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Sociolinguistic situation in Maiduguri: A study of Gamboru Liberty Ward

Abstract. This paper examines the sociolinguistic situation of the multilingual community Gamboru Ward in Maiduguri Metropolitan. The findings show that Hausa language is the predominant language used in almost every domain in the community. The multi-ethnic composition of Gamboru liberty ward is the result of its strategic position as a camp for slaves during the late 1940's and its location near Gamboru market and cattle market. Thus the community has become multilingual.

Introduction

Gamboru Liberty Ward was established in 1942, during the Period when the descendants of the freed slaves in Liberty Village, also known as Kakagida or Maisandari, were settled in the ward northeast of Shehuri called Gamboru Liberty Ward. According to a (1921) report on Yerwa, "Liberty Village was established as a freed slaves settlement shortly after Maisandari became the headquarters of the province eighteen year ago. Eight freed slaves were placed under the care of a government courier, Momadu by name. Momadu, the headman of the settlement, was commonly known amongst his subjects as Momadu Maisandari Liberty.

The word *Maisandari* in Kanuri refers to a messenger. Momadu, the headman who the British appointed to take care of the freed slaves, used to be a government courier or messenger, and later became known as the Liberty Village Maisandari. It is important at this stage to look at the reason it was necessary for the colonial government to settle the freed

slaves at the Liberty Village in Gamboru Liberty Ward in 1942. According to Lawan Mala Ali (1999), there were complaints from the Europeans about the general disturbances emanating from the Liberty Village. Drinking a local alcohol known as *Burkutu* which is brewed and sold in the Liberty Village, became a daily routine for some of the ex-slaves, who after consuming it continued to dance and beat their drums all night. The Europeans at the Government station (G.R.A) who happened to be their nextdoor neighbours often complained; therefore the freed slaves were removed from the Liberty Village to Gamboru Liberty Ward. Until the freed slaves arrived in Gamboru Liberty Ward in 1942, the area was still an uninhabited place.

However, some part of the land was used as a cemetery by the residents of Hausari, Fezzan, Shehuri and Limanti Wards of Maiduguri. In order to cover the open nature of the area, Borno Native Authority built a fence around the Ward and the freed slaves were encouraged to erect shelters for themselves. Each male who attained marriageable age was given a piece of land which measured one hundred by fifty feet. A market was also established. However, it was not a daily market but a weekly market that operate on Sundays. The Pilgrims Camp in Maiduguri, which is known as Al Hajiri, was also removed to Gamboru Liberty Ward.

On the whole, from the above information, it could be deduced that in Gamboru Liberty Ward the freed slaves came to lose their identity because it accommodated, as it were, a variety of peoples of nonslave origin who live side by side with the descendants of the freed slaves as a heterogeneous community, such that it is difficult to distinguish them. Today, Gamboru Liberty Ward comprises several peoples with different cultures. These peoples and their cultures contributed immensely to developing and enriching the language resources of the community. The ward later grew in size due to the influx of people from different places. Subsequently, residential quarters were built to meet the growing demand.

Method and procedure

This research work is achieved with the help of instruments of research presented below:

Sampling

Sampling procedures take into account of some selected socio-economic strata of the community:

- i. Ethnic background
- ii. Age group
- iii. Language use in various domains.

That was a theoretical approach elaborated In Labov (1972) the language use questionnaire was administered to 120 respondents.

Unobtrusive observation

The researcher paid attention to conversations among people of different age groups in the community and tried to make observations when they are unaware of being observed. When possible, the researcher recorded such conversations that came up among friends in a community or club with a mini-tape. Thus, in order to get what Labov (1972) referred to as “good data,” the researcher has employed unobtrusive observation in the course of this research work.

Data analysis

This paper reports, the result of investigation in terms of language use and social characteristics of the community, based on the data collected. These characteristics are though important and significant when discussing the linguistic situation.

- i The characteristics of the male inhabitants and
- ii Those of the female inhabitants of the community:

Demographic information for Gamboru Liberty Ward

Age

The ages of the male respondents are classified into two. The two groups are presented by percentage:

Table 1.

Groups	Age Groups	Percentage
1 st	30-60	25%
2 nd	18-29	75%

The Questionnaire was administered to the respondents in each age groups, that is, the first generation and the second generation. The first generation group (30-60 years) was chosen and administered the questionnaire, while the second generation group (18-29 years), which constituted the majority, was also chosen and administered the questionnaire. The percentage of the respondents are presented as 25% and 75% respectively.

Place of birth of male inhabitants

The respondents claimed to have been born in various localities within Nigeria and in some cases in the neighboring countries. The table below gives the places of birth of the respondents, the numbers found in the sample and the percentages:

NO IN THE SAMPLE	PLACE OF BIRTH	PERCENTAGE
40	MAIDUGURI	60%
6	BIU	15%
5	NGALA	10%
4	DAMBOA	10%
2	CAMEROUN	2%
2	NIGER REPUBLIC	2%
1	TCHAD	1%
TOTAL	60%	100%

Educational background

The respondents have undergone two types of education, Qu'ranic education and Western education. Western education is characterized by three levels, the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. The Qur'anic education is characterized by memorization of verses of the Holy Qur'an and secondly with the reading of the whole Qur'an.

