

Languages and National Identity: Relevance of Dialect in Hausa Regional Identity

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Abstract- Dialect refers to regional variety of language with differences in vocabulary, grammar as well as pronunciation. Dialect therefore is a kind of variation that exists in the use of language from one part of the region to the other that shares the same language. A language without dialect is in the verge of extinction. Hausa language is very rich in terms of number of speakers that uses the language across the Hausaland and beyond. This makes the language to be a lingua franca and as such has various dialects. The Hausa scholars classified Hausa dialect into Western and Eastern dialects respectively. This paper therefore is aim at exploring the relevance of Hausa dialect in Hausa regional identity. The methodology to employed in carrying out the research is by careful observation of the use of dialects by the respective speakers of Hausa dialectal regions.

Index Terms- Language, Regional Identity, National Identity, Dialect.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hausa is a language with the largest number of speakers, spoken in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan and Togo. Hausa serve as a lingua franca in West African Countries. It belongs to the West Chadic languages subgroup of the Chadic languages, which in turn is part of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Scholars are of the view that Hausa major dialects can be classified into Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern Hausa dialects. Eastern dialects are Kananci, Bausanci, Dauranci, Gudduranci and Hadejanci. Western Hausa dialects are Sakkwatanci, Kutebanci, Katsinanci, Arewanci, and Kurhwayanci. Katsina is transitional between Eastern and Western dialects. Northern Hausa dialects are Arewanci for Arawa. Then Zazzaganci in Zaria is the major Southern dialect Ahmad (1992:13). The paper is therefore intended to make a critical analysis of the relevance of Hausa dialect in Hausa regional identity.

II. LANGUAGE DEFINED

Language is defined by various scholars and researchers; as such it is defined in different ways from different perspectives. According to Sapir (1921:7) defined language as purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced

symbols. But Muhammad (2011:3) as cited in Thirumalai (2003) viewed language as a system of arbitrary vocal expression by means of which members of a social group interact with each other. Going from the above definition one can therefore opined that language is verbal or written as well as a semiotic form of expression through which human being can communicate ideas and emotions which also serve as their identity.

III. THE CONCEPT OF DIALECT

Dialect refers to the variation that exists in the use of language by the speakers of the same language living in different location, Sani (2009:2). Yahaya (2013:106) argued that dialectical variation is refers to the different varieties of language spoken in different geographical location or by different categories of speakers of language based on age, gender and social status. Hausa Dialect therefore as termed by linguist is refers to the variety of a language that is characterizes of a particular group of the language speakers which is sometimes applied to regional speech pattern cause as a result of geographical, social as well as linguistic factors.

IV. CLASSIFICATION OF HAUSA DIALECTS

Hausaland covers much part of Northern Nigeria outside the middle belt and Borno. But also extends to the north of Kano and Katsina provinces. It also covers north and West of Sokoto down to Southern part of Niger Republic.

There are numerous distinct Hausa Dialects both in the northern states of Nigeria as well as in the republic of Niger. Most of the dialects centers on the major cities. For instance, in the northern part of Nigeria, we have Kananci which is widely spoken in Kano which is the north central part of Nigeria. We also have Sakkwatanci spoken in Sokoto, further to the north of Kano is where Katsinanci is spoken with concentration of speakers in Katsina. Immediately to the south of Kano, Zazzaganci dialect is spoken with concentration of speakers at Zaria.

Dauranci centre around Daura which is north of Kano and East of Katsina, while Bausanci and Gudduranci centre around Bauchi state.

On the other hand, the dialects spoken in the Republic of Niger include Damagaranci which is spoken in Damagaram (Zinder) a city located to the northern part of Kano. We also have

Gobiranci spoken in Gobir (Tsbiri) directly west of Sokoto while Arewanci is spoken in Dogon Douthi which is situated east of Niamey and Kurfayanci is spoken in Kurfey (Filingi) north of Niamey. Other Hausa dialect with very small population in Niger can also be found include; Kyanganci spoken in Gaya and Agadanci which is spoken in Agadez.

Apart from the above dialect survey in Hausaland, some scholars are of the view that dialect of Hausa can best be categorized into Western and Eastern dialects respectively. Western dialects include Sakkwatanci, Katsinanci, Kurhwayanci and Arewanci which are spoken in Sokoto, Katsina, Kurfey, Dongon Douthi and Maradi respectively. While Eastern dialects of Kananci, Dauranci, Bausanci, Guduranci and Zazzaganci spoken in Kano, Daura, Bauchi and Zaria respectively.

