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A STUDY OF CONSONANT VARIATIONS IN GUDI AND YAYA DIALECTS OF NGAMO LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates and describes the consonant variations in Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language within the framework of generative phonology. Unstructured interview and personal observation are used as method of data collection for the study. The paper reveals that the major consonant variations observed between Gudi and Yaya dialects are prenasalization, metathesis, consonant germination, consonant dissimilation, palatalization, depalatalization and delateralization. Issues on underline structures and phonological rules of the processes are also discussed as pieces of evidence of the variations between the two dialects.

Keywords: Study, Consonant Variations, Gudi Dialect, Yaya Dialect, Ngamo Language.

1.0 Introduction

Ngamo is a West Chadic language spoken in the area to the south and west of Potiskum, Yobe State (Newman, 1977). Ngamo ethnic group claimed to trace their origin from the East. It has been reported that Ngamo migrated from Yemen and settled around the western shore of Lake Chad. After some years, Ngamo people were forced out of the area and they moved southwards in the late 14th century due to the establishment of Saifuwa in Borno who had earlier abandoned their original home (Kanem) due to the increasing menace of the Bulala raiders from the east. Hence, the second empire was established on Borno plains. Thereby, other tribes around the area were to be either became Kanuri in order to remain peacefully in the empire or they became targets of various types of intimidation (Smith, 1971:156). It was due to these reasons, Ngamo moved to Kolom, later to Guduku, eventually to Gudi hill, Gamari hill, Gana hill, Lewe hill, Jombor hill, Kaxi hill, Dotto hill, Vara hill and many other hills, finally, slowed down to the places of their present destinations in some parts of Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe.

Although information on Chadic languages of Yobe State has increased in the last few years but our linguistic knowledge on Ngamo today comes almost entirely from works of (Schuh 1978, 1982, 1984, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2004, 2003a, 2003b, 2001 etc). Apart from these works yet

there is no other linguistic research published on the language except a few copies of comparative studies (Gashinge 1993) (Samuel 2007) (Zulyadaini 2008) (Gadaka 2009, 2015). Consonant Variation in this study means a phonological process of reciprocal succession of two consonant sounds which inter-changing among Gudi and Yaya dialects. Meaning that one consonant sound may appear in one particular position in a word in Gudi dialect whereas another consonant sound appear in the same position in a word in Yaya dialect.Therefore, principal aim of this research is to investigate and examine deletion, insertion and voicing as variants in Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language.[1]

2-0 Literature Review

Ngamo people themselves recognized two major dialects of their language, the Gudi dialect spoken to the eastern part and Yaya dialect spoken to the western part of Ngamo area. Gashinge, Janga-xole & Goge (2004: iii) in an introduction commented on the two dialects of Gudi Ngamo and Yaya Ngamo. Thus: "These varieties are different enough that they probably deserve separate dictionaries, but the dialects are similar enough that they have been combined into a single dictionary in the current edition." The present research observes the consonant variations between Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language not the lexical comparison between Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language.

Another work to mention is on Ngamo phonology by Schuh (2005) focusing on Gudi dialect alone. The data on which Schuh based his study were collected in 2004 supported by a grant from US National Science Foundation (Award #BC-011129). The paper lays out a description of degemination, compensatory lengthening and gemination in Gudi dialect of Ngamo language. He argues that Ngamo Language has a number of morphophonological configurations that bring constants together across morpheme boundaries. In some cases, these consonantal abutments would result in geminates, but Ngamo strongly disprefers geminate. Degemination has different effects depending on whether has different effects on the geminate sequence belongs to suffix or to a root. In the former case, degemination is accompanied by compensatory lengthening but in the later geminate becomes a singleton with no change. Hence, Ngamo does not allow phonetic geminates when a consonant fully assimilates to a dissimilar consonant. The present study is concerned with the consonant variations in Gudi and Yaya dialects not a phonological process of Gudi dialects alone. Therefore, Schuh (2005) cannot be treated here as variation between Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language.

