

A Focus on Some Phonological Assimilation of English and French Loanwords into Hausa

Dr. Sule Haruna

Department of Hausa

Jigawa State College of Education and Legal Studies, Ringim

Dr. Muhammad Tijjani Ibrahim

Department of English

Jigawa State College of Education and Legal Studies, Ringim

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0386>

Published January 08, 2023

Citation: Haruna S. and Ibrahim M.T. (2024) A Focus on Some Phonological Assimilation of English and French Loanwords into Hausa, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies: English Lang., Teaching, Literature, Linguistics & Communication*, 5(1),1-11

ABSTRACT: *The present research aims to examine a comparative phonological study of English and French loanwords into Hausa as spoken in Nigeria and Niger Republic respectively. The main objective of the research is to identify and analyze the lexical differences of the two linguistic communities at phonological point of view. The study is going to cover two important areas that will represent other Hausa speaking areas, one in Nigeria and the other Niger. In southern Niger (Maradi and Damagaran) the largest cities with massive Hausa speakers in the country will be selected. In Nigeria, Kano city will be selected being the largest Hausa city with several Hausa speakers and the Kano Hausa is the closest dialect of standard Hausa. In collection of the data, various written materials available Bookshops and online materials will be referred to; Besides, two research assistants will be co-opted to assist in collecting a proportion of some lexical items within geographical areas from both Kano, Maradi and Damagaran. An observation and interview research methods will also be used in collecting the data, as the research deals with spoken Hausa. The anticipated findings of the research will be identifying Certain English and French Phonemes with their closest phonemes inventory of the first language (Hausa). Also, to identify some of the principles of Hausa language that play great roles in the phenomena of foreign lexicon thereby making the incoming loanwords looks and sound like the native Hausa words.*

KEYWORDS: phonology, assimilation, English, French, Hausa and loanwords.

INTRODUCTION

Every language has varieties of speech that show some degree of correlation with the social and geographical structure of the society. It is also obvious that every natural language has an

independent phonological system reflecting the different types of sounds that it happens to have. If a language is spoken by thousands or millions of people, variation of usage manifests in terms of phonetics, phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics etc. In the present work, some lexical items from standard Hausa and some regional dialects under study will be examined with the aim of finding out phonemes that undergo changes in certain environments toward the realization of phonemic merger in Hausa. Phonologically, a lexical item is represented as a linear sequence of segments, each segment is specified with respect to distinctive phonological information. In this work, we shall examine how phonological processes relate underlying forms with their phonetic representations; however, some phonological changes are automatic ones while some are non-automatic. This research is directly on a comparative phonological study of English and French loanwords adopted into Hausa. The language of Hausa is one the widely spoken indigenous languages in Sub-Sahara Africa, used as a first language by over forty-one (41) million people in its “central” area covering most of the Northern part of Nigeria and Southern part of Niger. It also, serves as lingua-franca, in most West African countries and within certain settler clusters in parts of North and Central Africa. Phonological processes are a systematic alternations or changes that sounds undergo depending on their positions in words or across word boundaries. Yul-Ifode (2014) asserts that “phonological processes are those changes which segments undergo that result in the various phonetic realizations of underlying phonological segments”. Phonological processes refer to a situation where segments of neighboring morphemes that becomes juxtaposed undergo change when they are combine to form words or other than those in which two morphemes come together (Schane, 1973). These processes are governed by phonological rules which generalization about the different ways a sound can be pronounced in different environments. (Hayes, 2009). Goldsmith (1995) explores phonological rules as “the devices employed by the phonological theory to account for the relationship between representations at different levels”. Additionally, phonological rules could be described as a mapping between underlying level and surface level of phonological representation. According to Sani (1989), phoneme is an abstract unit of distinctive/contrastive sound in a language. However, there are forty-seven (47) phonemes in Hausa, comprising thirty-four (34) consonants and thirteen (13) vowels, the English phonemes are forty-two (42) comprising twenty-four (24) consonant and eighteen (18) vowels, while French phonemes are fifteen (15), ten consonant phonemes and five vowels. The Hausa consonants are succinctly described by Sani (2005) “as a speech sounds which are produced with the obstruction of airstream, the obstruction could be partial or total”. More so, in the articulation of consonants sounds, three things are always put into consideration, thus, place of articulation, manner of articulation and state of the glottis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Phonology as a core area of Linguistics has a keen interest by many scholars which triggered a lot of scholarly researches in Hausa language. These researches were contributions made by some of the Hausa scholars in relation to automatic and non-automatic phonological changes in Hausa. The most famous among them are the works of Ibrahim (1978), Yalwa (1994), Zaria (1982), Abubakar

