

## Idiomatic Usage of Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri Numerals

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### Abstract

Idiomatic phrases are traditionally seen as being distinct from ordinary and literal language because they are non-compositional in their conventional interpretations; they are not functions of the meanings of their individual parts. The aim of this paper is to study the numerals and its idiomatic usages in Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri language spoken in different parts of North Bengal, lower part of Assam, Rangpur of Bangladesh, Jhapa and Morong of Nepal and so on. It has been observed that numerals not only used in counting system, but these are also used in personal name formation and widely found in idioms, proverbs and riddles. The variety of Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri chosen for analysis is mainly spoken in the district of Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal.

### 1. Introduction

Idioms are group of words or chunk of words strung together as a single unit which has a specific meaning. The compositional meaning of the constituent parts of the idioms are different from the specified meaning. The meaning of an idiom can be expressed by other words or group of words but the specific meaning which a particular idiom expresses vividly and subjectively in a given context which cannot be matched with other words or group of words. Katamba (1993:291) describes "... idioms (e.g., eat humble pie i.e. 'submit to humiliation') are lexical entities and function very much like a single word although they contain several words and are comparable to syntactic phrases and clauses (e.g., [eat Swiss chocolate] vp). The constituent parts of the idioms neither can be changed nor can be replaced by other synonymous words. The change of any word or its parts will destroy the specific meaning of the idiom or the new combinations may turn into something else with different meaning as for example in Rajbanshi [kɔla kʰa] কলা খা 'banana eat' i.e. 'to get nothing' and [nau baji tʰaki kɔcu baji] নাই বাড়ি থাকি কচু বাড়ি (from gourd field to colocasia roots field) i.e. 'talk rubbish/ talk nonsense'. The constituent parts cannot be changed or replaced by other members; the word [kɔla] কলা 'banana' cannot be replaced by [am] আম 'mango' or the verb [kʰa] খা 'eat' cannot be replaced by [pa] পা 'get'.

Hockett (1958) discusses idiom formation and types of idioms in detail. According to him idiom formation is also an important matter in historical linguistics. In every language, new idioms are constantly being created, some destined to occur only once or twice and then to be forgotten, others due to survive for a long time. There are certain matters which are relevant both in understanding how a language works at a given time and also in connection with linguistic change. He observes that each language favors certain patterns in the creation of new idioms. He brings productivity to discuss idiom formation, "... the less productive a pattern is, the more likely it is that if a new form does get coined by the pattern it will have idiomatic value." The syntactic patterns tend to be most productive, inflectional patterns next and derivational patterns least. While discussing types of idioms. Hockett (1958) emphasizes on substitutes, proper names, abbreviations, English phrasal compounds, figures of speech and also slang.

Saussure (1916) believed that linguistic signs are arbitrary. There is an arbitrary relationship between signifier (sequence of sounds) and the signified (concept). He notices the distinction between motivated and unmotivated signs; partially motivated and fully motivated signs. The numbers (numerals) 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 are unmotivated signs. Nothing about its form (sequence of sounds) represent the number 1, 2, 3, 8, and 10 respectively. Fully motivated signs have compositional meanings because compositionality is defined in terms of its parts. Partial motivation and compositionality; unmotivated signs are non-compositional. Partially motivated or unmotivated signs are stored whole in the lexicon and they are memorized. According to Bloomfield, the lexicon is really an appendix of grammar, a list of basic irregularities (Bloomfield 1933: 274). Aronoff and Fudeman (2010) say that ‘... irregular items are stored whole in the lexicon—they are memorized.’

The traditional belief of idioms is that they are once metaphorical in their origins and lost their metaphorical sense over time. These exist in the minds of the language users as frozen items or dead metaphors. Idioms are brief and has clear meaning. The subjective meaning is expressed objectively with force and vividness. It does not hurt the sentiment of the interlocutors rather it is an accumulated knowledge of a community which is expressed by simple interpretation. The structure of idioms is limited and there is less flexibility either in terms of syntax or in terms of lexical items. Idioms are lexically frozen and Idiomatic phrases are traditionally seen as being distinct from ordinary literal language because they are non-compositional in their conventional interpretations are not functions of the meanings of their individual parts. It has been understood that the literal meaning of the idioms is rejected as inappropriate and then only the nonliteral idiomatic meaning is accessed through retrieval.

