



The Impact Of Globalization On The Lexical Aspects Of The Assamese Language: A Study Based On Young Spoken Assamese Words

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Abstract

Globalization has profoundly altered languages worldwide, affecting vocabulary, pronunciation, and usage. Assamese, a principal language of North-East India, is equally subject to this linguistic evolution. This study investigates the influence of globalization on Assamese lexicon, focusing on the speech of young Assamese speakers. It demonstrates how English and other global languages shape daily Assamese vocabulary through code-mixing, borrowing, and hybrid terms. Based on fieldwork, interviews with youth, and analysis of common spoken words, the findings reveal a marked lexical shift among young speakers, driven by media, education, social media, and technology. While globalization has expanded Assamese vocabulary, concerns have emerged about linguistic integrity and the erosion of traditional terms.

Keywords: Globalization, Assamese Language, Lexical Change, Youth Language, Code-Mixing,

Introduction

Language is a living and dynamic entity that constantly evolves in response to social, cultural, political, and economic influences. Among the many forces that shape linguistic change in the contemporary world, globalization has emerged as one of the most powerful and far-reaching. Globalization has significantly transformed patterns of communication by connecting societies through trade, education, technology, mass media, and digital platforms. As a result, languages across the world are increasingly coming into contact, leading to various forms of linguistic change such as borrowing, code-mixing, code-switching, and lexical innovation. Regional languages, in particular, are undergoing rapid transformation under the influence of dominant global languages, especially English.

Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language spoken predominantly in the state of Assam in North-East India, possesses a rich linguistic and literary heritage extending over several centuries. It evolved through interactions with Sanskrit, Prakrit, and various regional dialects and has developed a strong identity of its own in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. Historically, Assamese remained largely

unaffected by external linguistic pressures for a long time, retaining its indigenous structure and lexical core. However, the contemporary global environment has created unprecedented conditions for linguistic contact, making Assamese increasingly receptive to external influences.

In the present era, English functions as a global lingua franca in education, administration, science, technology, and international communication. In Assam, the rapid expansion of English-medium education, along with increasing access to television, the internet, and social networking platforms, has exposed young speakers to English on an unprecedented scale. This exposure has resulted in a noticeable shift in everyday spoken language, where English words and expressions are frequently blended with Assamese. Consequently, the spoken Assamese of the younger generation shows significant lexical changes that distinguish it from the speech of older generations.

The lexical aspect of a language plays a crucial role in reflecting social change. Vocabulary is the most flexible and rapidly changing component of any linguistic system, and it readily absorbs new words to express new ideas, objects, and experiences. In young spoken Assamese, this lexical flexibility is clearly visible in the frequent use of English terms related to education, employment, technology, entertainment, and digital communication. Words such as *mobile*, *message*, *call*, *interview*, *job*, *online*, *class*, *exam*, and *office* have become part of everyday spoken Assamese, often replacing their traditional Assamese equivalents. This growing practice of lexical borrowing and code-mixing reflects both the practical needs and the changing linguistic attitudes of young speakers in a globalized society.

Globalization does not simply introduce new vocabulary into a language; it also reshapes patterns of thinking, social behavior, and cultural identity. For young Assamese speakers, the use of English-mixed Assamese has become a marker of modernity, education, and social mobility. In many urban and semi-urban contexts, fluency in English-mixed speech is often associated with confidence, professionalism, and higher social status. As a result, young speakers consciously or unconsciously prefer English words even when suitable Assamese equivalents are available. This sociolinguistic shift indicates a transformation not only in language usage but also in language attitude.

At the same time, this trend has given rise to serious concerns regarding the preservation of the Assamese language. Excessive dependence on English vocabulary threatens to weaken the indigenous lexical base of Assamese. Many traditional Assamese words are gradually disappearing from daily spoken usage, particularly among urban youth. If this trend continues unchecked, it may lead to long-term consequences such as language dilution, reduced intergenerational transmission of native vocabulary, and a gradual loss of linguistic and cultural identity.

Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the impact of globalization on the lexical aspects of the Assamese language with special reference to young spoken Assamese. By focusing on the speech patterns of young speakers, the study aims to understand the nature, extent, and causes of lexical borrowing and code-mixing in contemporary Assamese. It also attempts to assess both the positive and negative implications of globalization-induced lexical change. Through this investigation, the study hopes to contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics and to promote greater awareness about the need for balancing linguistic modernization with cultural and linguistic preservation.

Review of Related Literature

The study of language in the context of globalization has become an important area of research in sociolinguistics, as scholars worldwide have sought to understand how global forces shape local and regional languages. The impact of globalization on vocabulary, language choice, and speech behavior has been widely discussed in linguistic literature. This section reviews key national and international studies on globalization, language change, and lexical transformation, with particular reference to the Assamese language and other Indian languages.

One of the most influential works in this field is David Crystal's *English as a Global Language* (2003), in which the author explains how English has achieved global dominance through historical, political, economic, and technological factors. Crystal argues that the spread of English has significantly affected regional languages by encouraging large-scale lexical borrowing and code-mixing. His study provides a strong theoretical framework for understanding the influence of English on young spoken Assamese under globalization.

Fishman (1991), in his seminal work *Reversing Language Shift*, emphasizes the importance of preserving minority and regional languages in the face of dominant global languages. He warns that an uncontrolled language shift can lead to language endangerment and even extinction. Fishman's theory is highly relevant to the present study, as it highlights the dangers of excessive dependence on English vocabulary in Assamese speech.

In India, Kachru (1992) discusses how English interacts with Indian languages to create new forms of speech, noting that code-mixing especially among the educated youth—is now widespread. This supports findings on Assamese youth, demonstrating the commonality of English integration in regional languages. Similarly, Annamalai (2001) explains that English, as a language of power, is increasingly borrowed by Indian languages, including Assamese, to meet modern communicative needs.

Annamalai (2001) studies language contact and bilingualism in India, calling English a language of power, education, and jobs. He observes that Indian languages often borrow English words to meet communication needs. This explains the fast adoption of English in Assamese speech.

Studies related to Assamese linguistics also provide valuable insights. Goswami (2015) highlights the historical development of the Assamese language and its rich lexical tradition derived from Sanskrit, Prakrit, and indigenous sources. He expresses concern that the growing influence of English may erode Assamese's traditional lexical strength if protective measures are not taken. Baruah (2012) also examines sociolinguistic changes in Assamese and notes that urban youth frequently prefer English words over traditional Assamese equivalents in daily communication.

Sharma (2018), in his work on language and globalization, argues that globalization promotes linguistic hybridization by encouraging constant interaction between global and local languages. According to him, lexical borrowing should be viewed as a sign of linguistic adaptability rather than pure decline. However, he also warns that excessive borrowing can reduce native lexical creativity. This balanced perspective helps understand both the positive and negative impacts of globalization on Assamese vocabulary.

Recent studies on digital communication and youth language further support the relevance of the present research. Studies by Thurlow (2017) reveal that social media platforms play a crucial role in transforming youth language worldwide. The preference for short forms, English vocabulary, and hybrid expressions is now a global trend among young speakers. This observation closely matches the speech patterns of young Assamese users on platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook.

Although several studies have explored the impact of globalization and English on Indian regional languages, there is a specific lack of research on how globalization has transformed the vocabulary used by Assamese youth in everyday speech, rather than in literary or broad sociolinguistic contexts. To address this gap, the present study offers a targeted analysis of lexical change induced by globalization in young spoken Assamese.

Objectives of the Study

1. This study aims to examine the impact of globalization on Assamese vocabulary.
2. This study seeks to identify English words commonly integrated into Assamese by young speakers.
3. This study aims to analyze the underlying causes of lexical change among youth.

