A Lexical Comparison of A·we and Dual Dialects of Garo

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Abstract: *Among the eleven dialects of the Garo language A·we which is the standard dialect of Garo and Dual that is spoken in southern part of Garo Hills and in neighbouring country Bangladesh, are selected for this present study. This paper is an attempt to investigate the similarities and differences of lexical items between two dialects. The paper mainly compares the lexical data of mentioned two dialects and this study is limited to natural bodies, plants, body parts, person, kinship terms, negations and some tenses.*

The table shows the lexical comparisons between the two dialects.

Body parts:

A ·we	Dual	Gloss
/ɟaʔa/	/ɟaʔteŋ/	Leg
/okˋ/	/bibɨkˋ/	Stomach
/mɨkʰiŋ/	/kʰopal/	Forehead
/giŋtʰiŋ/	/giŋ/	Nose

Keyword: Tibeto-Burman, Garo, Lexical Items, Natural Bodies, Plants, Body Parts, Person, Kinship Terms, Negations and Some Tenses.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Garos are one of the major tribes of the state of Meghalaya. They prefer to call themselves *'A·chik'* and their language as *'A·chik Ku·sik'* or *'A·chikku'* or *'Mande Ku·sik'* or 'the language of the hill men' (Grierson, 1902:1). The term *'Garo'* is said to have originated from the Bodo word *'gar'*, which actually means 'to leave off' or 'divorce' or 'to abandon' and *'garhor'* or *'garhorbai'* which means to 'leave alone or divorce'. (Sangma 2010:23). According to the Migration Legend of Garos, the Garos and Bodos were the descendants of two sisters Nambae and Simbae. However, they parted at Rangmati during the course of their migration. The elder sister Simbae stayed back and the younger sister Nambae left with her group, and continued their journey towards the east.

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The belief that the Garos are the descendants of Simbae and the Bodos of Nambae still exists among the Garos till date. (Rongmuthu 1970:196).

The Garos are two-third majority inhabitants of the state of Meghalaya. Garo language or A·chikku is one of the branches of the Tibeto-Burman language stock. It is linguistically divided into eleven dialects and majority of these dialects are spoken in and around Garo Hills, some parts of Khasi Hills and in different parts of North-East India such as Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and also in some parts of West Bengal. (Grierson, 1903). According to Burling (2004:14), Garos are also found in different areas of Bangladesh like Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Bhaluka, Jaydebpur, Modhupur etc.

2. Linguistic Distribution of Garo Language

A·chikku or the Garo language was included in the Bodo group by Grierson (1903:68-69) in his *Linguistic Survey of India*, along with the languages like Boro, Dimasa, Rabha, Koch, Kachari, Tiwa, Deori, Kokborok and Mech etc. Burling (2004:10-12) mentioned that *A·chikku* or the Garo language has a number of dialects. According to him, there are eleven dialects, which are as follows:

1. *A·we*
2. *Am·beng or A·beng*
3. *Atong*
4. *Chisak*
5. *Matchi*
6. *Dual*
7. *Gara-Gan·ching*
8. *Chibok*
9. *Matabeng*
10. *Ruga*
11. *Me·gam.*

Major A. Playfair had also classified *A·chikku* or Garo language into eleven dialects in his book *The Garos* in the year 1909. A map showing the distribution of the dialects in the Garo Hills region as given by Playfair in his work *the Garos* is given below

