

## English Elements In Bangla Lexis

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### Abstract:

*This paper aims at looking into the indelible impression that the global lingua franca i.e. English has left on Bangla vocabulary. Though geographically the two languages are almost at antipodal positions, in this essay we will see that the English tongue has contributed substantially to the enrichment and development of Bangla lexicon.*

*This language (Bengali) current through an extent of country nearly equal to Great Britain, when properly cultivated, will be inferior to none in elegance and perspicuity.*

W Carey (Quoted in Sen,1911:06).

### Introduction:

Genealogically speaking, Bangla, along with Assamese is the easternmost of the Indo- European languages. Hudson (1965) has rightly called Bangla as a daughter of Sanskrit and second cousin of English. Like the mother, Bangla is very resourceful and has blossomed with the passage of time. Though much spade work is yet to be done to find out the precise date of birth of Bangla, researchers have roughly set the date around 650-1000 AD. Dr. Shahidullah (1965:13) has divided the development of Bangla into four phases with 650 AD as the year of birth:

650-1200: Old Bangla

1200-1350: Transitional Bangla

1350-1800: Medieval Bangla

1800- : Modern Bangla

From 650-2008, in this time span of fifteen long centuries (approximately), Bangla has emerged as the richest living Indian language. Banglophones can afford to boast of the fact that the national anthems of Bangladesh and India are written in Bangla. This is not the end of the story. The national song of India is written in Bangla. This is a huge achievement for any language to be the language of the national anthem and national song of a linguistically mega-diverse country like India. Last but not the least, Bangla is the first Asian language to produce a Nobel laureate in literature (Rabindranath Tagore) and another in Economics (Amartya Sen). This fact

proves the validity of William Carey's comment which is quoted at the beginning of this article, on the potential of our mother tongue and of what FH Skrine said about Bangla: *Bengali unites the mellifluousness of Italian with the power possessed by German of rendering complex ideas.* (Quoted in Sen, 1911:06)

These unsurpassable records speak volume in favour of the enviable resources of Bangla.

Among the resources of Bangla, the most important is its exquisitely rich lexis. As a Sanskritic language, Bangla is lexically very resourceful with high degree of concentration of Sanskrit words (Anderson, 1920). Among the Bangla lexemes, a substantial number of words are of foreign origin. From lexical perspective, Bangla has been one of the most cosmopolitan languages in the Indian sub-continent. In Bangla, we have words from America (Mahogany), Australia (Zebra), Mexico (Chocolate), Denmark (Gas), Italy (Gazette), Greece (Dam from Drachma) and France (Ansh). All the major continents and oceans have their shares in the Bangla lexicon. But excepting Portuguese and a few French words, other European and American loan words have entered our language through the English language.

Chatterjee (1926) has shown that Jnanendra Mohan Das has made 150000 lexical entries in his *Bangla Bhashar Abhidhan* (Dictionary of the Bangla Language). But most of the modern Bangla dictionaries like *Bangla Academy* and *Samsad* dictionaries list approximately 75,000 entries. However, if we take into account the words of the Bangla dialects, the number will be much more than 150000.

#### **Classification of Bangla words:**

The bulk of Bangla words have been divided into four classes: *Tadbhava* (Literally means, produced from that, i.e Sanskrit) *Tatsama* (Pure Sanskrit words) *Deshi* (Austroasiatic borrowing) *Bideshi* (Foreign words).

According to Chatterjee (1926), Bangla has 51.45% *Tadbhava*, 44% *Tatsama*, 3.30% Perso-Arabic and 1.25% English, Portuguese etc words. These figures, however, in the context of modern times are questionable. Bengal was exposed to the foreigners from ancient time because of her port. The whole of East Bangla was the hinterland of Chittagong Port which was dubbed by the Portuguese as *porta grande* or big port. Naturally enough, the Bangalis came in contact with the Mughals, Persians, Portuguese, Dutch, French and finally the English. Bangla language got enriched by borrowing words from these languages.