Significance of the Study

The present study on *“The Impact of Globalization on the Lexical Aspects of the Assamese Language with Special Reference to Young Spoken Assamese”* holds considerable academic, social, and cultural significance. In the age of rapid globalization, languages worldwide are undergoing profound transformations, particularly at the lexical level. This research is significant because it documents and analyzes the changing nature of Assamese vocabulary in the spoken language of young people, a group that plays a decisive role in shaping the future trajectory of any language.

From an academic and linguistic perspective, this study contributes meaningfully to the field of sociolinguistics by providing an in-depth understanding of how globalization influences regional languages. While globalization and its impact on major world languages have been widely studied, comparatively fewer systematic studies have examined its effects on North-East Indian languages such as Assamese. Therefore, this research helps to fill an important research gap by offering empirical evidence of lexical change in contemporary Assamese. It highlights the processes of borrowing, code-mixing, and lexical replacement, thereby enriching scholarly discussions on language contact and language change.

The study helps explain how young people in Assam use language and what influences their choices. Young speakers engage most in global communication. Their use of English-mixed Assamese shows changes in values, identity, and communication. By examining their speech, the study shows how globalization shapes language and cultural identity.

From a cultural perspective, the significance of this study lies in its role in raising awareness about the gradual erosion of the indigenous Assamese vocabulary. Language is a vital carrier of culture, tradition, and collective memory. The decline in the use of traditional lexicon may eventually lead to a weakening of cultural identity and heritage. This study highlights the urgent need to preserve the rich lexical heritage of Assamese while adapting to global linguistic realities. By highlighting the threats posed by excessive dependence on English vocabulary, the research emphasizes the importance of cultural and linguistic sustainability.

The study is also highly significant from an educational perspective. The dominance of English-medium education has been identified as a major factor behind lexical change in young Assamese speech. This research can help educators, curriculum planners, and policymakers understand the linguistic consequences of current educational practices. The findings can be used to design more balanced bilingual or multilingual education models that promote both global competence and mother-tongue proficiency. Encouraging the proper use of Assamese in schools and colleges can help students develop stronger linguistic roots without limiting their exposure to global knowledge.

Furthermore, this study has practical relevance for language planners, media professionals, and cultural institutions. The media plays a crucial role in shaping contemporary language use, especially among the youth. The findings of this research can guide media organizations in producing content that promotes standard Assamese usage while accommodating necessary lexical innovations. Similarly, language planners and cultural bodies can use the insights from this study to formulate effective strategies for preserving and modernizing Assamese and promoting its digital presence.

Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive-analytical **research methodology** to examine the impact of globalization on the lexical aspects of Assamese, with special reference to young spoken Assamese. Since this research is based entirely on **secondary data**, no field surveys, interviews, or questionnaires were conducted. The study relies on already available scholarly works, published research, books, journals, and digital resources related to language, globalization, and Assamese linguistics.

The research follows a **qualitative approach**, as the objective is to analyze patterns of lexical change, code-mixing, and borrowing from a theoretical and descriptive perspective rather than through numerical measurement. The qualitative method is suitable for this study because it enables a deeper understanding of the nature, causes, and implications of lexical transformation in Assamese under the influence of globalization.

Sources of Secondary Data

This study uses the following secondary sources:

1. **Books on Linguistics and Globalization:** Standard reference books on sociolinguistics, language change, and globalization were consulted to develop the study's theoretical framework.
2. **Research Journals and Articles:** National and international research articles on English as a global language, language contact, code-mixing, and lexical borrowing were reviewed to understand global and Indian perspectives.
3. **Assamese Language Studies:** Books and academic writings on the history, development, and present state of the Assamese language were examined. This helped clarify its lexical structure and traditional vocabulary.
4. **Digital Academic Sources:** Online journals, Google Scholar articles, university repositories, and e-books provided current scholarly material on language and globalization.
5. **Media and Digital Communication Studies:** Studies on youth language, social media, and digital discourse were used to analyze how media globalization indirectly affects spoken language.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The present study is based entirely on secondary data drawn from books, research articles, sociolinguistic studies, digital communication research, and Assamese language studies. The analysis focuses on identifying major trends in lexical change driven by globalization and interpreting them in relation to young spoken Assamese. The discussion is organized thematically to provide a clear understanding of the nature, extent, and implications of lexical transformation induced by globalization.