Wray and Perkins (2000) categorize idiomaticity and other immutable strings as formulaic sequence. The working definition of formulaic sequences adopted by them is the following:

“... a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar.”

Psycholinguist and cognitive linguists are in the opinion that idioms are analysable and also compositional to some extent. Meanings of idioms are not arbitrary. People in their everyday lives use and comprehend idioms they make use of metaphorical and metonymic knowledge which provides link between these phrases and their figurative expressions. Idioms were considered as periphery in the traditional grammatical treatment but in Construction Grammar these are treated as unit of grammatical analysis. The constructionsists contend that Children and second language learners presumably learn idioms in a rote manner or simply infer the meaning from the context (Gibbs 2002, 2007).

Dipak Roy (2012) also discusses Rajbanshi numerals in general citing different examples of various numeral and number used in riddles. The paper illustrates idiomatic usage of numerals It also tries to see how the numerals are incorporated in the natural language and its position in a phrase or sentence and its role as quantifying adjectives or in other related grammatical phenomena.

## 2. Research Methodology

Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri language<sup>1</sup> is an Indo-Aryan language mainly spoken in the districts of Coochbehar, Alipurduyar, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Dinajpur of North Bengal, Goalpara of Assam, Rangpur of Bangladesh, Jhapa and Morong of Nepal and Purniya of Bihar. The variety of Rajbanshi chosen for the analysis is mainly spoken in the district of Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The idioms and number idioms were collected from many native speakers of the language and also from different texts written in the Rajbanshi language. The author also conducted an experiment with some native speakers of the language (See section. 4)

## 3. Numerals and its idiomatic usage

Idioms are group of words or chunk of words strung together as a single unit which has a specific meaning. In the following examples numerical idioms have specific meaning; [kam pæʃɔʈʈi] ‘work sixty five’ means ‘something is over/done/finished’; [poa baro] ‘measure twelve’ means ‘profit or to get benefit’; [uniʃ biʃ] ‘nineteen twenty’ means ‘a little distance or difference’; [nœ çʰœ] ‘nine six’ means ‘destroy/obliterate’; [cairʃo biʃ] ‘four hundred twenty’ or [p<sup>h</sup>or ʈuanʈi] ‘four twenty’ means ‘a very bad ill-natured, rogue person.’

The compositional meaning of the constituent parts of the idioms are different from the specified meaning. The meaning of idiom can be expressed by other words or group of words but the specific meaning which a particular idiom expresses vividly and subjectively in a given context cannot be matched with other words or group of words.

According to Chatterjee (1926:784), the numerals present one of the distinct phonetic problems in NIA. Their forms show a remarkable uniformity all over the NIA area, a uniformity which is not in keeping with the several phonetic histories of NIA speeches. It is very difficult to decompose the compound numerals in its meaningful forms and parts. The compound numerals have to be taken into consideration in its entirety, as a whole unit. Mentioned below various compound numerals with its idiosyncrasy.

