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Numeral Classifiers in the Mru Language

Mru, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Bangladesh, has a complex system of numeral classifiers. Through eliciting data and analyzing texts with the aid of a speaker of Mru, I have been able to explore the intricacies of this aspect of Mru. Mru numeral classifiers are broadly divided into two semantic groups of ‘human’ and ‘non-human’. While more general classifiers can be used in place of more specific ones, classifiers rarely are allowed to cross between the groups of ‘human’ and ‘non-human’. These classifiers are also semantically divided into sortal and mensural types, the sortal classifiers describing inherent properties of the item while the mensural classifiers describe ways things can be measured. These sorts of divisions are typical in systems of numeral classifiers. Delving deeper into the rich classifier system of Mru, however, other interesting phenomena and particulars of Mru numeral classifiers become apparent, such as the use of repeaters, special classifiers for rope and jewelry, and classifiers for money. In addition, the presence of classifiers in Mru presents an intriguing situation in the acquisition of the language by Mru children.

References

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- Gil, David. “Numeral Classifiers.” *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Eds. Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil, and Bernard Comrie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 226-29.
- Payne, Thomas E. *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. 107-08