sociolinguistics, borrowing words from one language to another is a usual and contemporary phenomenon. Bangla has heavily borrowed a lot of words (lexical categories) from many languages (especially from English) when the population concerned came into close contact with them for political, social, cultural or commercial reasons. Actually, one language borrows words from another language, particularly when there is no equivalent expression in that language as it is mentioned earlier in this paper. In this study, it has been observed that a huge amount of Loan words used and promoted in recent Bangladeshi cinemas. Also, the types of lexical borrowings found in some selected Bangladeshi cinema and to what extent these are used in those selected cinemas have been analyzed here. To recapitulate, these borrowings into Bangla (selected Bangladeshi cinemas) have played a significant role in the domain of Sociolinguistics.

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