(1983), Bagari (1983/85), Bello (1985), Sani (2001) and Baba (1993/1998). Zaria (1982) puts emphasis on sound correspondences, distinguishing one dialect from another; Abubakar (1983) discusses dialectal variations from phonological perspective; Bagari (1983/1985) examines pvc's that end in long vowel /o:/ in syllable final position of Hausa common nouns; Bello (1985) investigates merger in relation to English loanwords in Hausa and cited examples on how the sounds of certain English loanwords merged with Hausa sounds; Sani (2001) studies the behavior of back consonants /k/ // and /g/ in relation to vowel alternation; Baba(1993/1998) examines pluractional verb forms where he touched on two variants of prefixal reduplication when forming pluractionals in Hausa. The focus of Yalwa (1994) was on Arabic loanwords into Hausa language, while Ibrahim (1978) main attention was on comparative analysis Azben, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Nufe and Yoruba loanwords into Hausa.

METHODOLOGY

The present research is designed to be qualitative and descriptive in nature. Yule (2006) asserts that "qualitative research is a type of research that describes a phenomenon in words instead of number or measure". In qualitative-based research, data are often collected through interviews, observations, and focus groups, within the analysis indentifying patterns across cases to provide a descriptive of this pattern (Milerday & Micheller 2004:17).

Area of Study

As stated earlier that, this research will investigate assimilation of English and French loanwords into Hausa. The area of study for this research will be Nigeria and Niger (Kano, Maradi and Damagaran). The selection is to represent other Hausa speaking areas in southern Niger refer to Hausa land and northern Nigeria.

Informants

This research purely concern with the spoken language of two distinct communities speaking Hausa. The best data gathering technique in conducting a research of this nature is for the researcher to meet his informants from whom he would get the relevant data. In this regard, a substantial number of Hausa speakers from the area of the study mentioned above will be met and interacted and their normal and natural speech habits will be carefully examined in the course of obtaining the data needed for English-French loanwords into Hausa. Besides, the two nominated selected research assistants will be involved in the selection of the informants to be interviewed. The informants will be from different categories based on age, sex as well as educational background (Islamic and Western education).

Data Collection Procedures

An interview, observations, focus groups and native speaker's intuition will be procedures for the data collection of this research. Additionally, this research will partially rely on a handful of

essential books, especially dictionaries of English-Hausa and French-Hausa and other various relevant materials written by some of the eminent scholars mentioned in the literature section. In the course of data collection, interview in this type of research that concerns speech is inevitable. Hence, the researchers will interview different Hausa speakers at the areas of the research mentioned above with the aim of examining assimilation of English and French phonemes into Hausa.

Method of Data Analysis

The method of the data analysis for this research will be based on the generative phonological theory. Generative phonology deals with the task of establishing the set of distinctive features and the properties of phonological rules of world languages. According to Schane (1973) “distinctive features are minimal elements” while Stampe (1973) asserts it as “the ad hoc abbreviations of features bundles that can take one of the values: +(plus) or - (minus)”. However, the selection to adopt this theory is reasonably based on its ability to address critically the analysis of assimilation of English and French loanwords into Hausa.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presented the interpretation and analysis of the data extracted from handful of essential books, especially dictionaries of English-Hausa French Hausa and other various relevant materials written by some of the eminent scholars mentioned in the literature section. The data discovered five phonological processes that motivate assimilation of English and French loanwords into Hausa. The identified phonological processes are: Labialization, Palatalization, Nasalization, Truncation and Metathesis.