#### **Bideshi or foreign words in Bangla lexis:**

According to Suniti Kumar (1926) *Bideshi* or foreign words constitute 4.55% (Perso-Arabic 3.3%+ 1.25% European words) of Bangla lexicon. This 1.25% share of European languages in



Bangla vocabulary includes English, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Danish, Italian and Spanish. Among the above mentioned European languages, the Bangalis came in direct contact with the Portuguese, French and of course, the English. The French and Portuguese came to Bengal before the English. Hence French words like restaurant (restorang), *en tete* (আঁতাত), *coupon* (কুপন), *depot* (ডিপো) and Portuguese words like *ispat* (ইস্পাত), *saban* (সাবান), *kedara* (কেদারা), *padri* (পাদ্রী), *behala* (বেহালা) were absorbed by Bangla directly from the French and Portuguese traders. The other European lexical items entered Bangla dictionary via the English language.

#### **English loan words in Bangla lexis:**

According to Hudson (1965) Bengali is the second cousin to the English tongue. On the genealogical plane, both the languages are inter-linked as both are under the umbrella of the Indo-European language family. Hudson (1965:125) shows the relationship in an engaging manner:

The family likeness is found quite soon when one begins to hear some very common words, e.g. numbers: *dui* (দুই), calls up the word 'dual control', *saptam* (সপ্তম, 7th) recalls 'Septem ber', the 7th month of the Roman calendar; or relationships: 'baba' (বাবা) is very like 'baby', 'mata' (মাতা) and 'bhrata' (ভ্রাতা) are recognizable in 'mother' and 'brother'; *nam* is obviously the same as 'name' and there are many others.

Besides this linguistic family relationship, there is another vitally important dimension which almost cemented the relationship between Bangla and English. Two hundred years of British colonial rule resulted in an influx of English words and phrases into Bangla. Because of globalisation and IT revolution, the influx has now reached such height that we may call this phenomenon as 'linguistic miscegenation'. Be it the offspring of 'linguistic miscegenation' or the by-product of globalisation, English words have become sine qua non of the Bangla lexicon. The English elements, to be precise, have become omnipresent in the Bangla language. The English words in Bangla vocabulary may be divided into two categories-

*Direct loan words and Slightly changed words.*

#### **Direct loan-words:**

The English loan words of this category entered the Bangla dictionary without any change in pronunciation. These words cover the following domains-

#### **Politics and administration:**

President, Magistrate, Judge, Government, Party, Public, Community, Minister, DC, ADC, Chairman, Member, OC, SP, Police, Bench, Session, OSD, Picketing, Show-down, Vote, Election, Campaign, Nomination, Parliament, Speaker, MP, Court, Injunction, Supreme Court, High Court etc.

The Second World War and the partition of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947 left some lexical legacies to Bangla:

দ্বিতীয় মহাযুদ্ধের প্রায় সমান বয়সী আমি,আমার চেতনার প্রথম উন্মেষের মুহূর্তে যুদ্ধ শব্দটি ছিল প্রায় 'দুধ' শব্দের মতই জরুরী। আর ছিল অন্ধকার মাখানো ভয় জড়ানো একটি শব্দ, 'ব্ল্যাক আউট' যার পাশাপাশি বুকের মধ্যে উৎসৃত হত তীব্র তীক্ষ্ণ আর্তনাদ-সাইরেন শব্দ। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ভয়, ছোট ছোট ছোট। 'অল ক্লিয়ার' সিগন্যাল দিলে তবে বেরোও মাথাময় ঝুলকালি মেখে.....তার পর এল ফটিটু এবং "ইভ্যাকুয়েশন" শব্দ (DevSen, 1995: 10-11)

[Translation:

*I am nearly as old as the Second World War. During the budding period of my consciousness, the word 'War' was as important as 'Milk'. A phrase used in the same breath with the same degree of urgency was 'Black out'. Another word to be juxtaposed here was 'Siren'. The very word caused adrenalin rush in us. Panicked, we used to run helter-skelter to shield ourselves from the aerial attacks. Hearing the signal 'All clear', we emerged; smeared with soot....The year 1942 heralded the advent of the word 'Evacuation' in our life.]*

Among other English loan words that have entered are language with the second world are –

Control, Ration, Supply, Queue, zip

The political upheaval of 1947 left it's indelible mark on Bangla. Words like 'riot', 'communal riot', 'direct action', 'passport' 'visa', 'camp', 'refugee', 'lock out', 'hotline' made their way to Bangla vocabulary in the wake of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

After 1971 we got:

Liberation, Freedom Fighter, Relief, Collaborator.

