Language Standardization A Study of Hausa (Kano And Bauchi) Dialects

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Abstract

Language is a living entity that is always in constant change. It develops change, modernizes and vanishes. In every language there are items that die out of others, developing using by using different strategies or devices of word formation to express modern needs of a particular language community. The purpose of this research is to examine the language standardization in Nigeria, a study of Hausa community of Bauchi and Kano with the view of analyzing the areas of similarities and differences between the two dialects. The study analyzes the differences which are prominent in the dialects and also examines if these differences the dialects hinder communication. It also studied the criteria for a language to be standard. Therefore, the study adopted the eclectic approach and generative dialectology approach to the study of dialects and contrastive analyses to the study of lexical items and features for language standardization, oral interview was conducted to the native speakers of the dialects observations was also employed in data collection. The result from the study reveals some lexical and phonological differences found in the dialects and reasons for the variations such as geographical features. The process of standardization cannot be seen as merely as a matter of communal choice but an innocent attempt on the part of society as a whole to choose a variety that can be used for official purposes and in addition a linguafranca.

Keywords: Language, Standerdization, Lexical Dialect, Hausa of Kano and Bauchi.

1. Background of the study

Every widely spoken language has regional variations, known as dialects, which differ depending on the area. Additionally, within a single community, the language may vary between different social groups. This demonstrates that no human language is entirely fixed or

uniform; all languages exhibit internal variation. These differences manifest in pronunciation, vocabulary, meaning, and grammatical structures, varying from one group or speaker to another. If the variations within a language are mutually intelligible, the speakers consider them dialects of the same language. However, when the variations are not mutually intelligible, they are regarded as different languages.

Language, whether spoken or written, serves to communicate ideas, knowledge, experiences, and thoughts. Scholars like Dittmar (1976) define a language as "that variety of speech community that is legitimized and institutionalized as a superior regional method of communication as a result of socio-political process." A dialect is a distinct form of a language, originating from either regional or social differences, and is characterized by specific linguistic features. Variations peculiar to particular speech forms within a community are known as dialects.

This research aims to examine the speech forms of Hausa, particularly in Bauchi, as spoken by the Hausa people. The study is based on the observation that the language exhibits certain variations due to different environmental influences and social interactions among the speakers. The research focuses on comparing the Hausa spoken in Bauchi and Kano.

1.1 The Hausa People

Hausa belongs to the Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. It holds a prominent position within this branch, being widely recognized and utilized. Particularly notable is its prevalence in education and its substantial literary contributions. With an estimated 40 to 50 million speakers, including both native and non-native speakers, it stands as one of the most extensively spoken African languages.

1.2 Where is Hausa Spoken?

The majority of Hausa speakers reside in Northern Nigeria and the Southern Republic of Niger. In Nigeria, the Hausa-speaking region encompasses the historical emirates of Kano, Katsina, Daura, Zaria, and Gobir. These territories were amalgamated into the Sokoto Caliphate following the Fulani Jihad led by Usman Shehu 'Danfodio in the early 19th century. Additionally, the Hausa language is spoken by diaspora communities, including traders, scholars, and immigrants, in urban areas across West Africa. These areas include southern and central Nigeria, Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, as well as Chad, the Blue Nile Province, and the western region of Sudan.

1.3 Hausa and its Dialects

Hausa exhibits various geographical dialects, characterized by differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. Notably, distinctions can be observed between eastern dialects, such as those spoken in Kano, and areas to the south (Zaria), southeast (Bauchi), and with Daura, as well as western dialects like Sokoto and Gobir, extending northwards into Niger. Within the eastern dialects, a standardized form known as Standard Hausa has emerged, primarily based on the "*Kananci*" dialect of Kano, a major commercial hub in Northern Nigeria. Standard Hausa serves as the benchmark for written language in books, newspapers, and broadcast media on radio and television. It is also utilized as the medium of instruction in schools, colleges, and universities, including institutions like Humboldt University Berlin, Germany. Importantly, these dialects of Hausa are mutually intelligible.

2. Language Standardization

Language, despite commonly being seen as uniform and static, undergoes perpetual competition and evolution. Its usage varies across regions, social groups, and contexts, yet there exists a standardized form typically deemed as "correct." This study delves into the phenomenon of

language standardization, its objectives, and its impact on language evolution. Furthermore, it explores the evolution of standard English as a case study to elucidate the standardization process.

