

## SEMANTIC CHANGE IN ARABIC LOANWORDS IN HASUA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper is a study of Arabic loanwords in Hausa language with particular reference to those words that have either changed meaning or shifted away from the denotations of their Arabic 'originals'. It is based on the established fact that Hausa language borrowed a good portion of its vocabulary from Arabic Language as evidenced by the volume of work in the area. Early works might have, perhaps, influenced the trend of research in the area toward more interest in phonological and morphological processes and changes undergone by the words than in the semantic aspect of it. The data is readily available in the existing lexicons previously compiled by different scholars. Reference will also be made to some other works. Sample of words that shifted from the meanings of the Arabic originals in the fields of religion, social life, education and trade will be analysed semantically in comparison to the Arabic source words within the context of semantic expansion, narrowing and shift. This will bring to light some conceptual ideas among the Hausas. Attempt will be made finally, to show some pedagogical implications of the semantic nature of this type of words in Arabic and Hausa as foreign/L2 learning and teaching among the Hausas and Arabs respectively.*

**Field of research:** *Semantic change, Arabic loanwords, Hausa language.*

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### 1. Introduction

Lexical borrowing is one of the natural consequences of linguistic contact. Arabic language as the language of the Qur'an and by extension the language of the Muslims has spread widely with the spread of Islam. Its influence on the native languages of non-Arab Muslims is far reaching; especially those languages Argungu (1996) referred to as Muslim Languages of Wider Communication. Hausa being one of them borrowed many lexical items from Arabic within a variety of context. Differences in history, culture and environment between the Arabs and the Hausas naturally affects the contextual use of those words that were borrowed between the donor community and the receptor. This is true since language, as Aitchison (2007) opined 'reflects the interaction of humans with the environment'. It is, therefore, normal to see some Arabic loanwords in Hausa that had their meanings changed from the denotations of their Arabic 'originals'. These types of words which did acquire in Hausa new or additional senses other than what their corresponding Arabic sources denote are the concern of this paper.

It is normal to assume that Hausa Language was used adequately by the Hausas to express their thoughts and feelings as well as account for their environment, society, culture and civilization without any recourse to borrowing. But this naturally must be within the period when the Hausas

were living in a sort of isolation; i.e. when Hausa Language was in no contact with any other Language. It is generally accepted that whenever two linguistic communities are in contact there exists the tendency for influence between their languages from one or both sides (El-Wafiy n.d.:229, Anees n.d.:41-42).

## **2. Between Hausa and Arabic.**

Hausa is said to belong to the Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family to which Arabic also belongs (cf. El-wafiy: 2005:63, Dawud 2001:4). It is spoken widely in West Africa and some parts of central Africa. Dawud (2001:4) considered it to be the third most important indigenous Language in Africa after Arabic and Swahili. The concentration of its native speakers is found in what used to be referred to as Hausaland; an area covering the major part of Northern Nigeria and southern part of Niger republic. Speakers of this language are referred to as Hausa (or Hausas), same as the language. Scholars like Dawud (2001) have shown that there are many common linguistic features between Hausa and Arabic at the levels of phonology, morphology and syntax. Some examples are gender differentiation, between male/female, subject – verb agreement marker where both the two languages use (ya) for male and (ta) for female; in addition to the fact that over two thirds of the sounds of the two languages are common, and that there are a lot of similarities between them in derivation (word formation) techniques.

Early contact by Hausas with Arabic language was traced to the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Galadanchi 1993:59-60). However, wide spread and establishment of Arabic in Hausaland had to wait until the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D (Hiskett, 1965; Ibrahim 1978:98); that was the period when Arab merchants started to establish settlements in Hausaland. These Arabs introduced to the Hausas things that were hitherto unknown to them. They came to them with a new religion – Islam, in fact a new civilization and culture. Thus, introducing new ideas, concepts and objects to the host community. It was therefore expected that the Hausas would be in need of new words and expressions in order to refer to and describe those new ideas and objects. The need could be satisfied by utilizing the natural resources of the Hausa Language through compounding and derivation or loan translation or borrowing. In fact all the three might have been put to use as means of extending word stock.

However, the influence of Arabic language on Hausa extends beyond the lexicon. And that borrowing from Arabic by the Hausas was not always necessitated by want of vocabulary to express new things. Many loanwords of Arabic origin in Hausa, like loanwords in many other languages, denote familiar ideas or objects and “there is no obvious reason why they should be borrowed.” (Brook 1981:26) It can therefore safely be said that Arabic loanwords in Hausa are of two kinds: those denoting familiar ideas and objects thereby providing a sort of synonymy to the existing words of the language (Hausa) and those denoting new concepts, ideas and objects.