#### **Education:**

School, college, university, Head Master, Principal, Professor, orientation, induction, GPA, Pass, Division, Class, Distinction, Course, Semester, Module, Registrar, Dean, Proctor, House Tutor, Hall, Faculty, Certificate, Degree, Diploma, Honors, Masters, M.Phil, Doctorate, Syllabus, Curriculum, Session, Coaching, Admission, Provost, Warden, Fees, Tuition, Scholarship, Waiver, Credit Transfer etc.

#### **Science:**

Pharmacy, Chromosome, Protoplasm, DNA, Zygote, Nucleus, Electron, Proton, Oxygen, Hydrogen, Nitrogen, Chlorin, Green House, Electronics, Biotechnology, Genetic Engineering etc.

Most of the words belonging to different disciplines of Science and Technology have been



adopted into Bangla in the original form and are transliterated without any change. Efforts have been made to coin Bangla equivalents of different scientific terms but without much success. The attempts sometimes resulted in the creation of bizarre-looking and odd-sounding words. For example, Oxygen (*omlojun*, অম্লজান), Hydrogen (*udjun*, উদ্যান), Nitrogen (*Netrojon*, নেত্রযান), Chlorine (*Kulhorin*, কুলহরিণ). Syed Mujtaba Ali, the celebrated writer of belles lettres in Bangla draws our attention to the funny, bizarre and exotic effect of some Bangla scientific terms:

রাজশেখর লেখেন, 'নেত্রজনের উপস্থিতিতে অসিতলীনের উপর কুলহরনীর প্রতিক্রিয়া' শুনে মনে হয় সঙ্কলের সজাগ দৃষ্টির সামনে কোন বেহেড বেলেলাপনা।.....এর অর্থ হচ্ছে *The reaction of chlorine (কুলহরনী) on acetylene (অসিতলীন) where nitrogen (নেত্রজন) is present.* (Ali, 2006:127).

The reason behind the creation of these sorts of Bangla technical terms is linguistico-historical. According to Haque (2004), pundits in the 19th century were extremely Sanskrit leaning and they had a tendency to adopt English loan words in Bangla via Sanskrit. The English words were first Sanskritized and the Sanskritized forms were then transliterated into Bengali. The result as we have already seen, was bizarre and funny. For example, because of the Sanskritization process and the subsequent Bangla transliteration we got 'exotic' words like *Kulhorin* (কুলহরিণ, for Chlorine), *Gouronor* (গৌরনর, Governor), *Netrojun* (নেত্রজন, Nitrogen), *Mokkhomuler* (মোক্খমুলার, Maxmuller).

#### IT:

Computer, hardware, software, configuration, compatible, email, internet, website, browsing, surfing, mouse, chatting, online, keyboard, Laptop, Palm-top, Multimedia, Gigabyte, megabyte, Cyber, Cybernetics, Information Super High Way, Power Point, Operating System, Hang, Junk mail, Net, Memory, Office Package etc.

Efforts have been made to coin Bangla equivalents of some IT terms but without any tangible success. Internet has been done into Bangla as *Ontorjal* (অর্ন্তজাল). 'Information Super Highway' has met its Bangla version in *Totto mohasarani* (তথ্য মহাসরণী). The Bangla word for computer *Gonon Jontra* (গণন যন্ত্র) reminds us of ancient Egypt's abacus. Visibly *Gonon jontro* reduces the multifarious capabilities of a versatile device to mere computing. These IT terms, however, have not received even modest currency in Bangla.

#### Art, Culture:

Fashion, Style, Show, Function, Exhibition, Fair, Model, Modeling, Painting, Photography, Ramp, Canvas, Mural, Motif, Fiction, Film, Documentary, Tele Film, Daily Soap Opera, Concert etc.

#### Religion:

Bible, Father, Mother, Sister, Catholic, Protestant, Methodist, Orthodox, Baptism, Gospel, New Testament, Old Testament, Missionary, Church, Pagoda, Temple, Nun, Saint etc.

Tagore in his *Shobdotatta* (শব্দতত্ত্ব) has given us a Bangla counterpart of Baptism as *Opsudikkha* (অপসুদীক্ষা) but the word did not get currency. *Nuton niom* (নুতন নিয়ম), *Puratan niom* (পুরতন নিয়ম) and *Susamachar* (সুসমাচার) are the direct translations of New Testament, Old Testament and Gospel which however, have got modest popularity.

