

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF LEXICAL TERMS IN SANGH-GAMI AND  
SANGH-GHSHI DIALECTS OF (ZAAR) SAYAWA COMMUNITIES OF  
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## **Abstract**

Language is a living entity that is always in constant change. It develops changes, modernizes and vanishes. In every language, there are items that die out and others develop by using different strategies or devices of word formation, such as derivation, to express the modern needs of a particular language community (Handhal 1998). The purpose of this research is to examine the lexical variations in Sang-ghshi and Sang-gami dialects of the Zaar (Sayawa) language with a view of analysing the areas of convergences and divergences between the two dialects. The study analyses those differences which are prominent in the dialects and also examines if these differences hinder communication among the speakers of these dialects. Therefore, the study adopts an eclectic approach by combining the generative dialectology approach to the study of dialects and a contrastive analysis to the study of lexical items. One hundred questionnaires were administered to native speakers of the two dialects in which one hundred lexical items were written and two columns were provided, one for each dialect. Other methods such as interview and observations were employed in data collection. The result from the study reveals some lexical and phonological differences found in the dialects. It also reveals some reasons for the variations such geographical features like rivers, mountains, migration and general distance. The findings further reveal that Sangh-ghshi dialect is frequently used in organised gathering either religious or political, as a result of their population and it is more acceptable by the people and other neighbouring languages and is more simplified and easy to learn by non Zaar speakers than Sangh-gami dialect. Most traditional songs and Radio programmes or presentations are conveniently presented with Sangh-ghshi dialect.

**Key Words:** Sociolinguistics, Lexical, Dialects, Sangh-ghshi and Sangh-gami.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Study

Every language that is spoken over significant area is spoken in somewhat different forms in different places; these are its regional dialects. Besides, even in a single community, a language may be spoken written differently by members of different social groups. This is to say that, no human language is fixed, uniform, or unvarying; all languages show internal variation. The actual usage varies from group to group and from speaker to speaker, in terms of pronunciation, choice of words, meanings or semantics, and syntactic constructions. The differences found within a language can be mutually intelligible among the speakers of the language. If they are mutually intelligible, the speakers consider themselves speaking different dialects of the same language but when the differences are not mutually intelligible among the speakers, it is obvious that they are speaking different languages.

A language, whether spoken or written, plays the role of communicating of ideas, knowledge, experiences and thoughts of individuals. Scholars such as Dittmar (1976:9) define language as "that variety of a speech community that is legitimized and institutionalised as a superior regional method of communication as a result of socio political process." Similarly, Gumpers (1962) is of the view that Language is a body of verbal signs abstracted from the totality of communicative behaviour on the basis of certain structural or genetic consideration.

A dialect is a distinct form of a language which is either regional or social in origin and differentiated from other forms of the language by specific linguistic features. Variations which are found in a language and are peculiar to particular speech form of people living in a speech community are known as dialects. In this research, efforts are made to examine the speech forms of a particular language with regards to Zaar (Sayawa) which is spoken among the Zaar (Sayawa) people. The research is based on the fact that certain variations are found in the speech forms of the language because; the speakers live

in different environments. They also interact and socialise in different contexts for different purposes. The work sets out to study the Sangh-ghshi and Sangh-gami speech forms of Zaar (Sayawa) language spoken in Southern part of Bauchi State, Nigeria.

## **Zaar (Sayawa) People and Language**

The Sangh (Sayawa) ethnic group inhabits Bogoro Local Government Area and a major part of Lere District of Tafawa Balewa Local Government in Bauchi State of Nigeria. In 1990 Bernard Caron in his book: the /Za:r/ Dictionary and Grammar,

in the north of Nigeria on the trail of Zaar, a language that was numerically the most important of the group of Chadic languages about which previously little was known. Though this group of people are said to have migrated from Lake Chad area, they have lived in their present location for centuries. It is speculated that their migration from the East to the present location was in search of security and farmland. This is because they were and are still known for their farming and hunting activities.