2.1 What is a Language?

Language serves as a multifaceted tool for human interaction, encompassing basic communication of needs, social relations, and the formation of networks. Sapir (1921) characterizes language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols," highlighting its role as a system of communication utilizing sound symbols. As human communication becomes more intricate, so does the complexity of expression, influencing various domains from politics to science to literature.

Scholars have extensively explored language from ancient civilizations like the Indians and Greeks to contemporary linguistics, examining its origins, neurological impact, and cognitive function. Additionally, researchers have analyzed language components such as grammar, syntax, phonology, morphology, vocabulary, spelling, heritage, variation, and change. It is crucial to distinguish between language system and language use. De Saussure (1916) defines language use as "the combinations through which the speaker uses the codes provided by the language to express his own thoughts," while language system pertains to the capacity to produce language.

Contrary to the perception of non-linguists, who often view languages as distinct entities with clear boundaries, language operates along a continuum with regional and social variations. Therefore, individuals (e.g., Speaker A) within a particular class, structure, and geographical area utilize a specific language variety. The linguistic divergence between Speaker A and

Speaker B increases with geographical and social distance. Languages exhibit internal variations, with each language comprising multiple varieties. Hudson (1996:22) defines a variety as "a set of linguistic items with similar distribution," enabling the treatment of linguistic items within a multilingual community as a single variety.

Determining the distinction between a "language" and a "dialect" can be challenging. Haugen (1966) emphasizes the ambiguity of these terms in a complex linguistic landscape. One approach to differentiation relies on mutual intelligibility. Spanish and English, for example, are considered distinct languages due to their mutual unintelligibility. However, closer linguistic relatives like Spanish and Portuguese may share some degree of mutual comprehension. Nevertheless, linguistic leveling, interdialectal variants, and reallocation influence the evolving dynamics of language variation and social variation.

3. The Concept of Language Standardization

Despite the inherent universality of language, individuals vary in how they construct and convey ideas, resulting in diverse language use patterns. Influences shaping language use encompass factors such as regional background, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, age, and gender. Moreover, individuals adapt their speech subtly based on the context and interlocutor, a phenomenon known as communicative competence, leading to the notion that each person speaks their own dialect or variety of the language.

Given this diversity, the notion of a "standard" language warrants scrutiny. It's important to clarify that "standard" does not imply universality or uniqueness. Even within a single language, the extent of variation within regional and social contexts nearly precludes the existence of a singular manner of speaking common to all speakers. Rather, a "standard" language represents an ideal or "correct" variety within a given linguistic community.

Ferguson (1968:27) defines standardization as "the process of one variety of a language becoming widely accepted throughout the speech community as a supradialectal norm—the 'best' form of the language rated above regional and social dialects." Crystal (1985) characterizes standardization as the employment of a prestigious variety of a language within a speech community, transcending regional boundaries to provide a unified mode of communication. Standard languages, varieties, or dialects serve to unify communication across regions and are institutionalized norms employed in language instruction for foreigners, among other functions.

Leith (1997:33) views standardization as a multifaceted project that takes various forms over time, often involving the cultivation of an exclusive variety by elites. Wolff (2000:332) conceptualizes language standardization as a developmental process involving the selection and promotion of language variants, particularly in language planning, resulting in the creation of language-related resources such as grammars, spelling guides, dictionaries, and literature.

From these perspectives, it becomes evident that the standard language represents a chosen variety embraced by the speech community as the correct form for written and official purposes, imbuing it with prestige over other language varieties.

It's noteworthy to highlight the disparity between written and spoken language. While a language "standard" primarily applies to the written form, achieving absolute standardization in spoken language is unattainable. Efforts to document and regulate spoken language tend to focus more on orthography, syntax, morphology, and vocabulary than on pronunciation.

In the realm of language standardization, two prevailing approaches emerge:

1. Discriminatory approach: This approach selects one or two prestige dialects and elevates them to the standard language level, often relegating other dialects to inferior positions.

2. Pan-dialectal approach: This approach advocates for standardization by acknowledging all dialects as equals, fostering dialectal harmony and inclusivity.

3.1 Aims of Language Standardization

The aims of standardizing language are manifold:

1. To contribute to the development of a nation: Language plays a crucial role in national development, serving as a vehicle and manifestation of culture.

2. To facilitate communication: Standardization simplifies communication by establishing certain rules, enabling effective communication among speakers.

3. To serve as a model: Standardizing language allows it to be used as a model for everyone in the community.

4. To enhance unification: Standardization provides a common, mutually comprehensible language, unifying speakers.

5. To simplify teaching: Standardization makes language teaching easier, particularly in communities where multiple dialects or languages are spoken.