3.0 Research Methodology

The researcher used text books, journals, dissertations, internet facilities and theses on Ngamo and other language studies on either phonology or dialectology to obtain secondary data. Also tape recorder and handset facilities were used to record interviews and discussions as primary source of data for the study. The researcher used unstructured interview and observation as methods of data collection for the research. Questions were presented to the respondents in an informal and relaxed atmosphere, where some valid and significant data about consonant variations were gathered. Such questions were presented to the respondents in a face-to-face encounter.

[1] We are grateful to Galka Mohammed Akuya and Edward Gali Yusuf for the numerous discussions, encouragement and advice at different stages during the write up of this paper. We are responsible for any short coming of the paper.

The interview was done in two different categories, depending on dialect of the respondents. Ten (10) respondents from Bawayo, Gamari, Gana, Gashinge and Kaxi provide data on Yaya dialect. Moreover, ten (10) other respondents from Xinkiri, Falau, Garkuwa, Gudi and Shengile provide data on Gudi dialect. The population of this study comprised of all Ngamo native speakers of Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe State of North-Eastern Nigeria. Being that it will not be possible to have the responses of the entire population, it has become necessary to select a sample population from the general population for their representation. Hence, quota sampling technique is used for the study. Therefore, the researchers use twenty (20) native speakers of Ngamo Language in the area of study as research respondents. However, the trips to above mentioned places and beyond have given the researcher the opportunity to conduct an interview with Ngamo natives on dialectal variations in their respective language area. The major aim was to collect required data and to verify the correctness of the data gathered for the research. The researcher gathered eight hundred and ninety one (891) Ngamo Gudi and Yaya wordlist.

The analysis for this research was done based on generative dialectology as a method in synchronic approach which involves the application of concepts and findings from generative phonology to the description and comparison of different dialects. It is based on the two-level approach to phonology which posited (a) underlying form and (b) phonological rule. This technique has the advantage of making it easier to handle two varieties at a time. One problem of generative phonology is how exactly underlying form should look like and how it should be arrived at. An early assumption was that it would be possible to take a base form from one dialect as basic and derive another dialect from it (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998:39-42). This method was adopted by Abubakar (1983) and Bulakarima (1991). Therefore, the researcher feels that it will be suitable to adopt this method as an approach to the present research.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

The major consonant variations in Ngamo dialects discussed here are prenasalization, metathesis, consonant gemination, consonant dissimilation, palatalization, depalatalization and delatarization. These consonant variations are observed between Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language in the present research as follows:

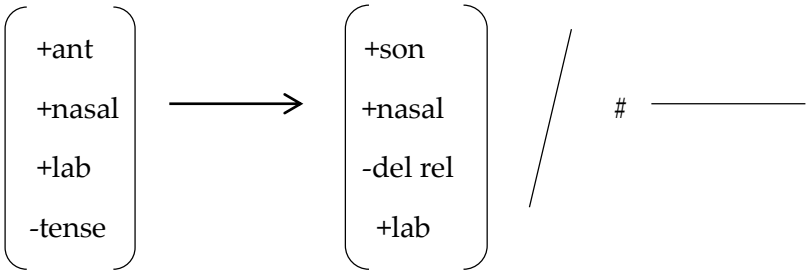
4.1 Prenasalization

Prenasalization is believed to be one of the phonological features of the Ngamo Language. It is more specific that Yaya dialect has bilabial prenasal /mb/ which is lost to its primary bilabial sound /m/ in Gudi dialect as exemplified in (1) below:

Example 1:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/màkʷùm/	[màkʷùm]	[mbòkʷùm]	Blind
b.	/màano/	[màano]	[mbàano]	Last year
c.	/màpto/	[màpto]	[mbaptò]	Mosquito
d.	/mìlàseʔè/	[mìlàseʔè]	[mbìlàsê]	Present year
e.	/mùlù/	[mùlù]	[mbùlu]	Shoulder
f.	/mùrè/	[mùrè]	[mbùrè]	Poverty

