

Trend and Tendencies of Lexicographical Study in Assam

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Abstract

Lexicographical Studies is a new intellectual thought that has been developed all over the world in the second half of the 20th Century. This thinking that started in different countries of the world with a view to the art of dictionary formulation has also reached a wide range covering the theoretical aspects of Lexicography in the last seventy years. We discuss in this research paper how Lexicographical study has evolved and what direction it covers in Assam, especially in Assamese Language.

Keywords: Assamese Language, Lexicography, Lexicographical study

1. Introduction

Lexicography is an independent academic discipline with theoretical and practical branches where practical branches monitor the vocabulary prevailing in one or more languages. The collection, selection and alphabet compilation cover the techniques of their stimulus, derivation, word recognition and sampling of the application of proper description and meaning. The theoretical section covers the structural aspects and meanings of the terminology contained in a dictionary. Time-wise discussion of the different forms of words, variation in meaning according to form, as well as the theory structure required for their description and analysis, history of Lexicography, the dictionary situation and market research, examination, and development of dictionary use theories etc., are also covered in other parts. On the whole, it indicates the linguistic and technical aspects of the dictionary formulation of a language. Lexicography covers both the process or practical aspects of dictionary preparation and the theoretical aspects of the dictionary. Scholars have therefore recognized it as an independent science. Targeting the process of dictionary preparation on the practical Lexicography section is discussed. Similarly, the theoretical Lexicography has developed based on research about dictionaries. Both these sections cover various aspects. Systematic studies of Lexicography are called Lexicographical Study.

Research on dictionaries has also gained a huge scope in India. In this context, several study centres and research institutes were established at different times to conduct systematic and careful study in India, such as, ‘An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principle’ in Pune, ‘Tamil Lexicon on Historical Principle’ in Annamalai University, Centre of Advance Studies in Linguistics in Pune University, Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore, etc. These institutions open the way for Lexicographical studies in all India backgrounds.

If we look at the context of Assam, then we can see that the Lexicographical study is still at an early stage in Assam. There has not been an initial systematic study in Assamese language, especially in terms of the origin, evolution, and current status of the theoretical aspect of Lexicography. However, Ph.D. dissertations have touched this aspect to some extent.

This research paper attempts to determine the outline of lexicographical studies in Assam by dividing the content as a Specialist review and a Journalistic review to facilitate discussion. Through it, we will be able to know which aspects the Assamese dictionary reviews have covered till date of Lexicography and what has not been covered yet.

2. Main Discussion

2.1 Lexicographical Study in Assamese in the 2nd half of the 20th Century

In the context of the whole world, the theoretical side under lexicographical study has been spread and developed since the eighties of the 20th Century. In parallel with that a tendency to Lexicographical studies was also developed in Assam with the effort of Assamese Scholars. The books and articles on dictionaries written in Assamese during this period were particularly focused on the background of the compilation of the published Assamese dictionaries, the principles of preparing dictionaries, similarity, and difference between two or more dictionaries, etc. So, in fact, they did not have the theoretical impact at all. Now we will discuss the books and articles published during this period. Till date a total of three individual and edited books related to dictionaries have been found in Assamese language.

2.1.1 Atul Chandra Barua’s Asamiya Abhidhan Aru Bhasha (1977) is the first book written about dictionaries in Assamese language. Out of the total of twelve articles contained in the book, five are related to Assamese dictionary and the remaining seven are related to Assamese Language. The aspects covered by the dictionary reviews discussed in the article are as follows:

1. Background and Tradition of dictionary related study in Assam.
2. Some technical aspect of dictionary preparation (e.g., Lemma selection, inclusion of entry, alphabetical order, etc.)

3. Discussion about the background, data collection, alphabetical order, Grammatical information, meaning, orthography and etymology of miles Bronson's dictionary titled A Dictionary in Assamese and English (1867)

4. Purpose of compilation of 'Dictionary in Assamese and English', 'Hemkosh', and 'Chandrakanta Abhidhan' and their reviews, etc.

