

1                   **REDUPLICATED EXPRESSIVES IN LEPCHA**

2  
3                   *Satarupa Dattamajumdar\**  
4

5                   **ABSTRACT:**

6  
7                   Reduplication is defined as repetition or copying of a word or a syllable  
8 either exactly or partially in order to bring modification in the semantic  
9 interpretation or to convey some special meaning. As observed in Lepcha, (a  
10 Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Sikkim and Darjeeling district of West  
11 Bengal) reduplicated expressives (structures which represent sounds or senses)  
12 may belong to the category of full reduplication as well as partial  
13 reduplication. Being an important structural phenomenon of the South Asian  
14 languages reduplicated expressives play a vital role in the system of  
15 communication and so demands a vivid description of its form and function  
16 with reference to the semantic interpretation.

17                   The data of the present paper has been collected from field investigation  
18 conducted in Kalimpong subdivision of Darjeeling district of West Bengal.  
19

20                   **INTRODUCTON: PRESENT STATUS AND FILIATION OF**  
21                   **LEPCHA**

22  
23                   The Lepchas are the original inhabitants of Sikkim and are mostly settled  
24 in Dzongu valley of north Sikkim. They are also settled in Kalimpong  
25 subdivision of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Apart from Sikkim and  
26 West Bengal, Lepcha is also spoken in Bhutan (lower valleys in the West and  
27 South) and Nepal (Mechi zone, Ilam district). Lepcha speech community is  
28 considered constitutionally a schedule tribe pertaining to the states of West  
29 Bengal and Sikkim in India.

30                   According to 2001 census, total Lepcha population in India was 50,629.  
31 The population strength of Lepcha in Sikkim is 35, 728 according to 2001  
32 census and 14,721 in West Bengal according to 2001 census. [according to:  
33 [http://www.census India.gov.in/ Census\\_Data\\_2001/ census\\_Data\\_online /](http://www.census India.gov.in/ Census_Data_2001/ census_Data_online / Language/partb.htm)  
34 [Language/partb.htm](http://www.census India.gov.in/ Census_Data_2001/ census_Data_online / Language/partb.htm)] . Lepchas are also settled in Bhutan (Samasti district)---  
35 the population strength being 2,000(2001 Van Driem) and in Nepal (Ilam  
36 district)--- the population strength being 1,272 (1961 Census) [according to :  
37 <http://www.ethnologue.com>]

---

\* *The Asiatic Society, Kolkata*

1 The Lepcha language (which is also known as Rong/Rongaring/Rongring)  
 2 belongs to the Tibeto Burman language sub-family under Tibeto-Chinese  
 3 language family. Lepcha is placed in the non-pronominalised group of the  
 4 Himalayan languages under the Tibeto-Burman sub-family.  
 5

## 6 **REDUPLICATION AND EXPRESSIVES**

7  
 8 Reduplication is defined as “repetition or copying of a word or a syllable  
 9 either exactly or partially in order to bring modification in the semantic  
 10 interpretation or to convey some special meaning. The phenomenon is  
 11 explained in terms of copying followed by affixation (Dattamajumdar  
 12 2001:19) There are some reduplicated structures which represent sounds or  
 13 senses and thus are expressives of a language. The expressives consist of  
 14 repetition of a word or of a syllable. These expressives have been termed as  
 15 Onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, ideophones and imitatives by different  
 16 scholars at different times as all these represent natural sounds and express  
 17 senses. But as Abbi (1992:15) proposes, “The best solution would be to treat  
 18 all these forms by their various names under the term Expressives.”

19 As observed in Lepcha, reduplicated expressives may belong to the  
 20 category of full reduplication as well as partial reduplication. Fully  
 21 reduplicated expressives refer to those structures which are formed by exact  
 22 doubling of the base form without any phonological alteration in the copied  
 23 affixed part of the structure. On the other hand partially reduplicated  
 24 expressives refer to those structures which involve alteration in the  
 25 phonological shape of the affixed copied part of the reduplicated structure.

26 Being an important structural phenomenon of the South Asian languages  
 27 reduplicated expressives play a vital role in the system of communication and  
 28 so demands a vivid description of its form and function with reference to the  
 29 semantic interpretation.