The people call themselves Sangh. However, the Hausas call them Sayawa. The name Sangh is said to have come from the word “saghad” meaning “wise”. It is the name Sangh that was corrupted by the Hausas when they came in contact with them. It was first corrupted to “Saghawa” which later metamorphosed to “Sayawa”. And since then, it has become the official name by which the Sangh people are called and identified as a tribe.

Geographically, those Sangh (Sayawa) from the western part of Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro local Government areas are referred to as Sangh-Gami whereas those from the eastern part of Bogoro are referred to as Sangh-Ghshi. Although, some sections of the Sayawa people refer to Zaar’ as the tribe’s name as against Sangh, their claim is based on the assertion that the Sayawa people are known for hospitality, kindness and goodwill.

The claim of hospitality, good gesture and kindness is not historical. The terms are relative and not absolute, therefore, cannot be said to be an exclusive distinguishing characteristics of a particular group of people or tribes. ‘Zaar’ in Sangh (Sayawa) language refers to ‘human beings’ or ‘universal human race’. It therefore means that Ngas, Jhar, Hausa, Fulani, Pyem and so on are also ‘Zaar’ i.e. human beings. If the original name of the Sangh (Sayawa) people were ‘Zaar’, the Hausas were likely to have referred to them as ‘Zarawa’.

This is because the word Zaar is not difficult to pronounce or write.

The Zaar (Sayawa) people are an ethno linguistic group that primarily inhabits southern part of Bauchi State: kindred groups can be found in Kaduna, Adamawa and Taraba States respectively. The Zaar (Sayawa) speakers are the second largest ethnic group in Bauchi State and the native speakers occupy two local government Areas in southern part. The population of Zaar (Sayaw) people (National Population Census (2006)) is 842,357. They occupy area of land which lies to the extreme south of Bauchi and West towards lower plateau. This study focuses at variations in Nigerian languages with respect to Zaar (Sayawa), which is mainly spoken in the North East of Nigeria and in the Southern part of Bauchi State specifically. Other States where the language is spoken in pockets are; Kubau and Lere local governments in Kaduna State, Taraba and Adamawa States.

The two dialects under study are the major dialects of (Zaar- Sayawa) language. One is Sangh-ghshi and the other is Sangh-gami dialects. These dialects are spoken widely other than other dialects such as Sara, Num, Zakshi, Gambar, Tungri, Sigdi and Kal dialects respectively; hence the study centred on the two above because of their popularity even among none Zaar (Sayawa) speakers within the neighbouring ethnic groups. Furthermore, Sangh-ghshi has some pockets of written materials in the dialect and has more spoken population followed by Sangh-gami dialect.

A dialect is “any distinct variety of language especially one spoken in a specific part of a country or other geographical area” (Matthews 2007). Furthermore, he adds that the criterion for distinguishing a dialect from a language is to take into consideration of mutual intelligibility of both dialects. Halliday (1964), cited in Farinde and Ojo (2005) defines dialect as a variety of languages distinguished according to users; Gregory (1978) further amplified this definition as He opines that dialectal varieties are linguistic reflections of reasonable permanent characteristics of the user of the language in situation. According to Holmes (2008), “Dialects are simply linguistic varieties which are distinguishable by their vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. In common usage, a dialect is a sub – standard, low status often rustic form of language generally associated with peasantry or other groups lacking in prestige. In its traditional sense, a dialect is a term which is often applied to all forms of languages, particularly those spoken in more isolated parts of the globe, which have no written form. Some also regard dialect as a kind of erroneous deviation from

the norms, an aberration of a correct or standard form of language. Modern dialectologies however are of the opinion that contrary to the above stated definitions of dialectology, all speakers of language speak at least one dialect of the same language. For instance Standard English has many dialects which are spoken in different parts of the world.

According to Trudgil (2007):

It is often useful to regard dialects as dialects of a language; dialect can be regarded as subdivision of a particular language. In this way, we may talk of the Parisian dialect of French, dialect the Lancashire dialect of English, the Bavarian dialect of German and so on.