#### **Sports:**

Tournament, Cricket, Football, Badminton, Sprint, Athlete, Gym, Gymnastics, Wicket, Out, Bowled, Bowler, Batsman, Wicket Keeper, Skipper, Referee, Umpire, Century, Fifty, Hat-trick, Sledging, Warm-up, Stadium, Team Spirit.

#### **Appliances & instruments:**

CD, DVD, Camera, Digital, Washing Machine, 3D, Virtual Reality, Robot, Vacuum Cleaner, Refrigerator, Oven, Pressure Cooker, Rice Cooker, TV, Remote Control, Flat TV, LCD Screen, Plasma TV, Home Theatre, Switch etc.

Hudson (1965:125) observes, " Many of the words needed for European style cooking are English words and have no Bengali equivalents, e.g. saucepan, frying pan, roast, pudding, plum".

#### **Slightly changed loan words:**

Vishnupada (1973) lists the following words in this category in his book:

Lord-*Lut* (লাট)

Glass-*Gelash* (গেলাস)

Hospital-*Haspatal* (হাসপাতাল)

Lanthorn-*Lonthon* (লন্ঠন)

The following words of this category have undergone so much Banglicization that it is even tough for an educated person to trace that the words are of English origin:

Table-*Tebil* (টেবিল)

Sentry-*Santri* (সান্ট্রী)

Guard-*Garad* (গারদ)

Box-*Buksho* (বাক্সো)

Office-*Apish* (আপিস)

Inch-*Inchi* (ইঞ্চি)

Christian-*Khristan* (খ্রিস্টান)

Jail-*Jel* (জেল)

Doctor-*Daktar* (ডাক্তার)

Police-*Pulish* (পুলিশ)

Feet-*Phut* (ফুট)



School-*Ishkul* (ইশকুল)  
 Steamer- *Istimar* (ইষ্টিমার)  
 Station-*Istishan* (ইষ্টিশান)  
 Engine-*Injin* (ইঞ্জিন)  
 Overseer-*Obharsiyar* (ওভারশিয়ার)  
 Tuition- *Tushoni* (টিউশনি)  
 Turpentine- *Turpin* (টারপিন)  
 Tile: *Tali* (টালি)  
 General: *Jandrel* (জাঁদরেল)  
 Bundle-*Bundil* (বান্ডিল)  
 Desk-*Deksho* (ডেকশো)  
 Brush-*Burush* (বুরুশ)  
 Bench- *Benchi* (বেঞ্চি)  
 Mummy- *Momi* (মমি)  
 Tarpaulin-*Terpal* (তেরপাল)  
 Member- *Membor* (মেম্বর)  
 Tincture- *Tinchar* (টিংচার)  
 Batten-*Batam* (বাটাম)

English 'pinnacle' has become *punshi* (পানসী-পানসী নৌকা) in Bangla. Etymologically, 'pinnacle' comes from Latin 'pinus' (pine tree). *Pampshu* (পাম্পসু, Light leather shoe) owes its origin to English 'pomp' and 'shoe'. According to Gobin Lal (1968:135), this shoe was 'probably worn for pomp'.

#### English Translation Loans

Apart from the above-mentioned categories, Bangla language has been enriched by what is called English translation -loans-

Tubewell -*Nalkup* (নলকুপ)  
 Title-role-*Nambhumika* (নামভূমিকা)  
 Title-page-*Akhyapatra* (আখ্যাপত্র)  
 Foot-light-*Padapradip* (পাদপ্রদীপ)  
 Re-union-*Punormilon* (পুনর্মিলন)  
 Pre-historic-*Pragoitihasik* (প্রাগৈতিহাসিক)  
 Air-tight-*Baiurodhi* (বায়ুরোধী)  
 Laughing gas - *Hasano gas* (হাসানো গ্যাস)  
 Tear Gas – *Kandano Gas* (কাঁদানো গ্যাস)

Sri Chintaharan (1953) shows that much used and cliched Bangla phrases, ghorar samne gari, ain shohostey loa, chaer bati tey tufan, kono patoroi oltatey baki na rakha are the direct transla

'Ghorar samney gari', 'Chaer batitey tufan', 'Kono pathoroi oltatey baki na rakha' are a few tions of 'put the cart before the horse' 'to take law into one's own hand', 'to raise storm in a tea cup' and 'to leave no stone unturned' respectively. The catalogue of this sort of English contribution to Bangla is quite long. Some more familiar translation loans are-

*Oronney rodon kora*-To cry in the wilderness

*Suborno sujog*- Golden opportunity

*Ulongo sotto*- Naked truth

*Kumbhirasru*- Crocodile tears

*Suprabhat*-Good morning

*Shuvoratri*-Goodnight

*Modhuchandrima*-Honeymoon.

