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THE WANCHO LANGUAGE: ORIGIN AND LINGUISTIC STATUS

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ABSTRACT:

The Wancho language as well as the Wancho community is dominant in the language in the Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh. It originated from the Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family spoken in Arunachal Pradesh. Anthropologically, the Wanchos is belongs from the Mongoloid origin.

The Wanchos is an endangered language which is included in the list of endangered languages by UNESCO. This is a previously undescribed language. In present context it is very much important to preserve the languages by scientific Language planning because the small languages are dominated by the International and Universal languages.

Though the Wancho is a previously undeciphered and undeveloped language so it is important to study scientifically for better improvement of the Language.

At first as a researcher we have to identify the factors which are affecting in the development of the respective Language. Then we have to try to make a proper planning for the development of the respective language. The main causes of endangered situation of the language are lack of awareness, lack of traditional script, lack of scientific research, lack of textbook, lack of grammar, lack of guidebook etc. Sometimes the characteristic of the language makes a difficulty in the process of development. Language policy is also responsible for the development of Wancho language. The new generation is not interested to use the language.

KEYWORDS: Sino-tibetan language family, Wancho language, Mongoloid, linguistic situation, endangered language, language planning.

0.1 INTRODUCTION

The North-East India is one of more striking place for linguists. It is also the most ethnically and linguistically divers region of India. It is known as seven sisters of India. The region is recognized as heaven of linguistic research. With the addition of Sikkim, it consists of eight states at present and they are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram,

Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. It is unique because this region is the cultural and linguistic hub of indigenous people. Linguistically, it is often designed as a language laboratory where a cluster of languages belonging to the three major language families of the world viz. Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan and Austro-Asiatic are spoken. Arunachal Pradesh is distinguished by its natural

beauty and is more striking for the linguists for possessing the linguistic variety. The linguistic tribes inhabiting in various places and pockets of this province have their dialectical variations according to their clans rather than the geographical locations. Arunachal Pradesh of the North East is a state with a population of nearly half a million speaks more than 50 languages. The



number of tribes can be estimated to seventy. The people are popularly called tribal and they have their own tribal languages and dialects. Many varieties of the inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh took their inhabitation areas mainly on the banks of rivers flowing through the state. The Wancho is one of significant linguistic tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. Since long they have been maintaining their respective traditional cultural area. Due to these dialectical variations some of them are mutually intelligible but some are not. Phonological, morphological and lexical distinctions are there among the varieties.

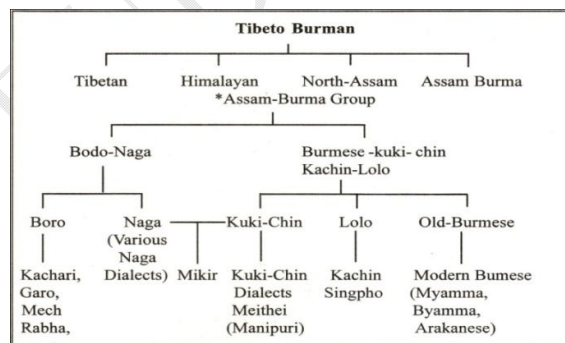
0.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aims and objectives of this work are given below:

- To find out the origin of the Wancho language.
- To find out the linguistic status of the Wancho language.
- To discuss about the factors affecting in the development of the Wancho Language.
- To find out the remedial measures of the development of the Wancho language.

1.0 THE ORIGIN OF THE WANCHO LANGUAGE

G. A. Grearson, Paul K. Benedict [Sino-Tibetan A Conceptus, 2009, p.6], Suniti Kumar Chatarji, [Kirata-Jana-Kriti, 1975, pp. 24-25] elaborately discussed the Sino-Tibetan speech family. They remark that the Wancho language is an offshoot of Sino-Tibetan origin. Later on some researchers have tried to explain the Wancho language as a sub group of Naga Group. Pramod Chandra Bhattacharja's opinions [Linguistic Situation in North-East India, 2003, pp.130-133], about the origin of the Wancho Language may be shown as Sino-Tibetan > Tibeto- Burman > Assam- Burma > Naga > Wancho. From cultural point of view, the Wancho community have a very close similarity with Naga communities i.e. head hunting. But now a days the tradition is totally closed. Of course these explanations are not sufficient for declaring the Wancho Language as an off-shoot of the Naga of the Boro-Naga Group. Researcher Robins Burling [Tibeto Burman Languages in North East India, <http://tibetoBurmanlanguages.net> > classifying, 21.09.2017] are trying to explain the Wancho Language is a sub group of Kanyak. But the main point is that the Kanyak and Wancho are sub branch of Naga Language. The tabular forms of the origin of the Wancho language are shown by the following picture.