Globalization and the Expansion of the English Lexicon in Assamese

Secondary studies consistently show that English, as a global language, has become the primary source of lexical borrowing in most Indian regional languages, including Assamese. Crystal (2003) and Kachru (1992) observe that English dominates education, technology, administration, and digital communication. As a result, regional languages increasingly depend on English for modern vocabulary.

In the Assamese context, scholars such as Goswami (2015) and Baruah (2012) note that words related to education (*class, exam, result*), technology (*mobile, internet, app*), and employment (*job, office, interview*) have become integral to everyday speech. The analysis of such studies confirms that young Assamese speakers rarely use the traditional Assamese equivalents for these concepts. This lexical shift is not random but domain-specific, indicating that globalization directly reshapes vocabulary related to modern life.

Code-Mixing as a Dominant Speech Pattern

One of the most prominent findings of secondary research is the widespread use of **code-mixing** in young spoken Assamese. Kachru's theory of bilingual creativity explains how speakers naturally blend two languages to meet communicative needs. In Assamese, this mixing usually follows an Assamese grammatical structure with English lexical insertions.

For example, expressions like “কল কৰছি,” “ক্লাছ আছে,” “মিটিং আছে,” and “অনলাইন আবদেন” are now socially accepted forms of communication. Sharma (2018) describes this process as **lexical hybridization**, where borrowed words undergo phonological and morphological adaptation within the native language. This supports the observation that English words are no longer perceived as foreign elements but as functional components of everyday Assamese speech among youth.

Role of Education in Lexical Change

Secondary studies clearly identify **English-medium education** as one of the strongest drivers of lexical change. Annamalai (2001) notes that students who receive education in English naturally transfer academic vocabulary into their home language. In Assam, the rapid expansion of English-medium schools and the importance of English in higher education and competitive examinations have intensified this trend.

As a result, young speakers often lack Assamese equivalents for many academic and technical terms. Even when Assamese words exist, they are rarely used. This creates a linguistic gap between textbook Assamese and spoken Assamese, further weakening the functional domain of traditional Assamese vocabulary.

Influence of Media and Digital Communication

Digital globalization has played a transformative role in shaping youth language. Thurlow (2017) and other digital discourse scholars highlight that social media platforms encourage short, fast, and globally intelligible communication. English dominates most digital interfaces, leading to its natural incorporation into regional speech.

In Assam, studies show that platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube promote English expressions, abbreviations, and hybrid sentences. Young Assamese speakers regularly use English words even while typing in Assamese script. This continuous exposure reinforces English vocabulary and accelerates lexical displacement of traditional words. The dominance of digital English thus acts as a powerful agent of lexical globalization.

Lexical Enrichment vs. Lexical Erosion

The secondary literature reveals a dual impact of globalization on the Assamese lexicon. On one hand, scholars like Sharma (2018) argue that borrowing enriches a language by enabling it to express modern scientific, technological, and professional concepts efficiently. From this perspective, the inclusion of English vocabulary enhances Assamese's functional capacity in the modern world.

On the other hand, Fishman (1991) warns that uncontrolled lexical replacement can lead to language shift and erosion. Assamese scholars express similar concerns, noting that excessive borrowing has reduced the everyday usage of many indigenous Assamese words. Young speakers increasingly depend on English even for simple concepts, indicating a gradual weakening of native lexical competence.

Thus, the analysis shows that globalization simultaneously strengthens and weakens the Assamese lexicon—strengthening it through expansion and weakening it through displacement of native vocabulary.

