

Ongoing Research on the Ombule (Wambule) Language

Jean Robert Oppenort
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For several years, both Nepali and foreign scholars have been intensively studying the vast number of Rai languages spoken in eastern Nepal. The Ombule (Wambule) language has been the object of linguistic research since 1996. This research is being carried out in the framework of the Himalayan Languages Project at Leiden University, the Netherlands. So far, during the last sixteen months, the varieties of Ombule spoken in the villages of Hilepānī and Uṃbu (Okhalḍhuṅgā district) and the closely related Jero Rai language have been analysed. The aim of the research is to produce a grammar (phonology, morphology and syntax) and a bi- or trilingual glossary of the Ombule language.

Nothing was known

The reason why Ombule was chosen for investigation is because virtually nothing was known about this language, which may occupy an important position within the Tibeto-Burman language family, a huge family which also includes languages such as Chinese, Tibetan, Limbu and all the other Rai languages. The present study is not only interesting for Tibeto-Burman typology, that is the study of the characteristics of this language family, but also for linguistics in general.

Grammar

The grammar of the Ombule language is due to appear within three years in the form of a book. This written material will hopefully preserve the language for future generations. It will hopefully inspire the Ombule people to write and read in their own native tongue.