

THE IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON HAUSA LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

by

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Abstract

This paper explores the effects of insecurity on Hausa language education in Nigeria, drawing on secondary data from print and online sources. Through content analysis, the study reveals that insecurity has significantly hindered the development of Hausa language education. Key issues identified include reduced education funding, declining private investment, disrupted academic calendars, loss of educators, student fatalities, and decreased enrollment and retention rates. To address these challenges, the paper recommends leveraging artificial intelligence for security in schools, tackling root causes of insecurity such as unemployment, enhancing border security, and enforcing stricter legal measures against banditry and terrorism.

Introduction

Nigeria faces a multifaceted security crisis, with terrorism in the Northeast, banditry in the Northwest and North Central, secessionist violence in the Southeast, and rampant kidnappings nationwide (Placing.org, 2024). These challenges have spilled into the education sector, disproportionately affecting Hausa language education, a cornerstone of cultural and linguistic identity in Northern Nigeria. The Hausa language, one of Nigeria's major indigenous languages, serves as a vital medium of communication, education, and cultural preservation, particularly in Northern Nigeria. As a lingua franca spoken by over 80 million people across West Africa, Hausa plays a crucial role in fostering national unity and regional integration. However, the persistent insecurity in Northern Nigeria—driven by insurgency, banditry, and communal conflicts—has severely disrupted the teaching and learning of Hausa, threatening linguistic heritage and educational development.

This paper examines the impact of insecurity on Hausa language education, explores strategies to enhance security in schools, and recommends measures to safeguard and promote effective learning. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can ensure the continuity of Hausa as an academic discipline and a vehicle for cultural preservation, transmission and national cohesion.

Historical Significance of Hausa Language

Hausa is not only a dominant language in Northern

Nigeria but also a key language of trade, religion, and media across West Africa. It is taught in formal education systems and used in broadcasting, literature, and digital communication.

The Hausa language holds immense historical, cultural, and socio-political significance in Nigeria and the African diaspora. Below is an overview of its key contributions:

Historical Significance in Nigeria

Trade & Commerce: Hausa was the Lingua Franca of the trans-Saharan trade (8th–19th centuries), connecting West Africa with North Africa and the Middle East. Hausa merchants (Dan Rimi) facilitated trade in salt, gold, textiles, and slaves.

Islamic Influence: The language became a vehicle for Islamic scholarship after the 14th-century Islamization of Hausa city-states (Kano, Katsina, Zaria). Ajami script (Arabic-derived Hausa writing) was used for religious texts.

Sokoto Caliphate (1804–1903): Under Usman Dan Fodio, Hausa became the administrative and scholarly language of one of Africa's largest pre-colonial empires.

British Colonial Era: The British adopted Hausa for indirect rule in Northern Nigeria, reinforcing its dominance over other regional languages.

Cultural and Literary Impact

Oral Tradition: Hausa has a rich tradition of oral poetry (Wakoki), proverbs, and storytelling (Tatsuniya).

Modern Literature: The Kano Market Literature (20th century) popularized Hausa-language novels, blending Islamic themes with romance and social issues.

Music & Film: Hausa-language music (Hausa hip-hop, traditional Griot songs) and Kannywood (Hausa film industry) spread its influence.

Socio-Political Role in Nigeria

Dominant Language: Hausa is Nigeria's most widely spoken indigenous language (over 80 million first- and second-language speakers).

National Politics: It is one of Nigeria's three major languages (with Yoruba & Igbo), influencing national discourse and media (e.g., Hausa BBC, RFI Hausa, VOA Hausa, DW Hausa).

Education & Media: Hausa is taught in schools and used in newspapers (Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo, Nigeria's oldest Hausa newspaper).

Diaspora Influence

Trans-Saharan & Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: Enslaved Hausa speakers spread the language to Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the Americas.

Brazil & Caribbean: Hausa Muslim slaves led revolts (e.g., the 1835 Malê Revolt in Brazil), preserving Islamic Hausa writings.

West African Diaspora: Hausa remains influential in Ghana, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Sudan as a trade language.

Modern Migration: Hausa-speaking communities thrive in Europe (UK, Germany), the Middle East, and North America, maintaining cultural ties through media and Islamic schools.

Global Reach Today

International Broadcasting: BBC Hausa, DW Hausa, China Radio Hausa serve millions, shaping African discourse.

Digital Presence: Hausa is among the most widely used African languages online, with growing content on YouTube, TikTok, and AI tools (Google Translate added Hausa in 2021).

