Borrowing or Code Switching: Some Observations in Bodo

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Abstract

Sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary area with diverse subject matter and has given rise to a variety of studies. The multilingual society has resulted in immense mixing in different languages. As a result, the scope and intensity of research in code switch and borrowing have increased over the years. This confirms the practical and academic relevance of different aspects of sociolinguistics. Several languages co-exist in Assam and a major section of the Bodo population speaks two or more languages. Bodo has borrowed and code switched from Assamese and English freely without assimilating or assimilating them. Prolonged contact between Assamese and Bodo is the reason why there is the occurrence of code switch and borrowing. Besides, the Assamese language plays a pivotal role as lingua franca in Assam. While English is the most widely spoken language. Therefore, this paper examines the code switch and borrowing elements from Assamese and English in Bodo.

Keywords: Bodo-English, sociolinguistics, code switching, borrowing

Introduction

Sociolinguistic deals with all aspects of the relationship between society and language. Bernard Spolsky (1998) "Sociolinguistics is the field that studies the relationship between language and society, between the uses of language and the social structures in which the users of the language live" (p.1). Several research works in code switch has flourished over the years. Since code switching and borrowing is one of the important phenomena that are frequently used by speakers. So there is a need to focus on the lexical categories as code switching or borrowing often made by the speakers during interactions. The mixing of English and Assamese as well as different languages in Bodo is the inevitable consequence of bi and multilingual situations. With acculturation between Bodos and Assamese speaking society and the use of English language changes in socio-cultural systems, the use of languages and ways of living have radically changed. Therefore, such an endeavor is crucial to explore the position of the language.

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Review of Literature

A few researchers examined the borrowed or loanwords to Bodo from different languages. But, no paper discussed borrowed words with regards to code switching. The works attempted to highlight borrowing is discussed below:

Baro (2007) claims that Bodo vocabulary consists of :
a) Indigenous words
b) Newly coined words
c) Loan words from within the state and nation. (p.67)

Brahma (2012) presents a list of lexical borrowing from the Kamrupi Assamese in Bodo with some changes as per the Bodo phonemic inventory. The Assamese words undergo different phonological processes such as aspiration, de-aspiration, vowel insertion, vowel shifting, and others. Chainary (2015) examines the lexical borrowing from non-cognate (Assamese, Bangla, Hindi) and cognate (Dimasa and Kokborok) languages. The study shows that some borrowed words undergo semantic and morphological changes during the process of borrowing and the formation of hybrid words is also observed. Muchahary (2015) notes that borrowed elements mainly from Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic, and Tibeto-Burman have directly or indirectly entered into the Bodo language due to socialization and interchange of knowledge and ideas. Basumatary & Chainary (2016) states that the words borrowed from other languages mainly Assamese, Hindi, and English are boronised to articulate the words natively. Brahma (2016) comments that the loanwords undergo phonological and morphological changes to accommodate the Bodo vocabulary. Apart from Assamese, Hindi, and English, loanwords are borrowed from Persian, Arabic, Turkish, France, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and many others. Most of the borrowed words have become assimilated into the Bodo language. Brahma (2018) in his paper shows that words from the languages undergo morphophonemic changes during borrowing. The vowel 'ɯ' and diphthong 'ɯi' is the most common changes that undergo in the borrowed words. The next section will discuss briefly on borrowing and code switching.

Borrowing vs Code-switching

Borrowing and code switching are closely related as borrowings are the remains of code switching. Borrowing is generally limited only to lexical items that may or may not be assimilated, unlike code switching which ranges from a single lexical unit to a complete sentence and remains assimilated or unassimilated. Cook (1991) termed code switch as a "non-cooperative communicative strategy" (p.68) and code switch occurs when an individual "falls back on his or her first language when in trouble, hence employing a psychologically motivated linguistic archi strategy" (p.70). Unlike other researchers, Myers-Scotton (1993) does not distinguish between borrowing and code switch. Rather, it suggests that both are similar and can witness the difference