Of course, the above assertion might be correct with major languages of the world, but certainly not with some minor languages. Since dialects are developed as a result of distance and geographical barriers that forced up gap between the settlements of such speech communities. On the other hand, Petyt (1980) opines that "a dialect is an abstraction based on some set of features chosen in a way which is essentially arbitrary. Petyt (ibid) further explains that when a speech community simply decided that they are going to take note of some features and ignore others, when calling something (object) a 'different form of a language emerge' the challenge with the above definition of dialect as different form of the same language is that of deciding how different languages rather than dialects". When people are dealing with related languages (such as English and German) they are unrelated while (English and Malay) are said to be reasonably related and can maintain that the distinction between dialect and language is a quantitative matter. Language enables people to talk with others at the same time, it enables them to talk about things that are abstract and out of reach. It provides us with not only just a mode of interaction, but also with capacity of representation. According to Green and Petty (1978:22)

Through language; Man obtained social responses from individuals and groups through language he acquires understanding, attitudes and ideals; with language he thinks and solves problems; from language he finds inspiration and secures emotional release. Language makes possible the operation of business and

government; it holds the key to achievement, security and international understanding.

## **Sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that is used in the study of intricate relationship between language and society. It can be seen as representing an attempt to relate language to the society. Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language use and the structure of society. It takes into account such factors as the social backgrounds of both the speaker and the addressee (i.e. their age, sex, social class, ethnic background, degree of integration into their neighbourhood, etc.), the relationship between speaker and addressee (good friends, employer–employee, teacher–pupil, grandmother–grandchild, etc.) and the context and manner of the interaction (in bed, in the supermarket, in a TV studio, in church, loudly, whispering, over the phone, by fax, etc.), maintaining that they are crucial to an understanding of both the structure and function of the language used in a situation. Because of the emphasis placed on language use, a Sociolinguistic analysis of language is typically based on (sound or video) recordings of everyday interactions (e.g. dinner-time conversations with friends, doctor–patient consultations, TV discussion programmes, etc.). From the forgoing, Ferguson's idea of language and the society is captured in the study area, and need to be deliberately discussed for the fact that the study focuses on language use in Zair (Sayawa) community where the language is used in everyday life by its speakers. By and large the language grows by developing more vocabulary into the language. Besides that, Akindele and Adegbite (1999) also see Sociolinguistics as a discipline which does not only provide an answer to the question of what accounts for differential changes in the social organization of language use and behaviour towards language, but also describes monolingual or multilingual speech community alternation between one variety and another among individuals who share a repertoire of varieties.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and social culture. That is, it seeks to unravel how age, sex, social status or background correlate with language, it answers questions such as: Do men speak differently from women? Is there a relationship between what one says and one's sex? Do the educated speak differently from the uneducated? These and other questions are dealt with in Sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics looks at how a society influences language. This is confirmed by Osisanwo (2012) who opines that Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. It is the study of patterns and variation in language within a society or community. Mainly, Sociolinguistics is interested in the study of language in its social and cultural context. The study of linguistics has opened up new grounds for indebt research in the field of language, which is the basis for this study.

Sociolinguistics is also concerned with the sociology of language, which is defined as the study of who speaks what language and to whom and where and for what purpose. The sociology of language looks at how language influences society. It looks at society as being broader than language and therefore as providing the context in which all language behavior must be viewed. Akindele and Adegbite (1999) examine such issues as language planning and standardization, multilingualism and national development etc. Thus from the forgoing, Linguist have unanimously agreed on one point: no one language is intrinsically better than any other language. Focusing only on structural features of a language leads the linguists to have a technical and neutral definition of the term dialect. Haugen (1997), in his paramount consideration is the genetic or historic relationship, in this sense; the word can be used to describe all speech forms originating from a common language ancestor. Thus the present study is interested in establishing lexical variation of a group of people who have dialects that are mutually intelligible among the speakers. These speakers share the same history and culture where members of the community do not live in a class (division) society. De Camp (1971) laid intrest on linguistic variation and not sociological variation.

