

“HAUSA AND THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE QUESTION IN NIGERIA: PRIVILEGES, PROSPECTS AND PREDICAMENTS” BEING INAUGURAL LECTURE DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR DAHIRU MUHAMMAD ARGUNGU OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES, USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY SOKOTO AT THE UNIVERSITY ON.....

Preamble

Linguistically speaking, Nigeria is a rich, indeed a very rich nation. The reason is Nigeria is home to over 500 independent languages all vying for support and patronage from government as well as from the nation’s citizens as instruments of communication. If the world, roughly, has nearly 7000 languages, as current researches have shown, Nigeria will be contributing about 14 per cent to the pool of global languages while in Africa, given the continent’s over 2000 tongues, Nigeria can claim its share of about one quarter out of that grand total. In essence, Nigeria has a huge language capital and linguistic resource base; these translate into real engines of development since language drives national development in all facets of life. Indeed, the most advanced nations of the world today are those that have pinned their development onto their national languages.

Regrettably, in Nigeria, language is neither seen as resource nor as index of development, as understood in the more technologically advanced societies of Western Europe, Asia, and the Arab world. Perhaps, the greatest and recent examples of domesticating local languages for technological advancement can be seen in relation to the Chinese as well as the South Koreans, and for a very long time now, the Japanese. These countries primarily rely on their local languages for formal education and education is the fountain that has always nourished development. Although foreign languages like English are equally used in those countries, but such use is directed and controlled through robust language planning in such a way that local languages are protected from being seriously endangered. In Nigeria, not only has the absence of a robust official policy keeps endangering local languages but such languages are frequently identified by citizens as the sources of the country’s troubles, particularly when viewed through the prism of Nigeria’s critical multilingualism or its lingo-ethno pluralism.

Introduction

Since independence, and as is typical of most African nations, Nigeria has retained a foreign tongue, English, as its official medium at the expense of its local languages. A key reason often associated with this action is the country’s critical multilingualism which government finds a difficult nut to crack as to come up with a sound national language policy. Protagonists of this argument try to show that choosing any Nigerian language or groups of languages to serve as

national language(s) at the expense of other indigenous tongues could set communities against one another and, possibly, even set the nation on war path. As a result of this argument, a laissez-faire attitude with regard to language policy has set in on the part of government where English, and not Nigerian languages, officially, has dominated the country's sociolinguistic scene. Yet the idea of linking multilingualism with political crisis is not unique to Nigeria. The fact is Nigeria's multilingualism is not as critical as that of countries like Papua New Guinea (800 languages), Indonesia (700 languages) and India (). These countries have managed to have some measures of control over their intense forms of multilingualism by ensuring that a specific local language triumphs over and above a foreign colonial language, in the case of India, Hindi, in Papua New Guinea, Tok Pisin and in Indonesia Bahasa Indonesia. Yet the three countries have tolerated, indeed domesticated English as a necessary international medium of communication within their borders.

A major consequence associated with the delay in the emergence of a robust language policy in Nigeria is the continuing marginalization, indeed endangerment of the local languages and particularly in their unequal relationship with English in the country. This is in addition to what the local languages experience in their uncontrolled growth which gives rise to friction among them as the more widely spoken and dominant tongues endanger the least widely spoken and less dominant ones in their internal relationships. This complex and unstable sociolinguistic scenario in Nigeria has come about due to lack of a concrete, coherent and comprehensive national language policy in the country.

In this inaugural lecture, therefore, I have purposely examined Hausa's position in the context of Nigeria's multilingualism as well as the national language question focusing on the privileges the language has enjoyed, followed by a study of its prospects and, finally, I took a look at its predicaments in its solo march towards becoming Nigeria's national language either through any natural evolutionary process or its luxuriantly cultural pertinacity and whether Hausa does this, officially, regionally, again, or through any magic wand catapults itself into becoming a full blown Nigerian national tongue, because Hausa boasts of all these privileges and potentials in its credentials. Therefore, my reasons for choosing Hausa and making it the focus of this inaugural lecture is because, along with other Nigerian heritage languages, Hausa has for long suffered government's lackadaisical performance in language planning and policy matters in this country.

Language Planning and National Development

The role of language in national development is undisputable. Language facilitates the creation of knowledge and innovation by citizens, mainly through education which in turn contributes to the development of a nation in various sectors of life. In other words, the development of individuals, groups and societies has language as its conduit through education. Two related

concepts are important when discussing language in and language and national development. These are language planning and language policy. Frequently, sociolinguists regard these terms as two faces of the same coin. Often, however, in sociolinguistics discourse, the term planning may precede the emergence of a policy. So when bureaucrats team up with linguists or sociolinguists and other language experts to plan the linguistic resources of a nation, they might end up coming out with a language policy for a country.

Thus, we should understand that language planning is like any other planning of a national resource which is the process of choosing a language or group of languages and developing them to the desired standards in order to enable them solve the communication needs or problems of a community or country in nearly all facets of life – education, politics, media, commerce, etc. Wardhaugh (2000) quoting Weinstein (1980) described language planning as ‘a government authorized, long term, sustained, and conscious effort to alter language’s function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems.’

A country can plan its language and/or linguistic capital or resources in a number of ways which may involve assessing resources, complex decision-making, the assignment of different functions to different languages or varieties of a language in a community, and the commitment of valuable resources (Wardhaugh 2000). Thus, not only is language tied to national development of a nation, but it so commonly comes to be one of the ingredients in nationalist goals and programs (Fishman 1973).

Ascendency of English and its consequences

The English language is undoubtedly the most important legacy of the British colonial masters to Nigeria. The adoption of the imperial tongue as a language for wider communication dates back to 1862 when Lagos was formally established as a colony by the British invaders. Its subsequent spread is, therefore, linked closely to British colonial rule and its attendant Christian evangelical crusade, with their cultural, political, and economic ramifications.
(Baldeh 1990)

Given the fact that English has been Nigeria’s official language since independence in 1960 a pertinent question to ask is how has this official position affected national planning and development in the country? Even though this question is not the primary focus of this inaugural lecture, nevertheless, it is important to stress that the development of all peoples goes hand in hand with the use of their languages as tools of development. In Nigeria, because English is understood only by a small or even a very small percentage of Nigerians (about or less than 20 per cent), the majority remains excluded or locked out in dealing with government easily, in fact, most citizens cannot easily and rapidly be reached by government communication-wise. To reach government with their views too, citizens who do not understand English cannot easily and rapidly do so, given the barriers created by the official medium. In this case, such sections of the citizenry are indirectly denied their linguistic rights in such a way as to contribute their views and opinions toward the development of the nation.

The problem associated with the above scenario is that planning and development in Nigeria will always contain gaps of the aggregate views and opinions of certain categories of citizens, indeed the exclusion of the majority section, owing to the official role of English in the country. As Ouedraogo (2000) aptly observes, “people cannot participate in their own development when they cannot understand and control the knowledge and skills required for development.” Oyelaran (in Emenanjo 1990) castigates Nigeria this way: “A nation-state in which the constitution is an obscure document written in a language understood well by a small minority and used for communication by even less cannot be said to be politically developed.” He went further to argue that “when justice is carried out in a language which majority does not, and in all likelihood cannot control well in the near future, there is bound to be miscarriage of justice and the entrenchment of political power in the hands of the few who gain control of the language.” The knowledge and skills are, of course, acquired largely through language.

It is obvious that the only way to make more citizens participate in the development process of a nation is to employ a common or popular language(s) that everyone or most citizens can understand and which will enable them acquire the required knowledge and skills, thus allowing for more inclusion in place of exclusion of citizens as agents of development in society.

