

Global Growing Impact of Hausa and the Need for its Documentation

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Abstract

Majority of the Hausawa are situated in the Northern Nigeria and the Southern Niger. Nevertheless, there are Hausa speakers in other parts of the world like Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Sudan, and Togo among others. The global population of Hausa speakers (as L₁) is estimated to be above 45 million. However, other millions of people, perhaps more than 20 million, speak the language as L₂. More so, the language is believed to be fast growing. This is indeed the positive effect of the richness in its lexicon, morphology, syntax and semantics as well as the simplicity of same. Another factor that contributes to the rapid spread of Hausa is the impressive mannerism, personality and the culture of its speakers. As one of the major Nigerian indigenous languages, others being Yoruba and Igbo, it is worth preserving and documenting. This would serve as campaign towards the development of the language. However, this is in line with the phenomenon that emerged national question, thus the need to reframe national language policy in order to have one or more indigenous language(s) as the official language(s) in Nigeria. Before that could be achieved, the indigenous languages must be developed in various domains of life such as; educational, scientific, social as well as political. However, this paper delves into the global growth of Hausa and the need to preserve the language. The preservative measures for the documentation of Hausa might include; recording and mobilization among others.

Keywords: Hausa, language documentation, Northern Nigeria, recording, and mobilization

1.0 Introduction

Hausa is the most largely spoken language in West Africa (Baldi, 1977; Sarbi, 2005). It has very large number of speakers, indeed more than fifty million (50 million) (Adamu, 1978; Garba, 2010). The Hausa cities are located in Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger (Yakasai, 2001; Amfani, 2004). However, certain factors led to the rapid growth and increase in population of Hausa speakers. One of such is the traditional and religious practice of marrying up to, but not more than, four wives (Garba, 2010). Other factors include its simplicity in communication, richness in vocabulary, and its ability of assimilating other minor languages it comes into contact with (Ibrahim, 1978; Jinju 1990; Yakasai, 2001).

However, there is the need to preserve and improve such rich indigenous languages for better. Perhaps so as to put an end to what Banjo in Tsaure & Sani (2016) describes as the silent approval and tacit adoption of English as the national or official language by the federal government of Nigeria. Moreover, to satisfy the need to have a national language that brings about unity among the Nigerians, and set us aside from the domination of other countries. By so doing, many education, economical, social, intellectual as well as personal gaps would be filled (IDRA, 2000; Oyetade, 2010; Tsaure & Sani, 2016). The negative effects of using a foreign language as official language are numerous. When students who are not yet fluent in English switch to using only English, they are functioning at an intellectual level below their age (Tsaure & Sani, 2016). In addition, borrowing a language means borrowing its culture too. This is because language and culture are inseparable (Fada, Kangiwa & Jigawa, 1995; Abubakar & Yusuf, 2008).

However, considering the current status of Hausa, and its rapid growth, it would be right to assume that it is capable to stand as official language of Nigeria if some efforts would be made towards that. This is in line with the factors Banjo considers as objective criteria for consideration for any language to be chosen as national language. They are:

- i. Current population of the speakers of the language,

- ii. The current rate of the expansion of the language,
- iii. The current state of development of the language and
- iv. The current image of the language (Banjo in Tsaure & Sani, 2016).

1.0 Conceptualization of Terms

Hausa is a name given to the language of Hausa people (Yusuf, 2012). Bergery (1934) gives it meaning as, “Hausa language.” Nicholas also affirms that the word Hausa referred to the meaning of *Hausa language* (Nicholas, 1996: 64).

Language preservation/documenting is an activity that gathers, processes and exhibits a sample of data of the language that is representative of its linguistic structure and gives a fair impression of how and for what purposes the language is used (Lehmann, 1999). The term has been defined as a lasting, multipurpose record of a language (Jost, Nikolaus, & Ulrike, 2006).

2.0 The Hausa Language and the *Hausawa*

Hausa language belongs to the Western branch of the Chadic language super family within the Afro-Asiatic language phylum. The home territories of the Hausa people lie on both sides of the border between Niger and Nigeria. In Niger, about one-half of the population speaks Hausa as a first language, whereas about one-fifth of the Nigerian population speaks it as a first language (Ekkehard, 2012; Chompson, 2015). However, the language is carried and spread to almost all major cities in West, North, Central, and Northeast Africa. This is indeed, among others, the result of their tradition of long-distance commerce and pilgrimages to the Holy Cities of Islam (Ekkehard, 2012; Musa, 2013; Chompson, 2015).