Thus, Sociolinguistics is divided into two branches micro- sociolinguistics: - This aspect handles language components, paralinguistic speech styles, Linguistic Variation, Stylistics, Discourse Analysis etc. while macro Sociolinguistics talks about language planning and language standardization, language attitude, language distribution etc. hence this study is micro-sociolinguistics even as the major concern of this study is on the Sangh (Sayawa) language variations on Sangh-gami and Sangh-ghshi dialects. Whereas Syal and Jindal (2013) posit that “Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the exploration of the relation between language and society” They further explain that



Sociolinguistics is based on the fact that language is not a single homogeneous entity, but has different forms in different situations. The changes in language occur because of the changes in social conditions, for example, social class, gender, regional and cultural groups. They further explain that Sociolinguistics is the study of language variation and change-how varieties of language are formed when the speakers belong to a geographical region, social class, social situation and occupation, etc. Varieties of a language that are formed in various geographical regions involve a change in the pronunciation as well as vocabulary. Such changes result in the formation of a distinctly different variety of the language called a dialect. In line with this study, a lot of geographical features contributed to the variations between Sangh gami and Sangh ghshi, mountains, rivers, others went on hiding because of family and community wars, thereby having different pronunciation and lexical variation emerge.

## **2.6 Historical Survey of Dialect**

The rise of the discipline of Sociolinguistics has introduced the consideration of social and demographic factors into the description and analysis of languages and language varieties. This has made the study of dialects a significant area in the understanding of not only human behaviour, but also of the processes of language change. However, according to Bernard Caron (2005) and Bitkon Adamu (2009) there is no mention to separate dialects of Zaar. Their works centred on the most acceptable dialect which is commonly used in most official gathering, churches and it has more speakers. The classical form of a dialect is the regional dialect, which is a distinct form of a language spoken in a certain geographical area. For instance, we have the Cockney-dialect, Yorkshire-dialect of English. Inhabitants of these regions have certain distinct linguistic features that differentiate them from speakers of other forms of English. Also, Tohomo O' odhan (formerly papago) and Akimel O' odhan (formerly pima) are two native American languages spoken by members of some tribal groups living in the states of Arizona and Northern Mexico.

## **2.7 Dialectology**

Britain (2015) refers to dialectology as the study of the way sounds, words and

grammatical forms differ within a language. Britain (ibid) opines that the term is usually used to describe the study of both accents and dialects and on the whole, dialectology has focused on the geographical distribution of different accents and dialects, and according to Chamber and Trudgill (1998), it has begun to investigate social factors such as age, gender and position in the society. Vajda (2013) sees dialectology as a branch of Sociolinguistics that studies the systematic variant of a language.

Like any other study of dialect or speech, it is difficult for this particular study to be successful without choosing a theoretical framework. This study therefore observes the social variables of the speech community involved, the distinction and mutual intelligibilities. The study therefore considers an eclectic approach by combining a generative dialectology and that of Robert Lado (1957), the theory of Contrastive Analysis which focuses on finding the similarities and differences of the sub-systems of languages compared. Contrastive Analysis in a general term is an inductive investigative approach based on the distinctive elements looked upon in the language under study. The theoretical framework gains insights from Structural Grammar of Randolph Quirk, and Greenbaum, (2004) in the analysis of two dialects as considered in this research. It also found that the Contrastive Analysis of Lado (1957) stands to be very helpful as it is basically concerned with how two languages can be compared and contrasted in terms of their similarities and differences.

## **Methodology**

This study uses the descriptive design; which is considered as appropriate for the topic of the study. A Contrastive Study of Zaar (Sayawa) and any other language that desires to study the lexical and sound system of a language requires a careful

description of lexical items in both dialects. Fries (1945) assert that “the most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the languages to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.” Therefore, under the light of this assertion, the research employed the use of descriptive models, such as the (Wilson model of word translation, Banathy"s model of analysis and structural grammatical model) are adopted.

