

CHAPTER 7

COMPARISON OF SGAW, KAYAH AND NORTHWEST KAREN PHONOLOGY

In this section, the phonological inventories of the analyzed seven Northwest Karen languages will be compared with Sgaw and Kayah.

7.1 Sgaw, Kayah and Northwest Karen consonants comparison

Table 33 displays the attested initial consonant inventory of each dialect. Note that Table 33 indicates phonetic similarities among phonemes, not etymological correspondences.

	Sgaw	Kayah	Bwe1	Bwe2	Gebah	Geker	Paku1	Paku2	Palaychi
Bilabial	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p
	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h	p ^h
	ɸ		ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ
		b	b	b	(b)	b		(b)	b
	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
			ṃ		ṃ				ṃ
	w	w	w	w	w	w	w	w	w
Labio-dental									f
		v	(v)						v
Dental	ʈ	ʈ	ʈ	ʈ	ʈ	ʈ		(ʈ)	ʈ
Alveolar	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t
	t ^h	t ^h		t ^h	t ^h	t ^h	t ^h	t ^h	t ^h
	ɖ		ɖ	ɖ	ɖ	ɖ	ɖ	ɖ	ɖ
		d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
			ṅ		ṅ				
	r	r	(r)	(r)	(r)	r			
l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	

			ʈ		ʈ				
	s	s	s	(s)	s	s	s	s	s
	s ^h	s ^h	s ^h		s ^h	s ^h	s ^h	s ^h	s ^h
		z				z	z	z	z
Postalveolar	tʃ			(tʃ)	tʃ	(tʃ)	tʃ	tʃ	
	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ	ɖʒ
	s ^j	s ^j	s ^j	s ^j	s ^j	s ^j			s ^j
Palatal	ɲ					(ɲ)	(ɲ)		
	j	j	j	j	j	j	j	j	j
Velar	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	k
	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h	k ^h
			g	g	(g)				
	x	x	x	x	(x)	(x)	x	x	x
	ɣ		ɣ	ɣ	ɣ	(ɣ)	ɣ	ɣ	ɣ
	ŋ	ŋ		ŋ	(ŋ)	ŋ		ŋ	ŋ
Glotal	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ
	h	h	h	h	h	h	h	h	h
	ɦ				(ɦ)		ɦ	(ɦ)	

Table 33. Consonant comparison of Sgaw, Kayah and the Northwest Karen languages

Northwest Karen languages tentatively include 36 different consonant sounds. As Table 33 shows, not all the languages have all 36 phonological units. Sgaw, Paku 1 and Gebah lack a voiced bilabial stop /b/. Kayan lacks a bilabial implosive, but has a voiced bilabial stop /b/. Palaychi has fricatives /f/, /v/ and /z/; other groups lack these fricatives (except Kayah, which has /v/ and /z/). All groups except Paku 1 have voiceless dental stop /t̪/; All except Bwe 1 have a voiceless aspirated alveolar stop /t^h/. All groups have voiced alveolar stop /d/ except Sgaw and Palaychi.

The table also shows that only Bwe 1 and Gebah have a lateral fricative /ɬ/. Sgaw and Geker have a palatal nasal /ɲ/. All groups have voiced velar stop /g/ except Sgaw, Kayah and Geker. Paku 1, Paku 2 and Palaychi lack an alveolar trill /r/; but it rarely occurs in Bwe 1, Bwe 2 and Gebah. Bwe 1 and Paku 1 do not have

velar nasal /ŋ/. Only Sgaw and Paku 1 have voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/. There are, in addition, some particular features such as the syllabic nasal /m̩/ and /ŋ̩/ in Bwe 1, Gebah and /m̩/ in Palachi.

Comparing the inventories of the Northwest Karen varieties with Standard Sgaw Karen, the Northwest Karen varieties have altogether, eleven segments not included in Sgaw: /b d f v ʔ z g m̩ ŋ̩ m̩ ŋ̩/. These are the important units, which must be added to a Sgaw-based orthography for the Northwest Karen languages.

7.1.1 Consonant clusters

Regarding the consonant clusters of Northwest Karen, the voiced labial-velar approximant [w] is found with each consonant of the system forming a cluster. Most of the Northwest Karen dialects have clusters corresponding with those of Sgaw Karen. The Kayah data indicates a few consonant clusters which are not found in either Sgaw or Northwest Karen. Gebah, Geker, Palaychi and Paku 2 found in correspondence with Sgaw. However, these dialects add clusters different from Sgaw. Bwe 1, Bwe 2 and Gebah, show clusters with the lateral approximant /l/ in correspondence with Sgaw, with some additions such as /bl/, /gl/ and /k^hlw/. Geker, Paku 1, Paku 2 and Palaychi show more deviation in this respect. Consonant clusters such as /dl, gl, fɣ/ of Geker; /bj, k^hɣ, dʒɣ/ of Paku 1 and /pj, tɣ/ of Paku 2 are not found either in Sgaw or Kayah. Kayah has /dʒrw, klw, krw/, which are found in none of the other Karenic languages. Only Gebah shows exact correspondence with Sgaw with regards to the clusters combined with alveolar trill /r/. Geker and Paku 1 have clusters with voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ in total correspondence with that of Sgaw. However, Paku 1 adds three more clusters, /dʒɣ/, /kɣ/, /k^hɣ/, which are totally

different to Sgaw and other dialects. Paku 2 has /tʃʏ/, /gy/ and Geker has /sʲy/, which are uniquely their own.

