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Degree in Linguistics and Didactics**

The Emergence of Hausa as a National Lingua Franca in Niger

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Abstract

The present research investigates the causes behind the emergence of Hausa as a national lingua franca in Niger. Precisely, the research seeks to answer the question as to why Hausa has become a lingua franca in Niger. To answer this question, a sociolinguistic approach of language spread or expansion has been adopted to see whether it applies to the Hausa language. It has been found that the emergence of Hausa as a lingua franca is mainly attributed to geo-historical reasons such as the rise of Hausa states in the fifteenth century, the continuous processes of migration in the seventeenth century which resulted in cultural and linguistic assimilation, territorial expansion brought about by the spread of Islam in the nineteenth century, and the establishment of long-distance trade by the Hausa diaspora. Moreover, the status of Hausa as a lingua franca has recently been maintained by socio-cultural factors represented by the growing use of the language for commercial and cultural purposes as well as its significance in education and media. These findings arguably support the sociolinguistic view regarding the impact of society on language expansion, that the widespread use of language is highly determined by social factors. The research concludes that languages do not spread mainly because of political factors such as colonization or conquest; socio-cultural and economic factors can equally play a leading role in the expansion process.

Keywords: emergence, Hausa, national lingua franca, Niger

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear parents and my beloved family.

Acknowledgements

All praise is due to Allah, the All-Wise, the One Who taught Man that which he did not know, for making the fulfilment of this research possible.

It takes a village to raise a child, says the African proverb, and it is certainly no different for any work on the scale of a dissertation. In reality, a legion of unseen people is usually behind the author and behind the scenes, helping, inspiring, providing data, correcting and fulfilling all the other functions necessary to the production of such a text. In this case, it has literally taken a village, or eleven, to produce this dissertation.

The professional and personal debts that I have accumulated along the gestation period of this research are more than I can pay. The greatest debt for outstanding assistance and support goes to my supervisor, the man who, like all sociolinguists, has a vested interest in studying languages, but unlike most of them, is more passionate about mother tongues in particular. He was my source of inspiration and indeed his contribution has provided a great impetus for the achievement of the present research.

I would like to also thank all the teachers and fellow students of the department of English, those who have contributed directly or indirectly throughout my academic journey to make it a successful one.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to my family whose support and encouragement have genuinely paved the way for the success of this work.

List of Acronyms

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CRI: China Radio International

IPA: International Phonetic Alphabet

IRIB: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting

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General Introduction

Language is generally defined as a means of communication, a powerful tool which enables human beings to understand and interact with the world around them. But while such a function may explain the prime importance of language, it does not account for why it spreads and becomes a medium of wider communication. When a language is spoken in two or more countries as a first or second language by a large population, this constitutes good evidence that it functions as a language of international communication. However, history abounds in examples of languages which became dominant not simply because of the number and nature of their speakers, but owing to the various functions associated with those languages from a social perspective. Therefore, the "... critical agents in their spread need not be their native speakers" (Mufwene, 2006, p. 615). In this context, the emergence of English as a global language is an outstanding example. Though English may be the only global language, it is not in fact the only lingua franca.

Regardless of variation in terms of figures, the number of languages spoken in the entire African continent is quite enormous. According to Ethnologue (2016), there are over two thousand languages spoken in Africa. Some of these languages are widely spoken across vast geographical regions, while others remain unknown to the general public because they are confined to minority areas where they are locally spoken. As one of the major African languages, Hausa has gained international and national significance. Indeed, Hausa is now the lingua franca of not only West Africa, but also Niger where it is spoken by the majority of the population and plays different roles within the actual society. But what makes a lingua franca? Why has Hausa become a lingua franca in Niger? And will it continue to hold that status therein?

These key questions constitute all together a fascinating area of research to explore. The present research, which will attempt to answer the above questions, contributes to the understanding of how languages develop to become dominant as the result of geo-historical and socio-cultural factors. In other words, it illustrates how society influences the spread and social status of languages. The achievement of this objective will be an appreciable contribution to the sociolinguistics of African languages, and more importantly to the promotion of Nigerien national languages which generally suffer from negative attitudes on the part of their speakers.

To explain the factors behind the emergence of Hausa as a national lingua franca in Niger, this research has been divided into two complementary chapters. The justification for

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this division resides primarily in the authenticity of the research topic and the endeavour to gather substantial data that account for it. The first chapter sets out a general presentation of the sociolinguistic situation in Niger. Since language cannot be studied without referring to the society wherein it is used, a brief mention will be made of the historical background and the demographic situation of the Nigerien society. In the same chapter will also be described the languages spoken in the country, with a special focus on their functions in the educational system. Moreover, we will touch upon the bilingual and multilingual aspects of the society and the language policy developed by the government to cope with them.

In the second chapter, we will provide a possible explanation for the emergence of Hausa as a lingua franca in Niger. Because the key reasons behind the popularity of Hausa are historical, a good account of its current status is impossible unless we refer back to the history of the language. Thus, we will explore, in the light of geo-historical evidence, the factors that led Hausa to develop in the Hausa states and spread across North and West Africa. This will enable us to understand why Hausa has come to be spoken by such a great number of speakers in Niger. Then, we will explain the socio-cultural forces which have enabled Hausa to maintain its lingua franca status. These are associated with the economic and cultural impacts on the Hausa language as well as the power of education and media. Finally, we will consider the implications of the current sociolinguistic situation of Niger on the future of Hausa as a lingua franca.

Chapter One

1. Introduction

The sociolinguistic situation of Niger, like that of any other country, is an interesting area of research – at least for sociolinguists – as it enables the researcher to understand not just the language, but also the society where that language is used. This is the purpose of this chapter. However, it is important to mention that details have been intentionally avoided. Instead, we will just give an overview of the interaction between the languages spoken in Niger and the ways these latter function in the Nigerien society. In so doing, the country will be briefly presented, followed by a glance at its historical background. Then, attention will be turned to the languages spoken in the country, with a special focus on the national ones. In addition, we will mention such sociolinguistic phenomena as bilingualism, multilingualism, and language policy as they significantly shape the language situation in Niger.

2. Presentation of the Country

Niger, officially the Republic of Niger, is a landlocked country situated in West Africa. It is bounded on the northwest by Algeria, on the northeast by Libya, on the east by Chad, on the south by Nigeria and Benin, and on the west by Burkina Faso and Mali. It has a surface area of 1,267,000 square kilometres, and is largely covered by the Sahara Desert. This explains its low population density. Niger's population was estimated at twenty million people (World Population Review, 2016). This population is characterised by an unequal distribution throughout the whole country: it is denser in the south where agricultural activities are practised and less dense in the arid zones of the north. Leclerc (2015) mentions that the most populated regions are occupied by the Zarma people around Niamey, the capital, and the Hausa people towards the east. He also adds that the majority of the population (around 75 per cent) occupy the southern part of the country which makes up a quarter of the national territory. Islam is the predominant religion in Niger. The Muslim population is estimated between 80 and 98 per cent adherents while the rest of the population is represented by small communities of Animists in rural areas and Christians in urban centres.

Niger has French as its official language. People who speak French were estimated at 10 per cent and they occupy the public sector with a background in formal education (Wolff, 2006). Most of them live in the capital Niamey and in administrative headquarters. In the domains of legislature, public administration, jurisdiction, and economic sector, French remains the preferred language. Hausa and occasionally Zarma are used for oral communication. As far as public life is concerned, the other national languages are practically

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absent. Unlike the local languages, French remains associated with power and prestige, upward social mobility, successful professional careers, employment in the public sector, etc. It dominates the education system almost exclusively. But the use of the foreign language poses a problem as most children do not speak it upon entering school. As a result, drastic school failure, frequent class repetition or sometimes dropouts are inevitable. To face this problem, the government has introduced the use of the main national languages in education, although this only concerns limited areas of the actual system.

2.1. Historical Background

The establishment of the Tuareg and Tubu nomads in the northern part of the Sahara followed by the settlement of the sedentary groups in the south provides a good starting point in the history of Niger. These settlements were made possible as a result of the desertification of the Sahara in the eighth millennium BC which had pushed southward the sedentary populations, leaving room for the nomadic communities. However, the region constituting present-day Niger entered into history when it began to serve as an important trade route across the Sahara in the Middle Ages (Leclerc, 2015). After Islam entered the region, two great kingdoms progressively arose: the Songhai Empire in the west and the empire of Kanem-Bornu in the east. Britannica (2011) mentions that the defeat of the Songhai Empire by the Moroccans in 1591 consequently led to its decline while, on the other hand, internal conflicts destabilized the Kanem Empire. The nineteenth century saw the rise of the Fulani Empire of Sokoto in the northwest of present-day Nigeria founded by Usman dan Fodio. This latter conquered both the Hausa states in the south and the Kanem Empire, against which he proclaimed Jihad or Holy War. It was these series of conquests that would later facilitate not only the spread of the Hausa language across the African continent but also the subsequent French colonization of Niger.

The French occupation of Niger began after the expedition led by the French officers Paul Voulet and Charles Chanoine in 1899. The expedition faced the resistance of the Tuareg of Air in the north who made it difficult for the French to establish a regular administration. However, towards 1922 after the severe drought and famine of 1913-1915 and the Tuareg uprising of the 1916-1917, the French succeeded in establishing their colonial power (Britannica, 2011). In spite of the resistance of the local population, which was not powerful enough to stop the colonizer, France succeeded in occupying the territory. Niger became a French colony by 1922, and French was made the language of administration.

