The Syllabic Construction of the Language Game/ Secret Language in Pnar

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The earlier literature has referred to the term *language games* with different names, such as *ludling, secret languages, disguised speech, play-language, argot* etc. So, these different names roughly refer to the same concept in different writings. At times, secret language is a cover term for some of these terms. Some writings specifically differentiate one term from the other. This paper argues that the concepts of *language games* and *secret language* are pragmatically different. The difference is in the function rather than the form; it is a language game when two competent speakers engage in conversation using different (twisting) codes, and it is a *secret language* when it is used to conceal the speech form from children or outsiders or for that matter from any of the in-groups who do not share/ learn the code system. So in this regard, the correctness of the term (*language game* or *secret language*) does not lie in the text that is spoken but in the contexts of the speech. This paper attempts to explain how syllables in Pnar[1] are switched to encode the speech in such a way that a closed alone follows it. Just like any natural language or any other game, language game is also no exception to the rule; it is rule-governed and abides in any respect with regular rules. Manipulation of words, phrase or sentences always needs to be done in systematic phonological, morphological or syntactic rules.

Key words: form/function, language game, Pnar, secret language, syllable structure

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[1] Pnar, also known as Jaintia (Spencer 1967) or earlier as Synteng (Grierson 1928), is a Khasian language spoken in the East and West Jaintia Hill District of Meghalaya and in a few pockets of Cachar Hills and North Cachar Hills districts of Assam. According to the People's Linguistic Survey of India (2014), the population of Pnars stands at 3,92,853.