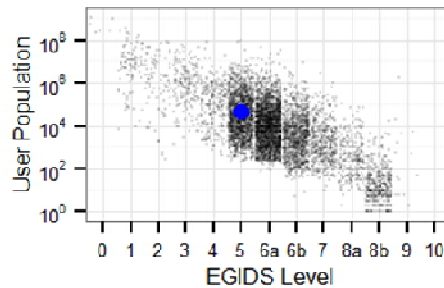


2.0 LINGUISTIC STATUS OF THE WANCHO LANGUAGE

According to the EDIGS [www.ethnologue.com. EGIDS Level] the Wancho language can be estimated as an endangered and developing language. In time of communication with other communities the speakers of the Wancho language feel some sort of hesitation. Specially the new generation of speakers feel hesitated to present their identity by speaking their respective language. The linguistic awareness for the language is degrading in current generation. As per the assessment of the EDIGS scale, the Wancho language can be observed as an endangered developing language because it is used for face- to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing speakers. The EGIDS consists of 13 levels with each higher number on the scale representing a greater level of disruption to the international transmutation of the language. More than 40 languages or dialects in India are considered to be endangered and believed to be heading towards extinction as only a few thousand

people speak them officials said. According to a report of the census Directorate, there are 22 scheduled languages and 100 non-scheduled languages in the country, which are spoken by a large number of people of one lakh or more. However 42 languages which are spoken by less than 10,000 people.[<https://currentaffairs.gktoday.in>, 29.06.2019]

The Wancho language is endangered but not critically endangered. It is in developing stage and it may be developed by proper language planning. The picture which is shown Wancho language as an endangered language that is given below-



- Each and every speaker from child to adult including old people uses the language.
- Wancho language is still at its colloquial form. There is neither traditional script nor Government recognized graphical script of the language. However, at present they have adopted Roman script and the Bible has also been translated to Wancho language adopting this script. Moreover, there is a limited written version of literature, inscription, songs, proverbs etc in Wancho language.
- The development of the language is restrained as there is no written literature of the Wancho language.
- There is a sporadic study of the language yet the lack of a complete scientific study creates problem in the development of the language. Due to the absence of scientific analysis there is a problem in publication of textbook, grammar etc in Wancho language.
- The colloquial form of the Wancho language is used in family life only. The new generation communicates with others in public field using Hindi, Assamese and English language. However, there is a recent awareness among the limited literate section to keep their language alive.

The main factors of the endangered stage of Wancho language may be described as given below-

Dialectical variation of Wancho language

There are two distinctive dialectical forms of the Wancho language viz. Tangjan and Changjan [www.ciil-lisindia.net, 21.09.2017] and both are geographically created with linguistic differences too. Niyanu and Nimu are the colloquial language from of the Tangjan and the Changjans respectively. At present Nimu dialect has been accepted as a whole in both upper and lower side of Wancho dominated area.

Scriptless language:

Wancho language is a scriptless language and traditionally different forms of songs, proverbs etc have been orally popular among the tribals. They have accepted the Roman script and used to preserve their culture and songs using this script.

Lack of awareness:

There is a lack of linguistic awareness among the Wancho people as the literacy rate is pathetically low. There is no significant development development of their own long and culture. In

formal environment they use Hindi and English for communicative purpose. However, there is a growth of awareness to some extent among the literate new generation youngsters for its vigorous use.

Influence of Christianity:

The Christianity has immense effect in cultural life of the Wanchos. The order to spread Christianity the Bible has also been translated to Wancho language and recently it is a positive effective sign of development of this language.

Lack of scientific study and Awareness:

The lack of scientific attitude and thinking is a prime factor of the underdevelopment of the Wancho language. Moreover, there is little research to know about the structural aspects of this language. As a result there is no composition of grammar and textbook and thus this language cannot be included as a subject of formal institutional system. Only a few number of studies have been found which are related to the Wancho language and literature. These are mention below-

The Wanchos written by Parul Dutta published in 1990 is a Description of socio cultural life of speakers of this language.

To study in an analytical view a work is *A Note on Wancho Language* (1977) author K.Dasgupta analyzed scientifically the phonologically and vocabulary of different dialects of the Wanchos. In Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India and Robins Burling's *The Tibeto-Burman languages* some aspects of Wancho language as discussed.

Fr. Francis T.J.sdb's *First Ever Wancho Grammar cum English-Wancho Tutor* is a very important book for the study. It has a very high academic value and linguistic value.

An article entitled *Wancho Phonology and Word list* published in *Linguistics of Tibeto-Burman Area* by Mankai Wangsu and Robins Burling, Vol-21, No.02 is a very high standard article which is scientific and linguistically prepared. It helps to the study

Monolingual circumstance:

The Wancho people generally reside at a very remote area and are delivered from the outer community. They can use their own colloquial language from only through several dialectal forms are available.

Bi-lingual and multi lingual circumstance:

The bi-lingual and multilingual factors create problem in the development of the Wancho language. Their use of Hindi and English from trade and other communication purpose also restrain the developmental process of their own language.

3.0 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we can summarize the main points as follows-

- Wancho language is belongs from Sino-Tibetan language family.
- The wancho language is an endangered language listed by UNESCO in developing stage.
- The main factors affecting in Wancho language as endangered level are – lack of awareness, script less, lack of scientific research, dialectal variations, influence of Christianity, monolingual circumstance and bi-lingual and multilingual circumstance.
- The main remedial measures are to make aware the speech community to their language, proper planning, provide textbook, grammar etc. in school level by proper language policy, by digitalization and by composing the songs, proverbs etc.

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