### **2.1 Arabic Loanwords in Hausa:**

A loanword is a lexical item taken directly into one language from another one with little or no translation. Therefore, Arabic Loanwords in Hausa are those lexical items (in the Hausa Language) which were originally Arabic, but happened to be part and parcel of the vocabulary of the Hausa Language as employed by the speakers of the language in their day to day linguistic activities. These words in most cases adapt to both phonological and morphological systems of the Hausa Language to the extent that speakers don't realize at once that those words were borrowed. These types of words are many in Hausa and they cover almost all aspects of the lives of the Hausa People. Abubakar (1972) claimed that Arabic loanwords account for 20% of the total vocabulary of Hausa. This opinion was echoed by Dawud (2001:4).

It may be plausible to assume that existence of common features between Arabic and Hausa has the tendency to facilitate borrowing and subsequent naturalization of Arabic lexical items in Hausa language; and that may account in part for the high volume of these loanwords in Hausa.

A considerable interest has been shown in the study of Arabic loanwords in Hausa. The study has in turn revealed many interesting discoveries. But the early works in the area were more concerned with phonological and morphological aspects within the words. Greenberg's (1947) attempt to account for the source of borrowing from Arabic by the Hausas (between classical and North African dialects) was based on phonological evidences. Hiskett's (1965) work, as a departure from Greenberg's (1947) was concerned with the general history of the people and their language as a determining factor in accounting for the causes and sources of the borrowing. But it never the less paid attention to phonology and morphology. These early works seemed to have set a trend in the area for many subsequent works to follow, such as Ibrahim (1978), Rufa'i (1982), Sani (1986), and Yalwa (1992). As a result, attention paid to semantics had mostly been at superficial level, and hardly an in depth study on the semantic features and characteristics of the Arabic loanwords in Hausa could be found, especially as it relates to semantic change.

It is a fact that a mere look at these words does reveal differences between them as they relate semantically to their 'originals' in the donor language. Words like *sallah*, *azumi*, *arziki*, *alkalami*, and *almakashi*, for example denote in Hausa almost exactly the same ideas or objects as *salah*, *saum*, *ar-rizq*, *al-qalam* and *al-miqass* correspondingly denote in Arabic. But *fassara* in Hausa means translation and not explanation which the Arabic verb *فسر* from which it is said to be taken, means. Likewise *attajiri* in Hausa means a wealthy man but *التاجر* in Arabic means a merchant.

From these few examples, it may be clear that among Arabic Loanwords in Hausa are words which retain their existing senses even after their transfer to Hausa Language – and they constitute the vast majority – and others that acquired extended, narrowed, or even replacement senses after their adoption by the Hausa Language.

However, to the best of my knowledge, there was hardly any work so far, that was particularly concerned with such variety of borrowed words from Arabic into Hausa. But similar works (e.g. Khan 2014) in other languages can be found.

#### **2.1.1. Semantic change in Arabic loanwords in Hausa.**

Semantic change, generally, is a process that takes place overtime. It is about changes in the meanings of words. A lexical item in a given language may develop additional or different senses from the hitherto existing ones it has. In other words, denotations of existing senses of a lexical item may shift and give way for new senses as the old senses become obsolete; or that new senses may develop 'as extensions of established ones, leading to polysemy as the newer and older senses co-exist' (Murphy & Koskela 2010:147). In certain situations, a shift in prominence may occur in the senses of a polysemic word so that a particular sense regarded earlier on as the main or most prominent moves away from the centre stage for another less prominent sense to take its place.

Efforts were made by Semanticists to classify and enumerate different types of semantic change; but attempts to give a comprehensive list of them proved to be very difficult if not impossible (Aitchison 2007:121). However, certain aspects, such as expansion of meaning, narrowing of meaning and shift in meaning are constant in many works. And semantic change in Arabic loanwords in Hausa can generally be accounted for within the context of these types.

### 3. The Study

#### 3.1 Nature and scope

This study is a descriptive type. It involves the analysis of certain lexical items from a semantico-sociolinguistic point of view. It will attempt to semantically describe those lexical items in relation to their senses in both the donor and receptor languages within the context of the life of the Hausa people. Therefore, lexical borrowing from Arabic into Hausa as a general phenomenon is not the main thrust here, rather the concern was only with the category of words that are borrowed from Arabic and used with different meanings. Also, it is not the aim of this study to account for how and why the semantic changes in those lexical items; but attempt will be made to bring in issues of pedagogical concern so as to present a perspective that can be used to facilitate second language learning and teaching as it relates to Arabic and Hausa languages.