Let me quickly point out that in Nigeria, no one language or even group of languages can one hundred per cent allow for this job of inclusion to be realized, instrumentally, for the nation, but employing any language or groups of languages with the *required credentials and capacity and when endorsed by Nigerians whether through a ‘yes’ vote in parliament or opting for a nationwide linguistic census or plebiscite* can help fast track development in the country far more rapidly than where English, through education, has taken the country today. Moreover, this is in line with UNESCO’s mother-tongue language policy and action for multilingualism which aim at encouraging the development of coherent regional and national language policies that are conducive to the appropriate use of languages in a given community and country.

No doubt, for Nigeria, there are challenges associated with such proposals and I am fully aware of these. It is in the nature of multilingual countries like Nigeria to inherently face such challenges made up of different constraints and obstacles. But challenges are what forge and force citizens in a nation to come together to find appropriate solutions to the nation’s language or other problems. In other words, Nigerians should see linguistic constraints as part of the country’s challenges of nationhood, and in Africa, the bastion of multilingualism, Nigeria remains its hot bed. At any rate, at this point, I am not yet done with language policy proposals for the country. So, distinguished members of the audience, lend me more your ears!

The National Language Debate

Debate regarding the national language for Nigeria has a long history dating back to the pre-independence era. As this writer earlier reported (Argungu 2020 quoting Baldeh 1990), in the wake of independence, a hot debate ensued in the Nigerian Parliament about the adoption of

Hausa as a lingua franca (impliedly, as a national language) for Nigeria, but this met with stiff resistance as the Lagos-based Nigerian Daily Express quoted one of the parliamentarians saying:

Parliament should be more careful about involving itself in the language tangle into which it is now being drawn. English is the adopted official language, the outward expression of all that unites the various peoples in this country...to seek to replace English with some vernacular at a particular dateline is asking for more than the greatest nationalist of them all can handle.

Since the time this speech was made by its anonymous parliamentarian, several proposals have been put forward concerning the choice of a national language for Nigeria. Looking through the records, and by way of summary, these proposals border on three areas, namely, first, the views expressed by some Nigerians who prefer that English continues as the medium of governance in the country, in its official capacity. Secondly, there are those Nigerians who feel that any of the three country's major languages (i.e. Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba) can fill this national need. Thirdly is the group of Nigerians who see Pidgin English, owing to its neutral position, having the capacity to fill this national gap. In addition to these, numerous other suggestions in different forms have also been made, such as the creation of an artificial language to be called WAZOBIA (made up of Yoruba, Hausa, and Ibo lexical items) as well as GUOSA, another artificial language to be developed almost along the same lines as WAZOBIA, and several other suggestions many of which have either been viewed as simply utopian or non-utilitarian. In spite of the views so far expressed by the citizens, the Nigerian government is yet to show its interest in these debates and its opinion is unknown about them. Nor have the current nation's parliamentarians debated these issues or any one of them introduced a bill for discussions about the pending national language question in the National Assembly.

Thus, in the face of divergent opinions among Nigerians, English, in spite of its being a colonial legacy as well as a threat to Nigerian local languages, has continued to be government's favoured choice and principal medium of communication in governance in the country, virtually ignoring the presence of over 500 heritage tongues from which the country could choose a national language(s) to fast track national development.

Several countries have moved ahead to devise comprehensive and effective language policies. They do this not only to fast track development through inclusion of more citizens, but also to preserve their linguistic diversity and identity which are vital issues for the societies, groups and individuals along with their cultures and civilizations. Among such societies are the countries in the North, East and Southern Africa all of which demonstrate their active use of their indigenous languages (particularly Arabic and Swahili) in official matters. Countries outside

Africa that have achieved reasonable progress in language planning matters in Asia include Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, etc. Some of these countries had been on the same level of development with Nigeria in the 60s, and they all are in various ways multilingual. Western Europe is a classical example of domesticating local languages for national development where, at their common Parliament in Luxembourg, they employ their national languages in debates, thus recognizing not only the importance of their diversity, but also the preservation of their identities through egalitarian and inclusive language policies that are fully enshrined in those countries' constitutions.

Nigerian Constitutional Provisions

As far as what could directly or indirectly be associated with national language policy is concerned, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has constitutional provisions in only two areas. These are:

- (i) The language of business of the National Assembly provision which states the following:

“The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, when adequate arrangements have been made thereof.”

And the language in education policy which says,

- (ii) “Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or language of immediate community and, at a later stage, English.”

It is clear from the wordings in the two policy statements above that there are implications regarding government's intention, ranging from ambiguity to double-speak and even an apparent lack of political will, going by the wordings in the provisions. In Nigeria, it is public knowledge that the language of business, particularly in the National Assembly, is yet to be conducted 'in Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba', ever since the publishing of the Constitution and instituting of the National Assembly itself. The truth is such debates have always been conducted in English, thus resulting in exclusion of the majority population in the country, because only those citizens who understand English can follow national debates, and such citizens represent a very small percentage of Nigerians.

Nor have legislative assemblies in the states, which exist closer to the ordinary citizens, use indigenous tongues in their debates consistently and frequently. This clearly means even at state and local government levels the problem of linguistic exclusion of citizens persists leaving

numerous members of the electorate in the dark about development plans and their execution at the grass root levels, whenever parliamentary debates are conducted in English.

Even more critical with regard to these provisions is the language in education policy. As is common knowledge too, the absence of an effective medium of instruction in schools has for long been the bane of the education sector in the country. Today many Nigerian children are neither fluent in the mother tongue nor in English largely because effective policies along with the means ensuring their effective supervision have not been put in place by government as to regulate what is happening in schools, particularly at the foundation level. When effective language policies get missing, particularly at the foundation level, the rest is crisis management virtually at all levels of the education sector.

My views concerning the above constitutional provisions have been very clear in some of my earlier papers (Argungu 2020). I said then:

....there are problems surrounding the national language policy statements. The first problem is in relation to the wordings '*language of immediate community*.' Though apparently easy to coin and read, the phrase is problematic and complex in terms of definition, given Nigeria's critical multilingualism. The second problem is with regard to the phrase/sentence where Government says '*when adequate arrangements have been made thereof*.' Clearly, this is an escape clause Government prepared, either to avoid getting committed to an important national assignment, or find a way to continue to postpone the matter, *ad infinitum*, in this case the national language question.

Numerous scholars, among them linguists of repute (Bamgbose.....Ikara....Emenanjo..... Oyelaran, etc have commented on the above provisions that in several ways show government's lack of seriousness on the issue of language policy.

Hausa's Privileges

If languages were humans, Hausa as a language would have been said to be born with a silver spoon in its mouth because the language has enjoyed a number of privileges, both with regard to linguistic and non-linguistic matters that accounted, and still account for its emergence, growth, development and spread on Nigeria's sociolinguistic horizons. In my opinion, no other indigenous language has enjoyed the privileges Hausa has enjoyed in Nigeria, beginning with its two fellow competitors, that is, Igbo and Yoruba languages. Even if these two languages had enjoyed anything close to Hausa's privileges, they did so at a time when Hausa had already gone several extra miles, far ahead of them, consolidating its credentials and pushing its status as a potential national language candidate but lacking such recognition both from the Nigerian Government and the country's citizens, including from its native-speakers, the Hausawa

themselves, who seemed to have taken things for granted that Hausa could promote itself without their active, popular and galvanized support. Indeed, in my opinion, numerous sectors responsible for Hausa's organized development and promotion had come and continue to come, surprisingly, from the non-Hausa sector - individuals, groups, associations and institutions, at home (in Nigeria) and abroad, as partly discussed below.

