Title: Linguistic Description and Comprehensive Documentation of Mewahang, Nepal

Abstract:
Mewahang, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language of the Kiranti subgroup (ISO 639-3:raf) and (ISO 639-3:emg) is spoken by approximately 900 people in the remote villages of the Sankhuwasabha district of eastern Nepal. Its linguistic analysis focusing on morpho-syntactic complexity and typology of language are significant targets of research. According to modern best practice in language documentation (c.f. Woodbury 2003; Austin 2007, 2010; Dwyer 2006; Lüpke 2010 and among others), linguistic description cannot be based simply on elicitation, which is known to seriously distort the data through influence of the contact language (Nepali in the case of Nepal). Therefore, high-quality grammatical description nowadays is always based on and illustrated with data from natural texts rather simply from elicitation.

The presentation is divided into two parts: the fieldwork report (documentation) and linguistic analysis. In this talk, I will particularly discuss some of the key characteristics of the Mewahang language such as detransitivization, compound verb constructions, and nominalization, and present some sample verb paradigms.

The complex morphological structure of Kiranti languages is their most fascinating feature and has received considerable attention in the literature on Tibeto-Burman Linguistics. Mewahang verbs, as Kiranti verbs in general, are characterized by a complex system of agreement where the verbs agree with both Agent (A) and Patient (P) arguments. Mewahang appears to be unusual among Kiranti languages in marking absolutive case consistently for all Patient (P), Theme (T), and Goal (G) arguments, whereas Central neighboring languages, such as Puma where dative marking is obligatory for animate P and G arguments (Sharma 2014). In this talk, I will present a fieldwork report of documentation and discuss ongoing linguistic research of the Mewahang language.