Determining the Standard of Education in Nigeria: The Case of Hausa Orthography

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Abstract
This study examined the determining standard of Education in Nigeria: The case of Hausa Orthography. Hausa being a chadic language is spoken mainly in northern Nigeria and some African countries. It is also being spoken and used in the media in countries like Germany, England, America, China and many more countries. It is also used in the newspapers like: Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo, Aminiya, Rariya, Hausa Leadership and many more magazines. One basic premise of writing Hausa is the rules that are not made in vacuum. The study looked at standard policies of writing the language and its standardization. It also examined the orthography. Also the paper briefed on the early high standard of education in Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the language learning.

Keywords: Hausa Language, Standard of Education, Orthography, Education

Introduction
Hausa is a chadic language with the largest number of speakers, … Hausa’s modern official orthography is a Latin based alphabet called boko, which was introduce in the 1930s by the British. Boko (or bookoo) is a Latin alphabet used to write the Hausa language. The first boko was devised by Europeans in the early 19th century, and developed in the early 20th century by the British (mostly) and French colonial authorities. It was made the official Hausa alphabet in 1930. Since the 1950s boko has been the main alphabet for Hausa.

Orthography is a set of conventions for writing a language. It includes rules of spelling, hyphenation, capitalization, word break, emphasis and punctuation. Most significant languages in the modern era are written down and for most such languages a standard orthography has been developed, often based on a standard variety of the language, and thus exhibiting less dialect variation than the spoken language. Sometimes there may be variation in a language’s orthography. In some cases orthography is regulated by bodies as language academics, although for many languages including Hausa. Orthography as is done coincides with the teaching and adoption of Hausa writing by means of English alphabets, known as “Boko Haruf”. Despite the fact that Hausa for long has its own dictionary, speakers and learners have ignored its relevance in keeping them aware of how standard style of writing and spelling could be maintained. Moreso, the Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo, Hausa newspaper had ceased to remain on float, and only in recent years that version of Hausa newspaper i.e. Rariya and Hausa Leadership had emerged. Thus the issue of Hausa as lingua franca in northern Nigerian became prominent.
Hausa Language and Standardization Policies

Hausa is a language being spoken in Western Sub-Saharan region of Africa. Hausawa is a term attributed to the people who speak Hausa. The actual origin of Hausawa is often contestable amongst academics. The history of Hausa people is varied according to sources; Daura and Bayajidda and the exclusive Ethiopian connection. Stories of Hausa people are filled with myths and controversies. But many of these sources have established that they are people whose traditions make up their identity. Hausawa were known to have been farmers and at certain historical epoch of their lives they remain as traders. The Hausa land is populated with their tribesmen to the size of 39 million. It is spoken mainly in Northern Nigeria and Niger and also in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Germany, Ghana, Sudan and Togo. Geography and religion played and still are determining factors in explaining the activities of Hausa people. Migration is said to place the Hausa people strategically on the water surface along the savannah area Islam is mainly the creed of them. They are therefore, connected to the Arabs of the Middle East in terms of Islamic practices and rites.

Arabic language and Hausa are two languages that share vocabulary, but fail to bear any mutual intelligibility. The long interaction due to trade and Islam put the two languages on proper exploit of shared oral literature and folklore. The Qur’an as the Book of Islam enhance cordial relationship between the Hausas and the Arabs. Let us not mistake the two languages as from the same language group.

Standardization of Hausa Language

Standardization of Hausa might have faced or undergone several research and changes in documentation. Any living language and that has widespread and being put into use in various human activities must have standard dictionary. Standardization is therefore the attempt to change for some conventional reasons as convenience, linguistic, geography, population, politics, economy, etc, the dialects that are consistent and which their grammatical rules are seemingly same and which bring about acceptable change. For example, the dialects in Hausa are in many respects mutually intelligible and share numerous literatures, linguistic repertoire, culture, costumes and norms. Particular proverbs and metaphors essentially built up to give sense in meaning to kind of thoughts in expressions. That is to that amongst Hausa dialects inherent in them have been competition, for instance, on which variety is most frequently used. Hausa standardization cannot be complete without looking at its process and system of writing. Ajami is one adoption of system/style of writing using Arabic letters. Though such adoption is not without modification – the result has been that the master of it is who does the script. Ajami has achieved a lot towards the spread of Hausa language across Sub-Sahara Africa, Sudan, Egypt, Libya and the United Kingdom. The Hausa people in the 17th and 18th centuries had form of literacy and numeracy using Arabic alphabets for the purpose of documentation and administration. An example of personal letter written between traders in the 17th century in Ajami to a trader based in Tripoli was discovered in the 1990’s.