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in frequency. Code switching has different linguistic functions and is different from borrowing. For instance, borrowing occurs when one does not find an equivalent word in their language while the code switch serves as solidarity markers. Essien (2000) defines code mixing (as used by the researcher) a 'socio-psychological function'. It has its way to construct a meaningful sentence. It follows a certain rule which may be language-dependent or language-independent. Essien (2000) suggests that "while code-mixing may be more or less ad-hoc in terms of selection of mixing items, borrowing is more stable. A person or community that borrows some items is likely to repeat the same items as the need arises" (p.5). According to Muysken (2000) code switching 'suggests the alternational type of mixing' and separates the bilingual mixing from the phenomena of borrowing and interference. Sometimes it is difficult to find out a clear and unwavering definition between code switching and borrowing. Stell (2019) rightly points out that "determining what is (not) a switch in bilingual speech has been a consistent concern for structural approaches" (p.161). Devic (2008) writes lexical transference (borrowing) was earlier considered as a threat to the purity of language and code switching was leveled with negative connotations.

However, the process to examine a word as borrowing or code switching will be different in every language depending on the status of the languages, history of language contact, the degree of acceptability of certain words in the recipient language, and many other sociolinguistic factors as well.

The Objective of the Study
The main purpose of the study is to distinguish a lexical element as borrowing or code switching.

Methodology
The data is collected from a natural conversation between two Bodo bilinguals.

Analysis of Data
The section below shows some of the examples from the Bodo language. The sentences containing examples are only extracted for analysis and are highlighted in bold and the translation is presented in italics.
The classification of code switching instances occurring in different speech categories is as follows:

a) **Numerical terms**- Though the English equivalence of third, fifteen, one, and two are available in Bodo, the speakers tend to use the English numerical terms in high frequency. The speaker code switches as the Bodo numerical terms are not frequently used due to the

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habitual use of English numerical terms. Such terms can be best identified as code switched items.

For example:

1) nɯŋ sɯra tʰɯ *2 jeirs* dɯŋkʰaiju zɯŋnijasɯ *1 jeir* lɔ dɯŋu sɯi. (*You have two years but we have only 1 year*).
2) nɯŋ da *3ʳᵈ semestǝr* Kla:s pʰɯra sɔli dɯŋ? (*Is your 3ʳᵈ-semester class going on)?*
3) kʰali *15* dɛɪsni tʰakʰai madɯi mannau tʰahai dɔŋ mɯn (*I stayed in my aunt's place for fifteen days only*).

b) **Terms of measurement**- Kilometer is an English term of measuring length. As there is no equivalent term in Bodo so the speaker borrowed the English word to fill the lexical gap during the conversation. At times, due to extensive use of a word, it becomes a part of the recipient language and is no longer identified as a borrowed word.

For example:

1) zɯŋni tʰannainipʰrai 7 - 8 se *kilomitǝr* guzan. *(It's away from our place7-8 kilometers far).*

c) **Kinship terms**- There are many terms in Bodo used to address kinship terms, but the word cousin does not have an equivalent word in Bodo. So, the speaker makes a marked choice by borrowing the lexical item. It is generally used to refer to the child of either uncle or aunt.

For example:

1) *kadzin* pʰɯrzuŋ gele bai. (*I played with my cousins*).

d) **Terms for parts of town**- 'sari ali' is the name of a place where four-lane intersects. There is an equivalent word for sari ali /lama brɯ/, but as it is the name of a place the speaker did not use the term equivalent in Bodo. Whereas, the phrase /tini ali/ is borrowed from Assamese to describe the exact location.

For example:

1) bini pʰrɯi sari gʰanta laju Vishwanath *sari ali* sim. (*From there it takes 4 hours to reach Vishawanath sari ali).*
2) **tini ali-**ni kʰɯ aŋ bara kʰɔbɔr mɯna kʰai. (*I do not know much about the incident in tini ali).*

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e) **Terms for sports**- Football is the name of a sport that has no equivalent term in Bodo. So, the speakers had no other option but to borrow the English lexical item which is now part of Bodo vocabulary.

For example:
> 1) *pʰutbɔl* muzaŋ mɯɯnu? (*Do you like football)?*

f) **Academic terms**: The speakers have directly mixed the English words used in the academic field without using the Bodo equivalent even though it is present. Sometimes, the speakers are not aware of the equivalent Bodo term as they are rarely used. Here, the proficiency of language also plays an important role. Instances found in the data below include linguistics, university, semester, notice board, class, etc. Such lexical categories are mostly considered as borrowed items but as new words are introduced through neologism it should be considered as examples of code switch as such concepts are now familiar to Bodo culture and society.

