

Lexical Borrowings in Boro

Swarna Prabha Chainary

*Dept. of Bodo
Gauhati University, India*

ABSTRACT: Boro language has a lot of borrowings from different languages of the soil as well as from abroad. Though the reasons behind borrowing of most words are unknown yet fulfillment of necessity may be considered as the greatest factor behind borrowing. This paper will basically highlight the languages from which borrowings have been done or are going on and during borrowing how some words are kept intact in form and meaning and in some what kind of changes are taking place along with semantic changes will be the main area of interest of this paper.

KEYWORDS: cognate, lexis, non-cognate, non-semantic change, semantic change

I. INTRODUCTION

Borrowing is an automatic process of every language in the world whether it is rich or poor. Sometimes borrowing is done to fulfill the needs of a language in its different spheres and sometimes it is done automatically without the knowledge of native speakers when and why it has been borrowed. Boro language has lot of such borrowings in different levels of linguistic analysis though study is going to be done here only on lexis. In borrowing most of the lexis are keeping their meaning intact as in the source language and in some semantic changes are also taking place. In borrowing in Boro language sometimes tatsama and sometimes tatbhava forms are also taking place. On the other hand, borrowings are commonly taking place from cognate as well as from non-cognate languages. So, discussion will take place both on cognate and non-cognate borrowings as well as on semantic changes and non-semantic changes.

II. METHODOLOGY

In this study the study of words will be based on morphological and semantic points of view. Data for this study has been collected both from primary as well as secondary sources based on their suitability.

III. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has high academic as well as linguistic value. Through this study an attempt will be made to show the structure taking place in case of borrowings and formation of hybrid words as well as the semantic changes during borrowings from one language to other.

IV. BORROWING FROM COGNATE LANGUAGES

The word cognate language here represents the languages developed from the same group similar to the Boro language and having very close resemblances to each other. Here, under the head of borrowing from cognate languages will include only two languages Dimasa and Kokborok. Besides these two cognate languages Boro language has also borrowed some words from its neighboring Assamese language belonging to the Indo-Aryan group. However, along with the development of time they wanted to be independent, take to dislike the words borrowed from this language, as its structure doesn't match with the Tibeto-Burman Boro language. The habitations of the Boros, Dimasas and Kokboroks are remote to each other and previously they had no any direct link or common platform either to exchange their thoughts and feelings or to borrow something from each other. But from the last few years they are coming close to each other and it is the reason that they are taking initiative to bid adieu to some of the Aryan origin words which they can nicely and easily borrow from each other having similar structure to their language/languages. Such words the Boro language has borrowed from Dimasa origin are *daukhu*, *dauling* and *dauphlam*. In Dimasa, *dau* means 'general bird or fowl' and with *dau* different bound forms have been suffixed to represent different varieties of birds owl, kite and duck respectively. This structure is same in Boro language and the word used to represent general bird or fowl is also same in Boro language with Dimasa. Previously for owl the Boros used *phesa* which is similar to Assamese and Hindi word *pecā* and which is not at all similar with the structure of the bird names available in Boro, i.e. each and every bird name in Boro language is to be accompanied by the word bird which is absent in this word. Therefore, they borrowed the word

daukhu from Dimasa that is structurally similar and have resemblances with other bird names as well. They accepted *daukhu* for owl instead of *phesa* because the crying sound of owl is also *khu khu* in Boro language and so is the bird crying in *khu khu* sound is *daukhu*. On the other hand, instead of *sila* (Assamese *xiloni*) ‘kite’ they borrowed *dauling* from Dimasa that also bears a deep meaning like the character of this bird. Kite is such a species of bird that flies on top of the sky and the word *ling* in Boro means high or far. The bird flying on top or high of the sky is *dauling* ‘kite’. Like the previous two names of bird species *dauphlam* used for *hangsu* ‘duck’ (Assamese *hāh*) has also been borrowed because of its having similarity with its character. In Boro *phlam* means ‘wide-open’ as the lower parts of duck’s legs are also wide open. The bird variety having wide-open palm is *dauphlam* ‘duck’.

Boro language has also borrowed some words from its cognate language Kokborok. One such word in Kokborok language is *birkhung* ‘aeroplane’ which has been borrowed in Boro language with slight modification as *birkhong*, the meaning remaining the same. In both the languages, the word *bir* means ‘to fly’ and the suffix *khung* and *khong* respectively have been added to form deverbal nouns in both the languages to represent aeroplane.

V. BORROWING FROM NON-COGNATE LANGUAGES

Like borrowing from cognate languages mentioned above some words have also been borrowed from non-cognate languages to fulfill the needs of this language. The reasons behind borrowing of some words are easy to explain and have reasons but some are very difficult and unexplainable. The lexis borrowed from a few languages are given below.