LABIALIZATION

This is the super-imposition of labial articulation on a non-labial sound. In short, it is a secondary articulation whereby lip rounding is added to a sound. "Any simple velar consonant in Hausa, that immediately comes before a back vowel is, by implication, a labialized one". Sani (1989;30). Some examples were cited for illustrations below:

Set (a)	Set(b)
saqo (message)	saqwan (the message)
roqo (pleading)	roqwan (the pleading)
tarko (a trap)	tarkwan (the trap)
rago (a ram)	ragwan (the ram)

The velars in the words under set (a) are simple velars, but they are labialized ones, though the labialization appears in the pronunciation of the words under set (b), to that effect the actual representation of the words under set (a) is saqwo, roqwo, tarkwo and ragwo respectively, (cf. Sani; 1989; 30).

In the light of the above, the loanwords from English and French that have plain/simple velars [k] and [g] are labialized as [kw] and [gw] provided they are followed by the back vowel [ɔ] which is equivalent to the Hausa short vowel (o), such occurrences are automatically labialized (rounded) in Hausa version as [kw] and [gw]. Some few examples can be seen below for illustrations: -

English

Corner
college
coal tar
committee
commissioner

Standard Hausa

kwanàa
kwaleejì
kwàltâa
kwàmìti
kwàmishinaà

French

congélateur
commissaire
l'ecole
comite
commissaire (depolice)

Hausa Spoken in Niger

kwànjilaàtâr
kwàmsàriyyàa
làkkwâl
kwàmbitêe
kwàmshâr (na ¹yansanda)

Glossary

freezer
charge office
school
committee
commissioner of police

The sound (c) in English and French is equivalent to Hausa velar sound [k] as they have the same features like I said earlier, therefore, the above phenomena happen whenever the sound [c] which is equivalent to Hausa [k] is followed by the back vowel [ɔ] which is equally the same with the Hausa short vowel [o], to that effect, the [c] pronounced as the Hausa simple velar [k] is automatically labialized as [kw]. See the rule below as formulated by Sani M.A.Z. (Prof.) in his lecture note;

/c/ → / - v [+lab]

{ + velar
- labial
- palat } [+ Labial]

The voiced velar stop/plosive [g] in both English and French is labialized in Hausa language as voiced velar stop/plosive [gw] as pointed earlier, examples:

English

governor
government
gold
guava

Standard Hausa.

gwabnàa
gwabnati
gwâl
gwaibàa

In Hausa spoken in Southern Niger also, the French loanword "goyave" meaning "guava" is pronounced as 'gwaibàa'. The rule for this phenomena is the same with the one overleaf.

PALATALIZATION

Sani (1989) defined palatalization as "the addition of a palatal articulation to a non-palatal consonant under certain conditions." The condition governing such palatalization is where the front vowel /i/ or /e/ immediately follows certain consonants (alveolar and velar).

Whenever English and French loanwords in Hausa have the velars /k/ and /g/, they are automatically palatalized provided they are immediately followed by front vowels /i/ and /e/ but palatalization of alveolar is not automatic. See some examples overleaf.

English	Standard Hausa	
mechanic	bàkaanikyèe	
bank	bankyìi	
certificate	sàtifikyèt	
gear	gyiyaà	
glass	gyìlaashii	
plug	fuloogvì	
French	Hausa Spoken in Niger	Glossary
climatiseur	kyìlmaatizêe	air condition
cle	kyìlêe	key
pellicule	feènikyìl	camera film

Sani, in his lecture note formulated the following rule to indicate where such a process occurs:

$/C/ \rightarrow C^y / - V \ [+palatal]$

$\left(\begin{array}{l} + \text{velar} \\ - \text{labial} \\ - \text{palatal} \end{array} \right)$

The palatalization of alveolar /s/ in borrowed words from English and French which is not automatic like that of velars, is shown where /s/ becomes /sh/ before the front vowels /i/ or /e/, see examples below:

English	Standard Hausa
glass	gyìlaashii
lace	leeshii
price office	faraashii
office	?oofishii

Pertaining the French loanword 'monsieur' into Hausa spoken in Southern Niger, the word is pronounced as /mùushe/ referring to mister or teacher, the sound /s/ in the foreign lexicon is palatalized because it is followed by the front vowel /i/, to that effect it becomes /sh/.