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After forty eight years of colonization, Niger gained independence on August 3, 1960. Although independence meant political stability, the administrative organization of the country has changed a little since. This instability was mostly the result of the political mutations caused by the continuous military coups under the different regimes. Nonetheless, achievements in the field of education are worth mentioning. In fact, under the first president Hamani Diori, the Ministry of Education issued a decree in 1967 establishing the alphabets of such languages as Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Songhai and Tamajaq (Leclerc, 2015). Later in 1974, the government of the Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountché developed a programme of educational reform which focused on the use of national languages as medium of instruction alternating with French, the revision of the structures of teacher training, the stimulation of research of the development of bilingual education, and the production of educational materials tailored to the needs of bilingual education. Leclerc (2015) reports that by 1993, there were forty two bilingual schools teaching in the five dominant languages (Hausa, Zarma, Fulfulde, Tamajaq and Kanuri), and covering more than 80 per cent of school zones of the time.

2.2. Demographic Situation

The Nigerien population is a conglomeration of different ethnic groups. The largest one is formed by the Hausa people, who occupy the southern centre of Niger. They speak Hausa, a vehicular language also spoken in Nigeria and ranked among the most important languages in western Africa. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2011), the Hausa constitute more than half of the Nigerien population, though the majority of Hausa natives live in Nigeria. This has probably made their language the main lingua franca of the country. The second major ethnic group is the Zarma living in the southwest. Because they share the same ethnic origin, the Zarma are sometimes associated with the Songhai, the Koutey and the Wogo people. They are found along the Niger River, in the southeast near the borders of Burkina Fas. Their language, Zarma, along with the other varieties, is spoken not only in Niger but also in Mali, in northern Burkina Faso, and in northern Benin. Both the Hausa and the Zarma are sedentary people. Scattered throughout the country are the nomadic Fulani people, with Fula as their language. There are also Tuareg people in Niger. They speak Tamazight and Tamajaq and are located in the region of Agadez, and on the southern fringe of the Sahara. As for the Kanuri people, they occupy the eastern part of Zinder and speak Kanuri. Arabs, Tubu, and Gurma people constitute the remainder of the population, along with some French and people from other countries.

3. Languages Present in Niger

According to Ethnologue (2016), there are twenty one spoken languages in Niger. While ten of these languages have been given the status of national languages, only one – French, the colonial language – has achieved official status since the days of independence. The choice of official and national languages by governments, particularly in post-colonial states, is part and parcel of the process of nation building. In this context, it is useful to understand what is meant by official language and national language. Patrick (2010) has provided a good definition of the two terms. As she puts it, official languages are “those that have been given ‘official’ status and that have functions associated with legitimate power, as related to the government and the civil service, the media, education, the judiciary, industry, and trade” (p. 181). The granting of official status to one (or sometimes more than one) depends greatly on political reasons, and in most cases such as those of post-colonial countries it is associated with independence.

National languages, as defined by Patrick (2010), are “those that have usually been ideologically constructed to unify nations by creating political, socio-cultural, and geographical integrity” (p. 180). To put it another way, a national language is one that is officially recognized and chosen by the national government as the language to be used nationally in administration, education, work, mass media etc. Besides, a national language acts as a bond between the different ethnic and linguistic groups of a given country. In Niger the languages playing this role are represented by Arabic, Buduma, Fulfulde, Gulmancema, Hausa, Kanuri, Zarma, Tamajaq, Tassawaq, and Tubu. For a better understanding of the linguistic distribution of the country, it is important to classify the national languages in accordance with their linguistic affiliation or the language family they belong to.

3.1. Afro-Asiatic Languages

The Afro-Asiatic languages refer to the languages of common origin found in the Arabian Peninsula, the northern part of Africa, and some islands and adjacent areas in Western Asia. They are divided into six branches, namely Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, and Semitic. In Niger, there are four languages members of the Afro-Asiatic family: Arabic (Semitic), Buduma and Hausa (Chadic), and Tamajaq (Berber).

Arabic is one of the ten national languages spoken in Niger. It is the mother tongue of 1.6 per cent of the population. According to the language list suggested by Ethnologue (2016),

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there are four varieties of Arabic present in Niger. The first variety is Algerian Saharan Arabic. Speakers of this variety are estimated at 260,000 around the Agadez region. The second variety is represented by Hassaniya Arabic. It is spoken by around 19,000 people, most of whom inhabit the Tahoua region. The third variety is Libyan Arabic, with its 9,300 speakers present around the regions of Agadez, Diffa and Zinder. Shuwa Arabic represents the fourth variety. Just as Libyan Arabic, it has 9,300 speakers living in the Diffa region. Though not mentioned by the Ethnologue, a small group of Lebanese Arabic speakers can be added to these four varieties. They are found in the Agadez region and are estimated at some 5,700 speakers (Leclerc, 2015).

The two Chadic languages spoken in Niger are Buduma and Hausa. Buduma speakers make up the 9,700 people found on the shores and islands of Lake Chad. Hausa is the main language spoken in Niger. It is the mother tongue of an estimated 8.5 million speakers, and second language of the majority of the Nigerien population. The Hausa language has several dialects and these latter can be distinguished according to their geographical distribution. The north-western area comprises the following dialects: Kurfeyanci around Filingué, Aderanci around Tahoua, Arewanci around Dogondouchi and Tibiranci around Maradi. The eastern area is characterised by the Damagaranci around Zinder and Agadez. Despite this dialectal variation, there is a mutual intelligibility between speakers of different dialects. Wolff (2006) notes that Hausa dialectology is less advanced in Niger. Unlike in Nigeria where it has achieved both standard and official status, the Hausa language has not yet been standardised in Niger. In addition, absence of an effective linguistic policy impedes the promotion and development of the national languages. However, Moumouni (2014) points out that “the language recently gained a new orthography following a workshop organised by the Ministry of National Education on the harmonisation of the orthography of the national languages” (p. 189).

Among the main languages spoken in Niger is also Tamajaq. It is the language of the Tuareg people who represent 0.7 per cent of the population (Leclerc, 2015). There are three varieties of Tamajaq in Niger: Tamahaq or Tahaggart spoken by some 20,000 people around the Agadez region and the Hoggar Mountains in Tamanrasset; Tamajaq or Tawallammat with 450,000 speakers spread around Agadez and Tahoua regions; and Tamajeq or Tayart with 250,000 speakers around the Air Mountains and Agadez region (Ethnologue, 2016).

3.2. Nilo-Saharan Languages

The Nilo-Saharan languages represent one of Africa's major language phyla. Languages within this family cover major areas in eastern and central Africa and extend westward as far as the Niger Valley in Mali, West Africa. The three languages from the Nilo-Saharan family spoken in Niger are Kanuri and Tubu (Saharan) and Zarma (Songhay).

As listed by Ethnologue (2016), the Kanuri language has four varieties: Bilma variety spoken by 20,000 people in the Bilma area in the Agadez region; Central Kanuri with 80,000 speakers in the Diffa region; Manga Kanuri with 280,000 speakers in Zinder and around the Diffa regions; and Tumari Kanuri, known as Kanembu, spoken by 40,000 people living in the Diffa region and its surroundings. The Tubu language is spoken by 19,000 people in the form of two varieties: the Teda dialect or Tedaga with 10,000 speakers around Agadez and Diffa) and the Daza dialect or Dazaga with 50,000 speakers around Diffa and Zinder.

Another important language spoken in Niger is Zarma. Also known as Djerma, it is the second major language of the population after Hausa. In addition, it is not just used as a vernacular but also as a lingua franca in certain regions. It is spoken by 3.2 million people as a mother tongue (18.2 per cent of the population). Wolff (2006) considers Zarma as "part of a language continuum" (p. 629). This continuity is characterised by the Songhay language along Gao in Mali, the Kaado dialect in Niger, the Dendi language southward in Benin.

3.3. Niger-Congo Languages

In terms of languages and geographical spread, the Niger-Congo is the largest language family in Africa. The area in which these languages are spoken extends from Dakar, Senegal, east to Mombasa in Kenya and south to Cape Town, South Africa (Britannica, 2011). The two Niger-Congo languages spoken in Niger constitute Fulfulde (Atlantic) and Gulmancema (Voltaic). As mentioned by the Ethnologue (2016), the Fulfulde language has two varieties: a central-eastern variety, spoken around Dogondoutchi and eastward to the border of Chad by 450,000 speakers, and a western variety, equally spoken by 450,000 speakers in the Tillabéri region and between the Burkina Faso border and Dogondoutchi. As for the Gulmancema language, it is spoken by 1.5 million speakers along the south-western border with Burkina Faso and in the south of Niamey.

The other language which completes the list of the ten national languages spoken in Niger is Tassawaq. It is spoken by a small population of about 8,000 people in the oasis of

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Ingala and the neighbouring salt mines of Teguida-n-Tessoumt. Between Agadez and Tahoua is spoken a variety of Tassawaq called Tagdal with 25,000 people. The Tassawaq language plus the regional dialects represent the Northern Songhay languages.