### 3.1. [ɛk] ‘one’

It is also found in [ɛkka] ‘used as one in children’s game’; [ɛkla/ɛklay/ɛkay] ‘alone’; [ɛkura] ‘only’; [ɛkna] ‘only one’; [ɛkoʈa] ‘unity’; [ɛkʈe/ɛkʈe] ‘together’; [ɛkanʈo] ‘name of a person, alone’; [ɛkaɔʈ] ‘eleven’; [ɛkaɔʈi] ‘name of a person, a day people keep fast/ the eleven day of the lunar fortnight’; [ɛkʃʰon] ‘one person’, [ɛkhaʃar] ‘one thousand’.<sup>3</sup> It is also found in the compound numerals after 10. These are [ɛgaro] ‘eleven’; [ɛkoʃ] ‘twenty-one’; [ɛkʈiriʃ] ‘thirty one’; [ɛkçollif] ‘forty one’; [ɛkanno] ‘fifty one’; [ɛkʃɔʈʈi] ‘sixty one’; [ɛkattur] ‘seventy one’, [ɛkaʃi] ‘eighty one’; [ɛkanɔbbɔi] ‘ninety one’. It is only in [ɛgaro], the form [ɛk] changes to [ɛg] or [ɛg] is the original form is the matter of historical reconstruction. And how [ɔʈ] becomes [raho]? It has to be noted that the basic monomorphemic number words in Indo-Aryan Languages are found up to ten (10) only and after 10 i.e. from eleven (11) only it is compound type. These compound formations seem to be compositional in some cases and in other instances semantically opaque and phonetically irregular. There has to be some historical reasons to account for this irregularity. However, this is not the scope

<sup>1</sup> The language Rajbanshi has many names. I have used ‘Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri’ in this article, though in the text for writing convenience I have used ‘Rajbanshi’.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion on Rajbanshi language, see Matthew Toulmin, Christopher P. Wilde, George W. Grierson and others.

<sup>3</sup>The <-k-> is lengthened or doubled in Bengali for emphasis, as in the case of the other consonants: e.g. <ekkekale, ekkebare-> all at once or all at the same time. Sk-785

of this paper. In Rajbanshi the compound type numerals after 10 formed by basic number [ɛk/g]+ 10 [ɔ̃/rahə] [ɛgaro] ‘11’.

### 3.2. [ɔ̃] ‘two’

[ɔ̃] ‘two’ has different forms [ɔ̃o], [ɔ̃ui], [ɔ̃i], [ba], [be], [bi] etc.<sup>4</sup> It is found in (ɔ̃oɔ̃ɔ̃pʰa ‘of two kinds’, [ɔ̃ocaɔ̃] ‘double ploughing’); [ɔ̃okka] ‘used as two in children’s game’; [ɔ̃uri] ‘two used in children’s game’; [ɔ̃ono] ‘both’ [ɔ̃o-mukʰa (ʃāp) ‘double standard person’ [ɔ̃okla] ‘two/both or husband and wife’; [ɔ̃uɔ̃i/ɔ̃iɔ̃i] ‘second’; [ɔ̃ukuna] ‘very little’ [ɔ̃una] ‘double’; [ɔ̃oyaɔ̃ɔ̃] ‘twelve’. Vowel harmony is noticeable as in the following examples [ɔ̃upura] ‘noon’, [ɔ̃ocaɔ̃], ‘ploughed twice’ [ɔ̃iɔ̃i] ‘second’.

The forms /ba, bə, be/ used for ɔ̃ ‘two’ in the compound numerals as for example; [baiɔ̃] ‘twenty-two’, [bɔ̃uɔ̃iɔ̃] ‘thirty-two’; [beyalliɔ̃] ‘forty-two’; [bahanno] ‘fifty-two’; [baɔ̃ɔ̃t̃i] ‘sixty two’ [bahatt̃ur] ‘seventy two’; [beraɔ̃i] ‘eighty two’; [beranəbbəi] ‘ninety two’.

### 3.3. [t̃i] ‘three’

In compound words we found the forms [t̃e, t̃i,] as for example [t̃ekka] ‘three used in children’s game’; [t̃iɔ̃i/ t̃iɔ̃i] ‘third’ [t̃ipurani] ‘Early times’; [t̃illi] ‘three used in children’s game’; [t̃epəʰi] ‘tea-pont; where three roads meet’; [t̃epaya] ‘tripod’. In the compound numerals [t̃ero] ‘thirteen’; [t̃eiɔ̃] ‘twenty-three’; [t̃eɔ̃iɔ̃] ‘thirty-three’; [t̃eɔ̃alliɔ̃] ‘forty-three’ [t̃irpanno] ‘fifty three’; [t̃eɔ̃t̃i] ‘sixty three’; [t̃ihatt̃ur] ‘seventy three’; [t̃iraɔ̃i] ‘eighty three’ [t̃itrənəbbəi] ‘ninety three’.

