

## A Sociolinguistic Investigation into Hindi Lexical Influence on the Contemporary Bangladeshi Bengali Language

**Mumtahnina Khatun<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Post-Graduate Student in General Linguistics, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

\*Corresponding Email: [mumtahnina1997@gmail.com](mailto:mumtahnina1997@gmail.com)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65827/tahreer.v4i1.77>

---

### Abstract

This study explores the increasing integration of Hindi loanwords into Bengali as spoken in Bangladesh. By employing a descriptive-qualitative approach, the research identifies key lexical borrowings facilitated by shared Indo-Aryan roots and modern cultural exchange. Utilising data from authoritative historical dictionaries alongside contemporary media analysis and interviews, the paper categorises loanwords into original forms and hybrid constructions. The findings highlight that over 10% of modern informal vocabulary in urban Bangladesh originates from Hindi, driven largely by the proliferation of digital streaming, Bollywood cinema, and cross-border communication. This research contributes to the understanding of language contact and the evolving linguistic identity of the younger generation in a globalised South Asian context.

### Keywords:

Sociolinguistic, Investigation, Hindi, Lexical, Contemporary, Bangladesh, Bengali, Language

---

**Received:** 18-12-2025

**Revision:** 11-01-2026

**Online:** 16-04-2026

**Accepted:** 13-03-2026



This article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0).

Free use, distribution, and reproduction permitted with proper citation of the original work.

© The Author(s).

---

## 1. Introduction

There are approximately 7,000 languages spoken across the world, and among them, none is entirely free from the influence of loanwords. It is a natural and common linguistic phenomenon for languages to borrow vocabulary from one another. When words are adopted from other languages, these “newcomers” are typically referred to as loanwords

or borrowings. Undoubtedly, the borrowing of words is a pervasive linguistic phenomenon, and there is scarcely any language that remains completely devoid of loanwords (Jespersen, 1922). Research has shown that when languages come into contact, various linguistic elements are transferred from one to another, primarily through the process of lexical borrowing (Kachru, 1985). One of the most evident consequences of such contact is lexical borrowing—a process whereby one language incorporates words from another to address lexical deficiencies or to mirror social and cultural interconnectedness (Hock & Joseph, 2009).

Hindi is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. About 581.4 million people worldwide speak Hindi as their mother tongue.

There are also second-language speakers inside and outside India

(worldpopulationreview.com). Languages undergo continual evolution through processes such as contact, migration, trade, media influence, and cultural exchange. Bengali, an Indo-Aryan language spoken primarily in Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, has a rich history of lexical borrowing from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English, and, more recently, Hindi (Chatterji, 1926; Masica, 1991). While earlier borrowings were shaped by political and religious influences, contemporary borrowings—especially from Hindi—are largely driven by mass media, popular culture, and cross-border communication. In Bangladesh, heightened exposure to Hindi via satellite television, Bollywood cinema, digital streaming services, and social media has markedly accelerated the integration of Hindi loanwords into vernacular Bengali discourse (Rahman, 2010). This phenomenon is particularly noticeable among urban youth, who frequently adopt Hindi lexical items related to entertainment, emotion, fashion, and informal communication. Despite Bengali and Hindi sharing a common Indo-Aryan linguistic heritage, the contemporary influx of Hindi vocabulary signifies a novel phase of contact-induced linguistic alteration, predominantly influenced by globalisation rather than gradual historical linguistic evolution (Kachru, 2006). Despite the visibility of Hindi loanwords in contemporary Bangladeshi Bengali, systematic academic research on their usage, frequency, semantic domains, and sociolinguistic implications remains limited. This study aims to address the usage of Hindi loanwords in the Bengali language in Bangladesh. By analysing real-life linguistic data and speaker attitudes, the research seeks to contribute to broader discussions on language contact, identity, and cultural influence in South Asia.

## 2. Background of the Study

The studies of linguistic borrowings, especially in lexicology, have always caught the attention of contemporary researchers, pedagogues, and linguists. However, to the best of my knowledge through related linguistics, no such attempt has been made in the specific area of Hindi loanwords in Bengali, in which the borrowed words have been presented showing usage in the Bengali language in Bangladesh. Based on the background above, the researcher got interested in analyzing the change of meaning.

## 3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is found out Hindi loanwords in the Bengali language as spoken in Bangladesh. By examining how and why Hindi lexical items are incorporated into everyday Bengali usage, this research seeks to uncover the cultural, historical, and media-driven influences that contribute to this linguistic phenomenon.