The origin of Hausa language is largely unknown (Birnin-Tudu, 2002; Musa, 2013). Notwithstanding, some legendary accounts of its origin exist. The rise of the Hausa-speaking states occurred sometime between 500 and 700 A.D., but it was not until roughly 1200 A.D. that these states came to control the region of Northern Nigeria and Northwestern Niger (Musa, 2013). There are a number of views about the origin of

the Hausa people. The famous of the views is the Bayajida legendry, though number of scholars rejects the theory. Another view holds that all *Hausawa* once lived by Lake Chad, but were forced to move westward when the water level in the lake dropped. However, a view also identifies the Hausa people as desert nomads who lived in the Sahara (Birnin- Tudu, 2002; Musa, 2013). Some scholars believe that there is a link between the Hausa and the people of Ethiopia based on shared worship of the sun, practiced prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity. Many Hausa themselves believe that their ancestors were Arabs whose descendants founded the popular Hausa city-states (Birnin- Tudu, 2002; Thompson, 2015).

Notwithstanding, the most accepted view of Hausa origin is that of Thurstan Shawi (Xanmahe, 1985; Birnin-Tudu, 2002). Thurstand is of the view that since there is strong evidence showing the existence of creatures in the South and East Africa (Austthroploitheous) as far back as about two million and six hundred years (2 000 600 years), the situation might be similar in the West Africa, only that there exists no research-evidence to vindicate that. Therefore, it is right at this juncture to say that, *Hausawa* migrate to their current cities neither from Masar, nor from the East. Rather, they had lived for long with other peoples at the Lake Chad. Desertification, which caused drainage to the lake, resulted into their permanent migration to River Rima area. It is from there that they spread and formed cities such as Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Daura, Rano, Damagaram, and Agadas among others (Birnin-Tudu, 2002). However, many researches account for the origin of Hausa. These researches include; Maiyawa (2008); Yusuf, (2012) etc.

2.1 Orthography

Hausa makes use of two writing systems. One is the modified Roman alphabet known as *boko*, which is presently used in all forms of media and in most educational writings. The other is the minor modification of the Arabic alphabet, referred to as *Ajami*. The *Ajami* writing system is the product of Arabic-speaking Hausa scholars who developed the orthography in the early nineteenth century. Currently, *Ajami* is still used by traditionalists such as poets, and by those who deem not to resort to *book* and/or Western education in general. (Yahaya, 1988; Musa, 2013; ALS, 2015). It is also studied in some higher educational institutions. In the recent years, the *Ajami* form of writing has been diminishing due to certain factors including negligence by government and lack of standardization among others (Sani, 2015).

2.2 Culture

The majority of *Hausawa* practice Islam. A small minority of Hausa people known as *Maguzawa* (pagans), practice religions other than Islam (ALS, 2015). Initially, the *Hausawa* worship the sun, moon and idols until after their contact with the Arab traders, when they embraced the religion of Islam (Mahamadu, 2006). The *Hausawa* have festivals such as *bikin kamun kifɪ* (fishing festival), *bikin aure* (marriage ceremony), *bikin suna* (naming ceremony) and many others.

However, Hausa society has a strong division of labor according to age and sex (CCF, 2009). The main activity in the towns is trade and agriculture. Many Hausa men have more than one occupation. In the towns and cities, they are mostly civil servants while some engage in trading. In rural areas, they farm, as well as engage in blacksmithing and crafts. On the other hand, Hausa women earn money by petty trading such as selling cloth scraps, pots, medicines, vegetable oils, and other small items. Hausa tradition highly respects the status and personality of women as do Islamic law. Thus, Hausa women do not expose their body and voices to other men other than their lawful husbands and relations. For that, their children or maids go to other houses or the market on their behalf (CCF, 2009).

