

CONSONANTAL LABIALIZATION AND CONSONANT CLUSTERS IN GĀ

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LABIALIZATION:

In the first part of this paper, I shall attempt to show that previous analyses of the Gā phonemic system have not fully captured some obvious generalizations. I shall limit my discussion specifically to the labialized consonants which have been treated as systematic by other investigators. For example Kropp¹ has observed that Gā has the following labialized consonants: *tʃw*, *dzw*, *ʃw*, *jw*, *kw*, *gw*, *hw*, *ɲw*. Berry and Kotei² have also given an identical inventory. It is my contention that the labialized consonants in Gā are predictable.

If one follows the 'taxonomic' method of determining which sounds in a language are phonemes, the 'minimal pair' test establishes that most of the labialized consonants in Gā are phonemes just as their non-labialized counterparts are also phonemes. For example:

Ex. 1

<i>dzw</i>	<i>dzwà</i>	broke	<i>dz</i>	<i>dzà</i>	distributed
<i>tʃw</i>	<i>tʃwà</i>	knocked	<i>tʃ</i>	<i>tʃà</i>	dug
<i>ʃw</i>	<i>ʃwá</i>	scatter!	<i>ʃ</i>	<i>ʃá</i>	fart!
<i>kw</i>	<i>kwá</i>	forsake!	<i>k</i>	<i>ká</i>	nail!
<i>gw</i>	<i>Gwàɲnyò</i>	a Guan	<i>g</i>	<i>Gànyò</i>	a Gā
<i>hw</i>	<i>hwàɲ</i>	to sprain	<i>h</i>	<i>há</i>	give!
<i>ɲw</i>	<i>ɲwèì</i>	heaven	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲáì</i>	coal

High tone is marked [ˀ], low tone [ˁ] and mid tone is marked [ˁ̄] in this paper. In the first four examples it is obvious that the labialized consonants contrast with their non-labialized counterparts. If we restrict our analysis to this type of corpus and this type of reasoning, we add a large number of phonological units to our inventory. On the other hand if in our analysis we aim at making an inventory of all segments which would distinguish one formative from another, then we must consider other contrasts as well. We may for example ask whether there is a contrast between non-labialized consonants followed by /u/ and their labialized counterparts and also if the appropriate labialized consonant followed by /u/ contrasts with either. For example:

Ex. 2

A		B		C	
<i>/dzwà/</i>	broke	<i>/dzùà/</i>	broke	<i>/dzwùà/</i>	broke
<i>/tʃwà/</i>	knocked	<i>/tʃùà/</i>	knocked	<i>/tʃwùà/</i>	knocked
<i>/ʃwá/</i>	scatter	<i>/ʃùá/</i>	scatter	<i>/ʃwùá/</i>	scatter
<i>/kwá/</i>	forsake	<i>/kùá/</i>	forsake	<i>/kwùá/</i>	forsake
<i>/Gwàɲnyò</i>	a Guan	<i>/Gùàɲnyò/</i>	a Guan	<i>/Gwùàɲnyò/</i>	a Guan
<i>/hwàɲ/</i>	to sprain	<i>/hùàɲ/</i>	to sprain	<i>/hwùàɲ/</i>	to sprain
<i>/ɲwèì/</i>	heaven	<i>/ɲùèì/</i>	heaven	<i>/ɲwùèì/</i>	heaven

¹ Kropp, M. E. (January 1968). 'An Analysis of the Consonant System of Gā', *JOURNAL OF WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES*, vol. V, no. 1.

² Berry, Jack, and Kotei, Nii Amon (1969). *AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN GĀ*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