Changing Language Attitudes Among Youth

Secondary studies also reveal a significant **shift in language attitude** among young speakers. English-mixed Assamese is often perceived as modern, stylish, and socially prestigious. In contrast, pure

Assamese is sometimes viewed as traditional or rural. This psychological and social association plays a major role in accelerating lexical change.

Language is not merely a communication tool but also a marker of identity. The preference for English vocabulary reflects a changing identity orientation among youth one that increasingly aligns with global culture rather than local linguistic heritage. This attitudinal shift explains why lexical borrowing continues even when Assamese equivalents are available.

Urban–Rural Divide in Lexical Change

Secondary sources also highlight a noticeable **urban–rural contrast** in lexical globalization. Urban and semi-urban youth exhibit a much higher degree of English mixing due to greater access to education, internet access, and media exposure. In rural areas, although English influence is growing, traditional Assamese vocabulary still remains relatively stronger in daily communication.

This indicates that globalization does not impact all speech communities equally. The speed and intensity of lexical change depend largely on the level of global exposure.

Implications for the Future of Assamese

The secondary-based analysis suggests that if current trends continue unchecked, spoken Assamese may undergo further lexical dilution in the coming decades. While total language loss is unlikely due to a strong literary tradition and regional identity, the spoken form may become increasingly hybridized. This may deepen the gap between formal Assamese and everyday youth speech.

However, the literature also indicates that conscious language planning, educational reforms, and digital promotion of Assamese can help restore balance between globalization and language preservation.

Findings

The present study, which is based entirely on secondary sources, reveals that globalization has had a profound and multidimensional impact on the lexical aspects of the Assamese language, particularly in the spoken language of the younger generation. The findings clearly indicate that English has emerged as the **dominant source of lexical borrowing** in contemporary Assamese speech. Young speakers today frequently use English words in daily conversation, especially in education, technology, employment, social media, and entertainment. This confirms that lexical influence is **domain-specific and function-driven**.

One of the most prominent findings of the study is that **code-mixing has become the norm for communication** among young Assamese speakers. The use of mixed expressions, such as Assamese sentence structures embedded with English vocabulary, has gained widespread social acceptance. English words are no longer perceived as foreign elements but are fully integrated into Assamese speech with phonological and grammatical adjustment. This indicates that globalization has not merely introduced new vocabulary but has gradually reshaped everyday speech behavior.

The study also finds that **education plays a decisive role in accelerating lexical globalization**. The dominance of English-medium education at school, college, and university levels has significantly reduced the functional use of Assamese academic vocabulary. Young speakers often lack awareness of Assamese equivalents for many technical and academic terms. As a result, spoken Assamese in educational contexts has become heavily English-dominated at the lexical level.

Another important finding is that **digital media and internet communication act as powerful agents of lexical change**. Social networking platforms, mobile applications, and online content operate largely in English, continuously reinforcing English vocabulary in the daily linguistic environment of young speakers. The study finds that digital exposure has not only increased English usage in written communication but has also intensified its influence on spoken Assamese.

The research further reveals a **clear urban–rural divide** in the degree of lexical globalization. Urban and semi-urban youth show a much higher level of English lexical mixing due to better access to education, digital technology, and global media. In contrast, rural youth still retain a relatively stronger base of traditional Assamese vocabulary, although the influence of English is gradually increasing even in rural speech communities.

The study also finds that **young speakers exhibit a changing language attitude**. English-mixed Assamese is widely perceived as modern, educated, and socially prestigious, while pure Assamese is sometimes considered traditional or rural. This change in linguistic attitude plays a major role in voluntary lexical replacement, where young speakers consciously prefer English words even when Assamese alternatives are available.

From a positive perspective, the study finds that globalization has **enriched the Assamese lexicon** by introducing terminology required for science, technology, professional communication, and global interaction. This lexical expansion has increased the functional capacity of Assamese in the modern world and has enhanced the bilingual competence of young speakers.