2.3 Literature

Hausa's rich literature such as poetry, play, prose, and musical literature, which is now available in print and in audio-visual recordings, makes it a rewarding area of study for those who reach an advanced level (SYNW, 2007). Hausa literature could be discussed under the following sub-headings:

2.3.1 Prose

There had been attempts for the enrichment of Hausa literature. In an effort to produce Hausa reading materials, the *Translation Bureau* was formed in 1929. The bureau was assigned the responsibilities of:

- i. Translating English and Arabic books to Hausa,
- ii. Publication of Hausa books and

iii. Helping citizens to publish books of their own (Atuwo, 2009).

The bureau was initially situated at Kano. It was later, after two years, moved to Zaria under the leadership of Dr. R. M. East. However, in 1933, its name was changed to Northern Regional Literature Agency (NORLA). This agency organized the first Hausa literary competition in which five writers emerged successful, and their books were published. Thus:

- i. *Ruwan Bagaja* by Abubakar Imam,
- ii. *Ganxoki* by Bello Kagara,
- iii. *Shaihu Umar* by Abubakar Tafawa Valewa,
- iv. *Idon Matambayi* by Muhammad Gwarzo and,
- v. *Jiki Magayi* by John Tafida and Dr. R. M. East (Atuwo, 2009).

Thereafter, other agencies were formed, among which were *Gaskiya Corporation* (1945) and *The Northern Nigerian Publishing Company* (1966) which was in collaboration with *Macmillan Publishers* (an England publishing company) (Yahaya, 1988; Atuwo, 2009). However, new style of Hausa prose was introduced around 1984 notably *Adabin Kasuwar Kano* (Kano Market Literature) (Balarabe, 2013). The books based on love stories. Kano Market Literature led to the continuous production of books. Among others, *Ranar Qin Dillanci*, *Mai Uwa a Bakin Murhu*, *Ba Girin-girin Ba Tai Mai*, *Allura Cikin Ruwa*, *So Tsuntsu*, *Sanin Gaibu* and *Da Na Sani* are published (Balarabe, 2013).

2.3.2 Poetry

Though Hausa oral songs must have existed as far back as the origin of Hausa (Abbas, 2009), the Hausa written poetry did not emanate until around 17th century (Yahaya, 1988; Maishanu, 2007). In the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, Hausa poetry was thematically Islamic centered. Shehu Usmanu and his companions used Hausa poetry to orient, educate and socialize the then *Hausawa* (Boyd & Mack, 1999; Habibu, 2001; Birnin-Tudu, 2002; Ibrahim, 2009). Today, Hausa poetry is studied in many tertiary institutions across the globe.

Reasonable number of individuals has vowed to study the field, some of which have reached professorial level, whereas, many others are Doctors. Ph. D. thesis on the field of Hausa poetry include: Muhammad, (1977); Xangambo, (1980); Yahya, (1987); Gusau, (1988); Birnin-Tudu, (2002); Dunfawa, (2002); AINU, (2007); Maiyawa, (2008); Omar, (2010).

2.3.3 Play

Xanjuma (2004) is of the view that the origin of drama dates back to the era of prophet Adam peace be upon him. That was when one of his children killed another. God sent two angels in form of birds of which one killed the other, there and then buried it. Humankind thereafter copies the scenario. However, Hausa drama started since during the early Hausa history in form of '*yar tsana*, *wasan gauta* and *wawan sarki* among others. Later, after the advent of Islam, many form of traditional Hausa drama originated which were religious centered thematically (Bunza, 2009). After contact with the English men, there was diversification in forms of Hausa drama. Thus, written Hausa plays, Hausa plays on radio station and TV stations as well as cinemas (Bunza, 2009). From then, many Hausa plays are being written. They include among others:

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|-----------------------------------|--------|----|---------------------|
| i. <i>Six Hausa plays</i> | (1930) | by | East, R. M. |
| ii. <i>Jatau na Kyallu</i> | (1965) | by | Maqarfi, S. |
| iii. <i>Matar mutum kabarinsa</i> | (1974) | by | Roukbar, B. F. |
| iv. <i>Mugunta guzurin wuya</i> | (1986) | by | Maigari, G. I. |
| v. <i>Gani ga wane</i> | (1990) | by | Soroxinki, A. |
| vi. <i>'Daqiqa Talatin</i> | (2015) | by | Gidan Dabino, A. D. |

However, Hausa film production started around 1980 and 1984 at Kano (Gidan Dabino, 2001). Fage, (2004) holds that, Hausa film production started earning recognition from 1990. So far, Hausa films are produced and distributed within and outside Nigeria every day.