NASALIZATION

Nasalization is the super-imposition of nasal articulation on a non-nasal sound. This is a situation where oral sound turns into nasal, which is normally determined by the context. Nasal vowel is inherent, Hausa language has no single nasal vowel unless it is dictated by the context. In borrowed lexical items from the two foreign languages in question, several vowels are nasalized. The nasalization process occurs in two or three conditions, the first condition is where the first consonant turns the vowel into nasal, example:

English	Standard Hausa	Hausa Spoken in Niger	Glossary
nescafe	naskoõffi		
musk (scent)	tùrààren miskiì		
master key	mastàar kîi		
motor	mootáa		
French			
monsieur	mùushe		mister
pellicule	feènikîl		camera film
infirmier	infirmee		nurse
thermos	tàrmûs		tea/food flask

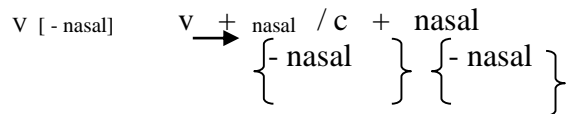
The second condition of nasalization is where the second consonant turns the oral sound into a nasal one. Consider the following examples:-

English	Standard Hausa	Hausa Spoken in Niger	Glossary
councillor	kansilaa		
tent	tantîi		
bench	banciì		
campaign	kànfêe		
ring	ringiì		
French			
peigne	fènyîi		comb
jante	jàntêe		wheel
Volant	boðlân		wheel steering
genderme	jàndarmàa		mobile police
arron dissement	?àrà̀n dismâa		local government

The third condition in the process of nasalization is where both consonants of the syllable determine the nasalization of the oral sound (vowel) into nasal. In short this involves the first and the second conditions discussed in page 37 and 38. See some few examples below: -

English	Standard Hausa	
monday	mandée	
minute	mintii	
mango	mangwàrò	
kerosene	kànànzîr	
French	Hausa Spoken in Niger	Glossary
Montre	mintii	wrist watch

The rule below is also formulated by Sani () in his lecture note, indicating the environment where such processes occur in all the three conditions discussed: -



TRUNCATION

This is a process in which a word of two or more syllables is reduced to a shorter form without altering its function, often in casual speech to indicate an attitude of familiarity, by the user, to the object being denoted or the audience being addressed.

Reducing a word to a shorter form is among the frequent linguistic changes. Hausa employs truncation as a means of adjusting some English and French loanwords thereby omitting some parts of the incoming words, thus-

English	Standard Hausa	Deletion	
handcuffs	ankwàa	h-, -ffs	
chocollate	caakùlé	-te	
torch light	toocìlan	-ght	
ear ring	yàri	-ng	
petrol	feetìr	-ol	
corporal	koofùr	-al	
French	Hausa Spoken in Niger	Deletion	Glossary
télévision	teélée	-vision	television
douanier	dùwân	-ier	custom officer
appareil photo-	?àfàràì	-/photo-	camera

It should be noted that there are no clear phonological or graphological rules by means of which one might predict where a particular word will be cut or reduced. At times the first syllable may be retained or the middle may be retained, or the last one.

METATHESIS

Metathesis is a process in which two speech sounds change position in a word without affecting the meaning of that particular word. Metathesis is of two types, there is the consonantal metathesis

involving consonants only, and the vowel metathesis that involves vowels alone. Consider some few examples below:

Consonant metathesis

hàwainìyaa → wàwainìyaa
bàgaàruwaa → gàbaàruwaa
ʔamree → ʔarmee
^

xamriì → xamriì
fartanyàa → fantaryàa
nauyiì → yauniì

Glossary

cameleon
Arabic gum tree
marriage

tie
hoe
heaviness

Vowel metathesis

mootàa → maatòo
bàrii → bìraa
sàyi → sìyaa
sakii → sikàa/shikàa/cikàa

Glossary

motor
stop/leave it
buy
divorce

The overleaf examples are cited from Hausa native words for illustrations and they occur inter-dialectally i.e. among the three major regional dialects of Hausaland comprising East, West and North respectively.