30 The data of the present paper has been collected from field investigation  
 31 conducted in Kalimpong subdivision of Darjeeling district of West Bengal.  
 32

### 33 *2.1. Expressives (Fully Reduplicated)*

34  
 35 Lepcha attests a number of fully reduplicated expressives. These may be  
 36 imitation of natural sounds or may be expressive of senses. The fully  
 37 reduplicated expressives are both phonologically and semantically significant  
 38 in the language.  
 39

1 I. Expressives ---- imitative of natural sounds

2

3 1. tʃyore      bul bul      tʃunɔn.  
4      tea-seems      imitative      boiling  
5                      sound of  
6                      boiling

7 ‘Tea is boiling with the sound.’

8

9 2. iŋasɔŋ    brok brok    ma tyuk  
10      child-pl.    imitative    neg. jump  
11                      sound of  
12                      jumping

13 ‘The children should not jump with noise.’

14

15 3. nam leŋ fuleŋsɔŋ    bruŋ bruŋ    lɔkam.  
16      young girl boy-pl.    imitative    dancing  
17                                      sound of  
18                                      drum beat

19 ‘The young girls and boys are dancing with the loud sound of drum beat.’

20

21 4. hɔ yuk    hrak hrak    majuk.  
22      you work    imitative    neg. to do  
23                      of rattling  
24                      sound

25 ‘Do not work with (making) rough sounds.’

26

27 5. kutʃuŋ unu    thaba    kram kram    hunfyɔ.  
28      corn    to fry    to eat    imitative    to be  
29                                      sound of  
30                                      breaking  
31                                      something crispy

32 ‘It is crispy to eat fried corn.’

33

34 6. hu    suk suk    thyopam.  
35      she/he    imitative    crying  
36                      sound of  
37                      sobbing

38 ‘She/he is sobbing.’

39

## REDUPLICATED EXPRESSIVES IN LEPCHA

### 1 II. Expressives (imitative of Senses)

2 1. TOBOK KIN KIN DOK.

3 stomach expr. of paining

4 gripping pain

5 ‘THE STOMACH IS HAVING GRIPING PAIN.’

6

7 2. tukya ka nɔm kun kun unnɔn.

8 pan-loc. oil expr. of to be-pr.

9 blowing smoke

10 ‘The oil is smoking in the pan.’

11

12 3. mennambu ambipɔt klem klem yumba.

13 ripe mango expr. of seems to be

14 sweet taste

15 ‘The ripe mango is sweet to taste.’

16

17 4. surɔŋ kɔsu sa duŋpɔt kyup kyup dokam.

18 today me-gen. knee expr. of paining

19 acute pain

20 ‘Today my knee is paining acute.’

21

22 5. so zim zim yubam.

23 rain expr. of falling

24 drizzling

25 rain

26 ‘It is drizzling.’

27

28 6. tutɕɔt ka tʃholi mu nɔŋ sa nyɔl nyɔl matʃya?

29 time –loc. school neg. to go of expr. of why

30 being slow

31 ‘Why are you slow/late, for not going to school?’

32

33 The semantic features of the fully reduplicated expressives in Lepcha are  
34 as follows.

35 Degree of Manifestation

36 Continuation

37 Repetition

38

1 *i. Degree of Manifestation*

2  
3 Mostly the fully reduplicated expressives which are the expressives of  
4 senses are found to manifest different qualities at different degrees. Some  
5 examples are presented below.  
6

7 1. hu thyom thyom lomam  
8 he expr. of being walking  
9 slow  
10 'He is walking slowly.'

11  
12 2. sukmut dɔr dɔr dyam  
13 wind expr. of blowing  
14 blowing in  
15 puff  
16 'The wind is blowing in puffs.'

17  
18 3. anjanre sitet nop nop yumba  
19 seat-needs how expr. of suppose to be  
20 softness  
21 'The seat is supposed to be soft.'

22  
23 *ii. Continuation*

24  
25 Lepcha fully reduplicated expressives which are essentially imitative of  
26 some natural sounds of actions often convey the sense of a continuation of a  
27 sound. Examples are cited below.

28 1. than than mat nu m<sup>^</sup> lom.  
29 imitative to do by neg. walk  
30 sounds made  
31 by the heels  
32 while walking  
33 'Donot walk by making sounds of heels (continuously).'