6. To serve a political purpose: Standardization can serve political reasons, such as claiming autonomy from domestic or foreign rule.

4. Process of Language Standardization

Haugen (1966) delineates a structured process for language standardization, comprising several distinct stages. First is the **selection** phase, wherein the choice of a standard variety is influenced not by inherent linguistic superiority but rather by social factors. The prestige associated with a particular variety often stems from the status of its speakers in political, military, economic, or social spheres, rather than any inherent linguistic qualities. The selection process aims to minimize linguistic variability by designating one variety as standard.

Next comes **codification**, a process involving both implicit and explicit actions aimed at prescribing linguistic norms. Codification entails the establishment of rules, particularly in orthography, morphology, and syntax, with lexicon standardization being more challenging due to its open-ended nature. Initially, informal codification occurs through prestigious written works, while more formal efforts involve the creation of reference materials such as dictionaries and grammars. Language academies may also play a role in codification, regulating and standardizing language usage at a national level.

Following codification is **elaboration of function**, during which the selected standard variety gains recognition and acceptance as a distinct linguistic entity. Codification increases awareness of the variety's legitimacy, leading to its expansion into new domains and social groups. As the standard variety is used to convey novel concepts, it undergoes lexical and syntactical expansion, often necessitating the creation of neologisms and adaptations. This process results in increased complexity and variation within the standard variety, establishing its acceptance in expanded societal contexts.

The subsequent stage is **acceptance**, wherein the norms of the standard variety are promoted, diffused, and enforced within the community. Institutions such as schools, ministries, media, and cultural establishments play crucial roles in fostering acceptance and establishing the standard as the normative form of the language. Over time, the standard variety comes to be regarded not merely as the best form of the language but as the language itself, while other varieties are marginalized as dialects.

Finally, Haugen (1972) emphasizes the importance of **maintenance**, which entails preserving the established standard by resisting change and competing variants. This process ensures the continuity and stability of the standard variety over time.

These stages of language standardization, as outlined by Haugen, illustrate a systematic progression from selection to maintenance, each phase contributing to the establishment and perpetuation of a standardized language variety.

	Form	Function
Society	Selection	Acceptance
Language	Codification	Elaboration

Table 1 (from Haugen 1972: 110)

4. Criteria for standard dialect selection

In determining a standard dialect among various variants, several widely utilized criteria are employed. According to Wolff (2000:335), these criteria typically encompass sociolinguistic considerations, occasionally supplemented by purely linguistic factors. The selection process is influenced by a range of social, psychological, and political factors, including:

- The numerical strength, denoted by both the size of the native speaker population and the extent of its use as a vehicular language by non-native speakers.

- The level of standardization achieved and the abundance of post-literary materials available.

- The historical and cultural prestige associated with the variant among non-native speakers, as well as its perceived linguistic "purity" among native speakers.

- The historical, cultural, and religious significance attributed to the variant by its native speakers.

- The political and economic dominance wielded by the native or non-native speakers of the dialect.

- The degree of mutual intelligibility among dialects within a language or language-clusters.

- The acceptability of the dialect by its users.

4.1 Examples of standard languages in the world

Arabic encompasses numerous varieties, many of which are mutually unintelligible. Despite this diversity, these varieties are considered part of a single language due to the existence of Literary Arabic, a standardized register that is generally comprehensible to literate speakers who have been exposed to it. Literary Arabic, often misleadingly referred to as Model Standard Arabic, is based on simplified Classical Arabic, the language of the Quran dating back to the 7th century CE (Holes, 2004).

Chinese, on the other hand, comprises various spoken forms known as fangyan, with major variants including Mandarin, Wu, Yue, and Min. These spoken variants are not mutually intelligible. Standard Chinese, based on the Beijing dialect of Mandarin, serves as the official language in several countries and regions, including the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Singapore, where it is respectively known as Putonghua, Guoyu, and Huayu (Norman, 1988).

Standard Finnish, known as yleiskieli, is primarily based on the dialects of Western Finland. Codified by Mikael Agricola in the 16th century, Finnish was developed to integrate the nation's dialects, aiming for national unification and linguistic consistency in written communication (Kuusi, 1964).