In contrary to above category, Ahmad (1992:13) opined that Major Hausa dialects can be group into;

- i. Western Dialects- Sokoto, Tawa, Zamfara and Kabi
- ii. Eastern Dialects- Kano, Hadejia, Azare, Katagum Misau, Jama'are etc.
- iii. Northern Dialects- Katsina, Maradi, and Zinder.
- iv. Southern Dialects- Zaria and Bauchi

From the above arguments one may deduced that present of dialect in any given language shows the richness of vocabularies and other lexical items in that particular language in question. This leads to having variation in the usage of language by the same speakers of language.

V. REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF HAUSA DIALECTS

Languages survive and spread globally as their uses move from one point to the other. Therefore reason for the spread of dialects in any given language is obvious. That is even the reason why linguist opined that a language without dialect is at the verge of extinction and possibly endangerment.

Some of the reasons for the emergence and the spread of Hausa dialects include;

- i. **Migration:** Simply mean movement of people from place of origin to the other as a result of trade, work, and search for Knowledge and quest for adventure etc. People tend to change their attitude toward their language as a result of acculturation from either side; as such the issue of dialect may arise.
- ii. **Geographical Factors:** Physical barriers like mountains, rivers and thick forest usually separate people of the same language from having direct contact to each other and create barrier of communication between them. When this happened, the possibility of having a language variety within the language is paramount.
- iii. **Grammatical/ Linguistic Factors:** This is the principal reason for dialect, hence the essence of dialect is to have different varieties of words and phrases in the language so as enrich the language in question. Therefore speakers tend to develop their language in vocabulary and sentence construction.

iv. **Social Factors:** Social status of speakers often create language gap in the use of language. For example the speech of the rulers is different from that of their masses, because rulers tend to speak with fairness and choice of words.

v. **Environmental Factors:** This is where the issue of assimilation arise, whenever there is a contact of two or more speakers of different languages, then the minority will face the threat of assimilation. The majority language will be at the advantage of getting new varieties of words, hence dialect will developed.

VI. RELEVANCE OF DIALECT IN HAUSA REGIONAL IDENTITY

Before we embark into detail discussion let us look at the concept of regional variation and identity in language. Regional variation in language more especially Hausa is what brought about the issue of dialects which are characteristics features most widely observed while spoken the dialect.

Identity in language is refers to the situation where part of a person's identity is not only concern with the country he belong to but also concentrated on the region he live. As such this type of identity is a sense of belonging similar to that of national identity but in a smaller scale. For example, if one was asked where he was in Hausaland? He would simply reply, Sokoto, Maradi, Katsina, Zaria, Bauchi, Dogon dutsi, Kano or any of the major cities of Hausaland, as such; every region in Hausaland is expected to use a specific dialect for their identity.

Therefore the native language of any community is its identity; hence identity is very important for the social and psychological well-being of the individual or group of people. Identity gives an individual a solid sense of who he is even in the plural context. Therefore without an indigenous language, it is difficult to sustain the cultural identity of the people in the region Usman (2014;13)

In trying to support argument of the paper, the two broad category of dialect will be analyzing (Western and Eastern dialects). Our analysis will be carried on the basis of morphological and syntactical processes in comparison with the standard Hausa dialect.

Western Dialect: These are dialects of Sakkwatanci, Katsinanci, Kurfayanci, and Arewanci spoken in Sokoto, Katsina, Kurfey and Dogon Douthi respectively. There are features that distinguish them from the conventional or standard dialects of Hausa as shown in the following examples; **W.D** (stand for western dialects) while **S.D** are for standard dialects respectively.

1. Western Dialects are identified with the use of /h/ (hw) sounds instead of /p/ or /f/ sounds.

W.D	S.D	GLOSS
Hwarii	farii	white
Hita	fita	go out
Hwatarii	fatarii	skirt

2. Use of /sh/ sound as the third person singular possessive pronoun suffix instead of **sa**. E.g,

W.D	S.D	GLOSS
Wandonsi	wandonsa	his pant
Agogonsi	agogonsa	his watch

3. Use of singular pronoun **shi** for subjective pronoun instead of pronoun **ya**.

W.D	S.D	GLOSS
Shi karanta	ya karanta	that he read

4. Use of third person plural relative perfective form

W.D	S.D	GLOSS
Munka	Muka	Plural Relative Pronoun
Sunka	Suka	”
Kunka	Kuka	”

5. Western dialects have more frequent germination (doubling of consonants).

W.D	SD	GLOSS
Zowwaa	Zuwaa	Coming
Kassuwa	Kasuwa	Market
Jakki	Jaki	Donkey

Now let us consider various dialects of Hausa with their distinctive features that make them unique and identical in nature.

- i. **Sakkwatanci dialect:** This dialect is very rich in terms of vocabulary and number of speakers utilizing the dialect. There are a specific sounds which are present in Sakkwatanci but absent in other dialects. Example consider the following consonants sounds /sw/ in swahe, /lw/ in lwatsi, /hw/ in hwawa, hwara or hwaruku etc.