*Dukkhito*: Sorry

*Badhito*: Indebted

*Anugrihito*: Obligated

*Chhutir mejaj*: Holiday mood

*Kalobazar*: Black market

*Shokto bhitti*: Solid base

*Anonder shatey*: With pleasure

*Shornakkhorey*: In letters of gold

*Shorno jug*: Golden Age

(Majumder, 1963:104)

We owe our Gola boddho (Neck- tie) to the English. The colonial rulers have taught us to attend Anterjatik (International) Gol tebil boitok (Round table meeting). They have bequeathed their 'wrist watch' to us as Hat ghor. The ancestors of our Bati ghor and Sobuj sonket are English 'Light House', 'Green signal' respectively.

English translation loans have grown in Bangla exponentially. Tagore's contribution in this field is pioneering. We owe the following lexical elements to the extraordinary genius of Tagore (2000: 360-363)-

*Centripetal* (কেন্দ্রানুগ - kendranug)

*Centrifugal* (কেন্দ্রাতিগ - Kendratig)

*Cosmic Ray* (মহাজাগতিক রশ্মি - Mohajaotic Roshmi)

*Infra red light* (লাল উজানি আলো - Lal Ujani alo)

*Reflex action* (প্রতিবর্তী ক্রিয়া - Protibritti Kria)

*Report* (প্রতিবেদন - Protibedon)

*Custom House* (মাসুল খানা - Masul khana)



The catalogue Tagore's contribution of this category is quite long. A comprehensive list of these translation loans have been appended to his Shobdototto. Many of the translation loans introduced by Tagore have become integral part of our language. But the following ones which sound a bit funny to the modern ears have almost lost their currency in Bangla-

Minister of Sports (কেলিসচিব, *Keli Sochib*)  
Governing Body (অধিষ্ঠায়ক বর্গ, *Odhistayok borgo*)  
Intelligence Department (কানাকানি বিভাগ, *Kanakani Bibhag*)  
His Exalted Highness (তদীয় উত্তুঙ্গতা, *Todiyo Uttungota*)  
Vigorous protest (বলবান অস্বীকৃতি, *Boloban Osikriti*)  
Extremist (বাড়াবাড়ির দল, *Barabarir dal*)  
Park (আরাম বাগ, *Aram bug*)  
Bureaucracy (আপিসি শাসন, *Apishi shashon*)

Translation loans are ever on the rise. The exoglossic status of English has contributed to this rise. Some recent translation loans are-

*Sonali karamordan* (সোনালী করমর্দন)- Golden handshake  
*Shikal dhumpayee* (শিকল ধূমপায়ী)- Chain smoker  
*Tupikhola obhinondan* (টুপি খোলা অভিনন্দন)- Hats-off congratulations (Hyat, 2008: 10)  
*Tan tan dorir upor diye hata* (টানটান দড়ির উপর দিয়ে হাঁটা)- Tight-rope walking (Siddique, 2000:142)  
*Nil rokto* (নীল রক্ত)-Blue blood  
*Holud sangbadikota* (হলুদ সাংবাদিকতা)- Yellow journalism  
*Gyanbhittik orthonity* (জ্ঞানভিত্তিক অর্থনীতি)- Knowledge economy

English translation loans have enriched the Bangla language but overuse of these elements makes the language unintelligible to the masses. Chintaharan (1953:46) has highlighted this hitherto neglected point in an engaging manner-