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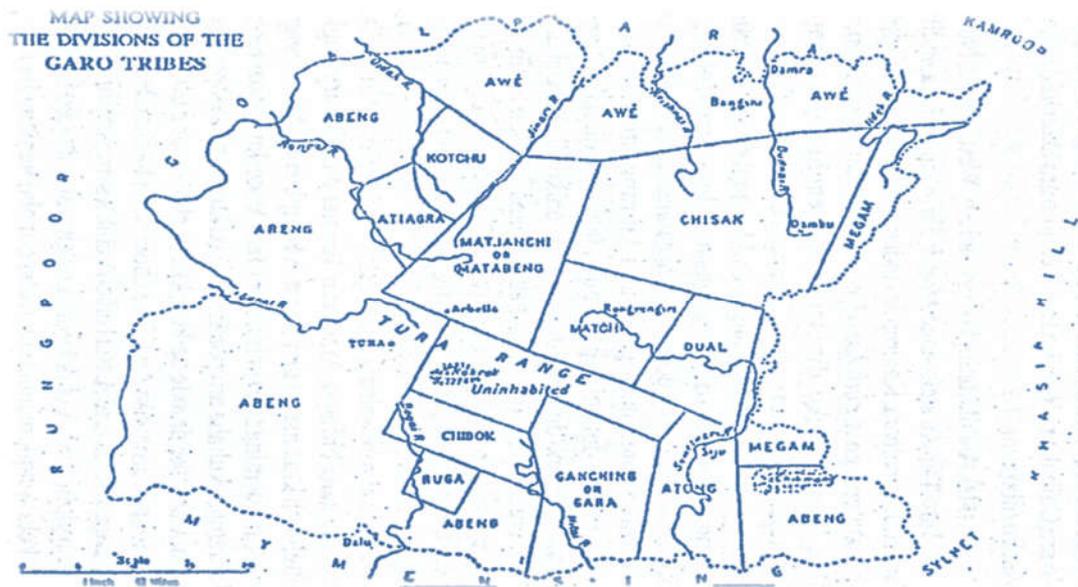
1. The A·we dialect is spoken in the northern part of Garo Hills and the plains at their foot, from the Kamrup border in the east, upto the west of the Jinari river. This dialect has been standardised and used for educational, administrative and religious purposes since the year 1902. (Sangma, 1983:31). After standardization of the A·we dialect, the Bible was translated into the standard A·chikku which is the A·we variety. Thereafter, many religious and secular writings were published in this variety.

2. The Chisak Variety: This variety is spoken in the north-eastern hills, from the southern border of the A·we in the north, stretching to a few miles of Simsang (Someswari) river in the south to the western border of Khasi Hills in the east.

3. The Dual Variety: The Duals are found residing on the banks of the Simsang (Someswari) river. There are a large number of Dual dwellers in the plains of Mymensingh district of neighbouring Bangladesh too.

4. The Matchi Variety: In the central valley of the Simsang (Someswari) river to the west of the Duals are the speakers of Matchi variety extending northward and southward, upto the northern slopes of the central range.

5. The Matjangchi/Matabeng Variety: The speakers of this variety occupy the areas north of the Simsang (Someswari) river. They live in between Matchi and A·beng areas.

6. The A·beng Variety: The A·beng speakers are most numerous in the entire Garo Hills district. They occupy almost the whole area of Western hills to the south-central range upto the Bogai river. A·beng speakers can also be found in some districts of neighbouring country Bangladesh like Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Netrakona and Sylhet (Burling, 2004.)

7. The Chibok Variety: To the east of the A·beng live the speakers of the Chibok variety in the upper valley of the Bogai river extending eastwards to the Dareng (Nitai) river.

8. The Ruga Variety: The Ruga speakers are those residing to the south of Chibok adjacent to Dalu area, in the low hills bordering the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh.

9. The Gara-Gan·ching Variety: The speakers of this variety occupy the south of the central range of Garo Hills, extending from the Dareng to Simsang river.

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10. The Atong Variety: The A·tong speakers inhabit the Simsang (Someswari) valley and the hills and extend upto siju.

11. The Me·gam Variety: The Me·gam speakers occupy the eastern border of the Garo Hills district, from Kamrup in the north to Mymensingh in the south.

Dual dialect speakers are concentrated in small pockets in South Garo Hills. A large number of Dual speakers can also be found in South-Western parts of Garo Hills in areas like Dalu, Sibbari, Gasuapara, Kapasipara etc. In West Garo Hills, Dual speakers are scattered in different villages like Balachanda, Chandakona etc. (Marak, 2009, Unpublished PhD thesis).

In the book, *People's Linguistic Survey of India,* Marak (2014), has stated that Dual speakers can be found in small pockets in South and West Garo Hills districts of Meghalaya. According to her, majority of the Dual speaking groups can also be found in the neighbouring country of Bangladesh in villages like Ghoshgaon, Kasibari, Digolbagh, Boipara, Bandatoli, Ailatoli etc, and they still continue to speak Dual variety.

3. Lexical Comparison of A·we and Dual Dialects of Garo

This paper is a comparative study of the lexical items of the A·we and the Dual dialect of Garo (A·chik) language. Although the dialects belong to the same language, there are certain differences as well as similarities between the lexical items of the two dialects. In order to show these similarities and differences and to make it easier to understand, the lexical items are divided into different groups as follows. Person, Kinship Terms, Body Parts, Natural Bodies, Body Parts, and some Tenses and negations.

