

The Chhintang Mundum (Ritual) Language: A Morpho-Semantic Analysis

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This paper aims at analyzing the Chhintang mundum (ritual) language from a morpho-semantic perspective. The Chhintang mundum (ritual) language, which is on the verge of extinction, is spoken by knowledgeable elders of the Chhintang Rai community settled in eastern Nepal. The data were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. After having completed translation, the analysis reveals that the mundum (ritual) language was different from the ordinary language. There are considerable differences between the mundum (ritual) and the ordinary language in many respects. One of the most distinct features of the mundum (ritual) language is the structure of paired nouns that make a ritual language distinct from an ordinary language. Such paired nouns are called binomials, a term coined and introduced by Allen (1978) in the field of ritual language study and further elaborated on by Gaenszle (2002), and (Rai, 2007).

The main focus of this study is to analyze the structural makeup of Chhintang binomials following a helpful framework proposed by Allen (1978). According to his helpful system, 'free standing words' or 'verbal roots' from the ordinary language are symbolized by upper cases such as A, B, C, their status as affixes is symbolized as lower cases such as 's', 't', or their being non-identifiable is symbolized as 'a', 'b', 'c'. In addition, he proposed to underline the symbol or symbols that represent the global meaning of the expression (or an approximation of it), and separates the two limbs by a period. Moreover, the ordinary language follows an SOV (NNV) syntactic structure, but the mundum (ritual) language follows an NV.nV structure. Here, 'N' refers to a noun/pronoun, V refers to a predicate (verb), and 'n' refers to an unidentified marker/noun. The following examples are taken from the mundum (ritual) language.

Examples of Morpho-Semantic Analysis

i. Binomials

i. risipchong.pholokchong 'lentil'
risip-chong.pholok-chong
A B .C B

ii. **Examples of Basic Sentence Structure of the Mundum (Ritual) Language:
NV.nV**

Field	Example 1 [Burhahang_01.18]
Ritual Text	tupla-pheno.beri-pheno
Morpho-semantic	A B . a B
Morpheme Break	tupla phes-no . beri phes-no
Glossing	banana.leaf stretch-NPST . banana.leaf stretch-NPST
Free Translation	(S/he is) Spreading the tip of banana leaves (to make an altar).

References

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