Specifically, the study aims to:

- Identify the most common Hindi loanwords currently used in spoken and written Bengali in Bangladesh.
- Analyze the semantic fields and contexts in which these loanwords occur, such as entertainment, media, religion, and daily communication.
- And show up their uses in different cases in the Bengali language in Bangladesh.

Ultimately, this study intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of language contact and borrowing in South Asia, highlighting how cross-cultural interactions and media exposure shape linguistic practices. It also seeks to provide insights into the dynamics of language change, preservation, and identity in a multilingual society.

## 4. Literature Review

The study of linguistic borrowings, especially lexical ones, has interested linguists for centuries. In an early study, representative of the loan words approximation view, Silverman (1992), Paradis (1996), Kenstowicz (2001/2004), and Steriade (2002) say different things about the stages of adaptation and the relative importance of factors such as the borrower's proficiency in the source language and the veridicality of cross-language speech perception. Hilali (1967) discusses in detail the Hindi loan words used in the Bengali language in this book. Also, in this book, he explained the origin of Hindi words used in the Bengali language in Bangladesh. he is the first to discuss in detail these Hindi loan words in Bengali. Chatterji (1926): In this study, the researcher discussed Origin and Development of the Bengali Language. He also explained the history and influence of the

Bengali language. Further, Kambuzya, Hossinzadeh (2014), and Akbas (2015) all discussed loan words in different languages. Ferdous (2009) analyzed loanwords in Bengali from eleven languages, noting phonological, morphological, and semantic changes, with Hindi borrowings showing strong structural integration, especially as nouns and adjectives. Nagarajan (2009) applied Optimality Theory to Bangla loanwords from several languages, demonstrating how phonological constraints guide assimilation—a framework that also applies to Hindi borrowings. Mahade (2015), explores the semantic shifts of Arabic loanwords within the Bengali language. The study identifies and analyzes the reasons behind these alterations, focusing on linguistic processes such as narrowing, amelioration, pejoration, metaphor, and metonymy. The research highlights that Arabic words entered Bengali primarily due to long-standing linguistic and cultural contact, especially during Muslim rule. Key reasons include religious necessity (for texts, prayers), the presence of religious educational institutions, the practice of naming children with Islamic/Arabic names, and the adoption of new concepts for which Bengali lacked equivalent terms. Lahiri (2017) showed that Hindi loanwords in Bengali influence phonology, lexicon, and syntax, often replacing native terms due to cultural prestige and media exposure. Awal (2023) emphasized that Hindi borrowings in Bangladesh stem mainly from cross-border exchange and Bollywood-driven media, with globalization further accelerating their everyday use.

## **5. Research Methodology**

### **5.1. Method of Collecting Data**

A method for collecting data is necessary to obtain accurate data for any type of research. I employed a mixed-methods design, which is a process for accumulating, evaluating, and “mixing” descriptive-qualitative data at some level of the inquiry process within a single study, to understand this research. This is a descriptive analytical study, and the data have been collected over 10 months. The Documentation Method has been followed in this research because the data are taken from printed media. Firstly, the researcher has collected data from a book named “Perso-Arabic elements in Bengali”. As this dictionary includes almost all of the Hindi loanwords in Bengali, this dictionary has been selected to find out those words that have been experienced in the Bengali language. I also took help from another dictionary named “Dictionary of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hindi in Bengali” to collect the original meaning of Hindi words. Secondly, I searched my bank of articles and books like a Hindi-Bengali dictionary and a foreign language dictionary to see Hindi loanwords used in the Bengali language. Thirdly, I interviewed the Bengali people and

recorded their voices and found out Hindi words from their daily speaking. Then, using Google Scholar, Academia.edu, and ResearchGate. I searched for articles with the keywords loan, loanword, Hindi language, and Bengali language.

### **5.2 Method of Analyzing Data**

The goal of analyzing data is to find Hindi loanwords in the Bengali language so that the purpose of the research can be achieved. In this research, qualitative and descriptive methods have been followed. To analyze the data, the researcher has followed the steps below:

- Observing the data.
- Looking for words that have been used in the Bengali language
- Categorize the words by their Bengali meaning according to the Bengali alphabet.
- Using writing techniques to analyze the data.