2.4 Dialect

Hausa has fourteen (14) major dialects and some minor dialects. Seven (7) of the major dialects are found in Nigeria, while other seven (7) are in Niger.

2.4.1 The Seven Major Hausa Dialects in Nigeria

- i. *Bausanci* (the dialect of Bauchi)
- ii. *Kananci* (the dialect of Kano)
- iii. *Katsinanci* (the dialect of Katsina)
- iv. *Dauranci* (the Daura dialect)
- v. *Sakkwatanci* (the Sokoto dialect)
- vi. *Zamfarci/Zamfaranci* (the dialect of Zamfara) and
- vii. *Zazzaganci* (the dialect of Zazzau) (Ahmad, 2008; El-ladan, Wali & Muhammad, 2010).

2.4.2 The Seven Major Hausa Dialects in Niger

- i. *Adaranci* (the Adar/Twa dialect)
- ii. *Agadasanci* (the dialect of Agadas)
- iii. *Arewanci* (the Arewa/Dogon Dutsi dialect)
- iv. *Canganci* (the dialect of Cangawa/Gaya)
- v. *Damagaranci* (the Damagaram/Zinder dialect)
- vi. *Gobiranci* (the Gobir/tsibiri dialect)
- vii. *Kurfayanci* (the dialect of Kurfai/Filinge) (Ahmad, 2008; El-ladan, Wali & Muhammad, 2010).

However, minor Hausa dialects include; *Guddiranci* (Guddiri/Katagum dialect), *Gumulananci* (Gumel dialect), *Haxejiyananci* (Haxeja dialect) and *Kabananci* (the dialect of Kebi) among others (Ahmad, 2008).

3.0 Global Growing Impact of Hausa

Important clues to viability of a language include its use for school education, for written communication and in the media (Lehmann, 1999).

3.1 Population

Hausa language is being spoken in many countries among which are; Chad, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Congo, Central African Republic, Sudan, Eritrea, and Germany (Furniss, 1996; Garba, 2010; Musa, 2013). Furniss, (1996), holds that, over fifty million (50 million) people communicate in with the language in Nigeria, Niger, Northern Ghana and some parts of Senegal and Sudan. Newman (2000) mentions the population of Hausa speakers to be more than thirty-five million (35 million). Amfani, (2004) describes Hausa as one of the most important languages in Africa, with more than forty million speakers.

However, according to the 1963 census, Hausa has, in Nigeria only, more than eleven million and six hundred thousand speakers (11 600 000) (Ethnologue in Garba, 2010). So also, more than half the population of Niger has Hausa as first language (Amfani, 2004). Perhaps, considering the above assertions, it is right to argue that, the current global Hausa population must be, by far, more than fifty million (50 million).

3.2 Education

Hausa has been taught outside Africa since 1885, when the first course was offered in Berlin, Germany. Today Hausa is taught on a regular basis throughout the world, mainly at universities that have a department specializing in African languages (Ekkehard, 2012; Thompson, 2015; ALS, 2015).

There are various works on Hausa which are made by the non-*Hausawa*. ALS, (2015) outlines some of them thus; German missionary Jakob Friedrich Schon's *Grammar of the Hausa Language* was published in 1862. His publication opened floor for a number of scholarly works concerning the Hausa language. The early ones among them include; Sergio Baldi's *Systematic Hausa Bibliography* (1977), Paul Newman's *The Hausa Language: An Encyclopedic Reference Grammar* (2000), and Philip J. Jaggard's *Hausa* (2001) (Yahaya, 1988; Atuwu, 2009; ALS, 2015)

3.3 Media

Radio and television broadcasting in Hausa is ubiquitous in northern Nigeria and in Niger. Also, radio stations in Ghana and Cameroon have regular Hausa broadcasts. Moreover, international broadcasting co-operations such as the BBC, Radio France Internationale, China Radio International, Voice of Russia, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, Radio Moscow, Radio Beijing and IRIB broadcast in Hausa (Garba, 2010; Ahmad, 2012).