1.1.2 Abhidhan Prasanga (1986) is the second book on dictionaries edited by Dr. Satyendra Narayan Goswami. The aspects discussed in the book include typology of various dictionaries with an introductory note for every dictionary. It also discussed specific types of dictionaries published in Assamese language till then. Other topics in the book include the compilation policy of Hemkosh and Bronson's dictionary, various subject matter of entry, orthography of Assamese language, problems of orthography and the need to remove them. etc.

1.1.3 Abhidhan tatva Basant Kumar Goswami has written the third book on dictionaries published during this period. The title of the book is Abhidhan tatva (1997). It is the last theoretical book on dictionaries of the 20th century. The topics of discussion in this book include a short account of tradition, growth and development of dictionary, contrast between Hemkosh and Chandrakanta Abhidhan, definition of Lexicography, relation between Lexicography and linguistics, Problems of dictionary compilation, various stages of dictionary compilation, etc.

The three books discussed above touch upon several aspects of theoretical Lexicography. (E.g., History of Lexicography, a general theory of Lexicography, criticism of dictionary, etc.). However, the history of lexicography was limited to discussing the history of dictionary compilation, not given the history of the theoretical side that was equally advanced.

From the structural point of view, only the discussion of microstructure has taken a turn for the most. In terms of dictionary criticism- Bronson's dictionary, Hemkosh and Chandrakant dictionary discuss the background of the three dictionaries, the purpose of the compilation, the principle of compilation etc. Similarly, relatively special emphasis has been laid on these issues: contrast of Entry structure and the spelling of Hemkosh and Chandrakanta dictionaries in and undisciplined use of spelling of Chandrakanta Abhidhan.

1.1.4 Since the nineties of the 20th century, various articles related to dictionaries have been found in magazines and many books on languages. Some of the articles about dictionaries published during this period are 'Asamiya Abhidhan keikhanar Pranayan reeti' by Maheshwar Neog, 'Eta Satabdir Asamiya Abhidhan', and 'Ardho Satabdit Asamiya Abhidhan' by Basants kr. Goswami. The elements reflected in these articles include Analysis of historical context and structural aspects from Bronson's dictionary to Chandrakanta dictionary, Orthographical mismatch from 'BOR AMRO' and 'LOTI AMRO' to Chandrakanta dictionary, historical value judgment efforts of

Bronson's dictionary, hemkosh and chandrakanta dictionary. In addition, problems arose in the Classification of Assamese dictionaries due to lack of specific objectives, variations in the policy of setting up Meaning, Problems arising in terms of entry insertion of dictionaries (e.g. etymology instruction problems, pronunciation instruction problems, limitations of grammatical instructions, etc.). From a theoretical perspective, the articles written in the second half of the 20th century have partially covered the two study areas, especially dictionary history and dictionary criticism. This is not an imitation of western theory. Historical context discussions from 'Bor Amro' (1795) to 'Chandrakanta Abhidhan' (1933) belong to History of Lexicography. On the other hand, comparative studies conducted between different subjects of entry in different dictionaries, studies on classification of dictionaries are under dictionary criticism.

1.1.5 Basanta kr. Goswami's Theory of Assamese Dictionary (1995) is the first and only thesis of Assamese language which is related to the dictionary. published in the 20th century. The topics discussed in this thesis include the collection of information, review of the rules for entry inclusion from Bronson's dictionary to the Chandrakanta Abhidhan, elements required to increase the usability of a dictionary, etc.

1.2 Lexicographical Study in Assamese Language in the 21st Century

1.2.1 First Decade

In the first decade of 21st century, three books on dictionaries were published in Assamese. Those are - Abhidhan Tatva (2003) edited by Prof. Arpana Konwar, Asamiya Jatiya Abhidhan Pakshyo-Bipokshyo (2010) edited by Lakshminath Tamuli and Abhidhan Tatva (2019) edited by Arpana Konwar. A large number of articles have also been written in various magazines and edited books in this decade. Some of those notable articles are as follows: 'Chandrakanta Abhidhanar Utkorsho Sadhan Aru Kisu Prasangik Chinta' (Prantik, 2001), 'Abhidhan Pranayanar DikDarshan' (Bartapokhili, 2002), 'Asamiya Bhashar Abhidhan Sarchar Itihas' (Gariyoshi, 2009), etc.