## **6. Loanwords or Borrowing Words**

A loan word (also a loan word, loan-word) is a word at least partly assimilated from one language (the donor language) into another language (the recipient or target language) through the process of borrowing. A loanword can also be called a borrowing word. Haugen (1950: 212) defines linguistic borrowing as “The endeavor to replicate linguistic patterns from one language into another.” This definition implies that, besides single lexical terms, borrowing may even concern phrases or patterns. Strictly speaking, transmitting loanwords through “The adoption of a local spoken variant of the donor language facilitates substitution at phonological and morphological levels”. yields to the act of substitution at the levels of phonology and morphology Boersma, P. et al (1971: 227). So overall, we can say that loanwords are words taken from one (doner) language and then incorporated into another language's vocabulary. Many halts, stations, and environments affect linguistic achievement. In other words, there are so many linguistic, social, cultural, and political variables that contribute to the process of linguistic borrowing (Hasan, 2015:1378). From the point of linguistics, there are some important reasons for borrowing words. Bilingualism can be an important reason for linguistic borrowing. Apart from this, there are some reasons why languages borrow words. The main reason is “the necessity of those words”, and it happens when a new word enters the language for a new concept. Another reason is the “prestige issue” (Hasan, 2015:1379).

## 7. On the Bengali Language

Bengali belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family, which includes Hindi, Punjabi, and Marathi. The language evolved from Magadhi Prakrit, an ancient language spoken in eastern India. Over time, it transitioned into Apabhramsha, a transitional form between Prakrit and early modern Indo-Aryan languages. Katzner (1995) states that Bangla, an Indo-Aryan language, originates from Sanskrit, thus exhibiting resemblances to Hindi. Its vocabulary shares similarities with Sanskrit, and although initially challenging, it presents certain parallels with Latin, as evidenced by specific examples. The flourishing of Bengali literature occurred between the 14th and 18th centuries, featuring poets such as Chandidas and Jayadev who composed works in the language. Primarily, the arrival and establishment of Muslim rule, encompassing the Sultanate and Mughal periods, served as a crucial catalyst. During these eras, Persian, a language heavily infused with Arabic vocabulary, became the language of the court and administration. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Bengali language was officially recognized as the sole state language, enshrined in the Constitution of 1972, and became a powerful symbol of national identity and unity. Concurrently, globalization and the proliferation of satellite television have introduced novel linguistic influences. Hindi loanwords have permeated the Bengali lexicon via Bollywood cinema, while English borrowings have augmented owing to advancements in technology and expanding commercial activities (Hossain, 2025). In the digital age, the adoption of Bangla Unicode and the spread of social media strengthened Bengali's global presence, connecting diaspora communities and ensuring its relevance in modern communication. Thus, since 1971, Bengali has evolved from a language of resistance into the foundation of Bangladesh's cultural and political identity, while continuously adapting to external influences in a rapidly changing world.

## 8. On the Hindi Language

Hindi, an Indo-Aryan language within the Indo-European family, traces its origins to Sanskrit and evolved through Prakrit and Apabhramsha stages before becoming distinct around the 10th century CE (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hindi-language>). The modern standardised form of Hindi is based on the Khari Boli dialect of Delhi and is written in the Devanagari script, a phonetic system with 47 primary characters. Historically, Hindi absorbed Persian and Arabic vocabulary during the medieval period under Mughal influence, which also gave rise to Urdu, a closely related register distinguished by its Perso-Arabic script and lexicon (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi>).

Hindi literature flourished in dialects such as Braj Bhasha and Awadhi, producing devotional works by poets like Tulsidas and Surdas, while the 19th century saw the rise of modern Hindi prose and nationalist writings. Today, Hindi is spoken by approximately 581.4 million people as a first language and over 120–264 million as a second language, making it one of the most widely spoken languages globally (<https://worldschoolbooks.com/languages/overview-of-the-hindi-language/>). It serves as the official language of India and is recognised in several other countries, including Fiji, Mauritius, and South Africa, while also functioning as a lingua franca across northern India. In contemporary times, Hindi continues to thrive through Bollywood cinema, mass media, and digital platforms, reinforcing its global cultural significance and maintaining its position within the Hindi–Urdu continuum, where Hindi adopts a more Sanskritized vocabulary, and Urdu incorporates Persian and Arabic elements.

## 9. Hindi Loanwords in the Bengali Language

For ease of discussion, firstly, we have divided Hindi words into two parts. In the first part, we discuss about original Hindi words that are used in the Bengali language without any changes, and in the second part, we discuss Hindi words with additions from other languages. In Bengali alphabetic order, and discussed in detail.