Table 1: Person

Sl no	A·we	Dual	Gloss
1	aŋ-a	aŋ-a	I
2	naʔ-a	naʔ-a	you
3	ua	ua	he/she (Third person singular)
4	naʔ-si-maŋ	ua-daŋ	you (Second person Plural)

The terms used for first person /aŋa/, second person /naʔa/ and third person singular- He/She /ua/ share the same morpheme in both A·we and Dual. However, the terms used for 'you' second person plural 'naʔsimaŋ' in A·we and 'uadaŋ' in Dual is different as can be seen in the above example. This /maŋ/ and /daŋ/ are used as a plural marker.

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Kinship terms are used in the society to denote relations between people. Again, there are similarities and differences between the two dialects as shown below.

Table 2: Kinship Terms

Sl No	A·we	Dual	Gloss
5	ba-ba	ba-bu	father
6	ai	bai	mother
7	am-bi	a-we	grandmother
8	ɟoŋ/dada	ɟoŋ/dada	brother
9	a-bi	di-di	elder sister
10	gu-me	gɨm-e	brother-in-law

There is a variation of vowel phonemes in Dual as in /baba/ and /babu/ where open front unrounded vowel /a/ changed to close back rounded /u/ and from close back rounded /u/ to front close central unrounded /ɨ/ in /gɨme/. Except ɟoŋ/dada, other examples share the different lexical morphemes in kinship terms.

Table 3: Body Parts

Sl no	A ·we	Dual	Gloss
11	kʰaʔ-tʰoŋ	kʰa	heart
12	wa-gam	wa	teeth
13	pʰe-tʰiŋ	pʰe	cheek
14	gɨŋ-tʰiŋ	gɨŋ	nose
15	gɨt-okˋ	gotokˋ	throat
16	kʰaɳʔ-kʰa-ɾe	kʰaɳʔ-kʰa-li	waist

As compared to A·we, most of the words are used as a morpheme-based form of words in Dual dialect as shown in the examples above, from serial no 11 to 14. Some phonological changes and lexical morpheme variances are also observed from the given examples shown below:

Table 4

A·we	Dual

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git-okˋ	go-dokˋ
/ɨ/ ⟶ /o/	
kʰaŋʔ-kʰa-ɾe	kʰaŋʔ-kʰa-li
/ɾe/ ⟶ /li/	

Table 5: Nature

SI no	A·we	Dual	Gloss
17	sal-gi	so-ga	sky
18	a-ɾam	ga-dɨl-a	cloud
19	ci-bi-ma	gaŋ	river
20	ɟa-joŋ	ɟo-nakˋ	moon

Differences of lexical items for nature objects are observed in the word form like /ga-dɨl-a/ 'cloud' and /gaŋ/ 'river'. However, a majority of the Dual speakers are dwelling in Bangladesh, it is noticeable that there are some loan Bengali words that are used in Dual dialect. For instance, /ʃorgu/ 'sky' and /ɟonaka/ 'moon' lexicons are borrowed and nativized from Bengali language as in /so-ga/ and /ɟo-nakˋ/ in Dual.

Table 6: Flora and Fauna

SI no	A ·we	Dual	English
21	eʔ-ciŋ	kʰiʔ-ciŋ	ginger
22	amʔ-pʰaŋ	kʰaʔ-pʰaŋ	thatch
23	tʰaʔ-bolcu	tʰaʔ-bɨtci	tapioca
24	mese	mose	mouse
25	naʔnɨl	naʔnel	electric eel
26	aɾɨŋga	aɾeŋga	alligator

Both the dialects share almost common lexical items for flora and fauna. But in Dual, there are some phonological alternations observed for fauna lexical items as in /mese/ changes to /mose/, /naʔnɨl/ changes to /naʔnel/ and /aɾɨŋga/ changes to / aɾeŋga/. The variation of lexical items in terms of phonemes can be shown as:

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A·we   Dual

/e/   ——————→   /o/

/ɨ/   ——————→   /e/

Furthermore, there are some observations of differences in the lexical items for plants for instance, /kʰiʔ-cɨŋ/ 'ginger', / kʰaʔ-pʰaŋ/ 'thatch' and /tʰaʔ-bɨtci/ 'tapioca'.