Hausa – Language of kingdoms, city-states and governments

Records show that Hausa had existed in pre-Islamic times where it held sway as the lingua franca of the competing multilingual communities that later peopled a sizeable chunk of pre-1914 northern territories. Authorities in such ancient empires as Gobir, Kabi and Zamfara kingdoms as well as the city-states of Kano, Katsina, Zazzau and so on, were officially Hausa-speaking. The cosmopolitan nature of the markets that existed in those territories particularly as operated during the trans-saharan trade and the Gwanja markets whose routes for ages passed through south-western Nigeria, all provided platforms where Hausa was used as the lingua franca among buyers and sellers who spoke languages other than Hausa. In some of those kingdoms and markets written Hausa in its Ajami form was used for administrative and commercial purposes.

During the Islamic conquest of northern Nigeria and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate Hausa enjoyed an even greater boon and status when the Caliphate scholars employed it as medium of religious education and the spread of Ajami-based literacy. But it was during the British colonial era that Hausa's official role reached its apogee when, out of obvious pragmatic reasons, the colonial government embraced Hausa as the principal medium of its Indirect Rule policy in northern Nigeria. First, Hausa (and not English) became the medium of instruction in the schools initially built by the colonial administration in the Region. This was followed by the establishment of Hausa-specific language bodies and agencies in order to develop the language's carrying capacity and delivery in administration in the North. Such agencies included the Hausa Translation Bureau (1930), the Hausa Literature Bureau (1939), Northern Regional Literature Agency or NORLA (1954), and the Hausa Language Board.

The British 'favoured' the use of Hausa for economic and other reasons since an early introduction of English among the Hausas would have led to some resistance, besides the difficulty of breaking the linguistic and cultural barriers of the time using the English language which was then too foreign to native Hausa speakers.

In addition to the boards and agencies, and in order to enable the Indirect Rule policy easily penetrate a difficult cultural terrain, the colonial regime encouraged non-Hausa speaking bureaucrats, expatriates and Nigerians alike, to learn and pass a Hausa language examination,

after which they would qualify to be appointed to various administrative posts in the North (Ahmed 1989). The Hausa language examinations were guided by stringent rules, as specified below (Argungu 2003 quoted in Philips 2000):

„in 1902 an official notice about the examinations was issued. Officers were to apply to the Secretary for their examinations. They were to translate administrative problems into Hausa for six different Africans none of whom knew English. Every political officer was to pass a Lower Standard Examination by the beginning of his second tour, unless he was authorized to take another language. The Higher Standard was to be passed by the beginning of his second tour. An officer's promotion would depend to a great extent on his language ability. There was also to be a system of gratuities so as to create positive incentives as well.

Although other Nigerian languages were put to varying degrees of use during the British colonial era in the country, yet no language enjoyed the status accorded Hausa, in the fullest sense of the word. These more or less accidental efforts at language planning, and which came about as a result of the prevailing circumstances, greatly helped to boost Hausa's early growth and expansion in the North, giving the language an edge, over and above other northern Nigerian languages.

Hausa – Proud owner of a pre-colonial writing system, the Ajami

One unique privilege Hausa enjoyed in the pre-colonial era was its Ajami writing system, a script its speakers, the Hausa people, created from Arabic characters and which they used in writing the language for religious and mundane purposes. It was the writings in Hausa-Ajami that the early British colonial officers found among Hausas which they soon learned with the purpose of uncovering many of the secrets in that society. Similarly, some early European scholars also employed Ajami to boost their academic researches. A case in point is that of Adam Mischlich who is described below by Newman (1998):

The second German scholar one needs to mention is Adam Mischlich, whose knowledge of Hausa came from the first-hand experience he had with the language while working as a missionary in Togo. Although he lived until 1948, his major Hausa publication, a 1906 dictionary and a 1911 grammar, place him in the early period. One of the interesting things about Mischlich's dictionary is that all the entries were given in ajami [Arabic script] as well as in boko [Latin script], a tradition that was dropped by later scholars. In Mischlich's case, it is fortunate that he did use both scripts – and this has definitely increased the usefulness of his work – since his Ajami transcriptions were often more accurate, particularly with regard to vowel length, than his boko

transcriptions. The reason for this, I believe, is that the ajami entries were written for Mischlich by his Hausa assistant (Alhaji Umar), while the boko entries represented Mischlich's own rendering of oral Hausa...

Today Ajami has continued to exist as a dying legacy among the Hausas in northern Nigeria, and, no doubt, among all the other Hausa-speaking communities, worldwide, whether in such countries as Niger Republic, Cameroon, Ghana or even the Republic of Sudan where the combined (triple) pressures of the use of Arabic, English and French among the Hausas has helped to render Ajami obsolete, of course, along with the lack of support from its northern Nigerian Hausa users. In this regard, the efforts by Kano State Government, in publishing a weekly newspaper *Alfijir*, in Ajami, probably the only known official move to help save the script is not only commendable but highly welcomed given the pitiful condition Ajami has currently found itself among the Hausas of northern Nigeria.

Ajami currently remains languishing in its ancient cocoon, but anxiously waiting for language bodies and agencies that could help resuscitate it because its continued existence not only supports Hausa as a language, but as observed above by Newman "(Hausa) *Ajami* transcriptions were often more accurate, particularly with regard to vowel length, than *Boko* transcriptions..." In any case, Ajami is a major early step and an instant aid to learning Arabic characters. Ajami script will forever remain as part of the literate history and identity of the Hausas, whether they ignore it or resolve, in future, to salvage or revive it. Whole languages, and not just their scripts, have been revitalized across the world and are currently in use in their cultures and societies, among them Hebrew, not to talk of reviving a script like Ajami.

Hausa – Companion of *Malams and Merchants*

If there is any one factor that has helped to preserve and spread Hausa in Nigeria and in Africa generally, it is the cultural tenacity and linguistic chauvinism of the tango of Hausa *Malams* (Islamic scholars) and Merchants (*Madugai*). The duo has been all over non-Hausa northern and southern territories of Nigeria mainly teaching non-Hausas Islam and/or serving as merchants. Many Hausas who lived and still live in Southern Nigeria as immigrants, for instance, and who on their arrival, initially, barely spoke English, constitute a formidable front for the spread of Hausa in those communities, along with its culture.

Once in the South, majority of these Hausa immigrants, on account of their kind of literacy which frequently is rooted in Arabic/Ajami scripts, stick mainly to their Hausa cultural norms. Unable to take up competitive white collar jobs in their host environments, Hausa immigrants get prepared to do any menial jobs or become artisans. For this reason and for the rest of their lives abroad, therefore, many Hausas as *Malams* and *Merchants* remain loyal to their mother tongue, Hausa, as they mainly keep to themselves in their various *zangos* (*immigrants' settlements*). These *zangos* remain the bastions of Hausa culture abroad offering nearly every basic service or goods one expects to find in a typical northern Nigerian Hausa setting. Once in

the *zango*, Hausa remains the medium of communication of its speakers, thus helping to protect it from the unrelenting influences of the host languages surrounding it.

Thus, the linguistic chauvinism of the native Hausa speakers remains with them while abroad, including in circumstances where, owing to certain pressures associated mainly with their trade or business, they are forced to learn the languages of their hosts. Where a Hausa man cares to marry a non-Hausa woman, as is common among Hausa immigrants, such a marriage frequently ends up adding to Hausa's linguistic demography through ethnic identity transfer of the non-Hausa woman to Hausa. When and where a Hausa *malam* or merchant opts to learn the language of his hosts, he thus ends up becoming a balanced or perfect (Hausa + Host Language) bilingual. As for the Hausa man's children resulting from a marriage, they too are almost certain to grow up speaking Hausa and, if lucky, they might also speak their mother-tongue, thus producing generations of young Hausa bilinguals abroad. Where the child ensuing from the marriage is educated in the modern sense, he or she becomes a trilingual, first, speaking Hausa, then the mother-tongue and finally a foreign (European) tongue as language of education such as English, French, Spanish or Portuguese, in the context of Africa generally.