চলতি বাংলায় অনেক ক্ষেত্রে ইংরেজী গঙ্গী ভাষা উহাকে শ্রীহীন না করিলেও সাধারণ বাঙালীর নিকট দুর্বোধ্য করিয়া তুলিতেছে। 'নেতৃত্ব দিকে ইচ্ছা করা', আইন স্বহস্তে লওয়া, ঘোড়ার সামনে গাড়ী, চায়ের বাটিতে তুফান, কোন পাথরই গুলটাতে বাকি না রাখা, প্রভৃতি প্রয়োগ সাহেবী বাংলার চরম নিদর্শন। আমরা এখন 'পারলৌকিক তৃপ্তিতে' সন্তুষ্টি না হইয়া বিদেশী মতে 'পরলোকগত আত্মা'র তৃপ্তি কামনা করি..... 'অরণ্যে রোদন করা' আমাদের সহিয়া গিয়াছে, 'সুবর্ণ সুযোগের' সম্ভাবহারেও তেমন আপত্তি নাই-কিন্তু 'উলংগে সত্যকে' স্বীকার করা বা 'কুস্তীরাশ্ফ মোচন করা' আমাদের পক্ষে বিশেষ কষ্টকর। 'সুপ্রভাতের' সহিত আমাদের নিত্য পরিচয়, কিন্তু তাই বলিয়া 'শুভরাত্রি'কেও নিত্য ব্যবহারে লাগাইবার চেষ্টা শোভন বা সমীচীন নহে, 'ফুলশয্যাতেই' আমাদের সন্তুষ্টি থাকা উচিত-'মধুচন্দ্রিমার' জন্য লালায়িত হওয়া আমাদের পক্ষে প্রশংসার বিষয় হইবেনা।

**[Translation:**

*Though the English elements in colloquial Bangla do not deprive it of its grace, they render the language incomprehensible to the masses. 'Netritto ditey ichhey kora' 'Ain shohostey lowa',*

examples of tangible English influence on Bangla. No more are we satisfied with 'Parouloukik tripti'- we, in the tune of the Anglophones, pray for the salvation of the 'Porolokgoto atma' (Departed soul) .... We have put up with 'Oronney rodon kora' (to cry in the wilderness). We do not raise any objection to the proper use of 'Suborno sujog' (golden opportunity). But it is really painful for us to put up with 'Ulongo shotto' (naked truth) or 'Kumbhirasru' (crocodile tears). 'Suprabhat' (Good morning) is our old acquaintance. But that does not imply that we should embrace 'Shuvo ratri' (Good night). 'Fulshojja' is what we should be satisfied with- hankering after 'Modhuchandrima' (honeymoon) would be an act of transgression on our part.]

### Marriage of English words with Bangla affixes:

The union of English words with Bangla affixes has given birth to numerous offsprings. Here are some examples:

#### English words+ Deshi Suffix

*Masteree*, মাষ্টারী (Master+Bangla suffix i, ই)

*Ministeri*, মিনিষ্টারী (Minister+ Bangla suffix i, ই)

*Professori* প্রফেসরী (Professor+ Bangla suffix i, ই)

*Deputygiri* ডেপুটি গিরি (Deputy+ Bangla suffix giri, গিরি)

*Editari* এডিটারী (Editor+ Bangla suffix i, ই)

#### Deshi Prefix+ English words

*Baytime* (বেটাইম)

*Bayhead* (বেহেড)

In some cases, the consummation of the relationship is so smooth that the new forms are very hard to be identified as the creation of translanguistic affair. For example, *obhi* (অভি) + *ontoreen* (অন্তরীন, *Internee*) = *Obhoyntoreen* (অভ্যন্তরীন).

Some English words precede Bangla words and perform the function of prefixes in the resultant forms. For example, Half-hata, Full-Hata, Full-Moja, Full-toiri etc.

### Hybrid Words:

Some English words are yoked to deshi words or other loan words in Bangla which in their new forms function as compound words in our language. Dr. Vishnupada (1973) dubs these words as Hybrid words. The following words are some Hybrid forms much in popular and day- to- day use:

*Master moshai* (English Master+ Bangla Moshai), *Dakter babu* (English Doctor+Bangla Babu), *Head moulovi* (English Head+Arabic Moulovi), *Ukil barrister* (Arabic Ukil+ English Barrister), *Jel Khana* (English Jail+ Persian Khana), *Shil Mohor* (English Seal+Persian Mohor), *Marka mara* (English Mark+Bangla Mara) *Log Boi* (English Log+Bangla Boi)



**Acronyms:**

Much used English acronyms like the UN, UNICEF, UNESCO, USA, UK, UAE, KSA, WTO, ADB, OIC have entered Bangla vocabulary directly and they are used in our tongue in the transliterated form without any change.