The use of tense markers in terms of lexical items are quite different from each other. Most of the dialects of the Garos have voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ as a progressive tense marker. But in Dual dialect /ŋ/ is deleted as seen in example no 27. There are some phoneme changes from close-mid front unrounded vowel /e/ to open front unrounded /a/, in the simple future tense as in /caʔ-gen/ and /caʔgan/ which means 'will eat?' as shown below:

Table 7: Tense

SI no	A ·we	Dual	English
27	caʔ-eŋ-a eat-Pro	caʔ-ea eat-Pro	eating (present+progressive)
28	caʔ-gen eat-Fut	caʔgan/ eat-Fut	will eat (simple future)

According to Wood (2008:85), The Bodo-Garo languages have a negative suffix that follows the main verb or root verb. It is similar in phonological structure across the family, and can easily be reconstructed as *-ya/.* The different forms of negation are found across the family are shown in the table below:

Table 8: Negation

Garo	Boro	Rabha	Deuri	Dimasa	PBG
-Ja	-a -ya-wa	-ca	-ya	-Ja	ya

As Proto-Bodo-Garo languages, the basic structure of negative sentences of all four cognate languages are S+O+V+Neg (Subject-Object-Verb followed by Negation) Illustration is shown below.

Dual /ɟa/	Boro /a/	Rabha /ca/	Kokborok /ya/	Gloss
/aŋ-a mi caʔ- ɟa/ S + O + V+ NEG 1ˢᵗ Sg rice-eat Neg	/aŋ aŋkʰam ɟay-a/ S + O + V+ NEG 1ˢᵗ Sg rice-eat-Neg	/aŋ mai sa-ca/ S + O + V+ NEG 1ˢᵗ Sg rice-eat-Neg	/aŋ mai ca-ya/ S + O + V+ NEG 1ˢᵗ Sg rice-eat-Neg	'I do not eat rice'

As in A·we (standard Garo), the negative marker /ɟa/ which is simple negation, is also used in Dual dialect as in Serial no. 31:

Sl no	A ·we	Dual	Gloss
31	aŋ-a mi caʔ-ɟa I -eat -rice -Neg	aŋ-a mi caʔ-ɟa I- eat -rice-Neg	I do not eat rice
32	da tʰu-si-kʰu-a	man se-kʰu-a	do not sleep now

Besides the negative marker /ja/, /da/ and /man/ are also used as imperative negative markers in the two dialects respectively. There is a difference in the negation marking /da/ and /man/ as is seen in Serial no. 32, but as other Pro-Bodo-Garo languages, both dialects use the same simple negation /ɟa/.

4. Findings

Phonological changes and differences are observed in the lexical items between the two dialects. According to the discussion, the phonological differences are:

/ɨ/ ⟶ /e/

/ɨ/ ⟶ /o/

/e/ ⟶ /o/

Lexical differences are also observed as in the following:

A·we	**Dual**
/eʔ-ciŋ /	/kʰiʔ-ciŋ/
/amʔ-pʰaŋ/	/kʰaʔ-pʰaŋ/
/tʰaʔ-bolcu/	/tʰaʔ-bɨtci/

As other languages, the process of borrowing and nativization are common factors in Garo language. Even in Dual dialect, some nativized loan words from Bengali language which is Indo-Aryan language stock is witnessed, for instance:

Bengali	Dual	Gloss
/ʃorgu/	/so-ga/	'sky'
/ɟonaka/	/ɟo-nakˀ/	'moon'

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5.Conclusion

Out of eleven dialects of the Garos, A·we (Standard Garo) and Dual dialects are selected for this present study which is an attempt to provide a study on lexical items to investigate their similarities and differences in use of lexical morphemes. This study is limited to few selected topics such as Person, Kinship Terms, Body Parts, Natural Bodies, Body Parts, and some Tenses and Negations. The paper has particularly focused on Dual dialect which is still in oral form of communication and no detailed study or research has been done on this dialect and as such, an effort will be made to determine and understand in order to document and preserve it since the number of speakers are becoming lesser and as a consequence this dialect is on the verge of extinction. The result of this study shows that these two dialects are mutually intelligible to each other. Both dialects are studied based on collected data and analysed to show them diverged or converged from the same language. There is much more to be done but within the time limit given, it is not possible to widen the scope of the study.

Thus, an attempt will be made to provide the documentation of lexical items and to understand their differences and similarities that occur between the two dialects which will not only be acontribution to Garo language but also to the field of linguistics as a whole.

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