### 1. The Table of original Hindi words that are used in the Modern Bengali language

Hindi Word	Pronunciation	Meaning in the Bengali Language
আখরোট	/akʰroʈ/	Walnut, a type of nut
আড়ত	/aʈoʈ/	Wholesale market or warehouse where goods are stored and traded
ইন্দারা	/ind̪ara/	One kind of source of water
কেরানী	/kerani/	Clerk, office worker responsible for paperwork
খানা	/kʰana/	Food or meal; also used for “place” in some dialects
গাজা	/gadʒa/	Hemp or cannabis sometimes refers to marijuana
গোলা	/gola/	Granary or storage pit for grains
চাঁপা	/tʃãpa/	Champa flower ( <i>Michelia champaca</i> ), a fragrant blossom
চিতা	/tʃiʈa/	Funeral pyre (for cremation); also means leopard in another sense
চিলিম	/tʃilim/	Hookah pipe or smoking pipe
চুন	/tʃun/	Lime (calcium carbonate), used in construction and whitewashing
চূড়ি	/tʃuʈi/	Bangle, a circular ornament worn on the wrist

চুড়িওয়াল	/tʃuɾiwala/	Bangle seller
চুড়িদার	/tʃuɾid̪ar/	Tight-fitting trousers (churidar style)
চৌকি	/tʃouki/	Cot, small bed, or guard post
চৌচালা	/tʃoutʃala/	A hut or house with a four-sided roof
ছিলিম	/tʃilim/	Hookah pipe or smoking pipe.
ছিট	/sit̪/	Sprinkle, speck, or dot.
ডালি	/d̪ali/	Basket or tray, often used for carrying fruits or offerings
তরকারী	/t̪orokari/	Vegetable curry or cooked vegetables
থোড়া	/thoɾa/	A little, small amount
থানা	/thana/	Police station; also, an administrative unit in rural areas
দক্ষিণ	/d̪okkʰin/	South (direction); also means ritual donation in religious contexts
দশ	/d̪oʃ/	Ten (number)
দাগা	/d̪aga/	Betrayal, fraud, or trickery
দাম	/d̪am/	Price or cost
দেওর	/deor/	Husband's younger brother (brother-in-law)
পাগড়ি	/pagɾi/	Turban, traditional headwear
পান	/pan/	Betel leaf, often chewed with areca nut
পিতল	/pit̪ol/	Brass, a metal alloy
পুরা	/pura/	Whole, complete, entire
বকরা	/bokora/	Goat
বজরা	/bodʒora/	Cargo boat or barge used in rivers
বরসাত	/borsat̪/	Rainy season
যবনা	/jobona/	Foreigner, outsider (historically used for Greeks/Yavanas)
বাবু	/babu/	Gentleman, master, or educated man; also polite address
বিঘা	/bigʰa/	Traditional land measurement unit (varies regionally, ~1/3 acre)
বেপারী	/bepari/	Trader or merchant
বেল	/bel/	Wood apple
বৈঠক	/boiʰok/	Meeting or sitting room
ভাত	/bʰat̪/	Cooked rice, staple food
ময়না	/moina/	Myna bird, a common songbird
মালি	/mali/	Gardener
রাজা	/radʒa/	King
রাণী	/rani/	Queen

<b>TAHREER</b> <small>Journal of Languages &amp; Literature</small>		
রাম	/ram/	Ram, Hindu deity (incarnation of Vishnu)
রুপা	/rupa/	Silver (metal)
লাফাঙ্গা	/lafāga/	Vagabond, loafer, or mischievous person
লোগট	/lengot/	Loincloth, traditional garment
শত্রু	/ʃotr̥u/	Enemy
শিশি	/ʃiʃi/	Small bottle or vial
শুরু	/ʃuru/	Beginning, start
শূল	/ʃul/	Spear or pike (weapon)
সতী	/ʃot̪i/	Virtuous, devoted wife; historically linked to the widow immolation practice
হুন্ডি	/hundi/	An indigenous financial instrument, a bill of exchange used in trade

খানা (/kʰana/)-In the Bengali language, /kʰana/ is used as a place name in Bengali language, expressing the name of a place by joining it with a noun. As an example: ডাক্তার + খানা = ডাক্তারখানা (Doctor + kʰana = Doctorkʰana). Its mean doctor's chamber or Hospital.

গোলা (/gola/)-The powder used in pistols and guns is called /gola/.

চাঁপা (/tʃāpa/)-/tʃāpa/ is used as a Female name in Bangladesh.

ছিট (/sit̪/)-In the Bengali language, Gauze cloth is called /sit̪/.

বকরা (/bokora/)-This word was used in the rural language in ancient times, but is no longer used. Now it's called /sagol/.

বজরা (/bodzora/)-A type of crop is grown in Bangladesh called /bodzora/.

যবনা (/jobona/)-In Bengali, the period of youth is called /jobona/ in literary language.

ময়না (/mɔina/)-/mɔina/ is used as a Female name in Bangladesh.