Orthography and Standardization

The Hausa language orthography is seriously part of language study that teachers in institutions face difficulties. Given the style of writing in Hausa, and in every dialect of it, spelling amongst students poses challenge. There has been adoption of English alphabets to
represent the sound approximation of Hausa sound system. Ajami system of writing now is obsolete in the sense that hardly one sees it being formerly used. In the 1940s and 1950s in Northern Nigerian, Ajami was used at Qadi Courts and Heads of Wards Administrative offices; where the function of English had never been pervasive.

By 1960 during Independence “Boko Haruf” – English alphabets became officially adopted to simplify and obviously to connect the relevance of Hausa language into the polity. Lack of literacy amongst the vast majority of Hausa speaking people across the North also, provided the background to which Ajami was entrenched. For example, the Ajami script is used on Nigeria’s currency to simplify for the then only Ajami readers to understand their value. However, Ajami is not for that alone it encumbers the link of the northern Hausa people with the rest of the world. It is also a matter of history that the leadership in the North might not have wanted the linked with particularly the Arab world. So, Ajami was affected with some level of standardization – though not in the same way it took for the employment of the English letters.

Two issues concur in argument on standardization of Hausa orthography i.e. the adoption of English letters because of its link to the English writing and also because Ajami was dropped in order to help synchronize the use of Hausa boko match with the vast literacy demand. Hausa orthography, therefore, become standardized – though not adequately and thoroughly made aware among learners of Hausa. Even native speakers who have gone through Western Education have been lacking skills to write accordingly. Despite the fact that Hausa orthography is being taught at all levels, it has remained problematic to students or learners of Hausa language. For instance, in the core curriculum orthography has been objectified as part of teaching process of Hausa language while orthography and dialectology are through research being investigated, students’ interest in writing correctly as prescribed of orthographical procedures is not there. Moreover, students’ being trained and taught to master the skills of orthography are often confused or influenced by their poor knowledge of English writing system. Example; common mistakes in Hausa orthography: a times speech sound differs with the real Hausa writings. And there are common mistakes to see in writings on bill boards, transportation vehicles and sometimes in newspapers. When it comes to writing on one stem words like pronouns, verbs and linkers you find these errors.

A verb like: ci, shi, ji, etc; pronouns like: shi, ni, ke, kai, some linkers like –r and –n and possessives.

Examples of sentences with common errors in pronoun and verbs are:

1. (a) Ni ne na ce ta ci  
   Na ji ya yi  correct  
   Ita ce ta yi correct

2. (b) Nine nace taci wrong
   Naji yayi wrong
   Itace tayi wrong

2. (a) Rigar Musa correct
   Gidan Bala correct
   Hular Sarki correct

2. (b) Rigam Musa wrong
   Gidam Bala wrong
   Hulas Sarki wrong
The Early High Standard of Education

The political leadership in the 50s, 60s and 70s are patriots, who did their best to give a helping hand to the young ones below them and even to generations unborn at that time; by making huge investments in education. They did not only establish concrete movemental superstructures in form of capital projects, though the establishment of primary, secondary, tertiary institutions and universities, but also financially supported those young learners in various levels of the education. Moreover the political leadership at that time was selfless, patriotic, foresighted and broadminded, as opposed to the egocentric, callous, unpatriotic, short-sighted, chicken hearted and sadistic class of leadership of today. The leaders in those days provided the schools with all the necessary facilities to take teaching and learning a pleasure. They gave generous financial and non-financial incentives to teachers and students, in order to teach well and learn well respectively. They provided a very positive atmosphere conducive for teaching and learning respectively. And these positive developments were instrumental to the high standard of education obtained in those days and the reverse of such positive developments constitute the background of the frightening fall of the standard of education today. All of us who attended schools in the 1950s, 60s and 70s knew very well how generous, merciful and foresighted our leaders were, in the way they handed our education. This cannot be said of today’s leaders, despite the enormous amount of money at the disposal of the later, as opposed to the meager amount of money at the disposal of the former.

These three decades 1950-1980 were the most momentous, the most progressive, the most dynamic and the most liberal, in the way education was managed, financed and developed in Nigeria. The political leaders of those days proved themselves practically as patriots, foresighted nationalists, political giants, and selfless supermen, who suppressed their human tendencies to accumulate wealth for their own personal aggrandizements and preferred to spend the nations money in a long-term investment (Education) in order to enhance a better future for the young generations and even those unborn. However, after the mid 1980s, things turned upside down because the various leaderships at the state and national levels, became ego-centric, sadistic, callous, short-sighted, unpatriotic and squandermanian. They literally strangulated the education system. And as political dwarfs, they undermined our national scientific and technological take-off. Academic researchers were frustrated and starved of funds; research institutes were literary killed; hard-working individual academicians were frustrated and intellectually handicapped; as they could not afford to publish books, because of the unbelievable expensive nature of the project. The research and tertiary institutes were drastically made to lacking equipment to conduct academic activities.