Education and Its Significance

Education is a transformative tool for societal development, fostering skills, values, and knowledge (Asiyai, 2020). In Nigeria, Hausa language education plays a vital role in preserving indigenous heritage and promoting multilingualism. However, insecurity has undermined these efforts, exacerbating existing challenges like poor funding and teacher shortages (Kadir, 2018). The National Policy on Education emphasizes the importance of indigenous languages, yet insecurity threatens these goals.

Educational Policy and Hausa Language

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2013) emphasizes the importance of mother-tongue instruction

in early childhood education. Hausa is a core subject in primary and secondary schools in Northern states and is offered as a course of study from degree program to masters and doctorate degree programs in universities such as Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Bayero University Kano and Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, among others.

Insecurity and Its Dimensions

Insecurity, defined as threats to societal stability (Onifode et al., 2013), has evolved into a pervasive crisis in Nigeria. Banditry, terrorism, and kidnappings have created a climate of fear, particularly in Northern regions where Hausa is predominantly spoken (Olamosu, 2000). For instance, the abduction of Chibok girls in Borno State, abduction of students from FGC Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State, the 2021 abduction of Bethel Baptist High School students in Kaduna, the farmer-herder clashes and ethno-religious violence in North Central region particularly in Benue and Jos disrupted Hausa language programs and eroded community trust in education (Premium Times, 2021). These crises have led to destruction of schools, mass displacement of teachers and students, school closures, and overall disruption of the education system which bring a decline in Hausa language literacy.

Roles of Hausa Language in Nigerian Education

Hausa is one of the three major indigenous languages officially recognized in Nigeria. It is used for instruction, communication, and cultural expression, especially in northern states. The National Policy on Education (NPE)

promotes the use of indigenous languages in early education, with Hausa being a central focus in the North. Below are some of the roles Hausa language plays in Nigerian education:

Medium of Instruction

In many northern Nigerian states, Hausa is used as the (Primary 1–3) under the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy. The National Policy on Education (NPE) encourages instruction in the mother tongue or a dominant indigenous language (like Hausa) at the foundational level to enhance comprehension and cognitive development. However, from Primary 4 onwards, English becomes the primary medium of instruction, but Hausa remains a subject of study.

Hausa as a Subject in Schools

Hausa is taught as a compulsory subject in many northern states, particularly in public schools.

It is part of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) curricula. Several Nigerian universities (e.g., Bayero University Kano, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto) offer Hausa Language and Literature at both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Research in Hausa linguistics, folklore, and literature is conducted at postgraduate levels.

Role in Adult & Non-Formal Education

Hausa is used in adult literacy programs across the north,

helping to reduce illiteracy rates. Organizations like the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) use Hausa for teaching basic literacy and numeracy. Similarly, many Islamiyya schools (Qur'anic schools) use Hausa as the language of instruction alongside Arabic.

Hausa in National Language Policy

Hausa has been officially recognized in the National Policy on Education as one of Nigeria's three major indigenous languages (alongside Igbo and Yoruba) as outlined in section 4 subsections 8 of the NPE (2004):

"The government recognizes the social and cultural importance of languages. Therefore, every child shall learn the language of their immediate environment. Additionally, for national unity, every child shall learn one of Nigeria's major languages: Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba" (FRN 1973:8).

This clearly defined the status of Hausa and emphasized its importance for every citizen. This learning is ensured in schools, alongside everyday communication. Studying Hausa in schools entails mastering its components: language, culture, and literature.

Also, the 1979 constitution included Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as national languages for use in national assemblies, provided adequate arrangements were made (Section 51 of the 1979 Constitution). Similarly, state assemblies could use English or major national

languages if approved (Section 91, as noted by Ikara 1994).

From this, it is evident that the government has formulated policies to promote the study of Hausa and its literature. These policies are embedded in the National Policy on Education and the Constitution, serving as the foundation for Hausa studies from nursery schools to universities. They also support governance, particularly in national and state assemblies, as seen in Ondo and Kano states. It is used in government communications, radio, and TV broadcasts (e.g., Hausa services on NTA, BBC Hausa, Voice of America Hausa).

Cultural and Literary Preservation

Hausa language education helps preserve Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, including proverbs, folktales, and traditional knowledge. Hausa literature (e.g., oral poetry, novels by writers like Abubakar Imam) preserves history and values. Also, the use of proverbs and folktales are key tools for moral instruction. Schools and institutions can develop Hausa literature, poetry, and drama to promote cultural identity. For instance, the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) promotes the study of Nigerian languages, including Hausa, for national unity and cultural preservation.