### 3.4. [cair] ‘four’

The forms [ca, cə, ca, cu, cə, cari, cura] etc are used as for example [cəuri] ‘four used in children’s game’; [cəuɔ̃h̃a] ‘fourth’; [cəumatʰa] ‘four roads meet’; [cair̃ta/cait̃ta] ‘few’; [cəub̃hiɔ̃i] ‘in every side’; [cəuyari] ‘cottage having four shades’, [dinacari] ‘four days/ few days’, [cəupəhor] ‘.....’ [cəiddo] ‘fourteen’; [cəbbiɔ̃] ‘twenty four’; [cəuɔ̃iɔ̃] ‘thirty four’; [cuyalliɔ̃/cəucəlliɔ̃], ‘forty four’; [cuyanno] ‘forty four’; [cəuɔ̃t̃i] ‘sixty four’; [cuyatt̃ur] ‘seventy four’; ‘forty four’; [cuyanno] ‘forty four’; [cəuɔ̃t̃i] ‘sixty four’; [cuyatt̃ur] ‘seventy four’; [curaɔ̃i] ‘eighty four’; [curənəbbəi] ‘ninety four’.

### 3.5. [pəc] ‘five’

It appears in different forms /pəc, pənc, pəc, pəy, pən/ etc as for example [pənco] ‘five’; [pəncom] ‘fifth’; [campa] ‘five used in children’s game’, [ponero/pondoro/pəncəɔ̃ɔ̃] ‘fifteen’; [pəciɔ̃] ‘twenty five’, [pəyɔ̃iɔ̃] ‘thirty five’; [pəycəlliɔ̃] ‘forty five’; [pəncaɔ̃] ‘fifty’; [pənanno/pəcpanno] ‘fifty five’ [pəyɔ̃t̃i] ‘sixty five’; [pəcatt̃ur] ‘seventy five’; [pəcaɔ̃i] ‘eighty five’; [pəcənəbbəi] ‘ninety five’. It has been observed that nasalization in the vowels in the word ‘pəc’ is also missing in Rajbanshi.

### 3.6. [cʰəy] ‘six’

The forms are [cʰəy, cʰa, cʰe, ʃo] as [ʃəɔ̃t̃ʰo] ‘sixth’; [ʃolo] ‘sixteen’; [cʰabbiɔ̃] ‘twenty six’; [cʰəuɔ̃t̃iɔ̃] ‘thirty six’; [cʰəycəlliɔ̃] ‘forty six’; [cʰappanno] ‘fifty six’; [ʃait̃/ʃat̃i] ‘sixty’; [ʃəyɔ̃t̃i] ‘sixty six’ [cʰeyatt̃ur] ‘seventy six’; [cʰeyəɔ̃i] ‘eighty six’; [cʰeyənəbbəi] ‘ninety six’.

### 3.7. [ʃat̃] ‘seven’

The forms are [ʃat̃, ʃəɔ̃t̃, ʃəpt̃o, ʃai, ʃ] as for example [ʃəpt̃om] ‘seventh’; [ʃəɔ̃oro] ‘seventeen’; [ʃat̃aiɔ̃] ‘twenty seven’; [ʃaiɔ̃iɔ̃] ‘thirty seven’; [ʃat̃əlliɔ̃] ‘forty seven’; [ʃat̃anno] ‘fifty seven’; [ʃat̃əɔ̃t̃i]

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<sup>4</sup>Chatterjee (1927:785). <-dui-> is a genuine Pracya and Magadhi form as preserved in Bengali. It is found in the other Magadhan speeches as well.