DC is more familiar to our masses than *Jela Proshashok* (জেলা প্রশাসক). VC is more glamorous than *Upacharjo* (উপাচার্য). MP (Member of Parliament) has occupied the public tongues by banishing *Songsod Sodoysa* (সংসদ সদস্য). Even illiterate people of Sidr and flood affected areas are not vulnerable to the use of VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding). TNO is closer to the people but *Thana Nirbahi Kormokorta* (থানা নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা) seems to be distant. Nouveau riches consider *Dudak* (দুদুক) as threat incarnate.

*Senaprodhan* (সেনা প্রধান) is familiar but for the top boss of police we go for impressive sounding IGP.

**Bengali words formed following English acronym formation process:**

JaS (জাস): Jati Songo (জাতিসংঘ)

SaS (সাস): Sahajjo Songstha (সাহায্য সংস্থা)

Kabikha (কাবিখা): Kajer Binimoye Khaddo (কাজের বিনিময়ে খাদ্য)

**Translation acronyms:**

VAT (Value Added Tax): *Musak* (মুসক - *Mullo Songjojan Kar*, মূল্য সংযোজন কর)

EC (Election Commission): *Nik* (নিক - *Nirbachon Commission*, নির্বাচন কমিশন)

**Some non-English words in Bangla through English:**

The plurilinguistic source of the lexical items used in Bangla bears testimony to the fact that it is one of the most cosmopolitan languages in the South Asian region. The Bangla lexicon can rightfully boast of its multi-ethnic and multinational entries.

Anthropologically speaking, we have words from the languages of Mongoloids (*Cha* from Chinese), Caucasians (*Vodka* from Russian), Negroids (*Zebra*, South Africa) and the Aborigines of Australia (*Boomerang*). The following brief list shows that all the major oceans and continents have their share in the Bangla lexicon. But the words found their place in our tongue through the English language.

Zebra (SA)

Chocolate (Mexican)

Hasna Henna (Japan)

Magenta (Italy)

Lama (Tibet)

Vodka (Russian)  
 Bolshevik (Russia)  
 Cork (Spain)  
 Quinine (South America)

Two recent lexical entrants to our language that have occupied educated Bangali tongues are *Ombudsman* and the notorious French word *Papparazzi*.

### **English loan words in Bangla: Boon or Bane?**

In his incomplete *Shobdo Shongroho* Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar has enlisted 40 English loan words in Bangla. The number multiplied rapidly as Chatterjee (1926) has shown that Jnanendra Mohan Das has made 1200 lexical entries of English loan words in Bangla. Musa and Ilyas (2002) have shown that approximately 3500 English loan words are in use in Bangla. The statistics shows that the curve of English loan word acceptance in Bangla is tangibly upward. The question that has haunted the linguists and purists is that what benefit are we reaping out of the exponential growth of English loan words in Bangla? Are we lexically polluting our language by borrowing indiscriminately from an alien tongue?

According to Vishnupada (1973) languages are like rivers- they are in perpetual flux. That Bangla has borrowed words from so many sources bears its stamp of healthy flow which Vishnupada considers as its vital sign of liveliness. Bangla has over 5000 Persian words (Shahidullah, 1965). The share of Arabic is also significant. Sanskrit, as it goes without saying, is the biggest shareholder in the Bangla lexis. These borrowings from diversified sources have enriched and enlivened Bnagla. So, borrowing from English is not the sign of lexical weakness of Bangla. Rather, it bears testimony to the fact that Bangla is a language with high degree of plasticity. Like English, it has borrowed words from different sources and has successfully accommodated the words in its own system.

Apart from the linguistic properties of Bangla in absorbing and accommodating English loan words, there is another point of pragmatic value. English loan words have tremendously contributed to the comprehensibility of the Banglophones globally. Banglophone learners of English enjoy considerable ease as their learning is accelerated by the preponderance of English loan words in Bangla. Besides, scientific loan words familiarise us with new concepts- they are our windows to the world of technology, research and discovery.