Parisian French serves as the standard in French literature, while Standard German evolved over centuries, initially as a written language, with the northern pronunciation eventually becoming

the universal standard (Haugen, 1972). The standard form of Modern Greek is based on Southern dialects, primarily spoken in regions such as the Peloponnese, Attica, and Crete. This standard, often referred to as "Athenian," is also official in Cyprus (Horrocks, 1997).

In India, two standardized registers of Hindustani have legal status: Standard Hindi and Urdu, with Hindustani often collectively referred to as Hindi-Urdu (Matras, 2009). Standard Hausa, described by Wolff (2003) as an artificial system primarily devised for written materials, is based on the speech of Kano, though it is rarely spoken. Similarly, Igbo has seen attempts at standardization, with experiments like Isuma Igbo and Union Igbo aiming to create a standardized form of the language accepted in printing and media (Armstrong, 1999).

4.2 The Development of Standard English

The progression of Standard English stands as a testament to the intricate interplay among historical, socio-political, and cultural influences. The emergence of standardization stemmed from the necessity for linguistic coherence and unity within societies, facilitating effective communication and nurturing a sense of national identity (Crystal, 2004). The roots of Standard English can be traced back to the Middle English era, which was shaped significantly by the Norman Conquest of 1066. This pivotal event saw French becoming the language of the ruling elite, while English retained its position as the vernacular of the common populace. Such linguistic dichotomy endured for centuries, profoundly shaping the trajectory of English standardization.

Despite the dominance of French in formal and literary spheres, English continued to undergo evolution and adaptation in everyday speech. The emergence of a distinct Middle English dialect, influenced by both French and Old English, laid the groundwork for the eventual standardization of the language (Baugh & Cable, 2002). Notably, the works of Chaucer during

the 14th century played a pivotal role in elevating the London dialect to prominence, thereby laying the groundwork for the eventual emergence of a standardized English form.

The late Middle English period witnessed significant strides in language standardization, driven by advancements in printing technology and the growing influence of the London dialect. The advent of William Caxton's printing press in the late 15th century facilitated the widespread dissemination of English texts, thereby contributing to the standardization of spelling and grammar (Crystal, 2004). Furthermore, the introduction of the Great Vowel Shift during this period brought about phonological changes that further molded the development of Standard English.

The Early Modern English period, spanning the 16th and 17th centuries, marked a period of consolidation and refinement for Standard English. The works of influential figures such as Shakespeare, along with the publication of the King James Bible, played pivotal roles in codifying linguistic norms and conventions (Baugh & Cable, 2002). Additionally, the establishment of grammar schools and the rising literacy rates contributed to the dissemination of standardized language forms, cementing the status of Standard English as the linguistic norm. In the modern era, Standard English has evolved into a global lingua franca, serving as a ubiquitous medium of communication across various domains, including business, academia, and technology. Despite the persistence of regional and social dialects, Standard English remains the benchmark for formal discourse and written communication, reflecting centuries of linguistic development and cultural heritage (Crystal, 2004). In an increasingly interconnected world, the ongoing evolution and adaptation of Standard English underscore its enduring significance as a conduit for expression and exchange.

4.2.1 Selection

Previously accepted variations in spelling, grammar, and pronunciation began to be perceived as problematic and requiring resolution (Crystal, 2004). The choice of variety for the establishment of Standard English was the East Midland dialect spoken by the merchant class in London (Baugh & Cable, 2002). Notably, this dialect was distinct from the Southeastern dialect used by the lower class, which eventually developed into Cockney (Baugh & Cable, 2002). Standard English, however, is not exclusively based on the East Midland dialect; it incorporates influences from various other dialects, suggesting a process of dialect leveling (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

The selection of the East Midland dialect can be attributed to several factors. During the 15th century, Westminster, situated near London, served as the hub of governmental administration, leading to the adoption of the East Midland dialect in official documents produced by the Chancery (Crystal, 2004). Additionally, the advent of the printing press played a pivotal role in disseminating this dialect, further solidifying its influence (Baugh & Cable, 2002). Moreover, the proximity of Oxford and Cambridge to London attracted students from diverse regions of England, facilitating the spread of the East Midland speech (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

4.2.2 Acceptance

By the mid-15th century, the East Midland dialect gained recognition as the established written standard for official documents, regardless of the native dialect of the scribe, marking a departure from earlier practices observed during Chaucer's era when scribes often modified his manuscripts to reflect their regional dialects (Baugh & Cable, 2002). However, by the time of Shakespeare in the 16th century, non-standard varieties of English ceased to be regarded seriously (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

This new standard initially found acceptance among government officials, followed by the literary elite, leading to its widespread adoption as the printed standard by the close of the 16th century (Crystal, 2004). Despite its pervasive influence, standard English never achieved universality, and regional variations persist to this day, albeit to a lesser extent (Baugh & Cable, 2002).