On account of their long-distance trading or sojourns undertaken for reasons of religious preaching, the coincidental but desired union of *Malam* and Merchant has almost always helped to take Hausa language to some of the remotest parts of Nigeria. Frequently, therefore, the combined efforts of *Malam* and Merchant, as each one of them pursues their own business in non-Hausa lands, results in Islamic conversions, linguistic assimilations, and marriages triggering ethnic identity transfers of numerous originally non-Hausa Nigerian citizens, thus expanding Hausa's demography in the country. These trends and practices go back centuries and are almost certain to continue given the cultural, linguistic and religious pertinacity and chauvinism of the duo of Hausa *Malam* and Merchant not only in Nigeria, but in Africa, as incidences across several areas of the continent have already proved with the Hausas.

Hausa – Medium of Islamic and Christian religious communications

Hausa's links with religions must definitely have begun with whatever ancients beliefs Hausas had embraced, prior to the coming of Islam and Christianity among them. With the coming of Islam, Hausa found itself completely immersed in the service of religion, in virtually everything that had to do with Islam ranging from its basic tenets down to the minutest phenomenon in the religion. Thus, the devoted Hausa Muslim scholars have, through massive translations, today produced virtually everything that the Nigerian Muslims need, in both spoken and written Hausa, to help them comprehend Islam more. The active role of Hausa as a major medium of transmission of Islam, therefore, is easily visible among its native speakers whether in the mosques or in open air preaching sessions. Everywhere, Hausa remains the preferred language of mass religious communication among Hausas.

Among the northern Christians too, Hausa has continued to provide its language service as a medium of preaching the Gospel. Indeed, the Christians too had since resorted to the translations of the Bible in Hausa, and this began as far back as 1853 (Argungu 2003). Today many northern Christian churches have unofficially declared Hausa their official language because parts or most of the services in these churches are conducted in Hausa. From names of churches to hymns down to slogans, including printed materials and even dresses sewn by some Christians, which are meant for some religious occasions, Hausa has remained the chosen medium among them. Of course, Hausa has found this comfortable space in the northern churches owing to the critical multilingualism among Christians in the region who find it difficult to adopt any one of their languages for this purpose, typical of the Nigerian situation at the national level, where English continues to enjoy its pride of place because Nigerians are yet to agree on any one of its languages, as the national medium, in the face of the country's intense multilingualism.

Hausa – Tool of academics and for the academia

Perhaps, in no other field has Hausa been privileged to serve as in the academics and for a very long time. Over time, Hausa has seen both amateur researchers and seasoned academics who have always found the language a ready tool either for conducting researches on the language or using Hausa as a medium of researches across a broad spectrum of both local and international scholars. They included the British, the Germans, the French, and recently the Japanese and Chinese, and, of course, Africans. Lots of these Hausa researches have been published. It is interesting to note that many of these Hausa scholars had never set foot on Hausa land, yet they went ahead to research and even publish in the language. In his 'A Century of Hausa Language Studies' (ed. Rufa'i 1991), Paul Newman, himself a marathon US-based Hausa researcher and the author of a celebrated work on Hausa 'The Hausa Language: An Encyclopedic Reference Grammar (Newman 2000) has declared the commitment of Europeans to Hausa studies as spurious, reporting one of them below.

An obvious person with whom to begin a history of Hausa language studies is Heinrich Barth, a German explorer who travelled across the Sahara and spent some five years between the years 1850 and 1855 in the sub-Saharan area. He spent time in Borno, in Kano and other Hausa towns, and then went all the way to Timbuktu, being one of the first European scholars to visit that city. One of Barth's servants during his travels was a Hausa boy named Dorugu, who accompanied him all the way back to Europe.

The list of foreign Hausa scholars is, of course, long. And if, by way of example, we add the ninety (90) years of teaching and study of Hausa at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in London, which unfortunately has now come to an end (Furniss and Jaggar Blog 2020),

along with information from around the globe, Hausa's credentials will definitely be published in volumes, a feat hardly won by any Nigerian language, nay African language. And then here at home in Nigeria, particularly in the post-independence era, we watched the gradual evolution of home-grown (native) Hausa scholars, first from among the universities of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Bayero University, Kano, and later similar institutions across Nigeria. These were privileges which Hausa enjoyed in relation to academic researches, and even today continues to enjoy.

It is unlikely that any Nigerian language could have been researched at Ph.D level (in Linguistics) by 1969, barely nine years after the country's independence. Writing about this academic feat, again, Newman (1991), had this comment to make about Hausa's unique and early academic achievements:

In pointing to the symbolic importance of 1969, one must note that this was also the year when Professor Kabir Galadanci completed his London Ph.D. dissertation, the first dissertation, as far as I am aware, awarded to a Hausa person for a linguistic study of Hausa. This turning point was followed by the Ph.D. dissertation of Bashir Ikara at Leeds (1975), Dauda Bagari at UCLA (1976), Abba Rufa'i at Geogretown (1977), after which Hausa dissertations appeared in rapidly increasing number, the most recent being that of Sammani Sani at Indiana (1988). The number of Ph.D.'s on Hausa language and literature by Hausas has grown so large that one cannot mention all of them individually.

No doubt Hausa has benefited and continues to benefit from researches undertaken by both foreign and indigenous academics, many of them scholars whose reputations remain indelible on the sands of time, even after their demise. Any Nigerian language with such an early academic outing like that of Hausa would have gained even more recognition than the language currently has, locally and internationally. But Hausa is yet to catch up with its fellow competitor African language giants such as Arabic and Kiswahili which are used at the African Union and even at the United Nations, while at home these two languages enjoy the privilege of being used as languages of parliamentary debates in some or most of their countries.

Hausa – Friend of radio stations, mass media journalists and commentators

In the field of media broadcasting involving particularly the radio, newspaper and later the television, again, Hausa has been enjoying a lead for decades before other Nigerian languages came to enjoy such recognition. Beginning with the home-grown (northern) newspaper the *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* which debuted in 1939 down to the emergence of Radio Kaduna in the 60s and later a TV station of the same name, terminating the era (approx. 1939 – 1990), a plethora of newspapers and magazines of varying names and sizes, (most of which are now dead), Hausa

as a language has had an enviable lead in mass media communication in Nigeria and later internationally.

Within Nigeria, Hausa created two records that have remained unmatched by any local Nigerian language to date. The first was when, between the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Government of Plateau State published a fully-government owned newspaper titled *Yancin Dan Adam*, whose contents were in Hausa only, and which this writer had the privilege of reading while a student at the University of Jos. Although the object of publishing the newspaper was political, it was evident that it played a key unification role among Plateau State's intense ethno-linguistic literate communities which favoured Hausa's choice by government, almost in the same way the British employed Hausa as the key in breaking the North's multilingual barrier, thus providing a means for the literate communities in the region to facilitate understanding issues related to the British Indirect Rule policy.

The second example of Hausa's unique record in the domain of mass media communication occurred when a well-known Yoruba politician, the late M. K. O. Abiola, published a Hausa-only newspaper, titled *Amana*, again, most probably for political and, certainly, not economic reasons. At the time of its publishing, a well-known Hausa politician, the late M. Aminu Kano paid glowing tributes to Abiola:

...for probably being the first person in this country, if not in the world, to establish a newspaper, (*Amana*) in Hausa language which he, himself, could not read well; a paper he entitled totally to Hausa people.

The privilege accorded Hausa by Plateau government which clearly was not dominated by Hausa-speaking elite, but who took it upon themselves to publish a newspaper in the language, and years later, the publishing of another Hausa newspaper by a non-Hausa (Yoruba) person in a predominantly Hausa-speaking territory are feats yet to be recorded by other Nigerian languages in the country.