‘sixty seven’; [ʃɔʈʈur] ‘seventy’; [ʃaʈʈur] ‘seventy seven’; [ʃaʈʈaʃi] ‘eighty seven’; [ʃaʈʈanɔbbɔi] ‘ninety seven’

### 3.8. [aʈ] ‘eight’

The forms are [aʈ, aʈʰ, ɔʃʈo] as for example [aʈkalai] ‘mixture of different pulses’; [ɔʃʈo] ‘eight’; [ɔʃʈopohor] ‘twenty four hours/religious ceremony’; [aʈʰaro] ‘eighteen’; [aʈʰaiʃ] ‘twenty eight’; [aʈʈiriʃ] ‘thirty eight’; [aʈʈɔlliʃ] ‘forty eight’; [aʈʰanno] ‘fifty eight’; [aʈʰaʈʈur] ‘seventy eight’; [aʈʰaʃi] ‘eighty eight’; [aʈʰanɔbbɔi] ‘ninety eight’,

### 3.9. [nɔy/nɔɔ] ‘nine’

The forms are /nɔy, nɔɔ, nɔb, / [nɔbom] ‘ninth’<sup>5</sup>; [uniʃ] ‘nineteen’; [unoʈiriʃ] ‘twenty nine’; [unocɔlliʃ] ‘thirty nine’; [unopɔncəʃ] ‘forty nine’; [unofaiʃ] ‘fifty nine’; [unofɔʈʈur] ‘sixty nine’; [unofaʃi] ‘seventy nine’; [unonɔbbɔi] ‘eighty nine’; [neranɔbbɔi] ‘ninety nine’ \* [unofɔ] ‘ninety nine’, [nɔbom] ‘ninth’

### 3.10. [dʌʃ] ‘ten’

[dʌʃok] ‘ten, decade’; [dʌʃom] ‘tenth’, [dʌʃomik] ‘decimal’; [dʌʃoŋgɔʈʈi] ‘together, society, effort’, [dʌʃa] ‘rituals after ten days’; [raha]--[egaro] ‘eleven’ to [aʈʰaro] ‘eighteen’..<sup>6</sup>

### 3.11. Examples of idiomatic constructions

The numerals and its idiomatic construction is given in bold forms in the following examples;

1. (a) [mor jɔibon geil, **tin kalot** pɔrluŋ] মোর যৈবন গেইল, **তিন কালোত** পরলুং।  
I.GEN youth go.PST, three time.LOC fall.PERF  
‘My youth is gone, I have become aged/old’

The meaning of the idiomatic expression [tin kal] ‘three time’ will be considered as ‘aged/old’ in the above context.

- (b) [ɔi cɛŋʈiʈa kɔm nomay, umayo **ʃare tin haʈ**] ঐ চেংড়িটা কম নোমায়, উমায়ও **সাড়ে তিন হাত**

That girl.CLF less not, she one and half three hand

‘That girl is no less, she is very stubborn’

The meaning of the idiomatic expression [ʃare tin haʈ] ‘three and half hands’ is ‘stubborn/arrogant’.

- (c) [ma (micca/ɔlpo) **cairʈa** bʰat de kene ] মা, (মিচ্চা/ অল্প) **চাইরটা** ভাত দেক্যানো।

Mother (less) four-CLF rice give why

‘Mother, please give me some rice’. (little)

The meaning of [cairʈa] ‘four’ here is very little.

- (d) [ʃat bʰatari bɛʈicʰaɔya] **সাত ভাতারি** বেটিছাওয়া<sup>7</sup>

Seven husband woman

<sup>5</sup> The numeral <naya> does not occur in the decades, the nines being formed, as in OIA., by prefixing <una> ... less to the next ten : eg. <un-isa-> 19, <uno-sattar> 69 etc. An exception is <ni-r-a-na(bba)i> 99 with altered vowel and intrusive <-r->. Page 792. S K. Chatterjee.

<sup>6</sup> The final group <-aha-> and then <-a-> in Bengali, Oriya and Assamese: and this final <-a-> is also written and pronounced <-o-> in Bengali; but <-aha-> is retained in Bihari and in Hindi. Page 793. Sk chatterjee. ODBL

<sup>7</sup> [ʃaʈ bʰaʈari bɔu kɔre ʈu ʈu] সাত ভাতারী বউ করে টউ টউ.. It is a saying.