Sakkwatanci	S.D	GLOSS
Swaha	Safe	Morning
Swabo	Sabo	Sin
Hwara	Fara	to begin
Hyade	fyade	to rape

The moment you came across a speaker pronouncing the above words you will begin to think that he is from Sokoto region (dialect). Apart from word construction, even in Sentence construction we sometimes heard Sokoto people in their utterances saying for example;

Sakkwatanci	S.D	GLOSS
1. Eh wallah!	Wallahi	Swear to God
2. Au wallah!	Wallahi	Swear to God
3. Musa yana bakin diga.	Musa ya je bakin titi	Musa is by the road
4. Wandanga dalibai hazikai na	Wadannan daliabai hazikai ne.	The students are hard working.

- ii. **Katsinanci:** The dialect share some common features with Sakkwatanci, but is unique in the use of /ts/ sound, more especially when the sound/ts/ appear or proceed the vowel /i/ or /o/. Example;

Katsinanci	S.D	GLOSS
Katchina	Katsina	Town Katsina
Tchogwami	Tsegumi	Gossip
Tchokana	Tsokana	Challenge
Tchintuwa	Tsintuwa	Discovery

- iii. **Arewanci:** The is spoken in Dogon Douchi of Niger Republic, the distinguishing features of the dialect can be seen in their mode of sentence formation. For instance;

Arewanci	S.D	GLOSS
Zaa ni tahiyaa	Za ni tafi	I will travel
Ya tahiyaa	Ya tafi	he has gone
Ya fara hanya	ya tafi	he has gone
Tahoo ka yi mini bagire. Zo ka raka ni		Let's go

- iv. **Kurhwayanci:** The share some features with Sakkwatanci dialect, this may not be unconnected with the closeness of the two regional dialects, or as a result of richness of vocabulary of Sakkwatanci. For example,

S.D	Sakkwatanci	Kurhwayanci	Gloss
Sauri	Samri	Samri	fastness
Muka	Munka	Munka	perfect pronoun

- v. **Zamfaranci:** This is a sub dialect of Sakkwatanci spoken in some part of Zamfara State. There are some features that distinguishes it from Sakkwatanci and standard dialects. For instance;

S.D	Zamfaranci	Gloss
Aure	anre/amre	Marriage
Mu wuce	Mu wucekke	let's go
Wuce	Wucekke	go

Now let us go back to the Eastern dialect and examine their common features in identifying their region as follows;

- a. **Kano Dialect:** The most striking features of Kano dialect is the speed at which the are making an utterance, they usually economize words while speaking the language. For instance;

S.D	Kananci	GLOSS
Mene ne?	Mee?	What is it?
Kai Wane ne?	waye?	Who are you?
Kada	kar	not to
Ya ce	ice	he said
Bari na fada maka	Bara na gaya maka	let me tell you.

- b. **Dauranci:** Dauranci dialect lack /sh/ Sound, instead they replaced /sh/ with /h/ or /hy/ sound. Example;

S.D	Dauranci	Gloss
Reshe	rehe	Branch
Shuka	hyuka	breed
Nishadi	nihyadi	entertained
Shiga	higa	entry

- c. **Bausanci:** They lack /c/ and /ts/ sounds in their dialect, instead they replaced /c/ with /sh/ and /ts/ with /s/ respectively. E.g

S.D	Bausanci	Gloss
Ciki	shiki	stomach
Zuciya	zushiya	heart
Cikini	Shiniki	trade

- d. **Gudduranci:** This is the dialect spoken in Misau, Jama'are, Katagum, Gwaram and Birnin kudu. They speakers of this dialect lacks /j/ instead they replaced it with /ʔ/ sound. For example;

S.D	Gudduranci	Gloss
}ofa	ʔ ofa	door
}afa	ʔafa	leg
}waro	ʔwaro	insect
ba}i	baʔi	black

- e. **Zazzaganci:** The main feature of Zazzaganci is the absent of gender distinction in the dialect. Consider the following examples;

f.

S.D	Zazzaganci	Gloss
Matata	matana	my wife
Motata	motata	my car
Wandona	wandona	trouser
Hulata	hulana	cap
Kekena	kekena	bicycle

Zazzaganci also replaces U with A in the treatment of names beginning with Un. Example,

S.D	Zazzaganci	Gloss
Unguwa	Anguwa	Area
Ungulu	Angulu	Vulture

VII. CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the paper has critically assessed the relevance of Hausa major dialects in Hausa regional identity. In an effort to support our argument, the paper has attempted to reveal the concept of dialect and its classification as well as the reasons for emergence and the spread of dialects in Hausaland. The paper therefore has attested that regional dialects play a role in regional identity as suggested in our general survey of Hausa major dialects. The paper also admits that every region in Hausaland has its own dialect for its socio-cultural identity.

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