

NATURALIZATION OF HINDI AND URDU LOANWORDS

IN MEITEILON (MANIPURI)

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The aim of this paper is to draw the attention of researchers towards the study of Loanwords in Meiteilon. Keeping in view the limited scope of this paper, it concentrates mainly on the process of Phonological Naturalization and discusses briefly the extent of borrowing. Examples have been drawn from Sanskrit-Hindi and Urdu (Perso-Arabic) words to show these changes during the process of linguistic borrowing. These loanwords reflect the socio-cultural changes that took place in Meiteilon linguistic community.

INTRODUCTION :

Meiteilon (Manipuri) is a member of the Kuki-Chin subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman ~~language~~ family (Grierson, 1904) and is spoken mainly in Manipur, in some parts of Assam and Tripura in India, and in some parts of Bangla Desh and Myanmar (Burma). The variety of Meiteilon described here may be called the Standard Valley speech-form of which Imphal, the capital city of the state is the main centre. Through long association with Sanskrit, Bengali, Assamese, Hindi, Urdu and other languages, Meiteilon has adopted not only loanwords but also accepted new segmental phonemes and their combinatory possibilities.

One of the sources of new words in Meiteilon has been borrowing from other languages. Indeed, Meiteilon has

been so hospitable towards languages in contact that the present-day Meiteilon vocabulary contains a large number of loanwords. A host of these vocables have entered the Meiteilon lexicon mainly in the early part of the 18th century. However, some of these loanwords might have entered in the 16th and 17th centuries or even earlier due to Manipur's contact with outside world mainly through traders, travellers and Hindu pilgrims. Keeping in view the limited scope of this paper, I have made an attempt to analyse some of the loanwords from Hindi and Urdu only. Further, I will be making an attempt to analyse the phonological aspect only. This paper is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to the phonological analysis of Hindi and Urdu words. This section also discusses the process of naturalization and the impact of these borrowings on the overall phonological system. The second section deals briefly with the extent of borrowing.

PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

As quote Professor Henderson '... foreign words may be taken into a language : a) they may be recast in a form already acceptable to the borrowing language; or b) they may retain some alien features, and so introduce new phonological patterns'.¹ Most of the loanwords in Meiteilon have been

1 Henderson, EJA, 'The Phonology of some loanwords in some South East Asian Language' in Prosodic Analysis, (ed.) FR Palmer, p.79, 1970.

naturalized and these words remain indistinguishable by phonetic criteria from native words. However, the unassimilated loanwords have a new phonological system and when compared with the phonological structure of native words, their separate entity retaining some alien features becomes quite evident. While working on the syllable structure of Meiteilon I found that loanwords have their own syllable structure operating partly in harmony and partly in conflict with syllable structure of native words. For instance, some of the word-initial consonant clusters and a few sonsonantal phonemes, which had no place in the phonological structure in the past have become an integral part of Meiteilon. The review of the earlier literature of Meiteilon reveals the fact that there were only fifteen consonantal phonemes in the earlier period. Later on, five more consonantal phonemes namely /b,d,j,g/ and /r/ were added. In addition to these voiced stops, the present-day Meiteilon also uses the voiced aspirated stops, /bh,dh,jh/ and /gh/. (khan: 1987).

Before discussing the process of Naturalization or Nativization it may be mentioned that most of the Perso-Arabic/Urdu words have found their way into Meiteilon lexicon through Bengali and Hindi. Such indirect borrowings are quite common and sometimes it is quite difficult to trace the history of a borrowed word accurately. The loanwords

which have been naturalized in accordance with the phonological pattern of the pre-existing structure have become the integral part of the borrowing language. The most productive area in which the process of naturalization takes place is that of phonological structure of the loanwords.