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that the bilabial nasal sound /m/ in Gudi dialect becomes bilabial prenasal sound /mb/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment of word initial position. Apart from the above rule, partial vowel assimilation of rounded sound is observed whereas mid low /a/ → mid back /o/ in the presence of high back vowel /u/ as in example (1a)[màk^{w}ùm] → [mbòk^{w}ùm] 'blind'. Also an insertion of glottal plosive /ʔ/ in between the mid front vowel /e/ in Gudi dialect is observed in example (1d)[mìlàseʔè] → [mbìlàsê] 'present year'.

4.2 Metathesis

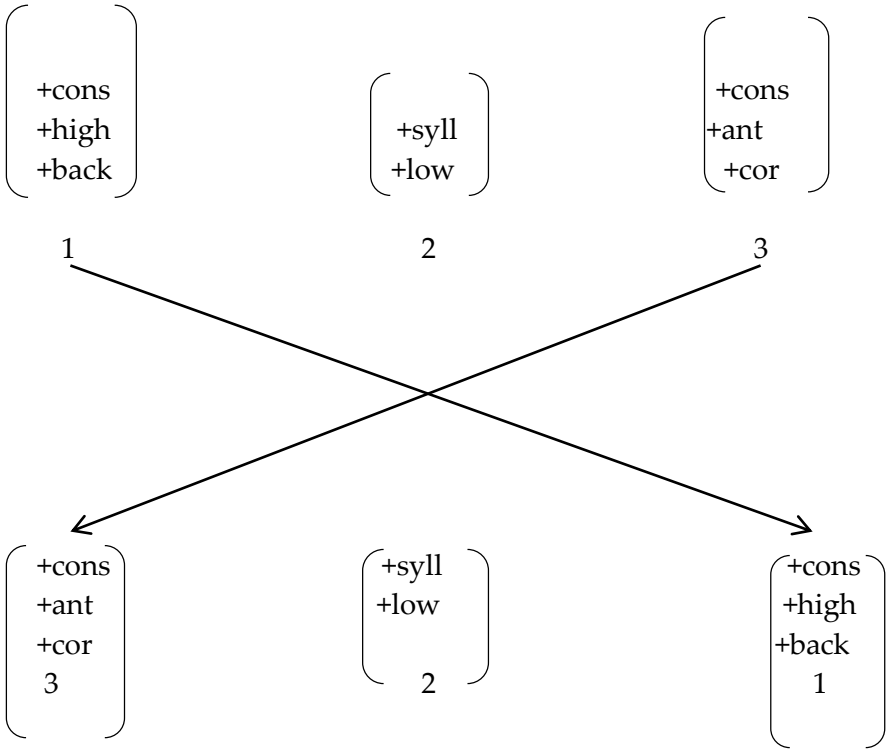
One of the phonological processes used to determine dialect variation between Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language is metathesis. There is a transposition of sound from one place to another in the dialects as exemplified in example (2) below:

Example 2:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/ʔàjàŋgà/	[ʔàjaŋgà]	[ʔàŋgʲìjà]	Baobab seed
b.	/gàdavšò/	[gàdavšò]	[dàgavšò]	Snake
c.	/rùvk^{w}ô/	[rùvk^{w}ô]	[rùkvô]	Contaminate
d.	/jàrvô/	[jàrvô]	[jàbrô]	Scatter
e.	/k^{w}ùkraasò/	[k^{w}ùkraasò]	[k^{w}ùrk^{w}ùse]	Scrambling

This process requires a different format from the majority of phonological rules. The reason behind this is that a metathesis rule affects more than a single segment of a word. Hence, the form of a transformational rule is needed as for the expression of example (2b) above.It is also important to note the voicing of voiceless bilabial implosive /v/ to become voiced bilabial plosive /b/ in the presence of voiced alveolar trill /r/ in example (2d)

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule asserts the transposition of velar plosive /g/ and alveolar plosive /d/ in Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language in the environment of first and second consonants. Based on the above, one can identify the transposition of velar plosive /g/ to a palatal approximant /j/ in (2a); bilabial implosive /v/ to velar plosive /k/ in (2b); alveolar trill /r/ to bilabial implosive /v/ in (2c); and velar plosive /k/ to alveolar trill /r/ (2d).