7.2 Vowel comparison

Table 34 displays the vowel comparison of Sgaw, Kayah and the Northwest Karen languages.

	Sgaw	Kayah	Bwe 1	Bwe 2	Gebah	Geker	Paku 1	Paku 2	Palachi
Front	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e
	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ
	ə	ə	ə	ə	ə	ə			ə
Back	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ	ɯ
	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u
Vowel			ʊ						ʊ
	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ
	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a

Table 34. Vowel comparison of Sgaw, Kayah and the Northwest Karen languages

All the Northwest Karen languages have monophthongs corresponding with those of Sgaw and Kayah except Bwe 2 and Palaychi, which add the near close rounded back vowel /ʊ/. Regarding diphthongs, Bwe 1 and 2 have a few diphthongs in their words borrowed from Burmese. Gebah shows one word with diphthong /kəḍʒeiʔ/ ‘grind’(299), which also appears to be a loan word (cf. Burmese /ḍʒeiʔ/). Geker includes many diphthongs, i.e. /ɜɯ, ɜo, ei, ai, ao, oi/; Paku Kathokhi has three diphthongs of these: /ɜɯ, ei, ai/; but Paku Shokho, like Sgaw, has no diphthongs. Palaychi has only one word containing a diphthong /kleʔ diaʔ gwaʔ/

'garlic'(65). Kayah has many diphthongs such as /ie, ia, ua, iu, ui, io, ea/ and these are totally different from Sgaw and Northwest Karen.

7.3 Tone comparison

Table 35 indicates the correspondences of phonetic tone levels between Sgaw and the Northwest Karen language.

			Sgaw	Kayah	Bwe 1	Bwe2	Gebah	Geker	Paku 1	Paku 2	Palachi
High tone	55	↑			↑	↑		↑		↑	
Mid-high	44	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Mid tone	33	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Mid low	22	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Low tone	11	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓		↓	
High falling	53	↘					↘	↘			↘
Low falling	31	↘						↘	↘		
High check		↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
Low check		↘	↘	↘	↘	↘				↘	↘

Table 35. Tones comparison of Sgaw, Kayah and Northwest Karen

Generally, the phonetic tone inventories of the Northwest Karen languages and Sgaw Karen language are quite similar. Bwe1, Bwe 2, Geker and Paku 2 have tones pitches ranging from low tone to high. Geker adds a low falling tone. Sgaw, Kayah, Gebah, Paku 1 and Palaychi lack the high tone, but instead of the high tone. Palaychi and Gebah have a high falling tone. Sgaw, Bwe 1, Bwe 2, and Paku Shokho have a low tone whereas Geker and Paku Kathokhi have a low falling tone. All the languages have high checked tone. However, only Gebah, Geker and Paku 1 lack low checked tones.

7.4 Basic pattern of North western Karen phonology

This section describes the shared elements of basic phonology of the Northwest Karen based on the preceding analysis.

7.4.1 Syllable structure

The meta-syllable structure of the Northwest Karen languages consisting of an initial consonant C_1 , and one or perhaps two medial consonants (C_2C_3). The most common medial consonants are the labial approximant /w/, the lateral /l/ or the voiced velar fricative or alveolar approximant /ɣ/, /r/ and /j/. The nucleus is composed of a monophthong V or a diphthong $V_1 V_2$. Finally, major syllables include a tone, represented by the symbol T. Thus the syllable structure appears as follow:

$$C_1 (C_2) (C_3) V_1 (V_2) T$$

Syllable types in the data included: CVT, CVVT, CCCVT, and CCVVT.

7.4.2 Consonant inventory

The following table displays the total phonological inventory of the Northwest Karenic languages.

	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Post alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive fortis vl asp.	p^h	$t̚$	t^h			k^h	
fortis	p		t			k	ʔ
Implosive lenis vd	$ɓ$		$ɗ$				
lenis vd	b		d			g	
Fricative fortis vl	f		s s^h	$tʃ$ s^j		x	h
lenis vl				$ɕʒ$			
lenis vd	v		z			ɣ	ɦ
Trill			r				
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
Syllabic nasal	$m̩$		$n̩$				
Lateral			l				
Approximant			$l̥$				
Approximant	w				j		

Table 36. Northwest Karen consonant inventory

7.5 Vowel inventory

The total inventory of Northwest Karen monophthongs is shown below.

	Front unrounded	Central unrounded	Back rounded
iHigh	i	ɯ	u ʊ
Mid	e ɛ	ə	o ɔ
Low		a	

Table 37. Northwest Karen vowels

7.6 Tone

There are five phonetic level pitches in open syllables: High (55), mid-high (44), mid (33), mid-low (22) and low (11). Therefore, there are three well attested tones: mid-high, mid, and mid-low (44, 33, 22). The high-falling and low falling tones /ʔ, ʋʔ/ co-occur with creaky voice quality.

All the languages have mid-high, mid and mid-low tones /44, 33, 22/. Note that Sgaw, Kayah and Palaychi have six well attested tonal categories, while Bwe 1, Bwe 2, and Paku 2 have seven tonal categories. Gebah and Paku 1 have only five.