In the present-day Meiteilon there are thirty segmental phonemes. Of these, twenty four are consonantal phonemes and six are vowel phonemes. These consonantal phonemes may be divided into two groups, i.e. indigenous and borrowed. The consonant phonemes included in the indigenous group are : /p,t,c,k;ph,th,kh;m,n,ŋ;s,h; l;y,w/ These indigenous phonemes can be considered as inherited directly from the earliest stages of the language. The borrowed phonemes /b,d,j,g,r/ and /bh,dh,jh,gh/ entered Meiteilon phonology at a later stage. These borrowed phonemes, numbering nine in all, are all voiced and they distinguish themselves from the indigenous phonemes by their distributional characteristics (Khan : 1987). Initial occurrence of /b,d,j,g,r/ and /bh,dh,th,gh/ is found only in loanwords. In word-final position these phonemes get completely devoiced. Thus, when they occur in the initial and final positions of a word, the word is bound to be a loanword : /baki/ 'credit', /dukan/ 'shop' /guli/ 'tablet, bullet, etc' /jati/ 'nation'; /bhut/ 'evil spirit', /dhup/ 'incense'

/dholok/ 'drum' /ghari/ 'watch, clock' /jhal/ 'cymbals',
 /ruman/-/runal/-/luman/ 'handkerchief', /hisab/ 'account'
 /həway muk/ 'a kind of pulse' /dak/ 'stain, mark'. The
 six vowel phonemes in Meiteilon (Manipuri) are /i e; o u;
 ə, a/. In Meiteilon there are no word-final consonant clusters.

SUBSTITUTION OF NON-EXISTENT PHONEMES

The substitution of non-existent phonemes by the
 nearest equivalent sounds in Meiteilon (Manipuri) is used
 as one of the most common divergent strategies to integrate
 a loanword in the structure of the recipient language. This
 process of naturalization by way of substituting the non-
 existent phonemes can be seen in the following examples:

Phoneme in the Source lang.	Substitution in the Reci- pient lang.	Words Pronounced in		GLOSS
		Lending languages	Meiteilon (Manipuri)	
/q/	/k/	qəlm	kulom	pen
		nəqli:	nəkəli	fake, imitation
		həq	hək	right
/ɕ/	/ɕ/	ɕəri:	b ^{na} wa:z, gəribnibaj	name of one of the kings of Manipur
		da:ɕ	dak	stain, mark
/z/	/j/	zila:	jila	district
		xəza:na:	khətna	revenue, etc.
		gəz	gəj	yard

Phoneme in the Source lang.	Substitution in the Reci- pient lang.	Words Pronounced in		GLOSS
		Lending languages	Meiteilon (Manipuri)	
/f/	/s/	ʃəhər	sohor	city, town
		dəʃa:	dəsa~dosa	bad luck, ill fate
		dəʃ	des	
/x/	/kh/	xəbər	khəbər	news paper
		dəxəl	dəkhəl~dokhol	legal occupa- tion of land
	/k/	ta:ri:x	tarik	date
/d/	/d̪/	dəndi	d̪əndi	punishment
/ch/	/s/	chatr	satrə	student
/ɣ/	/r/	peɣa	pera~bera	a kind of sweet
	/n/	gəɣeʃ	gənes	lord Ganesh
		cəɣɣ	cəron~cəron	'God's feet
/ɣ/	/j/	yug	jug~juk	epoch, era
		səhyog	səhəjok	cooperation etc.

Table : I (Showing Process of Naturalization by
substituting the Non-existent Phonemes)

It is evident from the above analysis that most affected segment in the process of naturalization (Substitution) are consonantal phonemes non-existent in Meiteilon and their replacements are mostly predictable. However, vowel phonemes in loanwords not available in Meiteilon are also substituted

by native vowels. The non-existent vowels undergo qualitative and quantitative changes. In addition to this device of replacement or substitution, the other devices used are the following:

OTHER DEVICES OF NATURALIZATION

DEVOICING :

/bdg/ > /ptk/

- /b > p/ /sa:bun/ > /sapon/ 'soap'
 /hisa:b/ > /hisap/ 'account'
 /d > t/ /degci/ > /teksi/ 'one of the cooking utensils'
 / nuva:d/ > / nubat/ 'translation'
 /g > k/ /gobhi/ > /kobi/ 'cabbage'
 /mû:ga/ > /muka/ 'silk cloth'
 /bibha:g/ > /bibhak/ 'department'