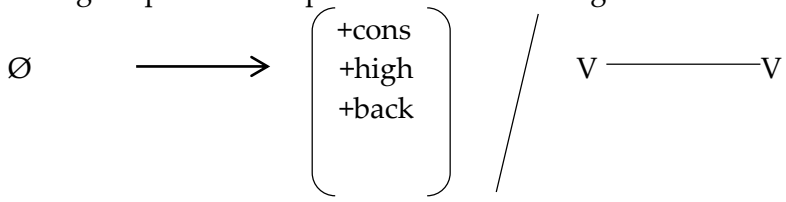
4.3 Consonant Gemination

Some words are pronounced with cluster of consonant words medially in Yaya dialect and with a single consonant in Gudi dialect of Ngamo language. Hence, the consonant following the lax vowel become geminated in Yaya dialect as in example (3) below:

Example 3:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/mòk^{w}ò/	[mòk^{w}ò]	[mòkk^{w}ò]	Carry
b.	/sàk^{w}ô/	[sàk^{w}ô]	[sakk^{w}ò]	Shave
c.	/dùk^{w}ô/	[dùk^{w}ô]	[dukk^{w}ò]	Kill
d.	/rakì/	[rakì]	[rakkì]	Almost

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that velar plosive /k/ found single in Gudi dialect becomes double of its kind in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment in between vowels.

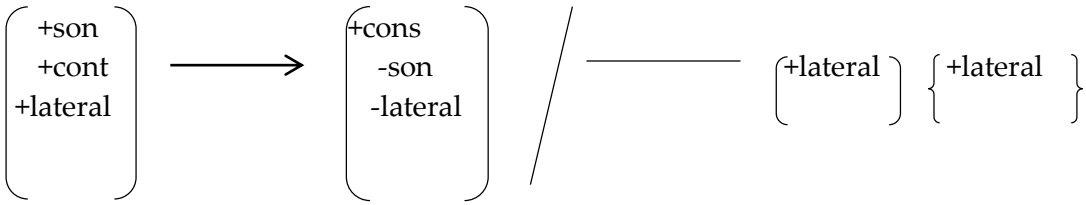
4.4 Consonant Dissimilation

This is a sound change in which cause two neighboring alveolar lateral sound /l/ in Gudi dialect to become less alike with respect to their manner of articulation. This process is common in Gudi dialect when compared to Yaya dialect of Ngamo language as illustrated in example (4) below:

Example 4:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/gìllâ/	[gìllâ]	[gìldô]	Shout
b.	/g^{w}òllà/	[g^{w}òllà]	[g^{w}òdlà]	Sickness
c.	/wàllâ/	[wàllâ]	[wàldâ]	Surpass

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that an alveolar lateral sound /l/ in Gudi dialect becomes alveolar plosive sound /d/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment before or after lateral sound.

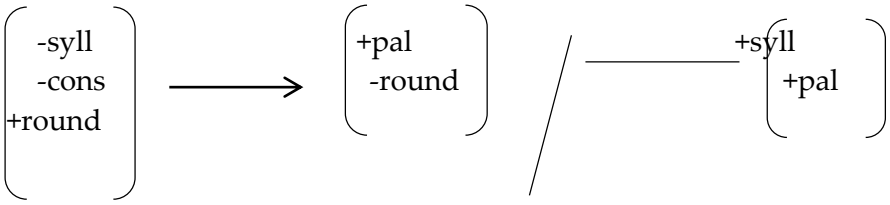
4.5.1Palatalization I

This is a common process that results from an interaction between front vowels and a neighboring alveolar consonant resulting in a fricative or affricate palatal consonant as in example (5) below:

Example 5:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/ʔàawè/	[ʔàawè]	[ʔàajè]	Cat
b.	/ǰàdàwì/	[ǰàdàwì]	[ǰàdàji]	Unmarried old woman
c.	/wìilô/	[wìilô]	[jìilô]	Accept

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that a labio-velar approximant /w/ in Gudi dialect becomes palatal approximant /j/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment before front vowel.

