

LANGUAGE MIXING IN ASSAMESE

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates morphosyntax of Assamese clauses that portray language mixing between the two languages, English and Assamese, and provides an exoskeletal analysis of these following Borer (2005, 2013), Afarli (2013) and Riksem (2015). The paper mainly focuses on English nouns and verbs being embedded in the Assamese structure..

The speakers of Assamese tend to mix lexical items of Assamese and English within the same sentence. The following examples show the use of English lexical items in demonstratives, yes-no questions, wh-questions and imperatives in Assamese.

- 1) Moi pen-tu kin-il-u.
I.Nom pen-cl buy-past-1P
'I bought a pen.'
- 2) Tai skul-oloi za-bo.
She-Nom school-Dat go-Fut
'She will go to the school.'
- 3) Ram-e plate-khon bhaᅇ-il-e.
Ram-erg plate-cl break-Past-3P
'Ram broke the plate.'
- 4) Tumi newspaper-kei-khon porh-a.
You-Nom newspaper-Pl-Cl read-2P
'You read the newspaper.'
- 5) Kitap-khini bag-or bhitor-ot as-e.
Book-cl bag-gen inside-Dat be-3P
'The books are inside the bag.'
- 6) Xi khusura collect kore.
He-Nom coins collect do-3P
'He collects stamps.'

In the above examples of demonstrative sentences, we see English nouns being used within the Assamese framework. The English nouns occur with Assamese classifiers (to indicate definiteness), number and case inflection.

- 7) Lora-tu-e jogging kori as-e.
Boy-Cl-3P jogging do be-3P
'The boy is jogging.'
- 8) Tumi painting kora? (Yes/No question)
You-Nom painting do-2P
'Do you paint?'
- 9) Kyo tum-ar porha-t concentration nai? (Wh-question)
Why you-Gen study-dat concentration neg
'Why don't you have concentration in studies?'

The above three examples illustrates the use of English complex nouns within Assamese clauses. In addition, English verbs are also used in imperatives as shown in 10.

10) Aha, sit !

(Imperative)

Come sit

‘Come, Sit !’

However, the paper primarily focuses on language mixing in DPs.

The structure of the DP proposed in the paper (based on Riksem, 2015) considers the Functional Phrase (FP) as the complement of the determiner D. The F in turn selects the NP. The inflectional properties (person, number and definiteness) are generated under F and the D contains definite and number features. It is assumed that the Genitive case feature is also generated under D. Hence, the exoskeletal representation of the structure of the DP generated is shown below-

DP[D_[DEF: U, NUM: U, CASE: UCASE:GEN] FP[F_[DEF: U, NUM: U, P: U] NP [n √ROOT]]]

The matrix language (Assamese) provides this syntactic frame and the English stems acquire the inflectional properties of the matrix language.

As for the analysis, it is proposed that the English exponent is inserted in the stem position. The functional head specifies the inflectional properties which are then spelled by the respective markers in Assamese. The stem is raised to the F head to take the inflection. The stem further raises to D (if there is a required genitive case feature) and takes the case inflection (‘-r’).

The paper is then able to explain that the English stem exponents which are incorporated in the matrix language structure holds Assamese functional features and thereby, are assigned Assamese functional elements.

REFERENCES

- 1) Alexiadou, A., Lohndal, T., Åfarli, T.A. & Grimstad, M.B. 2015. ‘Language Mixing: A Distributed Morphology approach’. University of Stuttgart, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- 2) Bhattacharya, Tanmoy. (1999). *The Structure of Bangla DP*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of London.
- 3) Borer, Hagit. 2005a. *Structuring Sense I: In Name Only*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 4) Riksem, Brita Ramsevik. 2015. ‘Language Mixing in American Norwegian DPs’. Norwegian University of Science and Technology NTNU, Trondheim.