If we have marveled at Hausa's feats at home, in Nigeria, then we ought to cheer the language in its performance abroad or at the international level, again, in relation to mass media broadcasting. Hausa shot into limelight, ahead of all other Nigerian languages, in foreign media broadcasts, particularly radio broadcasting. Starting with the BBC Hausa Service, which commenced its broadcast in 1957 (Pidgin and Yoruba BBC services commenced only last year, 2020). The Hausa service was launched as part of the Colonial Office's new initiative for Africa (Garba 2018 quoting Browne et al (1982). Following the BBC numerous countries on the African continent (such as Niger Republic, Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Egypt), as well as at the international level all embraced Hausa for broadcasting.

One of the interesting points about Hausa's friendship with media is the multitudes of Hausa radio listeners it has garnered for the BBC. This has made the BBC radio station popular in

Nigeria and in the Hausa-speaking world generally. In northern Nigeria, in particular, it is common to meet a Hausa man clinging to his transistor radio very early in the morning listening to the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Voice of America, the German Deustch Welle or any of the Hausa international broadcasting services. Indeed, only the early morning prayers separate many a Hausa radio listening addict with the BBC's early morning broadcasts.

Thus, whether in northern Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Central Africa, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Niger or Benin Republics or even in the Arab-speaking Sudan and Saudi Arabia, immigrant Hausas, worldwide, share the same entrenched radio listening habits. What this means is, again, using these foreign broadcasts not only to entertain, but also help in preserving Hausa apart from enriching it in various ways through the programmes that are daily broadcast. Through the programmes too, Hausa speakers have remained in the forefront of keeping themselves abreast of local and international news and events. Thus even an ordinary Hausa person, not just the elite, is aware of such developments. To a Hausa man, the unsung slogan has always been: if the BBC hasn't said it, then it's no news!

Hausa mass media outlets, whether the newspaper, radio, television, or now the internet and social media, all have greatly helped Hausa to develop mainly in the areas of translations, vocabulary development, language/literature enrichments, etc., to cite a few of the easily visible areas. Few, if any Nigerian languages have achieved the feat recorded by Hausa in language development via the mass media particularly the radio broadcasts, and for a very long time now, indeed since the 1930s.

Hausa – Partner in contemporary entertainment industry

Without doubt, Hausa enjoys a pride of place as a principal medium of the entertainment industry in Nigeria. Hausa shares this position with key Nigerian languages such as Ibo and Yoruba. But if demography and spread are anything to go by, both in Nigeria and Africa, Hausa, probably, can outdo the latter duo languages (probably with the exclusion of Pidgin English). in the entertainment industry, even if by some margins. Thus, entertainment industries like Kannywood, have undoubtedly pushed Hausa to permeate the Nigerian society far more than the factors that propelled the language in the country during the colonial or any other period. One possible reason for Hausa's charm in the entertainment industry, both in regard to its traditional and digital sectors, is Hausa's existing spread (or potential audiences) and its level of linguistic development which makes the language a ready tool to be exploited by all types of entertainers across the industry's spectrum.

Whether we think of Hausa videos or audios, podcasts, YouTube and so on, the bottom line is the lightening speed with which entertainment messages or programmes get to their destinations in the current digital age. Such messages are reckoned with not only in terms of

their speed but also the fact that they are produced in millions in Hausa, and are in the same way listened to or viewed in millions by audiences across not just the North, but the Hausa-speaking world.

As a medium of entertainment, today Hausa has enabled the emergence of billionaire producers in the same way English has produced billionaire authors via the entertainment industry all through well-crafted language use. So while the entertainment industry has pushed up and is still boosting the credentials of Hausa, Hausa has in turn helped to catapult those in the industry into fame both personally and financially through a perfect language/digital entertainment partnership. This is besides providing employment for numerous youths who suddenly found themselves in their upgraded status, thanks to their ability to speak Hausa.

Many of these entertainers, some of whom are non-Hausas, among both the men and women, perhaps, previously used Hausa only as an ordinary medium of communication, but later suddenly found it a ready tool which enabled them to showcase their talents, and reach out to millions of audiences previously unimagined and unknown to them. Thus, while the entertainers keep promoting Hausa through their productions, Hausa too is helping to raise their awareness and statuses, locally and globally.

Hausa – Most-widely diffusing and integrating indigenous Nigerian tongue

Without doubt Hausa is the most-widely diffused indigenous language in Nigeria. It is almost the only Nigerian tongue which is spoken more by Nigerian citizens who speak other (non-Hausa) languages in the country. In the North, the numerous languages there seem to have willy-nilly tolerated, if not accepted, the 'accidental' enthronement of Hausa as the region's lingua franca. Hausa has been providing this kind of service apparently for centuries among the northern multilingual communities. Reflecting on the integrative role of Hausa in northern Nigeria, Paden (1968) unequivocally comments:

The creation of a lingua franca, Hausa, has substantially aided northern political integration; the creation of a 'northern language area' has added a new dimension to the already close relationship between political structure and linguistic units.

Hausa is spoken as first, second, third, etc., language in Nigeria for reasons related to such matters as culture, marriages, education, business, employment, and so on. In highly multilingual states of the North like Bauchi, Plateau or Benue States, Hausa has been playing its integrative role for ages. Again, Paden (1968) confirms that,

Hausa still remains the only indigenous Nigerian language that has been instrumental in effectuating political integra-

tion within a context of complex ethnic pluralism. It has done this in the nineteenth century on an emirate level and in the twentieth century on a regional level.

Across Nigeria, one can bet it that it is easier and, perhaps, quicker to find a non-Hausa Nigerian speaking Hausa than a native Hausa person speaking a (non-Hausa) Nigerian tongue. In fact, the current diffusion of Hausa among non-Hausas in Nigeria has reached a stage where frequently native Hausa speakers have to be on their guard while speaking the language because, to their utter surprise, their non-Hausa interlocutors or neighbors could speak it. Many such native speakers have been embarrassed while meeting fellow Nigerians because the person they assumed was non-Hausa surprisingly turned out to speak the language, and amazingly fluently too. Many cases of such encounters abound and native Hausa speakers would tell tall tales about their shocking linguistic experiences.

These categories of non-Hausa speakers of Hausa come from various socio-economic classes in Nigeria, each with the different reasons that brought them into contact with the language, or more appropriately its speakers which enabled them to learn Hausa. Such Nigerian speakers of Hausa as a secondary medium of communication cut across the lower, middle and higher ranks of the country's elite, both men and women as well as among the old and young Nigerians. What these yet-to-be assessed statistics mean, Hausa has diffused across Nigeria beyond its northern base as well as the expectations of native Hausas, and the language is still counting on its gains as more Nigerians embrace or get integrated into it!

Hausa – Language with the largest numbers of speakers in Nigeria

Undoubtedly, Hausa has the largest numbers of speakers than any other indigenous language in Nigeria. According to Jagger (2001) "Hausa has more first-language speakers than any other sub-Saharan language." However, if we were to consider those (non-Hausas) but who speak the language as second, third or even fourth medium of communication in the country, these numbers would reach alarming proportions. Thus, in his estimation, Newman (2000) has put Hausa speakers at "upwards of thirty-five million speakers." Caron (2013), on his part, says "whereas none of the other 170 Chadic languages has more than 200 thousand speakers, Hausa is estimated to be spoken by around 50 million people, three quarters of whom live in Nigeria." Going by these fantastic statistics, and with Nigeria's current population of about 200 million people, Hausa speakers constitute a quarter of that estimate. No wonder, Hickey (1998) argued that "inside Nigeria itself four out of every five people are Hausa speakers."