Marital status

Table 3

	NO IN THE SAMPLE	PERCENTAGE
MARRIED	35	30
MIXED MARRIAGE	25	20
NON-MIXED MARRIAGE	20	10
UNMARRIED	40	40
TOTAL	120	100

NB. Mixed marriage consist of heads of households and spouses who belong to different ethnic groups, while a non-mixed marriage consists of heads of households and spouses who belong to the same ethnic group. In this data we observed that 40% of the male respondents are not married. The percentage of unmarried is high and the percentage of mixed marriage is also high, as a result of the heterogeneity of the people in that community.

Place of birth of inhabitant

Considering the two (2) age groups (30-60) and (18-29), 30% of the female respondents belong to the first age group while 80% of the respondents belong to the second groups. The female respondents claimed to have been born in different locations as shown below:

Table 4

NO IN THE SAMPLE	PLACE OF BIRTH	PERCENTAGE
42	Maiduguri	68
5	Biu	14
4	Ngala	10
3	Dikwa	2
2	Kano	2
2	Tchad Republic	2
2	Niger Republic	2
Total 60		100%

Most of the females respondents are not new comers; they claimed to have been born in different places in Nigeria with some exceptions who hailed from neighboring countries.

Language spoken

The Gamboru Liberty Ward is a complex, heterogeneous speech community where many languages exist side by side. The more prominent among these tribes in the ex-slave

settlement and those whose backgrounds are traceable to the Francophone territories and those whose background are traceable to Nigeria. The major languages that are found in Gamboru Liberty Ward include Kanuri, Hausa, Fulbe, Shuwa, Banana, Lgbo, Yoruba, Kablai, Gulai, Sara, Baghirmi, Meseme, Kim, Gabiri, Murum, Mundang, Tibiri, Gbaya, Mbum, Giziga, Matakam, Banda, Kabeteri, Manga, Bura, Babur, Marghi, Nupe, Efik, Lunguda and Chamba.

Function of the languages

Each of these languages is spoken at the Gamboru Liberty Ward serves certain functions in their various domains.

Frequency and function of Hausa

In my research, I discovered that **75%** of my respondents speak Hausa most frequently as their *lingua franca*. Functionally, Hausa language is considered as a lingua-franca at Gamboru Liberty Ward; where Marghi or any other ethnic group wants to communicate with Kanuri, He/she uses Hausa as a medium of communication. Hausa language also serves as a medium of instructions in the primary schools in the community. Primary grades one to three use Kanuri as a language of instruction, and primary grades four to six use Hausa language as a the medium.

Kanuri language is second in terms of various functions at Gamboru Liberty Ward, and Kanuri language also serves as second *lingua franca*, as speakers of other languages sometimes do communicate in Kanuri most frequently when they are confronted with the native speakers of Kanuri language. About 30% of my respondents do speak Kanuri fluently as their mother tongue. Shuwa Arab is third in terms of language function at the Gamboru Liberty Ward. I discovered that about 15% of my respondents speak Shuwa as their ethnic language and some non-native speakers claimed to speak Shuwa fluently, like their mother

tongue. Finally the other languages covered 10% because they are restricted either to homes or family levels.

Table 5
Frequency of language use

Hausa	40
Kanuri	30
Shuwa Arab	20
Others	10
Total	100

The above table shows that Hausa has 40% Kanuri 30% Shuwa Arab 20% and other minorities language have 10% the frequency of language use at Gamboru Liberty Ward.

Table 6

Domain of language use

ETHNIC GROUP	MARKET %	HOME%	WORKING PLACE%	DISPENSARY %	LAW AND ORDER %
	M	H	W	D	L
HAUSA	55	60	50	60	75
KANURI	30	20	30	25	15
SHUWA	10	15	15	10	7
OTHER	5	5	5	5	3
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above table shows that Hausa language is spoken with high frequency in almost every domain of the community. When people in the community meet, the tendency is to select Hausa in the following domains: market, home, workplace, dispensary, law and order, where Hausa language has the following percentages, 55% 60% 50%, 60% and 75% respectively. Kanuri language is second with the following percentages, 30%, 20% 30% 25%, and 15%. And Shuwa Arab comes third in terms of language use in various domains in Gamboru Liberty Ward with the following percentages 10%, 15%, 15%, 10%, and 7%, respectively. While the other minority languages covered 5%, 5%, 5%, 5%, and 3% respectively the domains used are market, home, work, dispensary, and law and order.

Conclusion

Describing the socio-linguistic situations of a community involves accounting for the influence of some or all social characteristics of the community and its linguistics resources. i.e., the sum of the languages used by its inhabitants. Our investigation reveals that male inhabitants who belong to the first generations (30-60) are mostly monolingual, while those who belong to the second generation (18-29) are mostly multilingual. This fact explains the need for various languages among the younger generations (18-29) in the growing multilingual situation. Likewise, female inhabitants who belong to the first generation are typically monolingual, while the second generations are mostly multilingual. This is the result of a Hausanization process in the community, whereby Hausa language is preferred over others in multiple domains. The younger inhabitants, or the second generation, usually pick Hausa as their language of interaction within the community. This constitutes a great danger to the other languages, like Kanuri and minority languages. There are also cases of mixed marriages in which the heads of household and their spouses opt to use the dominant language, with the result that all the children who are brought up in mixed marriage home acquire Hausa as their mother tongue as well.

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