"The introduction of foreign words may, however, at least temporarily "and in the speech of a restricted number of individuals, disturb the number of phonemes or their distribution as regards position in the word". Gimson (1980). Hausa speakers in both Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger Republics tend to disturb the distribution of some phonemes in the borrowed lexical items of English and French, though in case of metathesis, the meaning of the word doesn't change, just like I said earlier, the speakers of the target language sometimes apply certain sound changes by way of combining native linguistic elements on the foreign model. Examples:

English Standard Hausa

ruler luràa
revolver libarbàr
bucket bootikì
kerosene kànànzir

French Hausa Spoken in Niger Glossary
crayon kìrànyoo pencil

CONCLUSION

Word is one of the basic units of meaning and the medium through which human beings exchange ideas, concepts, feelings, sentiments and so on. This of course illustrates the great power that word wields in the affairs of men in different societies. Thus, this study decided to dwell on the incoming loanwords from the two distinct colonial languages into Hausa language spoken in different linguistic communities viz, Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. In this discussion, we have seen that absorption of borrowed lexical items into Hausa started with the phonetic representation of the borrowed words. Indeed, applying phonological rules in the lexical items of English and French has certain desirable consequences in the receptor language (Hausa) as this process, simplify pronunciation of the foreign loanwords to Hausa speakers and at the same time, assist the Hausa native speaker who is learning one of the two languages under study, to avoid first language phonetic interference.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, A. (1983). *Generative Phonology and Dialect Variation: A Study of Hausa Dialects*. (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis) SOAS University of London.
- Baba, A. T. (1993). *A Morphological Alternation in Hausa Verbal Forms*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis) Bayero University, Kano.
- Bagari, D. (1983). Phonological Adaptation of Borrowed Words in Hausa. *Occasional paper*; Vol. xiii, C.S.N.L Bayero University, Kano.
- Bello, M. (1985). *Some Phonological Aspects of English Loanwords in Hausa*. (Unpublished M.A Dissertation) Ahmadu Bello, University. Zaria.
- Goldsmith, J. (1976). *Autosegmental Phonology*. Massachusetts: M.I.T
- Hayes, B. (2009). *Introductory Phonology*. New Jersey. Blackwell Textbooks in Linguistics: Wiley- Blackwell
- Matthews, P. H. (2007). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics. 2nd Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Milnerday, A. & Michler, D. (2004). *Research Method for Every Day Life*. San Francisco: Josse-Bass.
- Sani, M.A.Z (1989). *An Introductory Phonology of Hausa*. Kano. Triumph Publishing Company, Nigeria Limited.
- Sani, M.A.Z (2001). A Focus on Some Segmental and Supra-segmental Features in Hausa Phonology. *Professorial Inaugural Lecture*. Bayero University, Kano.
- Sani, M.A.Z (2005). *An Introductory Phonology of Hausa (with exercise)*. Kano: Benchmark Publishers Limited.
- Schane, A. S. (1973). *Generative Phonology*. New Jersey: Prantice-Hall, Inc,

Eagleood Cliff.

Stampe, D. (1973). *A Dissertation on Natural Phonology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistic Club.

Yalwa, L. D (1994). Arabic Loanwords in Hausa. *UFAHAMU VOL.XX*

Yul-ifode, S. (2014). *A Course in Phonology*. Port Harcourt: Jireh Publishers.

Yule, G. (2006). *The Study of Language 5th ed.* Cambridge: Cambridge

Zaria, A. B. (1982). *Issues in Hausa Dialectology*. (Unpublish PhD. Thesis).
Indiana University of Indiana.