‘ill natured woman’

The idiomatic expression [ʃaṭ bʰaṭari] ‘one who seven husbands’ is considered to be ‘ill-natured woman’.

(e) [na ʃunuŋ tor ʃaṭe ʃaṭ koṭʰa] না শুনুং তোর সাড়ে সাত কথা

Not listen your half seven words

‘I don’t want to listen to your irrelevant talks’

The idiomatic expression [ʃaṭe ʃaṭ] ‘seven and half’ in this context refers to ‘nonsense and irrelevant talks’.

(f) [dɔʃ ʃʰɔnok dækao] দশ বনক ড্যাকাও

Ten-CLF.ACC call

‘Call the members of our community’

The expression [dɔʃ ʃʰɔn] ‘ten people’ refers to ‘members of a community’.

(g) [ʰoto tor oilla baro pɛcali koṭʰa] খোতো তোর ঐল্লা বারো পেচালী কথা

Keep your those twelve fold words

‘Keep aside all of yours nonsense words’

(h) [biyar pɔr uyar baroṭa baJil] ‘বিয়ার পর উয়ার বারোটা বাজিল’

Marriage-GEN after his twelve-CLS ring.PST.3.SING

‘After marriage he is totally devastated.’

### 3.2. Numerals and Proverbs

“Proverb /prɒvɜːrb/ is a short sentence that people often quote, which gives advice or tells you something about life.”<sup>8</sup> It can have a religious and philosophical meaning and provide inspiration and food for thought. They exist as little pieces of wisdom or thought in the minds of the speakers in a language. Proverbs are somewhat different from *idioms* (i.e. a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of individual words)<sup>9</sup> by the fact that they tend to convey a direct message or meaning, usually in the form of a phrase or sentence. The words used tend to have a deeper meaning and are not as cryptic or hidden as those used in idioms.

Idioms and Proverbs are also part of Formulaic language. According to Wray and Perkins (2001), formulaic language is ‘a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar’.

These items are conventionalized, frozen, fossilized and differ from creativity. Formulaicity or Formulaic language contrasts with productivity, the ability to use the structural system of language (syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology) in a combinatory way to create novel utterances and in an analytical way to understand them. In other words, we cannot manipulate with the structure of those items, once new words, morphemes, particles are incorporated in the formulaic structure, the idiomaticity, and the proverbial meaning of the items will be lost.

<sup>8</sup> Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary, Collins Cobuild. Harper Collins Publishers. 4thEd. 2003. Pg. 1150.

<sup>9</sup> Concise Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press. 12th edition. 2011. Pg. 708.



The knowledge generated in idioms and proverbs in general and in folk literature in particular is the result of experience of not only of one individual but of the community or the society at large. We may call it the wisdom of the people or the learning of the community. This is achieved when acceptance of a particular knowledge system, be it herbal medicine traditions, ethnic ecology, myth chanting, agrarian calendar reckoning through proverbs etc is gained by the community. Here are some proverbs made with numerals given below;

**2. (a) [tʃin maɪhʌ] ‘three heads’**

[tʃin maɪhʌr buɖɖhi nibi macʰer maɪhʌ nitto kʰabi] তিন মাথার বুদ্ধি নিবি মাছের মাথা নিত্য খাবি

‘Take suggestions from many people (brains) and eat head of fish every day.’

**(b) [dʌʃ d̪in] ‘ten days’ [ɛk d̪in] ‘one day’**

[corer dʌʃd̪in girir ɛkd̪in] চোরের দশ দিন গিরির এক দিন

‘Thieves have so many (ten) days, but the landlord has one day.’