The aspects that have come up for discussions about the history of Lexicography under theoretical Lexicography in this decade include Historical outline of Indian dictionary Compilation, A superficial review of dictionaries published from Bor Amro (1795) to Asamiya Jatiya Abhidhan (2010). It should be noted that in the Assamese dictionary related books published during this period, Lexicography has adopted the traditional view of Applied Linguistics. Needless to say, after the subtle research of western scholars, the idea is over that Lexicography belongs to applied linguistics. Instead, it has been established as an independent discipline.

The book 'Asamiya Jatiya Abhidhan Pakshyo-Bipokshyo (2010) mentioned above is related to dictionary criticism. Various articles in the book discussed the weakness of the 'Asamiya Jatiya Abhidhan' (2010). Some of these are:

Despite not being used in Assamese Language, Mistakes of Data Collection, English and other foreign language words are used as Headword. Criticism include unnecessary inclusion of words, criticism against spelling, various errors in the delivery of meaning of the Head words (Such as inconsistent examples, use of unqualified illustrations, data confusion, etc.). Overall, these have been severely criticized in various directions.

1.2.2 Second Decade

In the second decade of the 21st century, a book (Abhidhan tattva 2019) was published on the theoretical side of the Lexicography and also many articles were published in magazines and research journals. Similarly, special contributions have been made from the field of research. Two Theses and four Dissertations have been published in this decade.

Let us first describe the context of the book. The title of the book is Abhidhan tattva (2019). Here are the topics included: Definition of Lexicography, use of various technique of Dictionary making, dictionary typology, use of punctuation in dictionaries, outline of dictionary compiling tradition in Assamese (from BOR AMRO to electronic dictionaries of 21st Century.)

1.2.2.1 Articles of this decade tried to complete history of Assamese dictionaries. Devabrata Sharma's Article - 'Asamiya Abhidhan Pranayan Paramparar Asampurno Itihas' is notable in this regard. Moreover, Jyotirekha Hazarika has written about the spelling of Assamese dictionary in the journal Gariyoshi (2011), Abhijit Borah reflects a brief history of Lexicographical study with the title 'Abhidhan tattva aru Asamiya Abhidhanar sarsa' in the 'PRANTA:SWOR' research journal, In Dogorangsang research journal, Bornali Saikia has discussed the nature of the dictionary with the title of 'Adhunik Asamiya Abhidhanar Prakiti Bisar.

In this decade, a notable research paper by Prof. Subasana Mahanta was published that indicates another study area (Research on dictionary use) of Lexicography. The title of the research paper is 'Samprotik Asamiya Samajat Abhidhanar Byobohar: Byoboharkarir Monuvongi' (2015). It was published in the ANVIKSHA Journal from the Department of Assamese Dibrugarh University. A survey was conducted by 29 students through a questionnaire and Interview to collect information from 274 dictionary users. The research paper was prepared on the basis of the collected data. The information sought to be found through the survey is as follows:

1. What is the user's attitude towards the prevailing dictionaries?
2. Have existing dictionaries been able to overcome all user requirements?
3. What kind of dictionary does the user want in the future? etc.

This is the first research paper in Assamese language regarding the attitude of Assamese dictionary users.

1.2.2.2 In this decade, two theses on dictionaries have been completed. The first thesis is Asamiya Abhidhanar Dersho Basar aru Adhunik Abhidhan Pranetar Sanmukhat Pratyahban (2011) submitted by Karabi Gogoi, under guidance of Prof. Subasana Mahanta. The Thesis contains the history of dictionary compilation till the 21st century, Dictionary typology and classification of Assamese dictionaries, Structural analysis of six general Assamese dictionaries published between the 19th to 21st centuries, Also, some issues of dictionary compilation have been discussed. This Thesis covers both History of Lexicography and General theory of Lexicography areas under the metalexigraphy. However, the scholar does not mention about Metalexigraphy anywhere in the research work.