5. Elaboration of function

The decline in status of non-standard dialects was also influenced by the increasing emphasis placed on the standard itself, which began to serve a broader range of functions (Baugh & Cable, 2002). While non-standard varieties sufficed for informal contexts like everyday speech, they proved inadequate for literary, governmental, or scholarly purposes (Baugh & Cable, 2002). With the emergence of academic and scientific writing, English underwent further refinement to meet the requirements of these new contexts.

The objective of standardization has always been to achieve maximum versatility in function with minimal variation in form (Baugh & Cable, 2002). In essence, the standard should be adaptable for use across diverse domains while maintaining consistency in linguistic structure. Standard English has undergone extensive codification, resulting in grammar and vocabulary that are largely uniform worldwide (Crystal, 2004). This standardized form wields considerable influence, contributing to the decline of many longstanding dialects in England and Scotland (Crystal, 2004).

6. Methodology

This study uses the descriptive design which is considered as appropriate to the topic of the study. A contractive study of Hausawa and any other language that desires to study the texical and sound system of a language requires a careful description of lexical items in both dialects.

Fries (1945) asserts that "the most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of language 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 Wilson Model of Word Translation, and Banathy's model of analysis and structural grammatical model are adopted.

6.1 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 oral interview. The researcher being the native speaker of Hausa from Bauchi, plays an important role in the data collection for the research. The researcher draws his personal knowledge, observation and experience of the two dialects of Bauchi, Hausawa language which portray pragmatics that lied in the use of the 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 these with different pronunciation spelling but the same meaning.

Lexical items in Hausa Language that has same autography and meaning

S/N	Kano	Bauchi	English
1.	Gida	Gida	House
2.	Makaranta	Makaranta	School
3.	Soja	Soja	Army
4.	Ruwa	Ruwa	Water
5.	Daki	Daki	Room
6.	Kasuwa	Kasuwa	Market
7.	Asibiti	Asibitit	Hospital
8.	Abinci	Abinci	Food

9.	Haske	Haske	Light
10.	Duhu	Duhu	Dark

Lexical Items with different autography

S/N	Kano	Bauchi
1.	Waina	Masa
2.	Mummuki	Biredi
3.	Laulawa	Keke
4.	Gidan kaso	Gidan Yari
5.	Bakkade	Barkdai
6.	Fatake	Yan Kasuwa
7.	Dandali	Majalisa
8.	Kwarya	Koko
9.	Kwalba	Gwani
10.	Tsaki	Miyar Jiki

The table above shows 10 lexical items with about 90% are completely different from each other in spelling and pronunciation but have thesame meaning, even though the percentage agreement has confirmed that the two are dialects of Hausawa Language.

7. Findings

This section is dedicated to the examination, assessment, and interpretation of data both quantitatively and qualitatively, guided by the research inquiries at hand. The focus centers on scrutinizing the pragmatic aspects of lexical items within the two Hausa dialects. Dialects inherently fulfill various sociolinguistic functions in the broader evolution of a language. Through the lens of the posed research questions, notable disparities in pronunciation are evident, yet these differences have not posed significant challenges. Remarkably, the two

dialects exhibit mutual intelligibility, suggesting potential for both to attain standardization through adherence to a series of steps including selection, acceptance, diffusion, elaboration, maintenance, codification, and prescription (James M. & Lesley M., 1976).

8. Conclusion

It can be concluded that both the Hausa dialects of Kano and Bauchi exhibit both similarities and differences. However, they remain intelligible to speakers of both variants. Nonetheless, the process of language standardization carries inherent drawbacks, as it can foster feelings of superiority among speakers of the chosen dialect while engendering a sense of inferiority among those who use other variants. The selection of a single vernacular as the norm tends to privilege speakers of that particular variety while marginalizing alternative dialects and potential competing norms, along with their respective speakers. Despite variations in political and linguistic contexts, languages undergo analogous standardization processes, albeit with an acknowledgment of a commonly accepted "correct" form in written language. However, standardizing spoken language presents considerable challenges, as linguistic evolution is a natural aspect of living languages, making change inevitable. Complete standardization is only achievable in extinct languages, as living languages are inherently dynamic and resistant to uniformity. Nonetheless, attempts at standardization persist as a perennial endeavor.

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