The preponderance of English loan words in Bangla, however, is not an unamalgamated blessing. It has some concomitant problems as well. Musa and Ilyas (2002) have mentioned two such problems:

1. The transliterated form of English loan words is often a source of difficulty for foreign learners of Bangla, specially for those who are not initiated to the English language. For example, when a Korean learner of Bangla comes across this sentence *Bangladeshta really sundor*



(বাংলাদেশটা রিয়েলি সুন্দর), it will be difficult for him or her to understand the sentence as the word 'really' (রিয়েল) will not be found in any Bangla dictionary.

2. Excessive use of English loan words in textual and spoken Bangla is a source of difficulty for the children in the comprehension of their books or the conversations of those around them.

Apart from these problems, some other disadvantages are there related with the use of English loan words in Bangla. As most of the people of Bangladesh are not educated, too much reliance on the use of English words creates problem for them in understanding their own tongue. Most important of all, English loan words have forced many Bangla words to the edge of extinction.

The merits of the use of English loans in Bangla outweigh the demerits. The problems related with the use of English words can be solved easily. Regarding the problem highlighted by Musa and Ilyas (2002), Bangla lexicographers can incorporate the English loans in their dictionaries both in the transliterated and original forms which would solve the difficulty of the foreign learners of Bangla. The other problems are not beyond solution. Judicious, discriminate and proper use of English loans is supposed to help the children and mass people in their comprehension of their own language.

#### **Conclusion:**

The presence of English lexical elements in Bangla is pervasive. The influx of English loan words which was kickstarted by the decisive Battle of Plassey (1757) was accorded a lukewarm reception in the initial phase. But things started to change soon. As English replaced Farsi as the court language, people became enthusiastic about the language. The exoglossic status of English tremendously accelerated the tempo of English loan word acceptance in Bangla. What purists considered as 'lexical infiltration' in the early phase, later on came to be considered as 'lexical enrichment' of Bangla. This fact of linguistic enrichment of Bangla started to get recognition from Bangla speaking writers. A poet and writer of Tagore's stature has used 1860 English loan words in his writings (Mahato, 1974). Vidyasagar in his *Shobdoshongroho* made a list of English words in Bangla. The number of English loan words multiplied rapidly as we see in *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Chatterjee (1926) has mentioned that 700 English words were in use in the Bangla tongue. The exponential growth continued-the curve of English lexical element acceptance in Bangla maintains an almost tangible upward trend as is evidenced in the publication of *Banglai Procholito Ingreji Shobder Abhidhan* by Musa and Ilyas (2002). The dictionary shows that there are approximately 3500 English loan words in Bangla. The relationship between the two languages which started in 1757, has now been cemented by two hundred years of colonial rule. New dimensions to the relationship have been added by the IT revolution, spread of education, increased international mobility of the Bangla speakers and last but not the least, the phenomenal privilege enjoyed by English as the unrivalled global lingua franca.



Every aspect of Bangla (Syntax, Lexis, Phonology) bears the stamp of English influence. One of the first Bangla Grammars was written by an Englishman (NB Halhed, *A Grammar of the Bengal Language*). The first book on the systematic discussion of Bangla phonology was written by an English magistrate, ie. JD Anderson. Interestingly, the regulatory body of the Bangla language proudly declares the presence of an English word in its binomial composition-Bangla Academy. Our rickshawpullers, as it goes in a cliched joke, are familiar with University and College but not with *Viswavidyalaya* (বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়) and *Mahavidyalaya* (মহাবিদ্যালয়). The masses are more familiar with tax than with kor (Ki). People even speak of injection (in place of injunction) issued by the court but they are reluctant or unable to use *nishedagga* (নিষেধাজ্ঞা). *Ghoshito Odhikarik* (ঘোষিত অধিকারিক) seems to be outlandish but not Gazetted Officer. The previous one looks lackadaisical while glamour and power ooze from the latter. These examples show that our life is replete with English loan words many of which have undergone so much Banglicization that even the highly educated Bangla speakers are unaware of their foreign roots. These loan words have widened our lexical horizon, no doubt. Two hundred years of colonial rule and the linguistic family kinship have cemented the ties between the two tongues. Bangla has developed such a good degree of plasticity that it can readily absorb words from English into its system- 'tissue rejection' rarely happens. But we have to be judicious and temperate in the use of English loans so that the existing, effective Bangla words are not 'elbowed to graves'.

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