34  
35 2. k<sup>^</sup>ar fo phur phur mat nu lomn<sup>ɔ</sup>n.  
36 dove bird imitative sound to do by fly-abl.(past)  
37 of flapping wings  
38 'The bird has flown flapping the wings (continuously with the sound).'

39  
40

## REDUPLICATED EXPRESSIVES IN LEPCHA

- 1 3. so mun mun yubam.  
2 rain imitative coming down  
3 sound of  
4 drizzling rain  
5 ‘It is drizzling (continuously with the sound).’  
6

### 7 *iii. Repetition*

8  
9 Lepcha fully reduplicated expressives may convey the sense of repeated  
10 action. Some examples are given below.  
11

- 12 1. myɔnbu ariŋ bella bella yet  
13 unknown word expr. of to ask  
14 repetition  
15 ‘Ask the unknown words repeatedly.’  
16

- 17 2. thal thal thom ka mu nun.  
18 expr. of town to neg. go  
19 again and again  
20 ‘Do not go to the town repeatedly.’  
21

- 22 3. saarkʌp bruk bruk matnɔ tyukkam  
23 goat-child expr. of to do jumping  
24 repeated  
25 up and down  
26 ‘The goat-child is (repeatedly) jumping up and down.’  
27

## 28 **EXPRESSIVES (PARTIALLY REDUPLICATED)**

29  
30 Partially reduplicated expressives which involve a partial phonological  
31 alteration in the copied part affixed to the base element is prevalent in Lepcha.  
32 Alteration of a vowel or a consonant in the suffixed copied part have been  
33 observed in case of the partially reduplicated structures in Lepcha. Such  
34 partially reduplicated expressives are exemplified below.  
35

- 36 1. yuk dul dal mʌ mat  
37 work expr. of being neg. do  
38 jumble  
39 ‘Do not jumble up (confuse) while working.’

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

2. fΛη fiη taklyaη.  
 expr. of sky  
 cleanliness  
 ‘The sky is clear.’

3. bruk brak so yunon  
 expr. of falling rain falling  
 in drops  
 ‘The rain is falling in drops.’

4. tukfil nΛ yɔop nΛ tful tʃal hunbam.  
 ant by sting from expr. of happening  
 prickling  
 ‘Stinging of the ant is causing prickling sensation.’

5. hɔ yap yop matnɔ mΛ lom.  
 you expr.of to do neg. walk  
 staggering  
 ‘ You shouldnot stagger while walking.’

6. hɔ nɔη nΛ li hala vala hunnɔn.  
 you go after house expr.of to be-abl.(past)  
 emptiness  
 ‘After your departure the house became empty.’

**SEMANTIC INTERPRETATION**

The partially reduplicated expressives are found to be employed in order to convey different degrees of feeling and repeated actions. Thus it is the ‘Degree of Manifestation’ and ‘Repetition’ which covers the semantic interpretation of the partially reduplicated expressives in Lepcha.

**REDUPLICATION IN JUXTAPOSITION**

Additionally a different structure of reduplicated expressive has been noticed in which two fully reduplicated expressives are used together in juxtaposition. An instance can be cited below.





1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18

## REFERENCES

- Abbi ,A. 1992.*Reduplication in South Asian Languages --- An Areal, Typological and Historical Study*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.
- Dattamajumdar, S. 2001. *A Contrastive Study of the Reduplicated Structures in Asamiya, Bangla and Odia*. Kolkata: Subarnarekha.
- Dattamajumdar,S. 2008. ‘ Exploring the Ethnolinguistic Vitality:A Case Study in Dzongu Valley’ in <http://www.languageinindia.com>. vol.: 8 (e-Journal).
- Mainwaring,G.B.1876. *A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) language as it exists in the Dorjeeling and Sikkim Hills*. Calcutta.
- Mainwaring,G.B.1898. *Dictionary of the Lepcha Language*.Revised and completed by Albert Grunwedel.Berlin: Unger.
- Plaisier,H.2003.(a).*Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts in the Van manen Collection* . Leiden: Kern Institute.
- Plaisier,H. 2003(b). ‘Lepcha’. *The Sino-Tibetan Languages*.(Thurgood and Lapolla ed.)London & NewYork:Routledge.