In Nigeria, these numbers come predominantly from northern Nigeria, and are mostly found in the old Hausa city-states now represented by such modern states as Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, and Bauchi states, among others. And in numerous other large cities of the North, Hausa is spoken by the inhabitants of these cities. Indeed, if the population of the Hausas is anything to go by, then definitely speakers of Hausa in Nigeria makes a huge, no

doubt a humungous linguistic constituency, which can be equated with the populations of many countries across the globe.

In view of the above details indicating Hausa's surging linguistic demography, one is tempted to relatively approximate the language's position today almost approaching a status roughly similar to that of the English language in today's world where the Hausa's non-native speakers might soon overtake the native speakers, in the same way, at a global level, native English speakers have already been surpassed, demographically, by non-native speakers across the world, particularly if one thinks of the speakers or users of English in such countries as India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, etc., and even among immigrants in Britain and USA. It looks like soon the issue of who is native to Hausa and who is not will, in the coming decades and/or among the coming generations of Hausas in Nigeria, and possibly in other Hausa-speaking nations and communities, fizzle out.

As industrialization and globalization impact more on Nigeria, with its citizens laying their hands more and more on jobs, whether offline or online, the duo of ethno-lingo tango and tension that currently fuel various forms of ethno-linguistic crisis in the country might quietly fizzle out, leaving Nigerians desperately searching for what improves more and more their lives. When such a moment comes, as God willing, it surely will come, then it might turn out to be an irritability to question a person's nativity even if the question of his originality remains, and this will surely include native Hausa's as Nigerians.

Indeed, with its pan-ethnic, pan-Nigerian outlook (and probably, currently, the only language of its kind in the country), Hausa as a language will attract more and more ethnic groups to its fold, based on those same factors that have been fuelling its centuries-old process of linguistic assimilation which is embedded in what Salamone (1976) referred to in 'becoming Hausa.'

Salamone discussed the term 'becoming Hausa' to refer to the method of recruitment in which a non-Hausa becomes Hausa which he argues Hausa does by ascription. This, he explains, is done on various accounts, in particular the encompassing of all people who identify themselves as members of this (Hausa) group as a result of birth. He went further to say that since ethnic groups are regarded as organized groups whose members use them to achieve particular goals, in actuality ethnic groups sometimes receive as members people who are not 'born members'.

Furthermore, Salamone argues that ethnic boundaries are permeable, and people sometimes singly and sometimes in groups, cross them. In general, he points out that people do so either to maximize their opportunities or to minimize perceived threats, but there are other reasons the receiving group allows outsiders to become members, for example, religious or political reasons. In the case of Hausa, Islam as a religion has always aided the language in its process of linguistic assimilation where frequently non-Hausas adopt the language, on accepting the faith.

On the whole, the addition of non-Hausa members to the receiving (Hausa) group has a huge advantage for the language demographically, both in terms of its numbers of speakers and their distribution across Nigeria.

Hausa's prospects

If the above analyses of Hausa's privileges have been well understood, it is evident that what has been discussed represent, in a number of ways, the language's prospects or potentials in relation to its struggle toward becoming a national language or, at least, a national citizens' tongue in Nigeria.

In a discussion on the series of requirements on how a language can achieve fame and improve its status, particularly in relation to how it could spread and maintain its vitality or dominate others, the renowned sociolinguist, Wardhaugh (1987), cites a number of issues pointing out that such a language 'must have a secure base or territory in which it has exclusive domain.' He goes further to say that 'in this way a language may maintain its vitality particularly if those who speak it, write it or work in it, govern themselves in it, publish books in it, use it on radio and television, and maintain contact with those who use the language elsewhere in the world, if such people exist.' He further elaborated that 'it helps too if the population is an expanding one and if it exhibits considerable resistance to learning other languages.' He then concludes by saying 'If these conditions are present the language should at least hold its own. If, however, the language is to spread outside the territory some additional factors must undoubtedly come into play.'

A re-examination of our analyses of Hausa's prospects above will show that the language has virtually met all of the conditions itemized by Wardhaugh, and is linked to even more of those conditions or factors. For the avoidance of doubt, we summarise these conditions below.

First, Hausa not only has a secure base, but it operates from a substantial territory, geographically, the North, from which it historically has consolidated itself and then went ahead to spread and even dominate other languages in several parts of Nigeria, a process Hausa is continuing with. Because of its dominance, Hausa has often been referred to as 'killer language' in the sense that its dominance has meant the 'death' of other less-widely or smaller tongues. For language, this is a normal sociolinguistic process as its life is similar to the life of fish in water where one fish eats up another in order to survive. Moreover, when as resources of a nation languages remain largely unplanned or are left to grow on their own, in the wilds, it is obvious that they will experience greater turmoil in the raging competition they ought to face. Subsequently, the major tongues, such as Hausa, fiercely and uncontrollably dominate the minor ones, as can be seen in the life of Nigeria's indigenous languages.

Second, the numbers of those who speak Hausa, beginning with its native speakers, and those who use it as an auxiliary medium, including non-Hausas that employ it even in writing, are numerous, and on the increase in Nigeria. Third, Hausa has (diaspora) populations abroad who equally are already its active speakers, initially in numerous *zangos* within Nigeria, and in countries such as Cameroon, Ghana, Sudan and Saudi Arabia, not to mention Niger Republic, which is an extension of the Hausa-speaking lands separated only by colonial borders, to cite a few of these African countries. Not only diaspora Hausas are its active carriers, but these categories of speakers help in the diffusion of the language, particularly among non-Hausas living in those lands and countries.

Fourth, barring pressing individual experiences, Hausa speakers at home and abroad exhibit considerable resistance to speaking other languages, indeed the language has become a powerful symbol of Hausas' unity and resistance whether its speakers are encountered in northern Nigeria, its base, or outside it. Fifth, Hausa's integrating potentials, at home and abroad, brings into its fold diverse new speakers of the language from other (non-Hausa) languages through various processes of linguistic assimilation.

Fifth, Hausa experienced early development in the fields of literature and literacy as well as in journalism and the mass media in general besides its long romance with authorities and governments, ancient and modern. Then, for a very long time, Hausa has been responsible for raising the statuses of writers of varying degrees of interests whose Hausa-based scholarships brought fame to them, at home and abroad.

Besides these, some additional conditions that accounted for Hausa's growth and dominance include the language's association with Islam and Arabic. The former facilitated conversions of numerous non-Hausas into Hausa's lingua-cultural fold while the latter enabled the language to develop its structures, particularly vocabulary development, through an intensive and extensive process of linguistic borrowing, in the same way Hausa has, for decades now, been experiencing similar development with regard to its relationship with English in the country. Having borrowed extensive vocabularies from both Arabic and English, Hausa went ahead to be a giver itself of vocabularies to other Nigerian languages, notably to numerous northern languages, and including Pidgin English where words such as 'wahala', 'yawwa', 'brekete' 'toh' etc., all now almost naturalized in Pidgin. Finally, Hausa benefitted from the creation of institutional agencies and boards set up by governments which were deliberately meant to help develop it through policies which enabled the growth of its structures, and indirectly popularized it, upon assumption of its status as government mouthpiece in the North.

In reality, and by way of summary, Hausa's main prospects, which actually are its assets, lie deep in a fusion of religious, linguistic and demographic factors. But more importantly, it is the cultural attachment the Hausas exhibit to their language that has so far delayed or saved it

from experiencing the crushing effects of globalization, indeed endangerment, when compared to the scale of endangerment Hausa's peer Nigerian languages are currently experiencing. Nigerians are aware of this language attitude of the Hausas, as observed by Sofunke (1990:37) quoting Simpon who says:

This stems from the attitude of the northerners toward the Hausa language. Very many northerners would refuse to use English even when they know it.