5.1 Assamese

Boro language has borrowed many words from different Indo-Aryan languages via Assamese as speakers of both the languages are residing in the same place and same geographic region in Assam. In borrowing, some words have been kept intact and some have been adjusted with the articulation system of the Boro language, e.g. Ass. *kopal* > Br. *khaphal* ‘forehead/luck’. The Boro language has not the use of unaspirated voiceless stop/plosive and so these have been changed to aspirated voiceless stop/plosive when the word has been borrowed into the Boro language. So, in this example unaspirated voiceless stops *k* and *p* have been changed to aspirated voiceless stops *kh* and *ph* respectively. *sthal*¹ ‘place’ has been borrowed into Assamese via Hindi or other Indo-Aryan languages from Sauraseni. In Boro, this word has been borrowed via Assamese and is used as *thuylu* (the meaning is remaining the same as in Assamese) in some of the dialects inserting the high back unrounded vowel phoneme /u/ in between the consonants *th* and *l* and temporarily dropping the first consonant *s*. It is to be mentioned here that the using of high back unrounded vowel phoneme /u/ is a very special feature of Boro language as well as in most Tibeto-Burman languages of North-East India. So, the Arabic origin word *nazar* ‘sight/look/glance’ borrowed into Boro via Assamese *nojor* has also the high use of this phoneme and is replacing /o/ phoneme with /u/ and transforming it to *nuzur*, the meaning remaining the same. Most of the words borrowed via Assamese from other Indian origin words are either slightly or highly corrupted when borrowed in to Boro language. One such word is Persian *namkin* > Ass. *nimokhia* ‘salted’. This word when borrowed in Boro is not keeping its Hindi or Assamese form but it is becoming *nimkhi/ningkhi*. Therefore, all the sweets and biscuits having salted taste is termed as *nimki/ningkhi* in Boro language. The Boro peoples have also borrowed Ass. *tolpora* (the cloth spread in the lowermost part of a bed if there is more than one cloth and used basically in the bygone days) and using it as *tholphora* adjusting it with their articulation system and keeping the meaning intact. In Assamese *tol* means ‘lower’ and *pora* means ‘spread’, but in Boro language we don’t get any meaning of *tholphora* if we don’t hire the Assamese meaning. One more such word used in Boro language from Assamese is *ekhangkhi* ‘partial/half paralysis’. In Assamese language *ek* means one and *ongshi* means ‘part/side/division’. In partial or half paralysis one part of the body becomes motionless or functionless and from this meaning of Assamese language this health problem has been named *ekhangkhi* adjusting it with their articulation system. In the above mentioned borrowings in Boro language Boronisation of phonemes and articulation is taking place. Besides Boronisation of Assamese words some hybrid formations combining from both the languages (Assamese and Boro) are also used in Boro language though their numbers are very minimum. One such word in Boro language is *thaise* ‘one place/a particular place’. In Assamese *thai* means ‘place’ and in Boro *se* represents the cardinal numeral ‘one’, the combination of which is representing ‘one place/a particular place’. One more such hybrid word is *maslangkhar* ‘kingfisher’. It is composed of one Assamese word *mash* ‘fish’ and two Boro words *lang* ‘take away’ and *khar* ‘run’ both verbs. It is that variety of bird that takes fish from water and run away.

¹ MCGREGOR: THE OXFORD HINDI-ENGLISH DICTIONARY, P-1045

5.2 Bangla

The Boro language has also the borrowings from Bangla language. The Boro peoples mostly from the western part of Assam have adopted and borrowed some Bangla words which they never think or imagine as borrowing from other language. One such word in Bangla language is *alada*² ‘separate’. This word has been borrowed in to Boro language and has been used in a similar way as in Bangla language. One more word in Bangla language is *kamranga* ‘star fruit’. This has been used as *khambrennga* in Boro language with minor changes of the original word.

5.3 Hindi

Boro language has also borrowed many words from different Indian and other languages via Hindi and so from the broad point of view these are going to be included under the head of Hindi as most of the Boro peoples can speak and understand Hindi, e.g. the Hindi word *kham* ‘pillar/post’ has been borrowed into the Boro language by adding one suffix *-pha* becoming *khampha*, meaning remaining the same. On the other hand there are so many Boro village names among the Boros having the word *suba* used along with other words, e.g. *nagasuba* ‘the province /area of the nagas, a tribe of north-east India’ ; *darogasuba* ‘the province or area of the darogas’ (these are the name of two villages presently in the district of Udalguri, Assam). This word *sūba*³ coming after different words in Boro language is originally an Arabic word representing the meaning ‘area/province’. In both the languages, it has same phonemes and meaning except the *ū* and *u*. In Arabic it is long *ū* and in Boro it is short *u* because Boro language has not the use of long vowel. On the other hand the Persian word *hālat* ‘particular state/condition’ coming through Hindi in Boro language is slightly corrupted and taking the form of *halud*. Boro language has not the uses of voiceless phonemes in the end of a syllable and the use of *t* is also not available in the language so, the final voiceless consonant has been changed with the voiced *d* keeping the meaning intact. The Persian origin word *dag* ‘the mark of burning/a mark/spot/stain’ has also been borrowed into the Boro language via Hindi or Assamese. In Boro language, this word is being used as *daguy*, the meaning being the same. The reason is that though the phoneme *g* is voiced, Boro language has not the words ending with this phoneme. So, to adjust with the characteristics of their language this vowel phoneme *u* has been used in the final position of the word which has very frequent use in that position. The words borrowed from English, Chinese, French, and Portuguese etc. have not been included here because the words borrowed from these languages have only been Boronised to adjust with their articulation system.