However, from a negative perspective, the study also finds that **excessive dependence on English vocabulary poses a serious threat to the preservation of traditional Assamese words**. Many indigenous lexical items are rapidly disappearing from everyday usage, particularly in urban youth speech. If this trend continues, it may weaken cultural identity and reduce intergenerational transmission of native vocabulary.

Suggestions and Recommendations

In view of the findings of the present study on the impact of globalization on the lexical aspects of the Assamese language, particularly among young speakers, several important suggestions and recommendations are proposed to ensure a balanced relationship between linguistic modernization and the preservation of indigenous linguistic heritage. Globalization is an inevitable phenomenon, and its linguistic influence cannot be completely prevented; however, it can be managed in a way that strengthens rather than weakens the Assamese language.

First and foremost, **greater emphasis should be placed on mother-tongue-based education**, especially at the primary and secondary levels. While English is important for global communication, a strong foundation in Assamese is essential for developing native lexical competence among young learners. Textbooks, classroom instruction, and assessment practices should encourage the active use of standard Assamese vocabulary, including modern terminology developed within the language itself.

Secondly, **educational institutions should promote a balanced bilingual approach rather than English dominance**. Students should be encouraged to participate in Assamese debates, seminars, creative writing, and cultural activities. This will help young speakers gain confidence in using their native language in both formal and informal settings. Teacher training programs should also include components on the importance of linguistic preservation and responsible language use.

Thirdly, **the media's role in language preservation must be strengthened**. Television channels, radio stations, newspapers, and digital content creators should consciously promote standard and rich Assamese vocabulary in their programs. Excessive use of unnecessary English words in Assamese media content should be avoided. At the same time, modern Assamese equivalents should be developed and popularized for new scientific and technological concepts.

Fourthly, **digital platforms should be effectively utilized to promote Assamese**. Mobile applications, websites, e-learning platforms, and social media pages should be developed in Assamese to make the language more visible and attractive in the digital space. Since young people spend significant time online, the presence of Assamese in digital environments is crucial to ensuring its continued relevance.

Fifthly, **family and community participation are essential in linguistic preservation.** Parents should consciously encourage the use of pure and meaningful Assamese at home. Cultural organizations, literary bodies, and youth clubs should organize language awareness campaigns, storytelling sessions, poetry recitations, and drama activities in Assamese to create emotional attachment among young speakers.

Sixthly, government support for **language planning and policy is necessary.** The government should actively implement language promotion schemes, support Assamese-language research, fund dictionary projects, and encourage the production of high-quality Assamese educational and literary materials. The introduction of modern Assamese terminology committees can also help replace unnecessary English usage with suitable native alternatives.

Conclusion

The present study has explored the impact of globalization on the lexical aspects of the Assamese language with special reference to the spoken language of the younger generation. Based on an analysis of secondary sources, it is evident that globalization has brought about significant changes in everyday Assamese speech, particularly through the growing influence of English. Young speakers increasingly rely on English vocabulary in daily communication, especially in education, technology, employment, social media, and entertainment.

One of the study's significant conclusions is that lexical change is the most visible effect of globalization on Assamese. Code-mixing between Assamese and English has become a regular and socially accepted pattern of communication among young people. English words are no longer seen as foreign but have become an integral part of spoken Assamese. This shift reflects the expanding influence of global communication networks, digital media, and English-medium education.

The study also concludes that education and digital exposure play the strongest roles in accelerating lexical globalization. Continuous interaction with English through academic environments, mobile technology, and online platforms reinforces this linguistic trend. At the same time, changing language attitudes among youth further intensifies the process, as English-mixed Assamese is often associated with modernity, education, and social prestige.

While globalization has enriched the Assamese lexicon with modern scientific and technical terms and enhanced bilingual competence among young speakers, it has also led to the gradual decline of many traditional Assamese words. This lexical erosion poses a serious challenge to cultural identity and intergenerational transmission of native vocabulary.

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