Number of magazines and newspapers, however not less than hundred different publishers, are in constant circulation within the Hausa community and beyond. Bunza, (2008) lists some of them thus; *Fitila* of Analyst Kanduna, *Lifidi* of Comemo Nigerian Ltd Zariya, *Zamani* of Gidan Dabino Publishers Kano, *Annashuwa* of Smartstar Pictures Kano, *Walqiya* of Gimbiya Publishers Kano and *Aminiya* of Trust News Papers Group Kaduna among others.

3.4 Assimilation

Within the past two hundred years, Hausa has been spreading rapidly within Western and Northern Africa. Over the course of the past 50 years, this expansion has been the most dramatic in northern Nigeria, where Hausa has replaced a number of indigenous languages and has become the dominant lingua franca (Musa, 2013). Adamu, (1978) opines that, no minor language, which is in constant contact with Hausa, could resist its domination. Thus, *Fulani*, *Kudawa*, *Ayyukawa*, *Tacene* as well as *Kirfawa* communicate with Hausa, unless few of them who live far from cities. Similarly, Adamu, (1978) affirms that, Hausa language dominate many languages to the extent that their speakers (the minor languages) use Hausa as their first language (Yahaya, 2004). In places such as Bauchi, Gombe, Plateau, Kaduna and Potokum, Hausa has emerged first language to many people who

were native speakers of other languages (Newman, 2000; Yakasai, 2005). However, even amongst the other two major Nigerian languages (Igbo and Yoruba), some communicate in Hausa language (Abraham, in Garba, 2010).

4.0 The Need to Document/Preserve Hausa Language

Language is the mind, spirit, and soul of a people (Fishman, 1996). Therefore, there is the need to protect, preserve, promote, and practice our indigenous languages. It worth gathering all the knowledge, wisdom, and energy we possess to ensure their survival, spread and development (Verna, 2002). The fact that a substantial number of the languages still spoken today are threatened by extinction (Jost, Nikolaus, & Ulrike, 2006), arises the need to document our indigenous languages for better. In addition, in order to avoid indirect colonization of using foreign language as the national language in Nigeria, there should be prior campaigns for the development of the three major languages in various domains of national life such as education, hospitals, market places, National Assembly and State House of Assembly (Tsaure & Sani, 2016).

4.1 What is to be Documented

Language documentation might need the preservation of data and information on the following aspects:

- i. Historical information
- ii. Works from native and non-native experts
- iii. Language teaching materials
- iv. Music and art materials
- v. Biographical information (Richard *et al* ND)

4.2 The Procedures for the Documentation of Hausa Language

Verna, (2002) discloses some steps he considers vital in documenting indigenous language:

- i. The language must be banked in form of books, journals and other audio-visual forms of data keeping.
- ii. The level of consciousness of the speakers need to be raised for them to know why the language is nearing extinction, and the negative effect of that.
- iii. Training and certification must be rendered to keep the language under educational and research atmosphere.
- iv. Comprehensive and appropriate curriculum must be developed. This is to enable the smooth teaching and learning of the cultural, literal and the linguistic aspect of the language.
- v. There is the need to engage in meaningful research. This is to find solutions to problems affecting the language and to accelerate its development.

However, (Jost, Nikolaus, & Ulrike, 2006) introduce the grammar-dictionary format of language documentation. This format of language documentation targets the language system. That is, it is based on the notion of a language as an abstract system of rules and oppositions, which underlies the observable linguistic behavior. In this view, documenting a language essentially involves compiling a grammar (set of rules for producing utterances) and a dictionary (a list of conventional form-meaning pairings used in producing these utterances). To this core of the documentation, a number of texts are often added, either in the form of a text collection or in the appendix to the grammar. The texts added usually have the function of extended examples for how the system works in context. These texts are usually taken from the corpus of primary data on which the system description is based. They however, do not actually provide access to these primary data because they are edited in various ways. Providing direct access to the complete corpus of primary data is typically not part of this format.

5.0 Conclusion

Hausa language is one of the most spoken languages in Africa. It is past growing because of its simplicity, richness in vocabulary and grammar and its ability to assimilate other language it comes in contact with. It is being studied in number of universities across the globe and has. In addition, programs in radio and television

stations have being on both national and internationally. However, the need for documentation and preservation of the language arises so that it is risen up to meet up with the standard of national language. This is however to have an indigenous language as the official language. Thus, the language which could maintain culture and values as well as help in the rapid booming of educational and economic sectors as well as social, political and religious practices.

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