

Jawun Research Centre

SEMINAR SERIES

Communication, Health, and Social
and Cultural Well-Being



Seminar 18: Honorific systems in Bhutanese languages: linguistic means for social etiquette

This multidisciplinary seminar series aims to create a forum centered in Jawun. It is for researchers at CQUniversity, across Queensland and all over the world, as a forum to share their research findings and establish potential synergies, leading to joint grant applications, and partnerships that endeavour to advance knowledge in various disciplines.

Location

Room **3.06**, CQUniversity Cairns Campus
Corner Abbott Street and Shields Street
Or via [Zoom](#) Passcode: **253748**

Date and Time

Wednesday 21 September 2022

3:00pm – 5:00pm Qld time
Light refreshments provided

RSVP

JRC Administration via email: jrc@cqu.edu.au
or phone: 07 4923 2672

Further seminars upcoming in 2022 – [watch this space!](#)



Speaker

Dr Pema Wangdi,
Research Fellow, JRC,
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Abstract

Bhutan is situated in the Eastern Himalayas, a hotspot of linguistic diversity. Hundreds of languages belonging to several language families including Tibeto-Burman (Trans-Himalayan), Indo-European, Austroasiatic, and Dravidian are spoken in the Greater Himalayan region. At least 19 different languages are spoken in Bhutan which has a population of less than a million, and 18 of them belong to the Bodish group within the Tibeto-Burman language family.

All Bodish languages of Bhutan share the same honorific systems despite each language having its own grammatical systems and markers. Honorific forms and honorific constructions are used for achieving social etiquette, that of showing deference, humility, and politeness. Nouns and verbs of certain semantic domains have at least two forms, an ordinary one and an honorific/polite one, for a single meaning. Verbs of the GIVING and SPEAKING semantic types go further in that they have three different forms depending on whether the addressee is older, younger, or of the same age or status as the speaker.

In this presentation I will discuss the origin and development (derivational processes) of the honorific forms in Bhutanese languages. In particular, I will illustrate the three-way contrast (which I refer to as 'upward honorific', 'downward honorific', and 'horizontal honorific') using the verb 'give' and look at the association between syntactic functions and semantic roles in honorific constructions in Bhutanese languages.