VI. SEMANTIC CHANGE IN BORROWING

In the examples borrowed into the Boro language from cognate or the non-cognate languages mentioned above the meaning are remaining the same. But sometimes during borrowing though the words are in intact form their meanings are seen changing may be for not having any direct link with that particular language from which borrowing has been made or may be for oral transmission from one person to the other or for transmission from one generation to the other. Such words are also not so less in Boro language. Few such examples are going to be mentioned below:

6.1 The first word going to be mentioned here is Arabic *lafz*⁴ ‘word’ entering via Hindi into Boro. In Boro language, in some of the dialects it is being used as *lobzo* and is never used in positive sense but always in negative sense, and when used in Boro language its meaning varies in comparison to original, e.g.

Bi-ni khuga-a lobzo guḷi-a.
3SG-GEN mouth-NOM decorum to have-NEG. SUFF
(His/her mouth has no decorum).

6.2 The other word is Hindi *anāj*⁵ ‘foodgrain’. In Hindi *anāj* means grain/food in general. This word *anāj* of Hindi is used in slightly corrupted form *anazyu* in some Boro dialects. But in Boro dialect it is not representing grain/food but is representing the items of curry, e.g.

² CHAKI, JYOTI BHUSAN (ed.): DEV’S STUDENTS’ FAVOURITE DICTIONARY, p-127

³ MCGREGOR: THE OXFORD HINDI-ENGLISH DICTIONARY, P-1036

⁴ Ibid, p-886

⁵ Ibid, p-32

Dinuṭi no-ao anazu muṅzang dong.
 Today home-LOC curry good have
 (Today there is good curry at home).

6.3 The next example of semantic change bringing here is Persian *dālān*⁶ brought via Hindi. In Persian and Hindi its meaning is balcony/corridor/gallery. But in Boro language it is representing some other meaning i.e. the high building or structure which may be two storied or multi storied, e.g.

Bisuṭr-ha geder dalan gong-se dong.
 3PL-POSS big building CLASS-one have
 (They have a big building).

6.4 The next word where also one can get semantic change is the Persian word *goyanda*⁷ coming into Boro via Hindi. In Persian as well as in Urdu and Hindi its meaning is 'informer/spy'. But in Boro language it is representing complete opposite meaning and in this language its meaning is 'robber/the person of bad character'.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study on lexical borrowings discussed above is only a brief introduction of the researcher on the particular subject. In this discussion, an attempt was made to show how the borrowings are going on among the languages either known or unknown to each other and during borrowing how sometimes semantic changes are also taking place in the words. So, it is thought that this subject is a very interesting subject and has a vast scope to go into it which if properly studied can draw light on society as well as the resource/resources the language/languages have.

Abbreviations and symbols

3PL-3rd person plural
 3SG-3rd person singular
 CLASS-Classifier
 GEN-Genitive
 LOC-Locative
 NEG. SUFF-Negative suffix
 NOM-Nominative
 POSS-Possessive
 uṭ-high back unrounded vowel phoneme used in Boro language

⁶Ibid, p-493

⁷ Ibid, p-278

REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

- [1]. Biswas, Sailendra (com.), *Samsad Bangla Abhidhan* (Sahitya Samsad, 18th edition, 2012).
- [2]. Brahma, P.C. (com), *BODO-HINDI-ENGLISH DICTIONARY* (NILIMA PRAKASHANI, BAGANPARA, 3rd edition, 2011).
- [3]. Chaki, Jyoti Bhusan (ed.), *Dev's Students' Favourite Dictionary* (Dev Sahitya Kutir, Calcutta, 28th edition, 1996).
- [4]. Dhar, P.C. (ed.), *Kok-kuthumma* (Agartala: Tribal Research Institute, 1987).
- [5]. Hagjer, Nirupama (ed), *Dimasa Grauren* (Bira Bhadra Hagjer and his companions, 2005).
- [6]. McGregor, R.S., *THE OXFORD HINDI-ENGLISH DICTIONARY* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1993)