#### 3.2 Limitation

The study is basically on semantic change; specifically in Arabic loan words in Hausa. Thirty words of this nature from different aspects of life were used as examples.

#### 3.3 Methodology and Data

The data was sorted out from the list provided by Abubakar (1972) which has been a reference source for many researchers to follow, such as Ibrahim (1978) and Zarruk (1978). The words are presented in both the receptor and donor languages, and then a discussion that contrastively analyzes the semantic relationship between the senses of these words in the said languages followed. The researcher consulted many dictionaries (both mono and bi-lingual) and lexicons. In addition to tapping from his experiences as a Hausa native student of Arabic language and those of other bilingual colleagues; related literature has also been of great help.

#### 3.4 Analysis

Analysis of the data was based on three major forms of semantic change; expansion or broadening (sometimes generalizations), narrowing or shrinking (specialization) and shift. Ten words were used to exemplify each form.

##### 3.4.1 Semantic Expansion

Semantic expansion is when a lexical item/word acquires a new sense/meaning without losing its earlier/existing meaning. It may happen by acquisition of entirely a new additional sense or generalizing a hitherto specific sense. They are both found in Arabic loanwords in Hausa as the following examples show.

Hausa	Arabic	Discussion
Kimiyyah (n.f) Science	كيمياء (n.f.) Chemistry	<i>Ilimin kimiyya</i> means knowledge of science – science. Apparently, the scope of the word has expanded in Hausa to cover all branches of science. Thus the translation of " College of Arts and Science" as " <i>Kwalejin fasaha da kimiyyah</i> "
Sharhi	الشرح	Sharhi was used in Hausa in closely the sense of الشرح in Arabic

(n.m.) 1.Commentary/ explanation 2. analysis	(n.m) Commentary/ explanation	more especially within the context of religious literature where disciples of early scholars pay a lot of interest in giving commentaries and explanations of the works of those scholars. But over time it semantically expanded by acquiring new (though) related sense. It is now used in the sense of analysis as it refers to general comments and expression of thoughts, especially with regards to events and happenings. The sense of dependence upon a text/discourse which made الشرح a particular restricted type of commentary is removed to give way for generalization.
Mallami (n.m) 1.Teacher 2.learned	معلم (n.m.)Teacher	The common sense that bound 'teacher' and 'learned' together is the presence of knowledge. To be a teacher presupposes knowledge, but not all who possessed knowledge devote themselves to imparting it to others. Therefore 'mallam' is used in Hausa in a much wider sense than "معلم" in Arabic; because every معلم is a mallam and not vice versa. The Arabic word that may correspond with Mallam in this genral sense is عالم.
Asiri (n.m) 1.Secret 2.Evil magic	السِّرّ (n.m.)Secret	The word 'Asiri', in addition to the sense of السِّر has also the sense of السحر. It is possible to argue that 'Asiri' was borrowed from the Arabic السحر (magic), looking at how it fits well into some forms of phonological adaption by which the Hausas replace Arabic sounds with Hausa phonemes that are closer to the borrowed ones (Yelwa 1992, rufa'l 1982), even though 'sihiri' is the direct borrowing from السحر. Either way, "Asiri" is used in Hausa in the senses of both السِّر and السحر. Evil magic is always done in secrecy.
Alhaji (n.m.) 1.Pilgrim 2. Wealthy	الحاج (Alhaajj) (n.m.) pilgrim	The first sense is what the word was borrowed with. But it acquired with time the second one. Though apparently from a totally different semantic field, the relationship can be seen from the context of the life of the Hausas. Being predominantly Muslims, they yearn to perform Hajj. But the distance between Hausaland and the Holy sites of Islam made it a daunting task that was undertaken only by the wealthy. To perform Hajj, therefore, entails possession of wealth. On the other hand, the devotion which the Hausas have to Islam coupled with the social status a person who performed pilgrimage has among them made it inconceivable to find a healthy rich person who would not perform the hajj. This sense is prominent now that it is getting its way into Nigerian English. <i>Ta auri wani alhaji</i> - She is married to one <i>alhaji</i> , means she is married to rich person and not just someone who performed <i>hajj</i> .
Liyafa (n.f) Entertainment	ضيافة (n.f)Entertaining (of a guest)	'Liyafa' in today's usage has acquired a wider sense to denote entertainment in general and not restricted to a guest.
Walima (n.f.) Ceremony	الوليمة (n.f.)	Merry and happiness are common to feasts and ceremonies; and ceremonies may involve eating and drinking. But the focus