**(c) [unif biʃ] ‘nineteen twenty’**

[ʈaka hoilek bɔɾo ciʃ kʰoɖar tʰaki unif biʃ] টাকা হইলেক বড় চিস খোদার থাকি উনিশ বিশ

‘Money is great thing, there is a little difference between God and Money’

**(d) [tirif ɔllif] ‘thirty forty’**

[tirife bidda ɔllife dʰɔn iyar ɔpake tʰɔn tʰɔn] তিরিশে বিদ্যা চল্লিশে ধন, ইয়ার ওপাকে ঠনঠন

‘Acquire knowledge before thirty years and wealth before forty after that nothing is left’

**(e) [haʃar] ‘thousand’**

[ʃakaler haɔya haʃar ʈakar daɔya]সাকালের হাওয়া হাজার টাকার দাওয়া

‘The morning breeze is compared to medicines of thousands/invaluable rupees’

**4. Rajbanshi Numerals and Its Idiomatic usage: A Case Study**

The speakers of the language were asked to fill in the blanks in a sheet of paper written in Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri. It contains sixteen fill in the blank types which has idioms and number idioms. The fill in the blank are presented with a context in which the speaker can get the clue of the idioms. If the speaker does not know the idiom, s/he may interpret the idiomatic meaning rather the literal meaning of the phrase. The exercise carried out with ten speakers male and female both aged twenty to thirty-five years. The experimental design is given below in Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri;

**Experiment:**

নামঃ \_\_\_\_\_ বয়সঃ \_\_\_\_\_

ঠিকানাঃ \_\_\_\_\_

(দয়া করি নিচের লাইনগুলো মনোযোগ দিয়া পইরবেন। তারপর শূন্যস্থানোত যে শব্দটা বইসপে সেইটার নিচোত দাগ দিবেনঅথবা শূন্যস্থান পূরন কইরবেন)।

(১) খাড্ডি বুড়িকোনার বয়স ম্যালা- এক শো-এর কাছাকাছি হইবে। একদিন বুড়িটার শরীর খারাপ হইচে। সেদিন বোলে বুড়িটা হাসপাতালোত ভর্তি হইচে। দুইদিন পর বুড়িটার অবস্থা নাজেহাল, মরং বাচং ভাব। তারপর বুড়িটা, \_\_\_\_\_।

(ক) পোটোল তুইলচে (খ) পোটল তুলির ধইরচে (গ) আলু তুইলচে (ঘ) জল তুইলচে

(২) রমেশ চালাক চ্যাংড়া। পুতিবার ক্লাসোত ফাস্টে হয়। উমায় নাইনে পড়ে। সবসময় রমেশ \_\_\_\_\_ (সাতপাঁচ, পাচ-দশ, পাচসাত, দুই-এক) ভাবিয়া কাজ করে।

(৩) তুই খিৰ কথা কইস। আর বেশি করি ভাকার ভাকার না করিস। না শুনুং তোর \_\_\_\_\_ (তের, চৌদ্দ, পাঁচ, বারো, ছয়) পেঁচালি কথা।