Languages	Speakers	Percentage	Linguistic Affiliation
Hausa	8,542,000	47.2%	Chadic Language
Zarma	3,298,000	18.2%	Songhay Language
Fulfulde	1,507,000	8.3%	Atlantic Language
Kanuri	771,000	4.2%	Saharan Language
Arabic	670,300	3.6%	Semitic Language
Tamajaq	135,000	0.7%	Berber Language
Gulmancema	56,000	0.3%	Voltaic Language
Tubu	19,000	0.1%	Saharan Language
Tassawaq	15,000	0.08%	Nilo-Saharan Language
Buduma	9,700	0.05%	Chadic Language

Table 1: Ten languages with national status in Niger (Leclerc, 2015)

In Niger the situation of the national languages, including other languages which have not yet gained national status, poses a serious problem. In domains such as administration, civil service and education, they seem practically absent. It is French rather that has taken this position – a language that dominates the linguistic landscape of not only Niger, but Francophone African countries as well. Indeed, during the time of colonization, statutory and institutional measures were set up in order to facilitate the promotion and expansion of the colonial tongue in various administrations. Thus, Beidou (2014) notes that from colonization until today, only the French language serves as a medium of cooperation and collaboration between Francophone African countries, and as a means of communication, exchange, commerce and interaction between the populations of those countries. There is an indication that the French language occupies a central position in Niger, whereas the national languages remain just means of communication within the actual population and an expression of national identity. Beidou (2014) goes on to explain that this linguistic reality has prompted non-governmental organisations and associations involved in the domain of education to warn that the use of French may lead to cultural loss which, in turn, will possibly cause the disappearance of the local languages. Those organisations see the use of the foreign language

as an instrument of the ongoing process of domination and colonization. However, in order to verify the plausibility of such a claim, it is important to understand the relationship that exists between the different languages and their various functions within the social sphere.

4. Languages in Education

Education is undoubtedly one of those areas where language plays a very important role. Political decisions in this regard should therefore be taken with caution. Maman and Hamidou (2010) mentioned in their report that the Nigerien education system is structured into four components: formal education, non-formal education, informal education and specialized education. Formal education refers to a modality of acquiring education and professional training in a school setting. The same definition applies to non-formal education except that it is acquired in non-academic setting. In the first case, the target group are children from six years whereas the second involves adolescents and adults. Non-formal education constitutes an integral part of lifelong education. It allows adults and youth who have been excluded from the formal school system to acquire and maintain the necessary competence, skill and measures to adapt to a constantly changing environment. This type of education can result from an individual initiative and take the form of various learning activities outside the formal education system. Leclerc (2015) argues that in a country like Niger, “non-formal education is an absolute necessity in the process of social and economic development.” Informal education is the process by which a person acquires knowledge, skills and abilities during his lifetime through daily experience and interaction with the environment. As for specialized education, it is concerned with the education and training of people with mental and physical disabilities. It should be noted that of all these four types of education, the formal one is the most important. Formal education, as explained by Maman and Hamidou (2010), is organised in different levels of teachings:

- “Preschool education with two components: kindergartens and nursery classes;
- Basic cycle 1 with traditional schools, bilingual schools and specialized schools;
- Basic cycle 2 which manages the general secondary schools;
- Secondary education composed of general education plus professional and technical education;
- Higher education which, as its name suggests, involves higher education, scientific and applied research, and the training and the perfection of management” (p. 11).

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The following table gives an explanation of the situation of the ten national languages in the education system:

Languages	Percentage	Written Transcription
Hausa	47.2 %	Yes
Zarma	18.2 %	Yes
Fulfulde	8.3 %	Yes
Tamajaq	4.6 %	Yes
Kanuri	4.2 %	Yes
Arabic	3.6 %	No
Gulmancema	0.3 %	Yes
Tubu	0.1 %	Yes
Buduma	0.05 %	Yes
Tassawaq	0.08 %	No

Table 2: National languages in the education system (Leclerc, 2015)

It can be observed from the above table that only three of the ten national languages play an important role in education. Obviously, these statistics do not reflect the language policy of the government as planned. Nevertheless, they do give an idea about the importance of the national languages within the education setting. It is interesting, on the other hand, to note that considerable efforts are being made by the government at the national level to support the local languages, and develop a multilingual community, keeping French at the same time as the only official language.

To understand education in Niger thoroughly, it is important to mention bilingual education. The history of bilingual education goes back to 1973-1974 when the first bilingual school opened its doors in the region of Zinder under the name *Ecole Experimentale* or Experimental School (Maman & Hamidou, 2010). The school had Hausa and French as media of instruction and is considered one of the oldest experiences in terms of bilingual education in francophone West Africa. Among the reasons of creating such schools are the negative academic results that resulted from the use of French as the sole language of instruction. Therefore, the local languages were introduced based on the idea that children learn better when they learn in their first language. The idea seemed to be working, and after positive

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academic results, other experimental schools were opened throughout the country involving the five dominant national languages (Hausa, Zarma, Fulfulde, Tamajaq and Kanuri).

It should also be noted that this bilingual education makes an integral part of a policy of reformation of the whole education system as it was destabilized by the unsuccessful performance of the school inherited from colonization. Leclerc (2015) explains that the choice of the languages to be taught in bilingual schools is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, either directly or through educational services. However, he stresses the fact that this choice has to be approved by the local community in general meetings. In the case of non-formal education, the choice of languages of instruction is the exclusive responsibility of the community or the target groups, regardless of who the project initiators are. Thus, it is the majority or dominant national language in the milieu that is generally used. And depending on the situation, French comes at the beginning of the training or in the end, according to the need of the learners. Leclerc (2015) also reports that the number of bilingual schools which were theoretically functional during the academic year 2009-2010 was estimated at 573 across all bilingual models. They accounted for about 5 per cent of schools in basic cycle 1, far exceeding the number of private and community schools in the country.

Education in the Arabic language is also another important factor which plays a key role in the Nigerien education system. After having developed a policy on the promotion of bilingual education, the Ministry of National Education turned its attention to literacy and training in Arabic. This led to the elaboration of both a comprehensive and participatory programme designed to promote Franco-Arab bilingual education, especially in formal education. In the Islamic University of Say, for example, Arabic is the medium of instruction. Arabic is also taught in many schools (e.g. Franco-Arab schools) in an experimental way. In the observation of Leclerc (2015), many parents seem to guide their children to this type of education to the detriment of mainstream education in French, but the process remains marginal. This attitude finds its explanation in the fact that knowledge of Arabic plays an essential role in the life of the Muslim population. Therefore, Rouiller (2004) suggests that a special attention should be given to the teaching of Arabic. But because of the secular situation of the country, he questions both the possibility of teaching the religious language and the variety to teach in case the language policy goes in this way.

There are also Islamic schools in non-formal educational structure where a teacher teaches Qur'an to children of various ages in a traditional way. According to Leclerc (2015),

this style of education can be divided into two types: type 1 schools which offer full primary cycle with a programme based on 75 per cent teaching the Qur'an (100 per cent of the programme during the first two years) and 25 per cent of the time devoted to French and mathematics from the third year, and type 2 schools offering a programme open to all people regardless of age and are mainly devoted to the transcript of the local language with harmonized Qur'anic characters. Although the Nigerien government neglects this teaching tradition and hardly gives it financial support, Leclerc (2015) thinks that with the support of the Islamic Development Bank and other Islamic organizations, these schools could experience a positive development in Niger. In fact, as pointed by Leclerc (2015), the process has already begun. Today, the teaching of Arabic is increasingly becoming important in Niger due to the pressure of religious groups who put their focus primarily on Islamic teaching. Because of the great influence they exert on a significant proportion of the population, these groups cannot continue to be ignored by the government for long.

5. Bilingualism and Multilingualism

The study of bilingualism and multilingualism has attracted much attention over the past decades, particularly in the field of sociolinguistics. In fact, this comes with no surprise. Putting aside what Chomsky (1965) considered as “completely homogeneous speech community” (p. 3), it is evident that most speech communities around the world use more than one language and are, therefore, bilingual or multilingual. Romaine (1995) observed that “there are about thirty times as many languages as there are countries” (p. 8). This consequently implies that today bilingualism is practically present in every country of the world. And so is multilingualism, relatively speaking. But first what do bilingualism and multilingualism actually mean?

A quick look at the definition of these two terms in the literature reveals that they have often been differently defined and described so as to determine when a speaker can be considered as bilingual, and a society multilingual. These different perspectives regarding the connotation of both terms sometimes make it difficult to define them in a standard way. In order to understand them in relation to the present purpose, a more general definition will be suggested. In this vein, bilingualism can be defined as the ability to use two languages by an individual speaker. Bilingualism has various degrees. While some speakers tend to show a command of the two languages similar to that of native speakers, others can use two languages on a regular basis with a high degree of proficiency but without a native linguistic competence in either language. It is important to note that some bilinguals may be able to

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communicate orally but unable to read or write in one or more of their languages. As for multilingualism, it denotes the use of more than two languages within a society.

Bilingualism is a prevalent phenomenon in Niger. It involves the two major languages, namely Hausa and or Zarma, spoken as the main lingua franca across the country. According to Wolff (2006), these two languages can be understood by up to 90 per cent of the total population. However, in terms of language proficiency, it is often difficult to distinguish the bilingual speaker from the monolingual one as the language proficiency varies between individuals. For example, some Hausa native speakers can speak Zarma fluently with a native accent, whereas others can hold a normal conversation in Zarma but lack the linguistic competence of a native speaker. The same applies to native speakers of Zarma. In terms of reading and writing, the scenario is different as many of the local languages have not yet been codified. Also, there are particular linguistic practices where two speakers can successfully communicate in two different languages with no worry of misunderstanding. Even though this type of conversation occurs in very rare occasions involving a sense of language identity, they do provide an idea about how unique bilingualism can be.

A survey carried out from March 1999 to September 2000 by Rouiller (2004) on the linguistic representations of five national languages (Hausa, Songhay-Zarma, Kanuri, Fulfulde, and Tamajaq) shows that 1001 Nigeriens (20 per cent) are monolingual in a sample population of 4500 individuals. This small percentage is represented by speakers of the three other languages apart from Hausa and Songhay-Zarma. In his explanation, Rouiller (2004) mentions that these monolingual groups, found in various regions of the country, especially in rural areas, have restricted language needs within familial context and village. Moreover, his survey notes the presence of a few monolingual speakers in areas where Hausa and Songhay-Zarma are dominant. But as cultural practices and bilingual education is becoming more and more dominant in most monolingual communities, monolingualism tends to be gradually replaced by bilingualism and possibly multilingualism.