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Babangida administration (1985) had its impact on education. The government that used to sponsor research and training of personnel within and outside the country stopped. Teachers whose status can be measured to the development of the country are nowhere to fit with other teachers of different world. As it is often said “no nation can rise above its teachers”.

The National Policy on Education

Education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise, but a huge government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of government’s complete and dynamic intervention and active participation. The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effective national development.
Since a national policy on education is government’s way of achieving that part of its national objectives that can be achieved using education as a tool, no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the Nation. Nigeria’s philosophy of education therefore is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system. In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people’s culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother-tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The government, in its views on the report of the committee on the NPE, agreed that the medium of instruction at the primary school level was initially the mother-tongue or the language of immediate community of the learner and at letter stage English.

Language and Learning

Man, a social animal, is distinct from other species for his possession of language. Many researchers, especially social psychologists like Bruner, Piaget and Vygotsky, have asserted the importance of language to learning. Piaget (1952 cited Stone, 1966 p.190) believes that children’s ability to solve problems has been seen to improve greatly when they are able to express them symbolically using language. Without language symbols, whether mathematical, verbal, written, pictured or gestured, we would have no mean of communication, and hence no mind (Ozmon and Craver 1981 p.233). The child, who lacks experience of language which is mobile and versatile encouraging abstraction and classification, will lack the opportunity to develop higher symbolic processes: (stone 1966 p.185). There is no doubt that the mother tongue is the language that possess these qualities because it is the mother tongue that offers maximum opportunity for individual intellectual; development marked by maximum originality, initiative and positive self-image: (Afolayan, 1989 p.183).

The above assertions stressed the importance of mother tongue in teaching less could be expected from a learner who is taught in a language ‘alien’ to his culture and thinking. Nnolim (2009 p.3-4) believe that Nigeria’s progress lies in the development of the mother tongue a major vehicle of acculturation which help advance the cause of national unity and cultural identity.

National policy on Education, as quoted by Effiong (2007 p.143) states in section 5, subsection 22(d) that “Secondary education shall develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of word cultural heritage”.

Paradoxically, section 4, subsection 19(f) states that:

From the fourth year (in primary school) English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.

Continued use of English as a medium of instruction and the introduction of French side by side with Nigerian indigenous languages as taught subjects, really retard not ‘promote Nigerian languages, art and culture’. Scholars (Jibril, 2007 cited in Adegbite and Akinwale, 2010 p.102) have raised serious alarm towards current neglect of Nigerian indigenous language and the dominant usage of English and have warned that if the trend continues unchecked, indigenous languages, including the major ones, face the danger of extinction. To
promote Nigeria’s indigenous languages, local languages should be adopted as languages of instruction at all levels in Nigerian institutions and the teach English and probably French, as other subjects.

**Conclusion**
The issues of Hausa language, Ajami, mother tongue and orthography are noted and therefore affirmed that they are distinguishing research elements in the development and adoption of pedagogies in schools and colleges. The paper highlighted in particular, the intricacies involved in teaching orthography in the context in which teachers operate. The situation is that which requires practical method as developed in, for example, the NCE Hausa minimum standard. On general note, one question is still not being answered; how would orthography be maintained in a situation where the general readership is on the decline?

Many theorists and researchers have affirmed the significance of the mother tongue in teaching both young and adult learners. For this reason, many nations have opted for their indigenous languages as languages of instruction.

In Nigeria, however, the language of imperialists English – has remained the language of instruction in all schools. Arguably, there is falling standard of education in Nigeria. To promote education attainment, Nigeria should evolve a viable language planning, which is based on the Nigerian indigenous languages.

**Recommendations**

Previous experiences of Nigeria, in relation to the language of Education, have indicated that the policy of making English the cornerstone of education ‘was dictated by political considerations rather than by educational needs of the people’ (Ogunsola 1977 cited in Musaazi 1986 p.287). Since colonial time till date little has been done to change the educational language policy to suit Nigeria’s peculiarities and needs.

For further development of education in Nigeria, the following proposals are made:

- The three major Nigerian languages should be the languages of instruction in all institution of learning in Nigeria. The National Primary Commission (NEPC), in conjunction with the World Bank, has already published some books in Nigerian indigenous languages for science, mathematics, social studies and other subjects for all levels at primary school.
- Hausa should be the language of instruction throughout the Northern part of Nigeria, Igbo in the East and Yoruba in the west.
- Other majority language like Efik, Edo, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Idoma, Gwari and so on, should be made compulsory subjects of study in areas where each has substantial number of speakers.
- Students of primary three and above should learn English as any other subject is learnt. Thus, English should serve the role of associated language of study.
- Reviving the National Language Centre for codification of each major/main/minor Nigerian languages.

**References**


https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki>Hausa....