VOICING : /p kc/ > /bgj/

- /p > b/ /peya:/ > /bera/ 'a kind of sweet'
 /k > g/ /kuã:/ > /guha/ 'a well'
 /ma:rki:n/ > /margin/ 'unbleached cloth'
 /əkbər/ > /əgbər/ 'Akābar the Great'
 /c > j/ /moci:/ > /muji/ 'cobbler'

DEASPIRATION: /kñ. th./ > /k, t, /

- /cawkñət/ > /cawkət/ 'door frame'
 /prəmkñ/ > /prəmk/ 'head of the village Panchayat'

ASPIRATION : /p/ > /ph/

/papɿ/ > /paphor/ 'a thin crisp cake made of
several kinds of pulses, sago,
and potato, etc.

/sipɑ:hi:/ > /siphay/ 'soldier'

DENASALIZATION :

/pha:si:/ > /phasi/ ~ /pharsi/ 'hanging'

/kuā:/ > /guha/ 'a well'

/bā:suri:/ > /basi/ 'flute'

/mū:g/ > /muk/ 'a kind of pulse'

CONSONANTAL INTRUSION

Word-Medial intrusion:

/cəpra:si:/ > /cəmprasi/ 'peon'

/kəpu:r/ > /kərpur/ 'camphor'

Word-final intrusion:

/kɪst/ > /kɪsti/ 'instalments'

/təmbu:/ > /təmbur/ 'tent'

/ba:lti/ > /baltin/ 'bucket'

/cha:ta:/ > /satin/ 'umbrella'

/təkma/ > /təkman/ 'medal'

METATHESIS

/kənya/ > /kəyna/ 'a girl who is getting married
shortly'

/a:ɪ:rva:d/ > /arsibat/ 'blessings'

It may be noted from the above analysis that the most common

intrusive consonants are: /m, r, l, / and /n/. However, no rule can be formulated as regards the intrusive of these consonants is concerned. Metathesis, though rare, it is one of the devices used to naturalize Indo-Aryan word in Meiteilon.

SYLLABIC DISRUPTION

It is in this area where the most sophisticated and divergent strategies are used. The most common strategy is that of the 'system-based' structure of the recipient languages. The changes to made are more sensitive to the structures and rules of the borrowing language.

As stated earlier, word-final clusters are not available in indigenous words. Loanwords from Hindi and Urdu with final clusters are simplified in different ways. Some such clusters are split up by an intrusive vowel resulting in syllabic disruption.

Examples :

/fərq/ > /phəɾək/ 'difference'

/nərk/ > /nəɾək/ ~ /norok/ 'hall'

In these examples intrusive vowel /ə/ is used to split up the two consonants forming word-final clusters. In the following examples intrusive vowels /ə/ and /i/ are used at the end of the cluster. As a result of this strategy, the monosyllabic words turn out to ~~be~~ disyllabic.

Examples :

/kendr/ > /kendrə/	'centre, etc.'
/dhərm/ > /dhərmə/	'religion'
/tərk/ > /tərkə/	'argument'
/mu:rkʰ/ > /murkʰə/	'fool'
/qist/ > /kisti/	'instalment'
/kušt/ > /kusti/	'leprosy'

APOCOPE

Analysis of loanwords offers a few examples of apocope.

Examples:

/an,n/ < /a:n nd/	'proper noun (male)'
/bən/ < /bənd/	'stike, etc.'
/dərkhəs/ < /dərxa:st/	'application'

Like that of word-final clusters, there are certain consonant sequences which are not available in Meiteilon. When such consonant sequences occur in the loanwords, the Manipuri speakers uses certain devices, namely syncope and degemination in order to naturalize them.