Multilingualism plays a key role in the understanding of the relationship between the national languages and their social functions in Niger. It is a typical situation where the local or national languages have a special role in daily interactions. Apart from their primary function of transmitting cultural values and traditions, these languages also serve as a means of communication and exchange between the different linguistic communities of the country. Rouiller (2004) conducted a survey on the functions of five dominant languages (Hausa,

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Songhay-Zarma, Kanuri, Fulfulde, and Tamajaq) pertaining to a portion of the population. The survey reveals that there exists a growing competition between Hausa, Songhay-Zarma and French. For religious reasons, Arabic also comes into play as it is favoured by the overwhelming Muslim population. Thus, in order to satisfy the needs of the population, Rouiller (2004) argues that education in Niger has to involve more the mother tongues of students than French and Arabic.

The multilingual situation of Niger is organised around three main languages: two vehicular national languages – Hausa and Songhay-Zarma – and one official foreign language – French. To this multilingual setting is added the emergence of two foreign languages, English and Mandarin. The presence of Mandarin is brought about by cultural exchanges between China and Niger since the bilateral cooperation in 1996 (Beidou, 2014). These exchanges are manifested by the granting of scholarships and internship by the Chinese government to a number of Nigerien civil servants and students in different fields. The presence of English is also justified by cultural reasons. As a matter of fact, it is the second foreign language taught in secondary school and university after French. Besides, we can note, just like the case of China, the granting of scholarships and training to students who wish to study in the US or in England through the Commonwealth scholarship. Beidou (2014) believes that as they are gradually becoming important due to the reinforcement of economic and cultural relations plus the trends of globalisation, these foreign languages, in addition to the national ones, can relatively transform or contribute to the sociolinguistic makeup of Niger. So, what language policy can be developed for such a multilingual society?

6. A Neutral Language Policy

The concept of language policy is used to refer to those measures and plans developed by a government for the purpose of the managing the spoken languages in the national community (Maman & Hamidou, 2010). Generally speaking, this refers to the legislative and legal measures which define the promotion and the modalities of coexistence between languages present in a given territory. In the light of this definition, we cannot talk, in the context of Niger, about an explicit language policy. However, there exist some references and initiatives on the promotion of national languages present in various official documents.

Even though it was ruled by authoritarian regimes, the Nigerien government did not need legislation to legitimize its language policy. This can be explained by the suspension of both the constitution of 1960 in 1964 and the last constitution before the 1996 coup which

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dates from 1992. Writing in 2006, Wolff notes that the government has made a considerable progress in adult literacy since the achievement of independence. This has been possible owing to an effective policy developed by the government which aimed at using both French and the national languages as media of instruction. Regarding the status of languages in education, the constitution of 14th July 1999 proclaims in its article 3 that French is the official language. At the same time, the article states that all the languages of the Nigerien communities have the status of national languages. However, this declaration seems far-fetched. In fact, with the existence of many communities speaking different languages, it is unlikely that all the languages gain a national status. To face this issue, the constitution of 31st December 2001 states in its Article 2 fixing the promotion terms and development of national languages that only ten languages have been given national status. These languages include Arabic, Buduma, Fulfulde, Gulmancema, Hausa, Kanuri, Zarma, Tamajaq, Tassawaq and Tubu. It is important to mention that the policy of the government in terms of national languages is significantly based on education and the promotion of national unity.

In spite of the fact that French is proclaimed official language, it is not the only language used in the sphere of legislation and justice. Hausa and Zarma are also allowed in parliamentary debates and political discourse. However, the constitution is written and promulgated only in French. Article 7 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly (2001), for example, obliges the members of Age Office to be able to read and write in the official language. In the courts, the accepted written languages are French and rarely classical Arabic. In oral communication, on the other hand, most of the national languages are accepted before the judge who may use one or more interpreters. For instance, Article 57 of the Criminal Procedure Code (2007) allows subjects to trial to use their languages to express themselves in front of, say, a police officer. Under Article 5 of the 31st December 2001 constitution fixing the promotion terms and development of national languages, it is stated that “every Nigerien citizen has the right to benefit from the services of justice in the language of their choice” (as cited in Leclerc, 2015). And at the end of a trial, the sentence is pronounced in French and often in Arabic.

In the domain of public administration, the local languages are used in oral communication with employees speaking the same language(s). Leclerc (2015) thinks that this practice is not a right. He explains that French should have this right because it is the language of the government. However, the problem with Leclerc’s view is that it overlooks the fact that, from the sociolinguistic standpoint, there is no such thing as “right” when it

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comes to language use. In fact, what is the use of language if it does not serve the people who speak it? Sociolinguists do not do politics; they talk about how politicians do politics with language. Therefore, the argument that only French should be used in the government and the assembly is political, not sociolinguistic. But since a significant percentage of the Nigerien population does not know French, it is necessary and important for them to use their respective languages when they need to. Perhaps this explains the fact that some documents belonging to the Ministry of Justice, Health, Education and Agriculture can have a version in certain national languages. It follows then that it is unnecessary for a doctor or a nurse to address a patient in French. The communication can take place in a language that the patient understands. In contrast, it is a different scenario when we talk about written language where French remains the dominant language, especially in such areas as advertising, labelling, instructions, etc. Indeed, it is very rare to come across a public notice written in Hausa, Zarma or in any other national language. People who have received formal education sometimes display a significant command of French compared to other languages.

Despite the efforts of the government in the promotion and development of national languages, these latter are not as important as the French language in the education system, although Article 10 of the 1st June 1998 constitution on the orientation of the education system states that “the languages of education are French and the national languages” (as cited in Leclerc, 2015). Taking into consideration the stance of the constitution vis-à-vis the national languages, it can be concluded that they coexist with the French language at least at the level of primary or basic education, particularly in nursery schools. This does not always apply to secondary education (general and technical), given the fact that a second foreign language is often introduced in the curriculum. It is evident that the national languages are not equally treated. The government should be very cautious in case it decides to promote the national languages and probably give them official status because of the diverse linguistic groups that shape the country. At the moment, there seems to be no worries as the population indifferently uses the three major languages (Hausa, Zarma, and French) in respective domains. Wolff (2006) suggests a “trilingual model” based on these three main languages for any revision of the language policy in terms of official language(s).

7. Conclusion

The coexistence of several local languages with different functions within the actual society is a reality that makes the sociolinguistic situation in Niger less complex than that of many Francophone African countries where hundreds of national languages can be counted. In order to effectively cope with its multilingual society, the Nigerien government has adopted a language policy which consists of introducing the national languages, though not all of them, into the education system. As a result, a special attention has been given to bilingual education and a number of experimental bilingual schools have been created where, in addition to the official language – French –, five national languages are also taught depending on the schools and universities. In fact, because of the low rate of literacy in the French language, the population more or less displays a positive attitude towards the choice of their own languages to be used in education. So far, the experiment of bilingual education has been successful. This gives hope for an eventual process whereby the widely used national languages would gain a special status recognised by the government and one that will meet the linguistic needs of the Nigerien population.

Chapter Two

1. Introduction

Whenever people from different cultural and linguistic background meet and want to communicate, the need to adopt a common language that is understood by nearly everyone becomes inevitably essential. In the course of history and throughout different societies, many languages have played this role. Languages with such functions are referred to as lingua francas. Among the twenty one languages spoken in Niger, only one language stands out as the language of intercultural communication and commercial exchange: it is the Hausa language. The aim of this chapter is to explain how Hausa has become a lingua franca in Niger. To do so, we will generally present the Hausa language. Then, we will define lingua francas and briefly explain how they develop. This will be followed by an attempt to explain why Hausa has become a lingua franca thanks to geo-historical as well as socio-cultural factors. Finally, the chapter will close with possible sociolinguistic considerations about the future of the Hausa language.

2. Presentation of the Language

The Hausa language has been referred to as the most important lingua franca in West and Central Africa. According to the estimation of Britannica (2011), it is spoken as a first or second language by about forty to fifty million people and most of them live in northern Nigeria and in southern areas of Niger. In Nigeria, it is spoken as native language by the Hausa and Fulani people in a large area known as the Hausaland, which covers the traditional emirates of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Daura, Sokoto, etc. There are also native speakers of Hausa in the Hausa-speaking areas of southern Niger, which consists of Gobir, Maradi, Damagarm, Taouha, Dogondoutchi, etc. In both Nigeria and Niger, Hausa serves as a national language. Soucková (2011) points out that unlike most other African languages, Hausa is actually expanding. In many areas where it is spoken, it is rapidly replacing the local languages or used as a lingua franca. Along similar lines, Newman (2000) observed that “Hausa has probably been expanding for the past two hundred years, but its spread during the past half century has been particularly dramatic, particularly in northern Nigeria” (p. 1). As a result of this expansion, the language has rapidly become the mother tongue in such urban areas as Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, and Potiskum. It is also worth noting that the Hausa language is broadcast by such international radio stations as BBC, RFI, CRI, Voice of Russia, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, and IRIB (Musa, 2013). Besides, Hausa is taught at some

universities in Africa and around the world. (See appendices A and B for the geographical distribution of Hausa in Niger and Nigeria.)