National and Regional Integration

Hausa serves as a bridge language among diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. It also promotes Nigeria's soft power not only in neighboring countries like Niger, Chad,

Ghana, etc., but also at other global countries like America, China, England, etc.

Opportunities of Hausa Language Education

Hausa language education in Nigeria presents numerous opportunities due to its status as one of the most widely spoken indigenous languages in West Africa. Here are some key opportunities in Hausa language education in Nigeria:

Growing Demand for Indigenous Language Education

With the Nigerian government and UNESCO advocating for mother-tongue education, there is an increasing need for Hausa language teachers in primary and secondary schools.

Hausa in Media and Entertainment

Nigeria's film industry (Kannywood) and Hausa radio/TV stations create job opportunities for Hausa language experts in script writing, translation, and broadcasting. In addition, digital content creation (YouTube, podcasts, and social media) in Hausa is expanding.

Academic and Research Opportunities

Universities in Northern Nigeria (e.g., Bayero University Kano, ABU Zaria) offer Hausa language at undergraduate and postgraduate programs, creating demand for lecturers and researchers. There are opportunities for linguistic studies, dialectology, and Hausa computational linguistics (e.g., AI and machine translation).

Translation and Interpretation Services

Government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations (e.g., UNICEF, BBC Hausa) need Hausa translators for documents, meetings, and media. Also, the legal, medical, and business sectors require Hausa interpreters for effective communication.

Publishing and Literature Development

There is a growing market for Hausa language textbooks, novels, and children's books. The E-books and audiobooks in Hausa present new business opportunities.

Technology and Digital Learning

Mobile apps, online courses, and e-learning platforms for Hausa language learning are in demand. The AI-powered chat bots and voice assistants (like Google Assistant and Siri) could be developed for Hausa speakers.

International Opportunities

Hausa is spoken in neighboring countries (like Niger, Ghana, Chad, Cameroon, etc.), creating cross-border educational and business prospects. Foreign institutions and governments (USA, England, China, etc.) seek Hausa language experts for diplomacy, security, and research.

Government and Policy Implementation

The Nigerian government needs Hausa language specialists to implement language policies in education and public communication. Hausa is used in civic

education, voter awareness, and public health campaigns (e.g., polio eradication, COVID-19 awareness).

Entrepreneurship in Language Services

Establishing Hausa language tutoring centers (online/offline), offering Hausa copywriting, editing, and proofreading services for businesses and developing Hausa sign language for the hearing-impaired community is necessary

Contemporary Impacts of Insecurity on Hausa Language Education

Reduced Funding and Investment

Government budgets increasingly prioritize security over education, starving Hausa language programs of critical resources (ICIR, 2023). Private investors, deterred by violence, avoid funding schools in high-risk areas; further marginalizing Hausa education (Financialnigeria.com, 2020). Also, international agencies prioritize STEM over humanities research, for example, the Mexican investors cited insecurity as a barrier to supporting Nigerian education projects (The Cable, 2023). While the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) allocates <5% of grants to language studies, findings show that the budget allocation for the security agencies in Nigeria had increased as insecurity persisted, especially from 2019-2023 as investigated by Ukazor, Akuh and Ahon (2024) in the table below:

MDA	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
DEFENCE HQTRS	N5.21 Billion	N44.42 Billion	N35.36 Billion	N80.94 Billion	N86.11 Billion

MIN. OF DEFENCE HQTRS	N27.37 Billion	N2.16 Billion	N21.52 Billion	N21.01 Billion	N62.69 Billion
NIGERIAN ARMY	N228.42 Billion	N463.41 Billion	N510.64 Billion	N580.59 Billion	N665.12 Billion
NIGERIAN AIRFORCE	N114.84 Billion	N136.62 Billion	N140.13 Billion	N184.78 Billion	N200.42 Billion
NIGERIAN NAVY	N101.39 Billion	N130.81 Billion	N136.06 Billion	N173.03 Billion	N189.79 Billion
POLICE FORMATION & COMMAND HQTRS	N366.13 Billion	-----	-----	-----	-----
MIN. OF POLICE AFFAIRS	-----	N409.39 Billion	N455.13 Billion	N783.86 Billion	N838.06 Billion
TOTAL	N932.53 Billion	N1.30 Trillion	N1.39 Trillion	N1.93 Trillion	N2.16 Trillion

