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Book Review

Uttam Chakraborty and Shyamal Das, *Kokborok Morphology and Phonology*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2015. 110 pp.

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1.0 Introduction

Kokborok (KB) is a Sino-Tibetan language spoken in the North-eastern Indian state of Tripura. It is the official language of the majority of the tribes in the state but no systematic study of Kokborok grammar has been done by any trained linguist. Hence, language documentation is sorely needed. The authors, being specialist in linguistic studies undertake with the first systematic study of Kokborok grammar.

Kokborok Morphology and Phonology co-authored by Uttam Chakraborty and Shyamal Das is a first descriptive work on Kokborok language. The book preliminary investigates the basic concepts of morphology and phonology of Kokborok.

2.0 Structure of the book

The design of the book consists of a title page, preface and four chapters covering various relevant areas of linguistics, bibliography, and Index. The chapters of the book are:

Chapter 1: Word classes in Kokborok

Chapter 2: Morphemes in Kokborok

Chapter 3: Word formation in Kokborok

Chapter 4: Lexical tone in the languages of Tripura

The first chapter 'Word Classes in Kokborok' investigates whether word classes are present in Kokborok or not. The authors here discuss word classes of Kokborok from the commonly practiced angle with reference to English and Bangla. To make it exemplify for better understanding, the authors have categorized the word classes of Kokborok into two groups namely open class words and closed class words. The open class words in Kokborok include nouns, verbs, adjective, and adverbs; whereas KB closed class words include pronouns,

postpositions (preposition), conjunctions, interjections, determiners, numerals, and auxiliaries. From the analysis of word classes of Kokborok, it has been discovered that Kokborok has all the common words classes except preposition rather it is replaced by a postposition. Overall, the different forms and functions, presence or absence, or substitution of word classes of Kokborok are discussed splendidly with precise examples.

After investigating word classes in Kokborok, chapter two ‘Morphemes in Kokborok’ discusses different forms of word building processes in Kokborok. Before that, the fundamental concepts related to morphemes are stated first. Then the author proceed with the main subject of the chapter, so as words in Kokborok are concerned, the language has a tradition to exert all the three kinds of words: simple, complex and compound. The authors explain all these three kinds of word. Few examples of different kinds of words in Kokborok cited from the book are simple word /k^hom/ ‘flower’, complex word /k^homrək/ ‘flowers’, and compound word /da-kətər/ ‘elder brother’.

Free and bound morphemes of Kokborok are also discussed with reference to their uses in different grammatical contexts. In the latter of the chapter, the authors made a comparative study to provide the answer to an ever-intriguing question as to why the Bangla language used by the native KB speakers is different from the native use of Bangla. The chapter ends with discussion of the effect of KB Inflection on KB Bangla Inflection is discussed. For furthermore clarification, the authors have suggested for distinctive comparison between the morphological practices in KB, Bangla and KB Bangla in future research or study in this regard.

Both in descriptive linguistics and traditional grammar, word formation means a creation of a new word either by changing the form of a base or by adding affixes to the base or both. Hence, after anatomization of different forms of word building processes of Kokborok, in chapter three ‘Word formation in Kokborok’, the authors proceed to the discussion of word formation of Kokborok. The chapter embarks on with the introduction of word formation and its types. The derivational process of word formation is focused. The authors exhibit several kinds of the derivation of KB words such as derivation of nouns, derivation of verbs, derivation of adjectives, and derivation of adverbs.

Some other common processes of word formation such as reduplication and compound formation are also displayed with representative examples. Some examples seem to be not clear, so the authors have suggested for further research in this field.

Chapter four finally discusses the ‘Lexical tone in the languages of Tripura’. The chapter begins with the lineage of different languages in Tripura and then provide the status of the various tribes of Tripura. The analysis of lexical tone in the various Bangla dialects and

Tribal languages in Tripura are focussed. The detail data analysis of different tone levels from the eastern dialects of Bangla namely Kumila or Tripura Bangla (TB), Noakhali dialect of Bangla (NKB) and Sylheti dialect (SHB) are discussed with examples. To investigate whether the tribal languages attest lexical tone to its maximum range and variation or not, the authors discuss the use of tone in the four languages of tribal of Tripura namely, Kokborok, Reang, Ucoi, and Darlong. Although no attempt has been made to cast the discussion of the lexical tone of different languages of Tripura, the authors in this chapter attempt a tonogenetic explanation of the emergence of high tone in the various Bangla dialects and tribal languages in Tripura. Overall, this final chapter of the book is really challenging for the authors but still manage to provide a basic knowledge of the lexical tone to the readers.

3.0 Observation

Overall, this book is highly valuable as a descriptive work and provides some basic linguistic facts of Kokborok. The book is clearly structured. The Title of the chapters are informative and guide to their contents. It also has a good footnotes, index and bibliography. Data utilized in this book are mainly from primary sources in addition to the authors' primary knowledge of the language. The book is written in an easily digested and the points made are exemplified and discussed in an ample manner. This book is well written in a lucid way, any reader will feel pleasure reading this book. Furthermore, it is particularly helpful and useful to novice learners, students and researchers of linguistics interested in developing Kokborok language.