2.1. Phylogenetic Classification

The question as to whether the Hausa language is related to any other linguistic group has been an issue of dispute for so long amongst linguists. This is why in the classifications of African languages Hausa was allotted an independent place, unconnected with any other African languages (Newman, 2000; Smirnova, 1982). It was essential to provide a solution to the problem of genetic classification of the language, not only for purely linguistic reasons, but also to understand the origins of the Hausa people. Jaggar (2010) explains that it is difficult to understand the history of languages and their phylogenetic affiliation in sub-Saharan Africa due to a relative paucity of historical or linguistic documentation and limited knowledge of linguistic phenomena such as semantic shift, phonological change and systematic sound correspondences, etc. Although linguists do not rely on a precise technique for classification, etymology is generally used as it provides reliable information about the history of languages and to some extent that of their speakers. According to Jaggar (2001), it was only recently that the inclusion of Hausa (and Chadic) within Afro-Asiatic has been generally accepted, although this was first proposed about 150 years ago. Thus, it is now definitively established that Hausa is phylogenetically classified as a member of the Chadic languages, which in turn belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language phylum that includes Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, Berber, and Ancient Egyptian. The inclusion of Hausa in the Chadic family is justified by the many features of its grammatical structure such as the pronominal system, certain peculiarities of conjugation and verbal formation, the presence of grammatical gender, methods of word formation and formation of the plural, separate grammatical formants, etc. (Smirnova, 1982).

2.2. General Characteristics

The linguistic description of Hausa is generally done based on the standard variety spoken in Kano, Nigeria. In terms of orthography, the development of a writing system for the Hausa language did not prove to be difficult. In fact, before the contact of the Europeans with Africa in general and the Hausaland in particular, the language already possessed its own system of writing based on the Arabic script, called *Àjàmi*. Later in the early twentieth century, subsequent to British colonial administration in Nigeria, an alternate script known as *Bokò* was additionally developed based on the Latin alphabet. Today, both scripts are used for

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writing with the Arabic-based script being still restricted in use compared to the more modern *Bokò* script which is exclusively confined to formal education and for historical, religious or literary purposes.

The Hausa language has a complex phonological system which is characterized by tones and a large inventory of vowels and consonants (Thompson, 2015). Hausa vowel system comprises twelve vowels: five short vowels, five long vowels, and two diphthongs. In the standard Romanised writing system, short vowels are used for long vowels. Hausa has also thirty consonants with a large inventory due to several unusual contrasts. As illustrated in the IPA (1999), the pronunciation of consonants and vowels is relatively stable regardless of environment, and they are consistently longer in duration than their short counterparts. Smirnova (1982) on her part notes that the glottal stop is disregarded in alphabetisation, but all words starting with a vowel are pronounced with a glottal stop. In terms of syllables, Hausa has a fairly simple syllable structure. A syllable can be either *light* (Consonant-Vowel) or *heavy* (Consonant-Vowel-Vowel or Consonant-Vowel-Consonant). (See Gutman & Avanzati, 2013 for the linguistic structure of Hausa.)

Hausa is also a tonal language where the pitch of various syllables affects the meaning of words as much as the structure of the word. In writing, accent marks are used to indicate whether a tone is falling, rising, or even. The sentence structure has a subject-verb-object-form. Nouns are modified for number and gender, and adjectives agree with the number of the nouns they modify. Very often, variations in the pronunciation of certain verbs can be very subtle due to phonological features. For example while “yánkàà” means “to cut up,” simply changing the accent over the second “a” (yànkáá) means “to cut a piece off.” In fact, these phonological variations highlight the marked contrast between short and long vowels.

2.3. Regional Dialects

Akin to all widely distributed languages, Hausa has a number of geographical dialects, characterized by variations in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary across the areas where it has the status of both mother tongue and second language (Newman, 2000). In general, one can notice the difference between western Hausa, for example, as spoken in Sokoto and Tahoua, and eastern Hausa, as spoken in Kano and Zinder, with the dialect of Katsina and Maradi falling somewhere in between. This type of variation also exists within eastern Hausa where one can differentiate Standard Hausa of Kano from more restricted dialects such as that of Daura in the north, Zaria in the south, or Bauchi in the far southeast.

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The Hausa language has also been greatly influenced by the Arabic language, as well as the Tamajaq language of the Tuareg people, the Nilo-Saharan language of Kanuri and the Niger-Congo language of Mande. Similarly, English and French have also contributed to the linguistic structure of Hausa since the time of colonization. The result of this language contact has marked the language with a significant number of loanwords from various languages. For example, the introduction of both French and English loanwords helps to distinguish respectively between Hausa as spoken in Niger and Hausa of Nigeria.

3. Definition of Lingua Franca

Now different in meaning from the original Lingua Franca which was a pidgin developed in the eastern Mediterranean for commercial and military purposes, the term ‘lingua franca’ is generally used to refer to “any language used for communication among people of different mother tongues” (Bolafi, Bracalenti, Braham, & Gindro, 2003, p. 172). This is a useful definition but it seems unsatisfactory because it excludes the other social roles that a lingua franca can play apart from its purely communicative function. To refine this definition and make it more comprehensive, a lingua franca can be defined as a language that is not only used for daily communication between speakers of different languages, but also adopted for various social purposes such as socio-economic exchanges. Languages with lingua franca status are also considered as vehicular languages, even though there is a subtle distinction between the two in terms of function. While a vehicular language is widely used in a particular area, a lingua franca tends to encompass a wider communicative setting with several functions. English, for example, has been referred to as a lingua franca because it is widely used among speakers of different languages all over the world for many purposes. In fact, this is why it has also been called international language. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of Hausa as a lingua franca in West Africa and a vehicular language or national lingua franca in countries such as Niger and Nigeria. In the light of this distinction, it can then be concluded that a lingua franca can be both national and international depending on social importance and geographical distribution.

4. Development of Lingua Franca

Before explaining the ways in which lingua francas develop, it is important to address a common misconception about language. On attempting to explain why languages achieve widespread status, Bollafi et al. (2003) have claimed that linguistic reasons can explain the vehicularity of languages. Furthermore, they believe that “the prevalence of the use of certain

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vehicular languages over others at a given time or in a given field depends on linguistic, cultural and economic factors of predominance” (p. 326). Similarly, Bryson (2009) puts forward the claim that English is so widely used because of its adaptability and simplicity in terms of spelling and pronunciation. In fact, English is not alone. Arabic, Greek, French, and Latin have all been viewed through the same window as well. But arguments like these are both subjective and fallacious, though some of their proponents did not exclude extralinguistic reasons for the predominance of languages. Latin, for instance, had once been a widely used language despite its inflectional endings and gender differences. French, too, had played such a role regardless of its difficulty in gender and number agreement.

A language does not achieve wider communication simply because of its linguistic properties, or because of it has a limited and simple vocabulary, or because it could be associated with great literature, culture or religion in the past, or because it is widely spoken. Indeed, these are all reasons which may motivate a person to learn a language, but none of them, alone or in combination, can ensure the important status of a language. Crystal (2003) strongly argues that languages become dominant and important chiefly because of the power of their speakers, especially their political and military power. Looking back into history, one can see that Latin became the lingua franca of the Roman Empire because of the power of the Roman legions. Also, Greek once became an international language thanks to the powerful armies of Alexander the Great. Islam is arguably there to explain why Arabic is widely used across northern Africa and the Middle East. As for English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, they all respectively entered the Americas, Africa and the Far East through the doors of colonization.

Moreover, the number of speakers, whether as first or second language, has always been considered as a determining factor in the power of a language. This is the case of Hausa, a language spoken by about 50 million people found mostly in Niger and Nigeria. As mentioned by Jaggar (2001), it is also spoken by diaspora communities, traders, Muslim communities, and immigrants found mainly in urban areas of West Africa such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Sudan. Statistics gathered by Ethnologue (2016) suggest that about 800,000 people speak Hausa in Benin as a second language and use it for wider communication in the northern part of the country, mainly in larger towns and market villages. The same number of speakers is given for Sudan where Hausa is used as a second language. In Burkina Faso, only 500 speakers of Hausa could be counted in the eastern part of the region. Hausa speakers in Cameroun make up 23,000 people

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and are scattered throughout the country. About 120,000 people speak Hausa in Ivory Coast and they are mostly found in the capital, Abidjan. The Ethnologue made no mention of the number of Hausa speakers in Ghana. It is Leclerc (2015) who reports that there are around 200,000 Hausa speakers in Ghana where it is used as a second language and plays the role of wider communication.

Another way whereby a language can gain an important social function is when it is actively used in such domains as education, administration, media, etc. The function of Hausa as the language of commerce, government, and education, and the mass media is evident in countries where it is spoken as first or second language. Apart from a number of newspapers, publications, television and media productions, it is also taught and broadcast in countries where it only functions as a foreign language. In Niger, the development of Hausa as a lingua franca tends to be disturbed by the presence of the French language which dominates official and administrative settings. But as the national languages are gradually becoming important, there is some ground for thinking that they may coexist with the official colonial language, thereby gaining official status as well.

5. Factors in the Spread of Hausa in Niger

Before attempting to explain how the Hausa language expanded and came to hold its vehicular status in Niger, it is useful to understand first of all what is meant by language spread. As defined by Cooper, it is “an increase over time in the proportion of a communicative network that adopts a given language or language variety for a given communicative function” (as cited in Ferguson, 1996, p. 189). In other words, a language spreads when it develops throughout history to be eventually adopted by a significant number of people who use it for different social and communicative purposes. A similar point has been made by Mufwene (2006) who stresses, in a metaphorical way, the social aspect of language spread. For him, “languages are analogous to parasitic species in biology; their lives depend largely on the social practices of their hosts and makers, i.e., their speakers” (p. 615). Thus, because they involve social mechanisms, the causes of language spread are diverse, although they all stem from the contact between people speaking different languages.