### **Source of Data**

There are two primary sources; the first is the researcher and some other speakers of the two dialects, the second is the use of a questionnaire/ interview. The researcher, being a native speaker of Sangh-gami and also speaks Sangh-ghshi dialect, plays an important role in the data collection for the research. The researcher draws his personal knowledge, observation and experience of the two speech forms to come up with a list of words which are being administered to chosen respondents, first for identification of lexical items from the word list and secondly for the correct pronunciation of items presented.

This section presents and highlights the data collected from the two dialects of Zaar (Sayawa) language which portray Pragmatics that lied in the use of language in communication. Lexical items are carefully selected and arrange in order on the basis of items that have the same pronunciation, spelling and meaning, followed by those with different spellings and pronunciation but the same meaning, others are those with partial similarities (if any exist) and those words that can be used as singular and plural in both dialects

### **Lexical items in zaar language that has same autography and meaning**

Sangh-gami Dialect	Sangh-ghshi Dialect	English
1. Mwan (n)	mwan (n)	servant
2. Kihr (n)	kihr (n)	tale
3. dzaŋ (n)	dzaŋ (n)	sun
4. Zhaghali(n)	zhaghali(n)	water
5. miir (n)	miir (n)	osil
6. Maanda(v)	maandh(v)	fighting
7. dzangi	dzangi	that day
8. lhm (n)	lhm (n)	moon
9. mokshi (v) courtship	mokshi	(v)
10. naar (v)	naar (n)	hunting
11. zha (n)	zha (n)	water
12. laar (n)	laar (n)	river
13. nduuri (n) kitchen	fworgh (n)	
14. nyatsa(n)	nyatsa(n)	sand
15. longa (n)	longa (n)	hare

5. ndugbogn	twaknanndam	nine
6. dyebad	mburuk	all

## Lexical Items Differences

### Autography,

Pronunciation but same  
Meaning.

Sangh-gami	Dialect
Sangh-ghshi Dialect	
English	

1. əsubsu  
tantan  
eight

2. dzaŋ  
choŋ  
God

3. gyamda  
mbishlr  
ashes

4. chat  
cim  
call

7. dwaam	wurba	money
8. gambur	wuur	mountain
9. fwarəŋ	falaŋ	thunder
10. kyaŋəŋ	shaŋndi	pot
11. lambh	puus	stone
12. subər	səbər	knife
13. nduri	fworghad	short
14. nduwan	dan	stool
15. tuu	vwa	stomach

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The table above shows 15 lexical items with about 90% are completely different from each other in spelling and pronunciation but have the same meaning, even though the percentage agreement has confirmed that the two are dialects of Zaar (Sayawa) language it is important to point out that 90% is enough to bring about confusion or misunderstanding between the speakers of the two dialects. Sometimes, when a person who speaks Sangh-gami dialect communicates with someone who speaks Sangh-ghshi dialect, take a look at item number one in Sangh-gami the word “eight” is called **əsubsu** while Sangh-ghshi refer to the same eight as **tantan**, similarly item number three, Sangh-gami referred to “ashes” as **gyamdah** while with Sangh-ghshi is known as **mbishlr**. Item number six is considered as one that both in pronunciation and spelling they do not similar. Sangh-gami referred to “all” as **dyebad** while in Sangh-ghshi is called **mburuk**.

## Findings

The presentation, analysis and interpretation of data quantitatively and qualitatively based on the research questions forms the preoccupation of this section. The following content was analysed based on the pragmatic features of lexical items of the two dialects of Zaar language. The following findings were obtained Dialects generally play several Sociolinguistic roles in the overall development of a language. Based on the questions asked, there is a great difference in pronunciations and meanings in most of the lexical items identified

From the findings generally, there has not been much challenge despite the differences in the existing dialects in the speech communities. The two dialects are mutually intelligible in most of their lexical items, whereas the phonological makes it unintelligible especially when Sangh-gami dialect speaks, a listener from Sangh-ghshi dialect hardly can comprehend the message. The use of particular dialect in each part of the Zaar (Sayawa) speech community has help in building a strong relationship between the speakers of the same dialect, there by fostering unity and development among people. Having the knowledge of the two dialects, it aids them to relate well with each other and people from another dialect.

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