It is, of course, a fact that Hausa already contains unlimited number of English words in its structure to the extent that many *Hausawa 'yan boko* (western-educated Hausa elite) experience lots of inferences from the language when speaking their native tongue. This resistance to English or the preference shown to speaking Hausa is still visible among numerous or most contemporary Hausa speakers, including the younger educated generations among them in the North. One reason, probably, that could help explain this Hausa lingua-cultural defence mechanism is that there are still large pockets of Hausa populations who are not literate in the *Boko* system of education; hence those who regularly come into contact with English are from the minority elite sector.

Indeed, the absence of a majority *Boko*-literate Hausa population which consistently uses English in their daily life has partly delayed the arrival or emergence of Pidgin in the North, in contrast to its emergence in the South. Thus, currently in Nigeria, the Hausa-speaking communities, even within their *'Yan Boko* sector, remain poor speakers of Pidgin or that, as already observed by Sofunke above with regard to Standard English, they do not frequently use it even when they know it. Of course, this phenomenon is partly explained by the fact that Hausa has already met the needs of Hausa speakers (or Northerners generally) as a medium of daily communication in the region.

Any day Pidgin succeeds in overrunning the North, if it ever will, Hausa's dominance will begin to wane in the area. However, knowledge of Pidgin, in spite of its being a threat to Hausa's dominance, just like the presence of Standard English in the North too, will somehow aid many of its (Hausa) speakers to take their English proficiency to the next level, regardless of the percentage such (little) contribution might make. In my view, it is this minimalist Pidgin advantage that partly aids many southern students and all other speakers of Pidgin there generally, to improve their English language efficacy, if not proficiency. Again, never mind the degree or percentage of that aid, the fact is it does give them edge even if the process has a corresponding negative effect regarding the survival or original 'purity' of their indigenous tongues. The process is somehow akin to the way a prior knowledge of Ajami writing frequently aids anyone interested (Muslim Hausa or other) in learning Arabic proper, particularly with regard to reading and writing in the language.

Hausa's predicaments

When viewed in the context of all that we have said about Hausa, one can argue that the language has what it takes to become a national language candidate. But just like a person who is looked forward to succeed in a competition stands the chance of being successful or not, will these potentials alone, catapult Hausa into such prominence and acceptance? The answer definitely is partly yes and partly no. Partly yes because Hausa has virtually everything regarding requirements that can aid it become a national language far more than nearly all of its peer-indigenous tongues, as already discussed above. In reality, therefore, the predicaments against Hausa becoming a national language in Nigeria are many.

First, it is obvious that politics of language and ethnicity allowing Hausa to score a 'Yes' vote in any parliamentary debate or even linguistic plebiscite toward becoming a national language can only come from its native (Hausa) speakers and their supporters across the North and the country in general. Given the current political temperature in Nigeria, and for a very long time to come, this condition is not likely to change. We cited earlier forms of resistance Hausa faced in Parliament very early in the country's history in the introduction to this lecture. Following that encounter, Hausa has suffered and, up to the present moment, the language continues to suffer objections from Nigerians against its choice. Therefore, like Sofunke (1990) has already observed the choice of a national language for a country as politically and culturally diverse as Nigeria, is complex. And he concludes by advising that "the step towards choosing a national language has to be a cautious one, not because of any difficulty in determining numerical superiority or least of learnability, but precisely because of socio-political factors."

So it is a foregone conclusion, and indeed foolhardy, for Hausas and their supporters to think their language could simply be accepted and endorsed as the national language, possibly because of their numerical strength, in addition to all other factors. It is clear therefore that as citizens, Nigerians are not likely to agree on the choice of any of their indigenous tongues or group of tongues as their national language(s), thus almost permanently approving English's unfettered status in the country, officially, if not nationally.

Second, the Federal Government whose responsibility it is to care for and indeed protect, plan and see to the development all languages is yet to demonstrate such seriousness and commitment in the country. The fact that some provisions regarding language matters exist in the 1999 constitution does not fully absolve government of this responsibility. The crux of the matter is, in Nigeria, language is not understood as a resource both by government and the governed. For example, one rarely hears debates in both national and state houses of assembly concerning budgets about languages or discussions about linguistic resources of the country and which are linked to national planning. Hence, Hausa and other indigenous tongues suffer from this blanket national neglect of the country's linguistic resources.

Thirdly, currently English occupies an excessively huge and enviable position in the country. Government anointed it while its huge sectors of protection come mainly from the (elite) citizens, both from the North and South of the country, to the extent that the language has become an untouchable tongue. Over the years, Nigerians have consistently been told that doing away with English would spell doom for the country. Yet no linguist in their right senses would advocate that English should be abandoned or shown the way out of the country. This is impossible just as it is undesirable, for as long as Nigeria remains a corporate political entity, besides the language's international status. But Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, complained of linguistic famine in African societies which he said is the result of prizing foreign languages over native tongues. In other words, with excess baggage of tongues that can equally serve your needs, why bother crave for more?

Fourthly, in my view, Hausa has not been adequately, justifiably and comprehensively been supported by its native speakers, for instance, to the extent its peer-African languages have been, among them Swahili and Yoruba, not to talk of Arabic, particularly in the area of language technology which, as far as I know, currently is the leading area that drives language development and even account for the jobs native speakers and other users of a language can derive from it. Here, I am not talking about usual researches in or on Hausa, such as in the areas of literature, language or culture that have continued to be undertaken by Hausa local and international scholars, rather, I am speaking about promoting Hausa via the language technology industry, such as in translation localization, artificial intelligence, speech recognition, natural language processing, and so on, including a whole range of other technologies. For now Hausa has this predicament while languages like Swahili, Arabic and Yoruba have gone far. A clear example is to attempt a Google search for Hausa's online presence in the internet. One will either be disappointed or disinterested in what one finds there, but certainly not for Arabic or Swahili or even Yoruba.

Need for linguistic restructuring

For now, I see no challenge to speakers of all Nigerian languages than to lobby (or even pressurize) the Federal Government for linguistic restructuring so that indigenous tongues could enjoy more protection and development while it helps their speakers preserve their identities and cultures which they hope to pass onto other generations. By linguistic restructuring, we are here referring to the need to revise existing (Nigerian) language policy or policies toward an equitable arrangement of sharing the responsibilities of managing the nation's language and linguistic resources between the Federal Government and its state or local government counterparts in such a way that policies would (i) help protect each indigenous tongue against a fellow indigenous tongue as well as develop all of them, and (ii) protect all indigenous tongues against foreign (colonial) languages constitutionally. In the case

of Hausa, therefore, speakers of the language should be mobilized – individuals, groups, as well as communities to lobby for the more linguistic inclusion of citizens through increased language provisions in the Constitution. Currently, and as I earlier mentioned only two language provisions exist in the 1999 Constitution. These are (i) language in education and (ii) language of parliamentary debate by way of provisions. These should be reviewed by government to ensure adequate and comprehensive management of the country's language and linguistic resources.

Moreover, in line with the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights as echoed by the United Nations on 6th June 1960 at a conference in Barcelona, Spain, all nations are required to enshrine linguistic rights in their constitutions to empower their democracies. Nigeria needs to strengthen its Constitution with these rights, among them (i) *right to languages* which refers to the right to use the language one is most proficient in, as well as the right of access to the language(s) of empowerment and socio-economic advancement. On the other hand, there is also the *right of languages* which refers to the right of each and every language in a multilingual society to exist and of opportunity for it to develop – legal, scientific, technological etc, in short, to flourish at all levels and in all areas (Mazrui (1998).