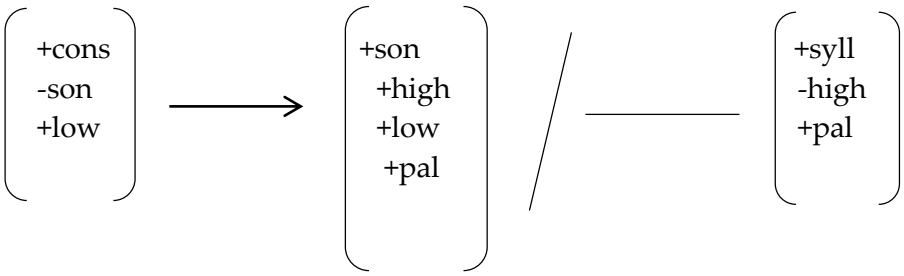
4.5.2 Palatalization II

This process is found to bring out a variation in Gudi dialect when compared to Yaya dialect of Ngamo language. The process involves the addition of palatal approximant /j/ in Yaya dialect to a (non-palatal) glottal plosive /ʔ/ in Gudi dialect. This can be seen in example (6) below:

Example 6:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/ʔjèlà/	[ʔèlà]	[ʔjèlà]	Millet
b.	/ʔjark^{w}ò/	[ʔèrk^{w}ô]	[ʔjerk^{w}ò]	Stop/stand
c.	/ʔèllu/	[ʔèllu]	[ʔjèllu]	Draw water

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that glottal plosive /ʔ/ in Gudi dialect becomes palatalized glottal /ʔj/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment before mid-front vowel.

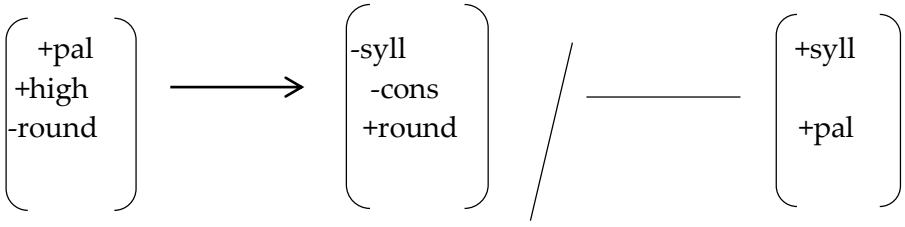
4.6 Depalatalization

This is a process whereby palatal approximant /j/ in Gudi dialect becomes (non-palatal) labio-velar approximant /w/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language as illustrated in example (7) below:

Example 7:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/jèxi/	[jèxi]	[wòxi]	Breast
b.	/jèsi/	[jèsi]	[wòsi]	Fire
c.	/jèelè/	[jèelè]	[wèelè]	White bush rat

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that palatal approximant sound /j/ in Gudi dialect becomes labio-velar approximant sound /w/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment before front vowel.