	Feast/party/ Banquet	lies in the 'coming together' of people. <i>Walima</i> in Hausa has a wider sense than in Arabic since it is not restricted to a 'gathering' for eating.
Lemu (n.m.)	ليمون (n.m.) Lime/Lemon	<i>Lemu</i> is general, it covers the whole of trees (and of course their fruits) in the rutaceae family. Hence; <i>lemun tsami</i> = lime/lemon ( <i>tsami</i> means sour taste) <i>lemun zaki</i> = sweet orange ( <i>zaki</i> means sweet taste) <i>lemun Masar</i> = citron (i.e. from Masar / Egypt)
Fallasa (n.f.) 1.to expose (somebody) to ridicule. 2. to squander	فلس (n.m) to declare(someb ody) bankrupt	To declare somebody bankrupt is to expose him. Even though a bankrupt person might not have squandered the wealth, he never the less, lost it, same as the squanderer.
Dabara (n.f) Device, Plan, resourcefuln ess stratagem, trick,	دبر (V. trans.) to manage,	To manage well, one has to be resourceful, plan and strategize, but he doesn't have to be tricky. But for a trick to succeed, a plan and a strategy for its execution is necessary, hence the sense of trick

Lexical items in this table are an example of Arabic loanwords in Hausa which have their meaning expanded in the receptor language by acquiring additional senses or generalizing a specific sense. The concern in the Arabic word was only with the sense that was borrowed into Hausa. A word may be polysemous but the receptor language Hausa, usually, would take cognizance of a particular sense only.

### 3.4.2. Narrowing

Narrowing is the direct opposite of expansion. It involves the loss of existing sense or senses of a word or specifying a hitherto general sense. The words to follow are examples of this in Arabic loanwords in Hausa.

Hausa	Arabic	Discussion
Alkawali (n.m.) Covenant	القول (n.m.)Utterance	A covenant is a form of utterance in which a promise was made.
Bahasi (n.m) Interrogation	البحث (n.m.)Research	During interrogation, the aim is to find out the truth. It is one way of conducting a research.
Ta'adda Damage (injuries) Hence/terrorism	تعدي (v.Intr)Transgress, Cross limits	He who deliberately causes damage or injury to others has actually transgressed his limits, and did encroach on their material and human rights.
Kadari (Alkadari) (n.m.)Worth, value	القدر (n.m.) worth, value	<i>kadari (alkadari)</i> is always positive as against <i>القدر</i> which is usually neutral and therefore applies to almost everything.
Daraja (n.f.) Value	درجة (n.f.)Step, Position	<i>Daraja</i> is a position of respect and value therefore denotes only a part of the sense of <i>درجة</i> .

Fassara (n.f.) translation	فسر (v. trans.) Explanation commentary	Translation is form of explanation. <i>Tafsir</i> from which the verb فسر was taken is usually associated with the (translation) of the Qur'an. There is a long tradition in Hausaland of holding <i>tafsir</i> sessions in Mosques and other places, where scholars read and translate to the gathering existing books of <i>Tafsir</i> , especially "Tafsir of Jalalain". Therefore 'fassara' as translation might have started with "translation of the meaning of the Qur'an" and extended to other forms of translation.
Balaga (n.f.) To reach puberty	بلغ (v.trans.) to reach	The verb بلغ and its corresponding adverb بلوغ were used in the Qur'an and religious literature mostly in the context of reaching puberty as the marking point for religious obligations. Perhaps this may account for the restriction in the meaning of the borrowed word 'balaga' in contrast to the unrestricted source word بلغ.
Fatara (n.f.) indigence	فترة (n.f.) interval, period	The sense of secession, though temporary, of a usual happening during an interval or intermission period is the focal point in the receptor language. Secession of something connotes lack of it; thus, 'fatara' means lack of money.
Ushira (n.f.) a portion (one tenth) of a deceased estate taken and kept for the treasury	عشر (n.m.) One tenth	عشر is general while <i>Ushira</i> is restricted
Tahiya (n.f) a particular form of praise to Allah recited at a particular stage in <i>Salah</i> .	تحية (n.f.) Greeting	تحية has a general sense therefore applies to all forms, but <i>tahiya</i> is used within the context of Muslim <i>salah</i> only

### 3.4.3. Meaning Shift

Shift is sometimes referred to as change in the meaning of words (cf. Mc Arthur :831). It involves the shift of focus through the loss of old sense and acquisition of a new one or through change of prominence where a weaker sense (of usually a polysemous lexical item) becomes the prominent one and the previous prominent sense moved to the background. This phenomenon in Arabic loanwords in Hausa can be seen in the following examples.

Hausa	Arabic	Discussion
Tammaha (n.f.) Expectation	الطمع (n.f.) Greed	A greedy person is always looking for more; he may therefore be hoping and expecting.