Once government is lobbied by citizens to have additional language provisions in the constitution, in form of these rights, more citizens, along with speakers of Hausa, will enjoy additional rights including rights to provision of efficient translations during trials in courts or in hospitals with regard to doctor/patient communication, and in relation to communication generally emanating from governments. Though such translations sometimes are provided to accompany official communication, yet this is left to the discretion of government. However, when such a language service becomes a provision in the constitution, then government ought to provide it or else citizens would take appropriate steps to claim their linguistic rights.

In short, in place of the current arrangement where only the Federal Government apparently legislates on language and linguistic matters in the country, some powers should devolve to state and local governments accordingly. In fact, the Federal Government has no business imposing a medium of governance either on a state or local government, as is presently the case in the country. Like it is in sharing nearly all other national resources, where frequently an agreed formula is used and powers devolved in order to resolve matters easily and rapidly between the Federal and state as well as local governments, our view is that in relation to language and linguistic resources too, such an arrangement should prevail. Where a conflict ensues, as it from time to time does ensue between the three tiers of government, this can also be resolved in an amicable way, either through arbitration, adjudication, consensus or any other acceptable method. The benefit of such an arrangement is that once the Federal Government relieves itself of some of these language and linguistic responsibilities, state and

local government would have to shoulder them, including any economic implications such an arrangement associated with such transfer of responsibilities should entail.

Indeed, with this kind of linguistic restructuring, we envisage that state and local governments will be much more empowered to have control over their language and linguistic resources, including overseeing the linguistic rights of individual citizens, groups and communities in their respective domains. In any case, apart from state and local governments having common linguistic interests (in direct opposition to those of the Federal Government), the two tiers of government are nearer to the speakers and their languages (and dialects), hence governments at the lower level understand better the conditions of local languages (and dialects) and the communication problems frequently encountered by their speakers whether this relates to the development, decay or even death of such languages (and dialects) in society for which policies would be required from time to time to protect as well as develop them.

Some options for Hausa

While lobbying for linguistic structuring, and with a likely sure blanket 'NO TO HAUSA' from nearly all parts of Nigeria, along with government's lukewarm attitude to language policy, some of the options for Hausa lie in the support it will garner, first, from its multitudes of speakers in North and elsewhere in Nigeria, and, second, from governments in majority Hausa-speaking states. I am in mind specifically governments of Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa States. I chose these states not only because of their multitudes of Hausa speakers, but also because of their fairly manageable linguistic composition and complexity vis-à-vis the politics of language and ethnicity in Nigeria.

These states, along with the communities of speakers, should effectively implement what already exists as language provisions in the 1999 Constitution in their domains. They include the following measures to help promote and further develop Hausa as the language's speakers lobby linguistic restructuring in the country:

1. There should be a total mobilization of all speakers of Hausa in the above states in form of a movement with clear goals and projects toward promoting Hausa language in Nigeria, based on conscious plans and policies. These projects should be supported by both state and local governments in the respective states.
2. In line with the existing constitutional provisions, the governments, both state and local, should declare Hausa their official language, and begin to prepare how to conduct all official matters in the language without delay. Already some governments and traditional institutions are used to implementing this provision, but there are frequent inconsistencies which now need harmonization across the target states. Hence, once

declared, Hausa should strictly continue to be the medium of communication, for instance, in the palaces of emirs and other traditional leaders in the target states.

3. Governments in these states should partner with linguists and other experts in order to properly run their language policies, including conducting researches on Hausa which should be funded by governments. Areas for the implementation of policies should be identified with the help of linguists, and in order of importance, such as education, law, bureaucracy, media, etc.
4. Care must be taken, in relation to planning, to include all other (non-Hausa) languages (and dialects) in the target states, that is, besides or in addition to Hausa. So even though the policy is to be pro-Hausa, experts should work towards linguistic egalitarianism taking into cognizance the linguistic rights of each language (or dialects) accordingly.
5. Language bodies, agencies and institutions should all be set up to enable smooth running of policy matters. This is because it is extremely difficult to implement language policies without such bodies or agencies. That was why the colonialists had to initially create them to guarantee convenience and continuity in language policy matters.
6. Collation of data on all (tertiary) institutions offering Hausa courses is mandatory for planning and implementation of policies in the designated states.
7. Literary competitions similar to the ones held by the colonialists during the era of Abubakar Imam et al and the current efforts by the BBC, other media houses and Hausa scholars in the country, all should be set to be mobilized in order to come up with projects that could help generate knowledge and ideas for writing of books on Hausa related to various disciplines. Among such books will be Hausa dictionaries, grammar books, literary materials, etc.
8. Special funds should be generated to support students and scholars in certain (specialized) areas of Hausa studies and researches, in addition to what universities are currently doing in this regard.
9. Though challenging, an experiment that should see the setting up of a university which should teach all its disciplines in Hausa should be given a trial immediately.

10. Different categories of Hausa speakers – males, females, children, traditional rulers, Islamic scholars, the almajirai, various professions and professional, etc., all should be mobilized and sensitized toward promoting Hausa more in their respective domains and professions. This is meant to not only involve but integrate the Hausa community of speakers into language planning and policy making, in addition to governments' efforts.
11. Hausa Language Pressure Groups (HLPGs) should be encouraged to emerge within the various sectors of the speech communities in order to governments' performance with regard to language planning and policy matters relating to Hausa, at all levels in the country.
12. A National Hausa Teachers' Association (NAHATA) should be set up to pursue matters relating to teaching and learning of Hausa in the country..
13. A Hausa Language Technology Association (HALTA) should also be set up to dive into matters related to Hausa and technology worldwide.
14. A Centre for Ajami Research (CAR) is urgently needed to help resuscitate and develop Hausa's age-long and more natural and familiar writing system.
15. A powerful website for the promotion of Hausa by Hausas worldwide, and to be jointly funded by the target governments along with Hausa communities in Nigeria should be created for the teaching and learning of the language as well as for its promotion and development.

Conclusions

The preceding discussions have interrogated Hausa's prospects when viewed in the context of the numerous privileges the language enjoyed and continues to enjoy in Nigeria over the years. Against this background, a question was posed about Hausa's chances of becoming Nigeria's national language. After examining all the privileges and prospects associated with Hausa's development, the paper, after extensively discussing the language predicaments, concluded that Hausa will again face virtually the same forces that earlier opposed it and block its chances to national fame. Therefore, the paper offered some options which, by way of summary, suggest that the language turn to its multitudes of Hausa speakers for succour in the northern states where it has such speakers in absolute majorities, along with the governments in those states and requested them to unite and push Hausa's credentials to the next level in its struggle to have more national impact.

However, the paper cautioned that while those efforts are going on, there is a need to lobby government to have more language provisions in the 1999 Constitution, by way of linguistic restructuring or devolution of linguistic powers between states and the Federal Government, thus taking language planning and policy to the lower level of governance, particularly in relation to observing linguistic rights which are aspects of human rights as practiced currently in numerous democracies around the world. As discussed in the lecture, currently there are only two such language provisions in the existing constitution of the country.

One of the advantages of having additional provisions is with regard to education, especially at the foundation level where instruction in the mother tongue, following the United Nations' policies, will go a long way to give pupils/students strong foundation in schools, thus giving State and local governments more say in planning and execution of policies related to the choice of media of instruction in schools. Involving state and local governments in matters of linguistics resources that concern their levels will equally put the management of languages in their domains in their hands, along with the support they will receive from speakers of such languages (and dialects) in overseeing to their growth and development as instruments of communication.

With additional language provisions in the constitution to, particularly where such provisions provide for language zones for the whole or parts of the country, subject, of course, to the terms or bye-laws in the provisions, Hausa may have more chances of reverting to its old status becoming, this time not necessarily a (whole) northern regional official medium, but it might be contended with a semi-regional official status, in this case, in the territories that had been occupied by the old city-states but now hosting Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa states, by way of experiment.

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