

TEACHING OF HAUSA GRAMMAR AND USAGE IN NIGERIA SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The paper outlines strategies for effective teaching of Hausa Grammar and usage in line with current education reform. Specifically, the paper touches on various definitions on Language, Hausa language development in general. Others are strategies for teaching Hausa Grammar and usage and suggestions and recommendation were made for teacher's guidance.

Introduction

Many definitions of language have been proposed. According to World Book – Encyclopaedia (1995) proposed definitions of language as: “*language is human speech, either spoken or written, language is the most common system of communication. It allows people to talk to each other and to write their thoughts and ideas*”.

From the above definition of language we can see that the linguist only believed that language is only human speech either spoken or written which is not true because we also have sign language in addition to spoken and written.

Hausa Language

Hausa is a language spoken in northern part of Nigeria and some southern part of Niger Republic is first language. According to Dunstam, E. (1969:73): “*Hausa is spoken in the northern states of Nigeria as a first language by about 12 million people as well as Niger Republic*”.

Apart from the number of people speaking Hausa as a first language, there are many other tribes speaking the language. Hickey, R. (1986:33-35) is of the opinion that; “*there are approximately forty-nine Million Husa speakers in West Africa today. There follows a rough estimate of their distribution but no indication is given of the proportion of first and second language speakers. As a language, Hausa has impressive credentials. It has a chair in all major universities in European, North America and Africa. It has a coveted slot in almost all established foreign radio stations and is spoken way beyond its own homeland. In Nigeria itself, four out of every five people are Hausa speakers.*”

In relation to above, according to Sani, M.A.Z (2001:01) stated that: “*Current estimation pegs the number of people that can speak Hausa today the world over at about 100,000,000 (Muhammad, D. Alfyyar Mu'azu Sani). Most of these people are found in Nigeria and South of Niger Republic – the home region of the Hausa's; others are found in large part of neighbouring countries like Ghana, Cameroon, Chad and Sudan*”.

From the opinions of Hausa scholars, we may conclude that, Hausa is spoken as a first language in Northern Nigeria and some southern part of Niger Republic, there are many tribe speaking Hausa as a language for communication, that the language of Hausa people is taught at secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria and various foreign universities and is used at foreign radio stations such BBC, Germany, etc. Finally, the number of people speaking the language is rapidly increasing every day. Hausa is also used as the medium of instruction in the primary as UN spelt out by the National Policy on Education (NPE) thus: “*--- the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community and, at a later stage English*” (NPE, 2004).

With this, the Hausa language can be used to teach as medium of instruction at primary school as mother tongue (L_1) because it has the orthography and literature for teaching the language as stated in the (NPE), thus; “*The language of the environment shall be taught as (L_1) where it has orthography and literature, where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on orally as a second language (L_2)*”. (NPE, 2004:19).

The Teaching of Hausa Grammar & Usage:

Grammar is the summation how words and phrases are grouped together to convey meaning. The grammar of any language also involves the rules governing its structure. According to Mathews, P.H. (1997:150) is of the view that; “Grammar is any systematic account of the structure of a language, the patterns that it describes, the branch of linguistic concerned with such patterns”.

On the other hand, the term ‘usage’ is employed to cover the full range of choices and discriminative in the use of language which can be classified into (1) by levels into formal standard, colloquial non standard, illiterate, etc. (ii) by levels into dichotomics (standard vs non-standard, and good vs bad or correct vs incorrect. Usage is also associated with socio-economic groups that distinguish other versions of language from a standard used in formal public communication system.

‘Teaching’ does not equal lead to ‘learning’. Teaching does not necessary lead to learning. The fact that the first is happening doesn’t automatically mean the other must occur. Learning of anything, anywhere demands energy and attention from the learner. One person cannot learn anything for anyone else. It has to be done by your own personal effort. Nobody else can transmit understanding or skills into your head.

For teaching grammar, Scrivener, J. (2005:252) is of opinion that, there are key-questions to be taken into consideration by the teacher of grammar and usage as follows; “(1) What is grammar?, (2) How do people learn grammar?, (3) How can I analyse form, meaning and use for teaching purpose?, (4) How can I provide relevant input for learners?, (5) How can I help learners notice, understand and memorise language? And (6) How can I help learners practice using language?”

For the teacher to succeed in line with the key questions above, you need to know the rules about sentence formation, tenses, verb pattern, etc. For example, in Hausa language we have sentences like:

- i) Ado yaa zo (statement)
- ii) Ado yaa zo? (interrogative)
- iii) Ado ya saya wa Ali keke (detive), etc.

Secondly, we need to know the tenses like:

- Na a zo - General past tense
- Na – zo - relative past tense
- Ina zuwa - present continues tense
- Nake zuwa - relative continues tense
- Zan zo - first future tense
- Na a zo - second future tense
- Na kan zo - Habitual tense
- Na – zo - Subjunctive tense.

Thirdly, you need to know the verb patterns of the language. Like in Hausa we have the following examples:

- 1- aikatau so-karba (transitive verb)
- 2- aikatau ki-karba (intransitive verb)
- 3- aikatau masu canzawa (changing verb)
- 4- aikatau marasa canzawa (unchanging verb)
- 5- aikatau masu gaba daya (monosyllable verb)
- 6- hawa-hawan aikatau (verbal grade system), etc.

The you need to know other class of words, such as Adverb (*bayanau*), Adjective (*sifa*), ideoplone (*amsa-kama*), noun (*suna*), pronoun (*wakilin suna*), and the use of prefix (*dafa goshi*), infix (*dafa ciki*), suffix (*dafa keya*) etc.

Grammar Teaching Procedure:

Presentation of grammatical items should take into account the linguistic context, form and meaning of such items and the situations in which they are normally used.

a) Linguistic context and form:

This may include countable and uncountable nouns in form of a sentence of subject + verb + object (SVO)

- i- Ado /yaa tafi/ kasuwa
- ii- Ali /yaa mari/ Ado
- iii- Ladi /taa jefa/ dama
- iv- Ali /yaa sha/ ruwa
- v- Wanna Ashana ce, etc.

Since the purpose of language is to communicate, items should be presented to show their meaning clearly. The use of real object and pictures (such as sugar, water, table, chair, etc) is necessary as a means of associating meaning with form.

Items should also be initially presented in their appropriate situational contexts. The classroom itself is full of objects which are countable and uncountable. The teacher may simply ask the class to list such objects. For a lesson on countable and uncountable nouns, the teacher may decide to explain the rule governing such items immediately after their initial presentation.

b) Structural Drills:

There should be varieties of drills in grammatical structure. The drills that the teacher can choose from include-action chain drills, substitution drill, conversion drill, fixe increment drill, completion drill, etc.

c) Language activity:

This is developed through a variety of informal procedures which reinforce the automatic responses of the structural drills. Such activities include small group drill, eg. Games, dramatization, questions and answers, classifying structures, i.e. classifying the various uses of structures into different groups transactional dialogue, and written practices.

Suggestions and Recommendations

For the teaching of grammar and usage to be effective, the teacher should take the following into consideration:

- a) that, you should know the historical development of the language, i.e. how it was reduced to writing and the development of literature, and the role and status of the language in education system.
- b) that, you should know the sound system of the language. i.e. vowels, consonants, tone/stress, and intonation, syllable structure, nature and types of words.
- c) that, you should know words building of the language, i.e. construction of words, omission, elision, assimilation, words division, expression, etc.
- d) that, you should know the semantic structure, such as slang, idioms, proverbs, figures of speech, synonyms, antonyms, how word change meaning, etc. and
- e) Dialectal divergence, implication and effect.

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