

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DISCOURSE FUNCTION OF CLASSIFIERS IN KARBI (PLAINS)

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ABSTRACT

A noun refers to an abstract concept and a numeral classifier classifies the referent of the noun on certain semantic parameters (such as, shape, size, animacy, etc.) and then instantiates the noun to facilitate its numerical quantification. Thus, classification and instantiation seems to be the basic function of numeral classifiers at the phrasal level. But when numeral classifiers are studied in the larger syntactic environment of discourse it becomes clear that they serve also as anaphor to the noun that is just classified and individuated. Second, by categorizing a noun with a numeral classifier which otherwise does not go with the noun, the speakers manipulates meaning. Furthermore, as discourse is basically talking about instances or individuals only a classified and individuated noun can be made topically salient or continuous in discourse. Thus, by leaving a noun unclassified the speaker manipulates meaning in discourse. In the present paper we focus on the discourse function of classifiers in the Karbi (as is spoken in plains of Assam especially in the Kamrup district) which is a numeral classifier language.

KEYWORDS: Classifiers, Discourse Function, Individuation, Karbi (Plains)