There is no doubt that languages do not move about on their own, nor do they expand overnight; they follow the course of history as shaped by their speakers. Indeed, the history of a language is closely related to the history of the people who speak it. So, how far back do we have to go in order to find the birthplace of the Hausa language? There are two possible

answers to this question: the first is geo-historical; the second is socio-cultural. The geo-historical answer shows how Hausa emerged from the Hausa States to reach its current status of lingua franca in Niger through migration, assimilation and territorial expansion. The socio-cultural answer explains why it continues to remain so therein as the language of commerce, cultural exchange, education, and media. It is the combination of these interlocking strands that has brought into existence a language which has come to be widely adopted by the dominant population of Niger for intercultural communication and socio-economic exchange.

5.1. The Rise of the Hausa States

To understand why Hausa has achieved widespread use as a lingua franca in Niger, it is essential to revisit the emergence of the great Hausa states of the past. It all started there. First of all, it should be noted that the origin of the Hausa people is largely unknown, apart from some mythical accounts and contradictory theories which can make not a sociolinguist but perhaps a historian satisfactorily happy. Unlike Pellow (1996) who thinks that there still is a question mark over both the time when the movement of the people actually occurred and their place of origin, Johnston (1967) argues that it is highly probable that the ethnic cradle of the Hausa people and the Hausa language resides in the eleventh century. However, more plausible and dependable appears to be the argument of Adamu (1984) who confidently affirms that "... the origin of the Hausa people must be located precisely in the territory now known as Hausaland" (268). After having drawn a comparison between local traditions in Hausaland and those found in many other parts of Africa, Adamu concludes that the ancestors of the Hausa were autochthonous to Hausaland. But he acknowledges that the large-scale immigration of people from the north and east, and later, the arrival of various Wangarawa (Dioula) and Fulani ethnic groups in Hausaland contributed to the making of the Hausa ethnic groups.

Despite the fact that the origin of the Hausa states has proved to be inconclusive and a topic of debate among historians, the period when they emerged, however, is factually established. Historical accounts trace the rise of these states back to the early eleventh century, but it was not until the fifteenth century that they came to control the territory that stretched from the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria north to the Sahel, and from the Niger River to the border of Bornu, to the northeast (Page, 2001). Hausaland was composed of a group of fourteen states with seven independent and self-governing states (Biram, Daura, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Rano, and Zaria [Zazzau]), and their outlying satellites (Zamfara, Kebbi, Yauri,

Gwari, Nupe, Kororofa [Jukun], and Yoruba). According to Page (2001), each state played a specialized role based on location and natural resources. Kano and Rano, for example, grew cotton and produced fine cloth and textiles to be exported to other Hausa states within Hausaland and to extensive regions beyond. Kebbi was the original seat of government, while Zaria supplied labour for the agricultural state of Kebbi. Katsina and Daura controlled the trading centres, as their geographical location enabled them direct access to the caravans coming across the desert from the north and slave traders from the south. As for Gobir, it represented the military defence and was mainly responsible for protecting the Hausa states from both Bornu and the neighbouring states of the Ghana Empire. It is this social, political and economic organisation of the Hausa states that would pave the way for subsequent social integration and the development of complex urban societies characterized by well-organised political structures.

5.2. Immigration and Emigration

Perhaps more than any other factor, immigration and emigration into and from Hausaland constitute one of the most important factors which had greatly contributed to the spread of the Hausa language. These phenomena were possible because the Hausa states had succeeded, by the seventeenth century, in developing politically related and stable states. In the same period, strong leaders shaped the economic and political make-up of their respective states by establishing alliances with their neighbours and creating great centres of learning. Probably attracted by these social developments, heavy groups of immigrants arrived in Hausaland from different directions for different purposes. As pointed by Adamu (1984), most of those immigrants inhabited the Sahel in the north, Bornu in the east and Mali and Songhai empires in the west. Their categories included herdsmen, fishermen, agriculturalists, merchants and traders, Muslim clerics and scholars, and some aristocrats. These patterns of settlements were made possible owing to the geographical position of Hausaland which, in the view of Johnston (1967), has also proved to be historically significant. True, because throughout history, the Sahara became the meeting place of distinct ethnic and linguistic groups.

The first group of immigrants to arrive in Hausaland in the eighteenth century were the Fulani nomadic pastoralists coming from the west. However, Máthé-Shires (2005) notes that the earliest settlements had begun in the fifteenth century when the increasing desertification in northern Africa pushed large numbers of Fulani people to migrate into Hausa territory.

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Although no statistics exist regarding the number of Fulani migrants, they were not numerous according to Adamu (1984). There were also Fulani Muslim clerics who lived mostly in urban centres. Their presence, adds Adamu, had contributed significantly to the establishment Islam, particularly in the states of Kano and Katsina.

The following ethnic group to come to Hausaland after the Fulani were the Tuareg. They arrived from Air in the late fourteenth century, pushed the autochthonous Hausa southwards and established the sultanate of Agadez. The Tuareg, being essentially nomads, were not much interested in territorial occupation and settlements; they were mainly concerned with exchanging their products for agricultural commodities (Adamu, 1984). In addition, they engaged in raids on the sedentary people to the south of Air. Further Tuareg immigrants continued to come to Hausaland in search of grazing, but as Adamu observes, this immigration became more intense only at a later period.

Another group of migrants into Hausaland was that of people coming from the Bornu area. Their movement had been a long-standing one because of the direct relationship that existed between Bornu and Hausaland. The types of people included refugee aristocrats, but there were also many people, especially merchants and scholars, who continued to come to the region. They settled in all parts of the country, chiefly in Kano, Katsina, and Zaria. Adamu (1984) excludes any evidence of craftsmen among the early immigrants, but he admits the possibility of their presence.

Among the waves of immigrants to come to Hausaland were also the Wangarawa or Dioula people. After the first group arrived, subsequent other groups, particularly merchants, followed. While some of them settled in Kano, others inhabited the urban centres of Zazzau and Katsina. The Wangarawa became successfully assimilated into the Hausa community, though they did keep their economic activities. Adamu (1984) mentioned more importantly that "Hausa became the only language of communication used by the Wangarawa, at least in public" (p. 288). In spite of the uncertainty about the early people who brought Islam to Hausland, the Wangarawa are considered as the main contributors to the introduction of Islam in the region.

The last two categories of immigrants to Hausaland are the Songhai fishermen from the west followed by the Arab and Berber merchants and scholars who came from North Africa and the Timbuktu area. In accordance with their traditional occupations, the Songhai people settled in the lower Rima valley. Like the other groups, they too eventually became absorbed

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into the Hausa social system at the expense of their own traditional culture and language, thus creating the western marches of Hausaland. In regards to the Arabs and the Berbers, they began to enter Hausaland in the second half of the fifteenth century (Adamu, 1984). They settled mainly in Kano and Katsina, attracted by the prosperity and the adoption of Islam.

While numerous ethnic groups were coming to Hausaland from different directions, people were also leaving the territory, moving southwards and westwards. As illustrated by Adamu (1984), the emigration of people towards the south happened as the result of military campaigns launched by Kano and Katsina against foreign states. Apart from traders and Muslim clerics, many more people continued to emigrate from Kano to Bornu. When these different ethnic groups moved to Hausaland, they brought in not only their beliefs, but they also produced a multilingual and culturally homogeneous society which was to make the Hausa one of the most important ethnic groups in Africa and their language the most widely spoken in West Africa.

The inevitable consequence of these patterns of settlement was the introduction and spread of Islam in Hausaland. Even though the Hausa people had been in contact with Muslims since the eighth century, probably through their exchange with North Africa via the trans-Saharan trade routes, Islam was not predominant in the region until the end of the fifteenth century (Bugaje, 2001). The tremendous impact of Islam on the Hausa society and occasionally the language is undoubtedly a fact which cannot be ignored. First, the spread of Islam caused the development of Islamic education associated with the scholars and clerics from various parts of Africa. As a result of this, the Hausa states became important centres of Islamic scholarship, attracting scholars from beyond the region. Thus, literacy and Arabic literature developed and a powerful bond was also created between Hausaland and the outside world of North African states, Middle East, and Europe. Moreover, Islam, explain Fago and Usman (2010), had fostered long distance trade between the Hausa people and foreign countries as a concomitant to the creation of strong trading centres. Last but not least, Islam contributed to the development of one of the earliest forms of written Hausa language, occasioned by the contact of the Hausa with the Arabic-speaking world.

The end of the nineteenth century was marked by political disintegration and social movements within the Hausa states. Due to internal rivalry among the states over land and control of trade routes, economically strong states such as Kano and Katsina became politically debilitated. Besides, pressure from the Tuareg who had become a dominant

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military force in the region forced Gobir to relocate southward at the edge of the Mali empire. As mentioned by Page (2001), it was indeed this political turmoil that would prove to be a determining factor in the success of the Fulani jihadist movement led by Uthmān dan Fodio between 1804 and 1808. By 1809, the main Hausa states had capitulated. Ultimately, dan Fodio succeeded in conquering the Hausa states and integrated them into the Sokoto caliphate, an Islamic empire composed of individual emirates or states led by local Muslim rulers.