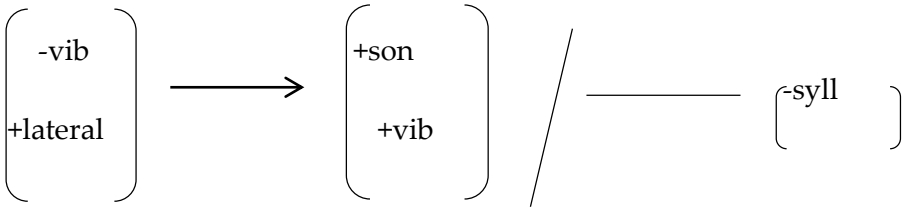
2.10 Delateralization

This is a process by which alveolar lateral /l/ in Gudi dialect becomes (non-lateral) alveolar trill /r/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language as illustrated in example (8) below:

Example 8:

	Base Form	**Gudi**	**Yaya**	**Gloss**
a.	/lèrèi/	[lèrèi]	[rèrèi]	Lie
b.	/lìŋgì-lìŋgì/	[lìŋgʲì-lìŋgʲì]	[rìŋgʲì-rìŋgʲì]	Long skinny legs
c.	/hàra-gùlà/	[hàra-g^{w}ùlà]	[ʔarà-g^{w}ùram]	Caltrop
d.	/làalintàr/	[làalintàr]	[ràarintà]	Purse made of cloth worn around waist

This phonological process is captured in the following rule:



The above rule states that the alveolar lateral /l/ in Gudi dialect becomes alveolar trill /r/ in Yaya dialect of Ngamo language in the environment before non-syllabic segment.

5.0 Discussion

Prenasalization is a process by which bilabial plosive sound /m/ in Gudi dialect becomes bilabial prenasal sound /mb/ in Yaya dialect in some instances as in [màkùm] →[mbòkùm] 'blind'. Metathesis is a phonological process used to determine Gudi and Yaya dialectal variation where by a transposition of sounds from one place to another in a word occurs as in [rùvkô]→[rùkvô] 'contaminate'. Consonant gemination is a process where by a word pronounced with consonant cluster medically in Yaya dialect pronounced with a single consonant in Gudi dialect as in [mòk^{w}ò]→ [mòkk^{w}ò] 'carry'. Consonant dissimilation is another process by which alveolar lateral sound /l/ in Gudi dialect becomes less alike to alveolar plosive sound /d/ in Yaya dialect word medially as in [gìllâ] → [gìldô] 'shoot'.

Palatalization is a process of adding a palatal articulation i.e. palatal approximant sound /j/ in Yaya dialect from non-palatal consonant i.e. labio-velar approximant sound /w/ in Gudi

dialect in the presence of front vowel as in [ʔàawè] → [ʔàajè]'cat'.In the other hand, depalatalization is a process by which a palatal approximant sound /j/ before a front vowel in Gudi dialect becomes non-palatal i.e. labio-velar approximant sound /w/ in the environment before back vowel in Yaya dialect as in [jèxi] → [wòxi] 'breast'. Delateralization is another process by which alveolar lateral sound /l/ in Gudi dialect becomes (non-lateral) i.e. alveolar trill sound /r/ in Yaya dialect as in [lìŋgì-lìŋgì →[rìŋgì-rìŋgì] 'long skinny legs'.Another form of palatalization process is by adding a palatal articulation of /j/ in Yaya dialect to glottal plosive in Gudi dialect as in [ʔèlà] → [ʔjèlà] 'millet' in the presence of mid front vowel.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it has concluded that mutual intelligibility is in the level of understanding one another between the speakers of Gudi and Yaya which justifies grouping them as two dialects of one language despite the phonetic, phonological, morphological and lexical variations that exists between the two groups. It has observed that a dialectal variation between Gudi and Yaya dialects was due to geographical factor. The distances of one group from another for hundreds of years on the hills seized inter relationship in terms of marriages, associations, migrations and interactions.The major consonant variations in Ngamo dialects discussed here are prenasalization, metathesis, consonant gemination, consonant dissimilation, palatalization, depalatalization and delatarization. This should not be seen as laziness on the part of speakers to express themselves but rather an economy of the word usage in the desire to be less verbose in the side of both Gudi and Yaya dialect.In conclusion, this study compares and analyses the Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language with the aim of identifying consonant variations. Hence, it is hoped that this work will stimulate researchers on the various linguistic fields of Ngamo language by scholars of Chadic languages in feature.

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