SYNCOPE

/usop/ < /utsəb/	'religious festival, function, reast, etc.'
/cithi/ < /ciθhi/	'letter'
/mit thyə/ > /mithə/	'mission'

DEGEMINATION

/pākka/ > /pāka/	'fool proof'
/izzət/ > /ijət/	'prestige, honour'
/gulla/ > /gula/	'a kind of sweet meat'
/cākka/ > /cāka/	'wheel'
/cappəl/ > /cāpəl/	'slippers'

There are a large number of words undergoing this process of degemination. It may be noted that all the loanwords with gemination of consonants are degeminated though some such gemination are available in Meiteilon. There seems to be no exception to this tendency. As it is evident from the above analysis, the loanwords are after naturalized so as to confirm to the restrictions posed on syllable structure of Meiteilon (Manipuri)

THE EXTENT OF BORROWING:

A review of earlier literature, both oral and written before the 17 century suggests the absence of loanwords in Meiteilon (Manipuri). Early missionaries inthusiastic about the spread of Vaishnavism as a new religion in Manipur seem to have incorporated into Meiteilon a host of new words. After the acceptance of Vaishnavism, the Meiteilon has drawn heavily on Sanskrit and Hindi languages for new words relating to the new religion and religious rituals. It may be noted that most of these words refer to some of the fundamental notions

of the new religion and most of these are used in their naturalized form. As a result of a free flow of these words parallel indigenous words were displaced or their usage was reduced to the status of being archaic. It is because of this tendency that Meiteilon has lost a host of indigenous words which otherwise were quite common in earlier literature.

It is a well known fact that new experiences, new objects, concepts and practices bring new words into language. It is because of this Need filling Motive that the flow of Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali loans started after the acceptance of a new religion and has increased to a considerable extent with the passage of time. Such words have spread all over the state among the speakers of Meiteilon. In all such cases linguistic borrowing became a practical necessity. After the mass acceptance of Vaishnavism, most of the proper nouns (names of the people) were taken either from Sanskrit or Hindi. These names are invariably in hybrid forms, retaining the surname from the native language. Interestingly enough, most surnames end with voiced bilabial nasal [m].

Native Surname	Name (Sanskrit/Hindi)	Sex Marker
thokcom	manī	siŋ (male Marker)
koyjɔm	pyari	debi (female Marker)
səpɔm	indira	cənu (female Marker)

TABLE II : (Showing Formations of Proper Nouns)

In addition to these names, a few place-names in Manipuri are of non-Manipuri origin. But significantly enough these place names (Manipur, Canchipur, Churachandpur, Bishnupur) happen to be quite important places in Manipur. Another sphere from which Hindi/Sanskrit words have entered Meiteilon is that of politics : /rajniti/ 'politics', /neta/ 'leader' /dol/ 'party' /kendra/ 'centre, etc.' are some of the examples from a large number of loanwords. Other words like /sahitya/ 'literature' /kabitā/ 'poem', /kalāpna/ 'imagination', /alankar/ 'figure of speech' /alocana/ 'criticism' are getting established in literary and intellectual circles. Musical terms including words describing theatre performance have also been borrowed from Hindi and Bengali. As might be expected, quite a few legal terms, including words describing the court procedures have been borrowed from Perso-Arabic and Urdu. To quote a few such examples, one can recollect the following :

/munsip/ 'judge' /adalat/ 'court' /dakhaskari/ 'application' /dakhaskari/ 'petition writer' /sarkar/ 'Government', /jurmana/ 'fine, etc.', /jamabandi/ 'record of rights' /dabi/ 'demand, claim', /jila/ 'district', /ayin/ 'law', /tarik/ 'date'.

The above analysis of loanwords shows that hierarchically the highest number of loanwords belongs to the

category of words - nouns and next to it are verbal phrases; mostly in hybrid forms. To sum up, it can be stated a good number of words are still drifting into the lexicon of Meiteilon (Manipuri) from different languages in contact. However, one notices a tendency among the native speakers to substitute the well-established loanwords by newly coined indigenous words. Instead of /chatrɜ/ 'student', /adhunik/ 'modern song, etc.' there is an increasing tendency to use /mɛheiroy/ , /matɛmgi isɔy/ respectively. In the absence of in-depth linguistic studies of loanwords in Meiteilon, it is not possible to say anything conclusive about the overall impact of these linguistic borrowings on the language. As such, it is necessary to carry out independent but exhaustive study of different aspects of loanwords in Meiteilon.

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