This Islamic movement and the subsequent ones had had very far-reaching political, social and economic consequences. Politically, Boahem (1989) observes that it resulted in the creation of the Sokoto caliphate, a great empire which, by the 1820s, covered almost the whole of the northern and parts of western regions of Nigeria, and the Massina Empire which dominated the area of the Niger bend. The social implications of these momentous revolutions were even more profound. To quote Boahem,

What therefore emerged in the end was not a uniform and unadulterated Islamic culture and society but rather a Fulbe-Hausa culture in Hausaland and a Fulbe-Mande culture in the area of the Niger bend, though both were heavily impregnated with the tenets of Islam and the teachings of the founding fathers. (p. 43)

Moreover, the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate and Bornu as part of a single region brought about an economic expansion which manifested itself in various ways. Firstly, there was a relative peace and stability in the region which attracted immigrants and caused both the settlement of new areas of land and the establishment of new villages. Secondly, there was an increase in the number of Hausa-based traders and transporters and increasing exports of finished products. These two economic dimensions opened the doors for the Hausa people to engage in trade with distant countries beyond Hausaland proper.

The Hausa people have a long-established tradition of commerce and Islamic pilgrimage. Indeed, not only did the Hausa traders travel extensively throughout West Africa, but their rich land attracted also the attention of merchants from abroad. In a multifaceted way, commerce, religion, migration and assimilation had, therefore, brought into contact people with different cultures and speaking different languages. But it was not only people, goods and cultures that moved and were exchanged: languages too were at play. This is why Last (1989) writes that "... the significant development of this period was the increasing use of Hausa instead of Arabic or Fulfulde in books and poetry" (p. 587). As a result, the use of

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Hausa in Arabic script became more widespread. In addition, because of the role that the Hausa states had played, their language achieved widespread use even between people speaking other languages in the Hausaland proper and beyond. Speaking a common language, Hausa, and sharing the same religion, Islam, the Hausa people had come to form homogeneous groups that would later become an integral part of modern Niger and Nigeria. But it is in Niger that the Hausa language has been favoured by the majority of the population as a medium of intercultural communication and as the language of trade, media and education.

5.3. Economic and Cultural Factors

The emergence of Hausa as a lingua franca in Niger is also accredited to the economic and cultural foundations which, from the early social development in the Hausa states until today, continue to sustain the vehicularity of the language. Indeed, the power of a language can be measured in terms of many variables such as industrial production, power of technology, international exchanges, etc. Apparently, the Hausa people did not have such a powerful technology as it is understood today, nor did they own huge factories. However, they did engage in commercial production involving different kinds of products which were to be exchanged not on an international level, but at least in distant commercial centres. But “despite the general impression that the Hausa people were overwhelmingly engaged in trade”, writes Adamu (1984), “every Hausa was primarily a farmer, and agriculture was essential to the economic life of the region” (p. 296). He also adds that handicraft and metal-working played an important role in the development of Hausa economy. As they were passed on through generations, these commercial practices have significantly influenced the status of the Hausa language in the communities where it has come to be adopted as a vehicle of communication, commerce, and cultural exchange.

Economy has always been a driving force not just in the spread of languages, but more importantly their vitality in social spheres. In this sense, Leclerc (2015) makes the point that when a country becomes economically powerful; this contributes to the prestige and dissemination of both its language and culture. The evidence for this argument can be clearly seen in English, a language which owes much of its global supremacy to the economic hegemony of both Britain and America.

Niger is not such a powerful country in terms of economy; but at a local level, the economic system of the country has contributed to the establishment of Hausa as the lingua

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franca of the Nigerien society. According to Moumouni (2014), the Hausa system of commerce can be traditionally divided into at least three categories. The first category is represented by the market or local trade. It involves the agricultural products and small-scale crafts or artisanal products, carried out essentially by the producers themselves. The second type is referred to as wholesale commerce. It is controlled by professional merchants who are engaged in long-distance commerce. The third position is occupied by an intermediary type of commerce controlled by mobile traders who travel from one market to another in order to buy and sell products at a lower price or retailing products imported by the professional merchants. The market, notes Adamu (1984), constitutes the preferred venue for commerce among the Hausa. These sorts of commercial activities are actively practised in different regions, but they are more prevalent in such economic regions as Maradi, Zinder, Tahoua and Niamey to some extent where the Hausa constitute the dominant ethnic group. The importance of commerce for the urban population of these regions has turned the market into a social network, a meeting place where one can find relatives and friends or make contact with foreigners. In such contexts where language plays a key role, Hausa has stood out as the preferred language for commercial purposes, depending on the markets and the ethnic and linguistic belonging of the merchants.

If there is any one chief reason to explain why language and culture are closely intertwined, it is because they mutually influence each other in such an outstanding manner. Indeed, culture has always been an important factor in the expansion and widespread use of language. In the case of Niger, there is a strong relationship between the spread of Hausa culture and the popularity that the Hausa language enjoys in Niger. The main factor which has made this possible is cultural entrainment. As Juompan-Yakam (2015) notes, the government has recently developed genuine ways to promote cultural unity and establish social cohesion as a solution to the interethnic tensions which have recently shaken the social structure of the country. A very good example is the '*cousinage à plaisanterie*' or cousinhood joking where cultural jokes are told about different ethnic groups in a funny and amusing manner. In addition to radio and television which regularly add a greater sociocultural dimension to this practice, a special week is dedicated to it every year. Several languages are used depending on the nature of the jokes and the groups involved, but Hausa tends to be the preferred language as most of the jokes concern mainly the Hausa ethnic group.

5.4. Impact of Education and the Media

The spread of Hausa as a lingua franca in Niger equally finds its explanation in the roles played by education and the media. In the domain of education, French has traditionally been established as the language of instruction. Nevertheless, the teaching of Hausa as a national language has attracted much attention, particularly in regions where the Hausa people represent the majority of the population. Meierkord (2006) explains that when a language achieves a certain prestige in a community, this may cause parental or societal demand for it to be used as the medium of instructions in schools or taught at the expense of other languages. In regions such as Maradi and Zinder, for example, the function of Hausa as the language of wider communication has pushed the community to express a vested interest in choosing Hausa as the language for education. Given the linguistic situation of Niger, it seems very difficult to have a national language which will replace or cohabit with French as the official language. But to some extent, an appreciable effort has been made by the Nigerien government to ensure that the lingua franca of the country is included in the educational system. In this sense, some universities have started to offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Hausa, thereby producing specialists and teachers in both Hausa language and literature involved in comparable programmes at universities in Europe, the US, Japan, China, and South Korea (Jaggar, 2001). Furthermore, traditional Koranic schools have also contributed to the vehicularity of Hausa in Niger by using it as a medium of education.

The media has similarly contributed to the actual status of Hausa as a vehicular language in Niger. In spite of the undisputable presence of French as the language of the electronic and print media, Wolff (2006) points out that the indigenous languages have also been used in the print media since 1965, with nationwide distribution. In such contexts, the use of these languages in the media is important because of the long-standing illiteracy rate of the Nigerien population who cannot read French newspapers. This explains perhaps the recent increase in the creation of private radio stations in urban areas, where listeners can follow the broadcasting in their local languages mainly Hausa and Zarma. It is important to mention that broadcasting in Hausa is also provided by international radio stations located in Britain, America, France, Germany, Russia, and China. The degree to which the media has influenced the Hausa language is not as significant in Niger as in Nigeria where, according to Chamo (2012), over a thousand companies provide movies in Hausa. But because of the cultural

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realities shared between the two Hausa-speaking countries, those broadcasting are highly appreciated by the local Nigerien population. Moreover, a significant number of movie productions are imported from Nigeria to Niger and these have successfully helped to promote the Hausa language. The major role played by Hausa movies is bound to have a long-term impact on the Hausa language due to the strong demand of the Hausa community to express and promote their cultural values through the media.

The additional domains in which the use of Hausa as a medium of intercultural communication has proved to be vital are the music industry and advertisements. Traditional Hausa songs are widespread in Niger. In modern types of music such as rap songs, for example, a mixture of languages is used to give the song a multicultural dimension. Generally speaking, the artists tend to use a language that is understood by the population regardless of the message being transmitted. More often than not, the preferred language is Hausa. But the Hausa language is not only limited to the domain of music; advertisements are also carried out in the language. Thanks to the important roles played by radio and television, advertisements in the local languages have recently attracted attention. Indeed, all these areas of interest have shown how important the Hausa language is to the Nigerien society. Therefore, if any question needs to be asked, it is regarding the future of the very language.

6. What Future for the Hausa Language?

Before becoming one of the most widely used languages in West Africa, the Hausa language had passed through different historical, political, economic, and cultural phases. These latter had shaped the way the language has spread and come to hold such an important status in Niger. Will this be the case for the status of Hausa in the coming years? Though history may not repeat itself, the answer can be quite positive for languages have always been influenced by social forces. Indeed, languages become important because of the power of the nations who speak them, and the process may not take that long as it did in the past. So interesting is the way Crystal (2003) puts it: “a week may be a long time in politics; but a century is a short time in linguistics” (p. 123). Thus, a possible scenario can be imagined where the Hausa language can undergo major changes to ultimately become a powerful lingua franca. In Niger, the process has already begun as the result of the growing trends of urbanisation, travel, and commerce. However, the actual sociolinguistic situation of the country somehow suggests that it is too early to make speculations. In the meantime, French appears to be the main language challenging the position of Hausa. The Nigerien society

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cannot do without it, of course, but if any national language is to develop and achieve official status in addition to French, it will probably be the Hausa language.