- (৪) ঐ বেটিছাওয়াটার স্বভাব ভাল নোমায়। কয়টা যে বিয়াও কইরচে তার ঠিক নাই। উমায় হইল \_\_\_\_\_ (আট, দশ, পনের, এগার, পাঁচ, সাত) ভাতারীবেটিছাওয়া।
- (৫) মানিকের ব্যাটাটা খুব খচ্চর। উয়ার ঠাকুরদা একটা পুতুল আনি দিচে। নগদে পুতুলটা \_\_\_\_\_ (নয়-ছয়, আট-দশ, একদুই, পাচ-সাত, নয়-পাচ) করি ফ্যালাইল।
- (৬) ওই যে কইচে আরো কওয়ার \_\_\_\_\_ (চাইচে, ধইরচে, পাইচে, পাইবে)।
- (৭) টাকা হইলেক বড় চিস খোদার থাকি উনিশ \_\_\_\_\_ (একশ, বিশ, আঠারো, উনতিরিশ)।
- (৮) তিরিশে বিদ্যা \_\_\_\_\_ (চল্লিশে, পঞ্চাশে, পয়তিরিশে) ধন ইয়ার ওপাকে ঠন ঠন।
- (৯) মুই ভুকাং \_\_\_\_\_ (পনের, বিশ, দশ, একশ, বারো) জনের বাড়া, মোর বাড়া যায় উত্তর পাড়া।
- (১০) সকাল বেলার হাওয়া \_\_\_\_\_ (একশ, দশ, পাচ, হাজার, কোটি) টাকার দাওয়া।
- (১১) উমুরা দুইজন কাং কম নোমায়, বাচির গেইলে কাকো \_\_\_\_\_ (আঠারো, একশ, উনিশ, সতেরো) কাকো বিশ হওয়া খায়।
- (১২) চোরের দশদিন গিরির \_\_\_\_\_ (একদিন, পাঁচদিন, ছয়দিন, দশদিন)।
- (১৩) কামলাটা সকাল থাকি এই দুপুরি রইদোদ হাল বোয়ার ধইরচে। কোনোয় খায় নাই। উয়ার আইজকা \_\_\_\_\_ (তেরো, দশটা, বারোটা, বিশটা) বাজীচে।
- (১৪) মা মোক মিচ্চা \_\_\_\_\_ (চাইরটা, পাঁচটা, দশটা, চাইর, তিনটা) ভাত দে।
- (১৫) উমায় আইজকা হামার বাড়িত নিমন্ত্রন খাওয়ার আসিল না। কতবার কওয়া খাইবে? উয়াক মুই কম সে কম \_\_\_\_\_ (পনের বার, দশবার, চৌদ্দবার, সাতবার) কচুং।
- (১৬) তুই কি ভুভুরা খাইস? মোকো \_\_\_\_\_ (চাইরকোনা, পাঁচকোনা, দুকুনা, একোনা) দে ক্যানে, মোরো খাওয়ার মন গেইচে।

#### ধইন্যবাদ।

The expected answer as far as the idioms and numerals are concerned are; 1. [poʈol tuilce] 2. [ʃatpac] 3. [baro] 4. [ʃat] 5. [nɔy-cʰoy] 6. [caice] 7. [biʃ] 8. [cɔllifɛ] 9. [dɔʃ] 10. [hajar] 11. [uniʃ] 12. [ekdin] 13. [baroʈa] 14. [cairʈa] 15. [cɔiddobar] 16. [dukuna].

The informants 1, 3, and 5 commit errors as far as the correct idioms are concerned No. 1, No. 3 and No. 15. They have taken the literal meaning of the idioms and interpreted No. 1 [poʈol tulir dʰɔrice], No. 3 [cɔiddo] and No.15 [ʃatbar]. The subject 1 also did not fill the blank in No. 8 and she informed that she did not know the answer. The rest of the answers were correct.

#### 5. Findings and Conclusions

The experimental research in psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics on idioms, proverbs and formulaic sequences have shown that they are not dead metaphors or fully lexically fixed expressions. In fact, they are analysable and decomposable lexically, syntactically and semantically. They are characterized as constructions and not treated as peripheral aspects of language. In the generative tradition constructions are neglected and finds place in the lexicon. Chomsky (1993) contends that “UG [Universal Grammar] provides a fixed system of principles and finite array of finitely valued parameters. The language particular rules reduce to choice of values for these parameters. The notion of grammatical construction is eliminated and with it, construction particular rules.” On the other hand, “In grammar the investigation of the idiomatic and are general are the same, the study of the periphery is the study of the core—and vice versa” (Kay and Fillmore 1999). The constructions are defined in Construction Grammar, (Michaelis and Lambrecht 1996: 216);

“...the grammar represents an inventory of form-meaning-function complexes, in which words are distinguished from grammatical constructions only with regard to their internal complexity. The inventory of constructions is not unstructured; it is more like a map than a shopping list. Elements in this inventory are related through inheritance hierarchies, containing more or less general patterns”.



In toto, it can be stated that numerals play an important role in the Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri language. They have normal and idiomatic usages, employed in children's game, riddle formation and personal names. Finally, the Rajbanshi numerals are Indo-Aryan origin (except for some borrowings) and there is no sign of Tibeto-Burman influence even in the idioms, proverbs and riddles we do not find any trace of Tibeto-Burman ancestry.<sup>10</sup>

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