The other one is Abhidhan Tattva' Byoboharik aru Tattvik Dishar Adharat submitted by Abhijit Borah (2015). There are several aspects that have been manifested in this Thesis as well. Judging from the point of view of theory, this Thesis provides a brief understanding of the Theoretical Lexicography but does not offer an explanation of the study areas under it. It also analysed a total of ten selected dictionary structures from Bronson's dictionary to the 21st century electronic software dictionary. While analyzing all the dictionaries, they are discussed in three categories as micro structures, macro structures and megastructures.

1.2.2.3 Some M.Phil. Dissertations in Dictionary have been completed in this decade. They mainly reflect the comparative aspect. Parismita Borah has submitted a Dissertation entitled Abhidhantattva'r Adharat Hemkosh Aru Adhunik Asamiya Abhidhanar Tulonamulok Adhyayan which provides a comparative discussion of the structural aspects of the two dictionaries. Similarly, Amal Nath in his Dissertation entitled Ekobingsha Satikar Sadharan Asamiya Abhidhanat Bijnan Aru Taithyo Prayukti Bikhoyak Prabisti has judged the various similarities and differences between the science and information technology entries of Asamiya Jatiya Abhidhan and Saraighat Abhidhan. Lakhiprasad Dehingia has also discussed the entry of Assamese electronic dictionaries in his Dissertation Asamiya Baidyutin Abhidhanar Prakriti. Overall, we get the following results in this decade:

1. The history of the dictionary making in Assamese has been discussed earlier, but Lexicographical Study has only been discussed in this decade. The field of research has made this contribution.
2. The comparison aspect has gained prominence during this period.
3. Structural analysis of dictionaries based on a general theory of Lexicography within Metalexigraphy took place during this period.
4. Assamese electronic dictionaries and some of their aspects have been discussed in this decade even though it is on a limited extent.
5. Research on the use of dictionaries in Assamese was first conducted in this decade. However, this field of study has not yet expanded significantly in Assamese.

3.0 Conclusion

The above study shows that many aspects have been reflected in the Assamese lexicographical study in the past period. But it is also true that the Assamese Lexicographical Study, which began in the second half of the twentieth century, has not covered some aspects or has many limitations. Some aspects are being ignored; many aspects remain to be studied on a broader range. Some of them are mentioned below:

1. Theoretical Lexicography or Metalexigraphy is a total of four major fields of study that Western scholars have mentioned in their research. Those four areas are respectively-1. History of Lexicography 2. A General theory of Lexicography 3. Research on dictionary use and 4. Dictionary Criticism. In Assamese, Abhijit Borah has given only a nominal introduction in his research work, and it does not give a proper idea of these areas of study. Similarly, this has been mentioned in the article 'Abhidhan, Abhidhanar Sangya Aru Abhidhan tattva' (2019) by Karabi Gogoi. but no one has discussed it in detail so far.

2. There have been many discussions on the historical outline of the Assamese dictionary in various articles, books, and research papers. In contrast, the discussion of Lexicographical Study is negligible. Secondly, General theory of Lexicography is discussed in theoretical books, theses and dissertations on lexicography but not in journal articles. Research on the use of dictionaries in Assamese has not yet received much attention. In Abhidhan Tattva Basanta Kumar Goswami, quotes an example of Western scholars doing user research. Prof. Subasana Mahanta's paper published in the journal 'ANVIKSA' in 2015 is the first and only Assamese paper on the use of dictionaries till now. There is scope for systematic studies in this regard in the future.

3. Dictionary criticism is not at the level it really should be, but to some extent it is found in Assamese. Asamiya Jatiya Abhidhanar Pakshya-Bipakshya and Ramesh Pathak's book Asamiya Bhashar Bivinno Dish: Mot Aru Bitorkito Mot reflects many aspects of dictionary criticism.

4. There are not many Journalistic Reviews on Assamese Dictionaries. These are naturally short and advertising. Journalistic Reviews on Dictionaries in Assamese language so far have highlighted the following aspects:

- i. the qualities of a dictionary with personal opinion.
- ii. Various problems observed in Assamese dictionaries including word collection.
- iii. Provide news on the publication of new Assamese dictionaries, quality, etc.

Due to a very wide scope of the subject under study, this research remains somewhat limited. In the future, extensive studies are needed.

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