For example:
> 1) *kla:s* pʰɯura muzaŋ hɔinu sɔli dɔŋ (*My classes are going well*).
> 2) auga bauga *ju:nivərsiti-*au mɯɯn ba lanɯ sɯi *liŋgwistik*kʰɯ iŋgliʃ-au lanɯ sandu. (*I will take admission in any University if I will get admission I will take linguistic or English*).
> 3) bara gɯɯzaŋ beraihɯipʰerakʰɯi Cherrapunji tʰaŋnu hagau daŋ. *la:s sɪmestər*-rau. umpʰrai bɔndʰuau nɔjaɔ tʰaŋgun (*I have not visited faraway places (in Shillong). In last semester I am planning to visit Cherrapunji and in puja holidays I will go home*).
> 4) *nəʊtɪs bɔ:d*-au hɯibai ba. (*It might be if it's written on the notice board*).

g) **Phatic expressions:** The phatic expressions are usually taken from the English language. The speakers used the English word 'yeah' and 'bye' as a sign of expression of acceptance as well as linguistic fillers respectively. Such words can be considered as borrowed items from English but they do function as code switch items as well. Gumperz (1982) regards such items as discourse markers which is an important aspect of code switch.

For example:
> 1) A: *pʰutbɔl* pʰɯɯr!! (*football*!!)
>   B: *jeə* (yeah)
> 2) *bus*-a pʰɯi bai. aŋ tʰaŋnɯ sɯi. *bai*. (*The bus has arrived, am leaving now. Bye.*)

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h) **Noun** - Although Bodo has lexicon items to refer to the weather, area, town, year, days, and last the speaker makes the use of the English term to be more expressive and acceptable. The speaker has borrowed the lexical word /ləgɯ/ 'friend' and / bɔ:dər/ 'border' as there is no Bodo term for it.

For example:
1) Tezpurni pʰrɯi tin gʰɔnta laijɯ, Arunachal ***bɔ:dər*** sim (*It takes 3 hours from Tezpur to reach Arunachal border*).
2) zuŋnija ***town area***-jau ɯmpʰrai zanaja tini ali-au. (*It happened in tini ali , a place away from our town area*).
3) ***dɪrekt*** Arunachal lau naŋzabɯ Gohpur. (*Gohpur can be reached direct from Arunachal*).

i) **Verb**: The verb /sina/ 'well known' does not have an equivalent term in Bodo. So, it a borrowed item into the Bodo language.

For example:
1) ***log***-*u* pʰɯr guja lugupʰɯr bu guja kʰɔkʰrazarau ***sina-i*** nai bɯ guja enikʰainɯ. (*I want to go but I don't have any friends in Kokrajhar*).

Apart from Assamese and English, words from Hindi is also present in the conversation.

For example:
1) ***karɔn*** kʰɯntʰa hɔra aŋnɯ baherau tʰaiju hunnai kʰai. (*I do not know much about the incidents because they do not inform me as I stay outside*).
2) sanba lɔsɔnɔ ***sutti***-ja? (*Holiday is only for 5 days) ?*
3) Bahir-au tʰaŋnu giju weðər-ni tʰakʰai ***gɔrɔm*** (*I am afraid to go to other places as it is very hot*).

It is observed that the elements of both the languages Assamese and English have become an integral part of the Bodo language. In many cases, it is observed that the speaker borrows due to the non-availability of terms and code switches to fulfill some sociolinguistic motivation. Some examples function both as borrowing and code switching. As Matras (2019) claims that "borrowing is most difficult to discern from code-switching in cases where active bilinguals alternate among meaning-equivalent structures- in two (or more) languages" (p.149). Therefore, one should also examine the situation where and how a word is used to determine the status of the word as borrowing or code switching as shown in the examples above.

Conclusion

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From the above discussion, it becomes clear that switching and borrowing have become an unmarked feature of the Bodo language. It is very important to examine a word by analyzing the context of usage to denote if it is a borrowing or code switching. The introduction of new words through neologisms should be accepted as a part of Bodo vocabulary to fulfill the different requirements of the language in a modernized society. It will further help to strengthen the vocabulary of the Bodo language. Even though the research work does not study the phonological and morphological changes due to the mixing of languages, one needs to investigate the language induced changes in Bodo due to intensive contact with Assamese and English. So there is a need to conduct a further in-depth study on other aspects of borrowing and code switching phenomena.

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