Annoba (n.f.) Epidemic	النوبة (n.f.) calamity	An epidemic is a form of calamity that befalls a people.
Hatsabibi (n.m.) Quarrelsome	الطبيب (n.m.) Doctor	It is very difficult to find any semantic relationship between 'hatsabibi' and الطبيب. The former is a behavioral trait and has no relationship what so ever with the latter as a professional classification. Never the less, refutable scholars were of the opinion that 'hatsabibi' was borrowed from الطبيب (cf. Bargery 1934, Ibrahim 1978).
Attajiri (n.m.) Rich person	التاجر (n.m.)Trader/ Merchant	The Arabic sense is denoting an activity while the Hausa one denotes a status. The relationship between the two may be that the activity may lead to the acquisition of the status. Perhaps the traders and merchants in the Hausa community sometime in history constituted the majority of rich people in the community.
Harbi (N.M.) To shoot	حارب (v.trans.)to fight (a war)	Shooting is one of many techniques employed in a war.
Lahani (n.m) 1.Injury 2.blemish	لحن (n.m.)Defect (of speech)	There is a negative effect in both the senses of both the 'original' and borrowed words. Perhaps the difference between them is in the nature of the defect.
Daula (n.f) 1.Caliphate/ dynasty 2,Enjoyment	الدولة (n.f.) Dynasty/ Rulership	Enjoyment is usually the preserve of those in authority.
Sanadi (n.m) Cause, reason, means	السند (n.m.)Support/ proof(by attribution)	The relationship may be that of the senses of السند and السبب , as the Hausa <i>Sanadi</i> have the same sense as السبب in Arabic. A 'reason' or 'cause' might be the support upon which something is built.
Fasahah (n.f.) (1) cleverness (2) Arts	فصاحة (n.m.)Eloquence	An eloquent person is usually seen to be a clever person.
Ummul Haba'isi (n.f.)Root cause	أم الخبائث (n.f.)(Figurative) beer/ alcohol	Beer/Alcohol is referred to in Islamic literature as the 'root cause of all evils' as a form of metonymy. When the expression was borrowed into Hausa it was dissociated from the referent while still maintaining metonymic meaning.

It is clear from the examples given above that some Arabic loanwords in Hausa have acquired in the receptor language meanings different from the ones they have in Arabic. However, there exists between the Arabic and Hausa meanings a certain relationship that stands as a point of convergence. This point may appear sometimes weak in itself, yet it helps us greatly in understanding the Hausa speakers' perception as they borrow from Arabic.

#### 4. Findings

This study though preliminary has revealed certain issues of importance that need to be studied further. It has shown that similarities between Arabic and Hausa languages manifest in Arabic loanwords in Hausa, especially at the level of grammatical categorization. Nouns in Arabic are borrowed in to Hausa as nouns and their gender (masculine/feminine) in most cases remain unchanged. It has also shown that despite the fact that many borrowed words are polysemous in the donor language



the Hausas while borrowing them were concerned with only one particular sense. It was also able to show that semantic changes by expansion and narrowing mostly occur due to generalization of a restricted sense and restriction of a generalized sense respectively. Similarly, a relationship between the meanings of the word in the donor and receptor languages is capable of giving insights into certain conceptions in the life of the Hausa people. It also suggests that semantic adaptation of Arabic loan-words in Hausa is a continuous process.

### 5. Pedagogical implications

A study of this nature can actually be of pedagogic concern. Arabic is learned among the Hausa people more than any other foreign language. On the other hand, there is increased interest in the learning of Hausa in the Arab world. You may find people speaking Hausa among the Arabs without having visited Hausaland. Proper understanding of lexical meanings is a necessity in second language learning and explaining these meanings in a sort of comparison between Hausa and Arabic allows for a better teaching strategy (from the side of the teacher) and that will facilitate better grasp of the meaning on the part of the student. The inference of actual meaning as Khan (2014:48) suggests, is better possible when the root word and the borrowing are studied. Lado (1957:91) categorized these types of words as deceptive cognates. The teacher needs to identify the points of differences, hence difficulty, between the meanings in the donor and receptor languages. Grouping of the words in order of difficulty can also be made on the basis of semantic categorization of the meaning change.

### 6. Conclusion and recommendations

This paper as a preliminary attempt was able to analyze semantic changes in some Arabic loan-words in Hausa, within the context of expansion, narrowing and shift from a descriptive perspective. It has shown some characteristics and features of these types of words and how that could be exploited in the teaching of the two languages. However, further research is needed from a historical perspective that can account for the reasons and some of the processes of these semantic changes.

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