Disruption of Teaching and Learning

Frequent attacks by bandits, terrorists (e.g., Boko Haram), and communal clashes force schools to shut down, interrupting Hausa language instruction. In Zamfara and Sokoto, prolonged closures have led to learning loss and curriculum delays, irregular academic sessions, where schools in conflict zones operate inconsistently, making it difficult to maintain a structured Hausa language curriculum (Tribune, 2021). The 2023 shutdown of 13 schools in Kaduna exemplifies this trend, disproportionately affecting Hausa-medium institutions (Premium Times, 2021). Examinations have

also been disrupted. For instance, the National exams (e.g., WAEC, NECO) were often postponed in insecure areas, affecting Hausa language assessments. In addition, some schools were relocated to safer areas, causing logistical challenges in maintaining the academic calendar.

Declining Enrollment and Retention

Fear of attacks discourages students from attending schools, leading to poor learning outcomes in Hausa and other subjects. Parents in the Northwest increasingly withdraw children from school due to kidnappings, with 1,436 students abducted since 2020, leading to a decline in students' enrolment in Hausa studies, as parents prioritize safety over education (UNICEF, 2022). Girls, who constitute 60% of out-of-school children in the North, face heightened risks, undermining efforts to promote Hausa literacy among women (Amnesty International, 2021). In addition, students and teachers in conflict zones suffer from stress and trauma, affecting concentration and performance in Hausa studies.

Teacher Shortages

Many teachers flee high-risk areas, leaving schools understaffed and reducing the quality of Hausa language education. This may lead to brain drain, whereby talented Hausa linguists and educators may leave the country, weakening academic progress in the field. Over 2,295 teachers have been killed in the Northeast, many of whom were Hausa language instructors (Adedigba, 2018). The 2024 murder of Usmanu Danfodiyo

University lecturer highlighted threats to higher education (Premium Times, 2024).

Erosion of Cultural Knowledge

Since Hausa language education preserves cultural heritage, insecurity threaten the transmission of traditions and history.

Hindrance to Research in Hausa Language Education

Schools and universities in conflict zones may lose valuable through destruction of academic materials like Hausa manuscripts, textbooks, and research documents. This may lead to limited fieldwork. Researchers focusing on Hausa linguistics, literature, or pedagogy struggle to conduct fieldwork in unsafe regions

Strategies for Enhancing Security and Promoting Hausa Language Education

Strengthening School Security

This can be achieved through the deployment of trained school security personnel, fencing of school premises installation of surveillance systems and establishing school safety protocols and drills to enable effective teaching and learning of Hausa.

Leveraging Technology for Distance Learning

Develop Hausa language e-learning platforms accessible via radio, TV, and mobile applications; this can be achieved through training teachers and students in digital literacy. In addition, there is need to provide solar-powered devices for off-grid communities.

Community Involvement and Vigilance

Promoting community ownership of schools may encourage community policing to protect schools and getting traditional and religious leaders involved in education advocacy can promote Hausa language education.

Government and Policy Intervention

Implementing Safe Schools Declaration action plans, allocating special funds for schools in conflict-prone areas and giving incentives to teachers in high-risk zones through hazard allowances and housing may help in promoting Hausa language education.

Curriculum and Content Reform

Trough developing flexible Hausa language curricula which is adaptable for both formal and non-formal settings and integrating peace education and conflict resolution into Hausa language materials can enhance security and promote Hausa language education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Insecurity has severely disrupted Hausa language education, threatening cultural heritage and national development. Security is fundamental to the effective teaching and learning of Hausa language in Nigeria. Without a safe learning environment, efforts to preserve and promote indigenous languages remain threatened. Through strategic interventions, ranging from school security to technological innovation and community participation, Nigeria can safeguard its linguistic diversity and educational future.

Recommendations

To mitigate these impacts, the following measures are proposed:

1. Expand Safe School Initiatives to all high-risk states.
2. Boost Digital Literacy Programs for Hausa language learning.
3. Deploy AI-driven surveillance in schools to enhance security (e.g., facial recognition for threat detection).
4. Train More Hausa Teachers with incentives for rural postings.
5. Strengthen IDP Education Programs to ensure displaced children continue learning.
6. Promote Hausa Media (Radio, YouTube) for wider reach.
7. Expedite prosecution of offenders to restore confidence in education.

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