7. Conclusion

The historical accounts have genuinely proved that the rise of the Hausa states was a major factor which initiated the expansion of Hausa as a lingua franca from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The significant social, political and economic developments achieved by these states by the seventeenth century attracted the attention of neighbouring kingdoms such as the Songhai, Mali, and Kanem-Bornu empires. As a result, geographical factors such as migration and territorial expansion soon followed on in the eighteenth century, bringing people of different ethnic backgrounds from various places into Hausaland. Through cultural and linguistic assimilation, the multicultural aspects of Hausaland changed into a unique and homogenous linguistic community where Hausa stood out as the main vehicle for communication and trade. After Islam was introduced into the region, further achievements took place such as the development of literature, literacy and commerce. Moreover, the territory expanded significantly due to the commercial and religious relationships that linked Hausaland with other foreign countries. It was under these favourable conditions that the Hausa language spread across different places in Africa to be used as a lingua franca. In Niger, thanks to socio-cultural factors, Hausa has become the dominant language for intercultural communication, the one that covers such social aspects as media, education, commerce, entertainment, etc.

General Conclusion

The development of languages for wider communication is an essential concomitant of the contact between different ethnolinguistic groups. This contact can take different manifestations depending on the period in which they occur and the social processes involved. From a sociolinguistic perspective, languages spread as the result of migration, the voluntary or involuntary movements of people speaking one language into the territory of people speaking another. Moreover, languages become widely used when they are adopted by speakers of other languages due to such social phenomena as conquest, territorial expansion and trade. In this sense, the language is taken from its homeland to overseas places and become adopted as a second or foreign language. In addition, the roles that a language plays in education and media can have a significant impact on its geographical distribution and social importance.

In the light of these factors, the present research has sought to explain why Hausa has become a lingua franca in Niger. But why should it be Hausa and not some other language? Indeed, as if to disprove the argument that languages do not spread merely because of their intrinsic linguistic features, a number of geo-historical and socio-cultural forces have chronologically stood to explain the reasons behind the position of Hausa as a lingua franca in Niger. When the Hausa states emerged in the fifteenth century, they did not just develop economically and politically powerful states; they also contributed to the establishment of Hausa as a dominant language in Hausaland. The multiple ethnic groups which migrated to the region in the seventeenth century and the subsequent spread of Islam were equally among the major causes in the consolidation and expansion of the language. The emergence of Hausa owes also a great deal to the long distance trade and the territorial growth that occurred in the nineteenth century after the unification of the Hausa states by the Fulani religious movements to form the Sokoto caliphate. Recently, the place that Hausa has occupied in the commercial and cultural spheres of Niger coupled with its growing importance in the domains of media and education similarly explain why Hausa should be referred to as a lingua franca.

The sociolinguistic landscape of Niger is characterized by a competition between the official language and the national languages. The explanation for this state of affairs goes back to the days following independence when most of the newly-independent countries retained the language of the former colonizer and made it official. In Niger, even though the local languages have been accorded 'national' status, they still tend to have less power compared to the French language which is associated with prestige, higher education and administration. Despite the fact that the government has developed a language policy which

General Conclusion

aims at promoting the national languages, there is still much work to be done in order to ensure that these latter are not being left behind or neglected. In fact, the importance of Hausa as a language of intercultural communication stands as a good reason to prompt the Nigerien government to consider a language policy for both the maintenance and promotion of the national languages, especially those associated with vital social functions.

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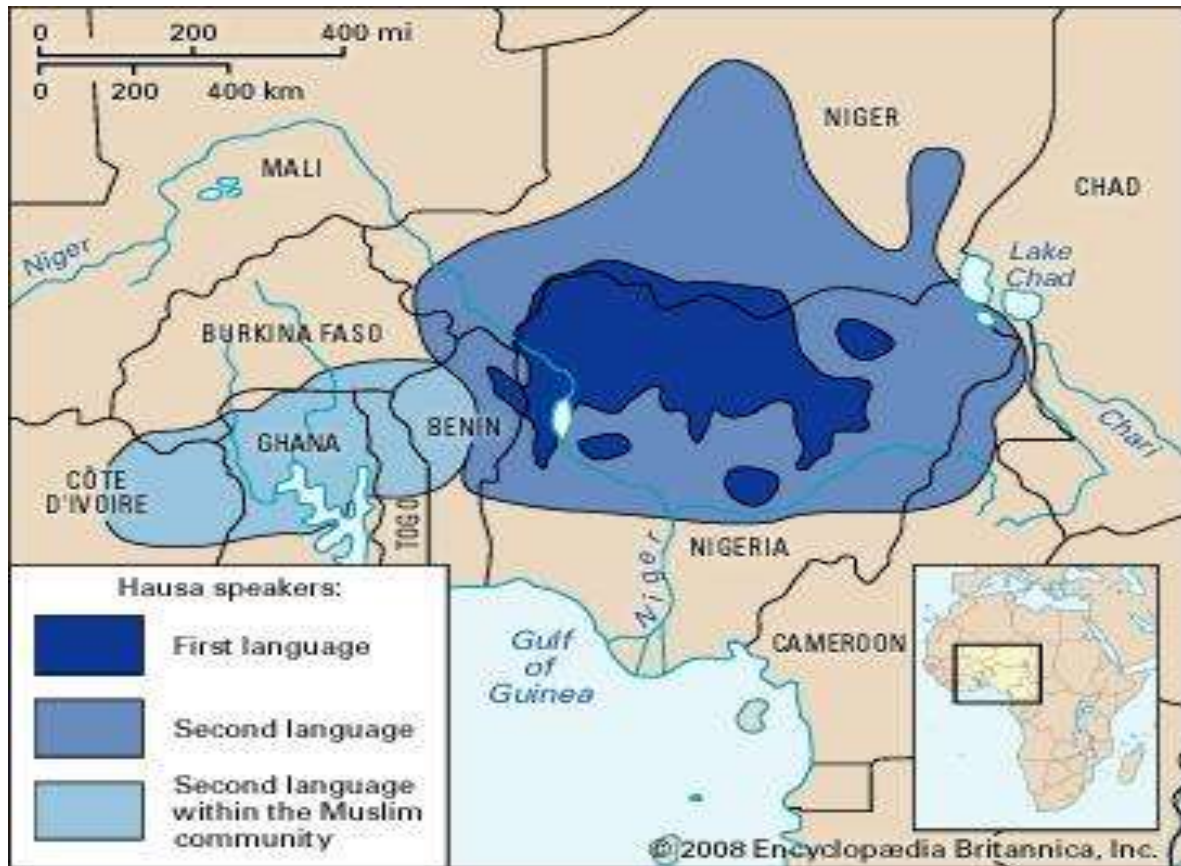
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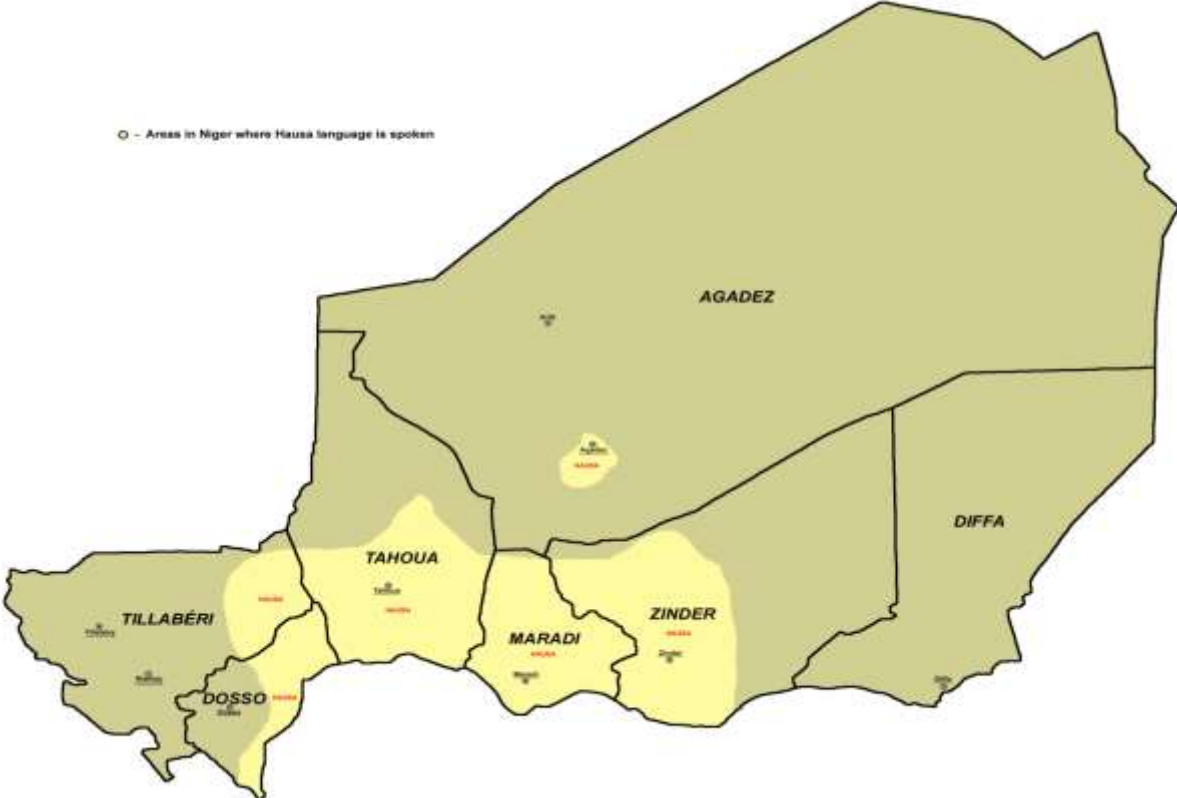
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Appendices

Appendix A: Distribution of the Hausa language (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2011)



Appendix B: Ethnolinguistic territories of Hausa people in Niger, (Wikipedia, 2011)



Note: The yellow colour represent areas where Hausa is spoken. But this map is not necessarily representative of Hausa speaking majority because speakers of Hausa are mixed with speakers of other languages.