রাজা (/radʒa/)-/radʒa/ is also used as a male name

রাম (/ram/)-/ram/ is used as a name for Hindu boys in Bangladesh.

শিশি (/ʃiʃi/)-Only old glass bottles are called /ʃiʃi/.

## 2. The Table of Hindi words with additions from other languages that are used in the Modern Bengali language

<b>TAHREER</b> <small>Journal of Languages &amp; Literature</small>		
<b>Hindi Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
চৌচালা	/tʃoutʃala/	A hut or house with a four-sided sloping roof, common in rural Bengal
চৌরাস্তা	/tʃourastʃa/	A crossroads or intersection where four roads meet
চৌহদ্দি	/tʃouhoddi/	Boundary or limit of a property, area, or territory
ডাকখানা	/dakʰkhana/	Post office, the place where letters and parcels are collected and delivered

## 10. Conclusion

The present study demonstrates the usage of Hindi loanwords in the Bengali language. The incorporation of Hindi lexical items into Bengali is not merely a matter of vocabulary expansion but reflects broader socio-cultural processes, particularly the influence of mass media, popular culture, and cross-border communication. The findings suggest that Hindi loanwords are most prevalent in informal registers and among younger speakers, indicating a generational dimension to borrowing practices. This linguistic phenomenon underscores the permeability of language boundaries in multilingual contexts, where borrowing serves both communicative efficiency and symbolic functions. While some speakers perceive Hindi loanwords as enriching and modernising Bengali, others view them as a potential challenge to linguistic purity and cultural autonomy.

## References

- Awal, A. (2023). Language Contact in Bangladesh. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 13(4), 69–84.
- Chatterji, S. K. (1926). *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*. Calcutta University Press.
- Ferdous, W. (2009). *A Study of Loan Words in the Bengali Language*. M.Phil. Thesis, Department of Linguistics, University of Dhaka. Retrieved from the Dhaka University Repository.
- Haq, Rafiqul Kazi (2007), “Dictionary of Arabic, Persian, Turkish Hindi and Urdu Words in the Bengali Language”, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Hasan, Mahde (2015), “Semantic Change of Words Entered into Another Language Through the Process of Language Borrowing: A Case Study of Arabic Words in Bengali”, *People: International Journal of Social Science*, Mountain View, USA

Hilali, Shaikh Ghulam Maqsood (1967), "Perso-Arabic Elements in Bengali", Hilali Foundation, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Hock, H. H., & Joseph, B. D. (2009). *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Hossain, M. R. (2025). Language Movement of 1952: Background of Independent Bangladesh. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13(4), 1–10.

Islam, M. N., & Hashim, A. (2024). Hybridisation in English Newspapers in Bangladesh. *International Education Studies*, 17(5), 59–72.

Jespersen, O. (1922), "Language: Its Nature and Development", Routledge, Abingdon.

Kachru, B. B. (2006). *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes*. University of Illinois Press.

Kachru, Braj B. (1985), "Standards, codification, and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle. In *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*", edited by Randolph Quirk and Henry G. Widdowson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 11-30

Kenstowicz, M. (1994), *Phonology in Generative Grammar*, UK: Blackwell. (2001/4), "The Role of Perception in Loanword Phonology", To Appear in *Linguistique Africaine* 20 and *Studies in African Linguistics* 32, Pp.95-112

Lahiri, B. (2017). *Bengali in Contact with Hindi*. Academia.edu. Retrieved from Academia.edu.

Masica, C. P. (1991). *The Indo-Aryan Languages*. Cambridge University Press.

Nagarajan, H. (2009). *Constraints Through the Ages: Loanwords in Bangla*. Academia.edu. Retrieved from Academia.edu.

Paradis, C. (1996). "The Inadequacy of Filters and Faithfulness in Loan Word Adaptation", In Durand, J. And Laks, B. (Eds.), *Current Trends in Phonology: Models and Methods*, Vol. 2, Salford: European Studies Research Institute, Available As ROA-157 From the Rutgers Optimality Archive, Pp. 509-534

Rahman, T. (2010). Cultural globalisation and language change in Bangladesh. *South Asian Linguistics Review*, 12(1), 89–104.

Silverman, Daniel (1992), "Multiple Scansions in Loanword Phonology", Evidence from Cantonese. p. 289

Steriade, D. (2002). “The Phonology of Perceptibility Effects: The P-Map& Its Consequences for Constraint Organisation”, Unpublished Manuscript, UCLA.

### **Internet Sources**

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hindi-language>

Bengali Language Movement – Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi>