

The Grammatical Functions of the Particle [Xin] in Hausa

Yusuf Salisu Sani

Aminu Kano College of Islamic and Legal Studies, Kano

yusufsalisu@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper investigates the grammatical functions of the particle [xin] in Hausa from descriptive perspective using the Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG) as basis of analysis. The particle [xin] as used by Hausa native speakers has two main functions as discussed in this paper. One, it serves as an emphatic word, confirming a statement, as in the answer to the question 'Audu ka màara?' (Is it Audu that you slapped?) 'E! Audu xin na màara' (Yes! it's indeed Audu that I slapped!). Second, it functions as complement of [-n or -r], where they [-n or -r] cannot be used due to phonological or morphological constraints. The particle [xin] as discovered in this paper serves the grammatical functions of [-n and -r] that is genitival linkers, referential markers and in short possessive construction. [-n and -r] are always used as suffixes attached to NP. However, where the NP has final CVC syllable the attachment is not applicable, as Hausa does not accommodate CVCC syllable structure, hence in this case, [xin] is used instead of [-n or -r] as in 'riigunàa takwàs xin da ka baa ni sun qarèe' (the eight dresses you gave me are finish). However, some words with final CVC syllable optionally used [xin] or accept [-n and -r] by inserting a vowel to break the consonant cluster like 'ofis xin Musa' or 'ofishin Musa' (Musa's office). But this is only applicable to words that have a final vowel [i] in their sounds sequence. Morphologically, pronouns do not accept affixation, where the use of [-n and -r] involve a pronoun, [xin] is also used instead, since [-n and -r] cannot be affixed to pronoun.

Keywords: particle [Xin], Hausa language, grammatical function, Phrase structure Grammar

Introduction

The particle [xin] is commonly assumed to be associated with loan words in Hausa, like in the following example 'Ofisxin Musa (Musa's office). Later, Yalwa and Schuh (2001) discussed the particle [xin] alongside '-r' and '-n' and concluded that [xin] also goes with indigenous numeric words as in 'Nairà bìyaxin dà na baa kà' (the five Naira I gave you) Yalwa and Shoe(2001) also considered the word as a construction, combining intervening particle 'xi' and '-n' which they refer to "Xi-n construction" (Yalwa & Schuh, 2001, p. 1). In this paper [xin] it is considered as a particle. The Hausa dictionary, CSNL (2006, p.125) describes the word [xin] as an 'emphatic word'. Moreover, a close observation of the word shows that it also goes with indigenous words, as Yalwa and Schuh (2001) posited. Though their position was that it oes with numerics, but I think it can also go with other some Hausa words other than just numerics, as in the sentence 'gànjjar xin Muusaa.... (The Musa's pipe wrench...). The issue here is that do we ascribe grammatical function to the particle [xin] or can it play another linguistics functions?

In view of the above, this paper is set to investigate the morphophonological and morphosyntactic relationship with its already identified grammatical functions.

In addition, it is worthy of mention that the theory of Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG) or Rewriting Rule (RR) will form the basis of analysis in this paper, where the PSG stipulates that sentence structure is [S = NP + VP] Galadanci (1976:p. 5).

The grammatical functions of [xin]

Syntactically, the particle [xin] in Hausa serves as a complement to the bound linkers [-n] and [-r] in short genitival complex: as link elements, referential markers and in the construction of short possessives, that is where [-n] and [-r] cannot be used due to some morphological or phonological issues [xin]is employed to replace them in all their functions. In addition, the word plays an emphatic role (CSNL, 2006:125).

Short Genitival Linker

Structurally, genitival complex has two parts (Galadanci, 1976, p. 27), nominal phrase (NP) and link element (LE) that is [-n] or [-r], in short genitival complex and [na] and [ta] in long genitival complex. Semantically, genitive construction shows that the preceding NP is related to the following NP or an entity, consider the following:

(1) *maàta-r Audù* (Audu's wife): here the construction shows that first NP (*maàta*) relate to the following NP (*Audu*) with a -r as a link element in between, thus a short genitival complex with following structure:

Gen. Cx. NP +LE+ NP
NP $\xrightarrow{\text{maàta}}$

LE → -r
 NP → Audù
 And →

(2) *maàta ta Audù* (Audu's wife): is long genitival complex with the following structure:

Gen. Cx. NP+LE+NP
 NP → *maàta*
 LE → *ta*
 NP → *Audù*

The link elements (genitival linker) connect preceding NP with the following NP or adjective like in (1) and(2); or adjective with NP (Newman, 2001, p. 300). Consider (3) below:

(3) *Kooriya-r huùla*(green cap)
 Gen. Cx. Adj+LE+NP
 Adj → *Kooriya*
 LE → -r
 NP → *hula*

Referential Marker

Reference refers to a previously mentioned entity or NP. Syntactically bound linkers [-n] and [-r] serve as referential elements, marking gender and number. -n stands for masculine singular and plural on one hand and '-r' for feminine singular on the other, as in:

- (4) *Wàndô-n yaa yaagèe.* (The trousers is torn)
 Lit. 'trousers-ref.pro.3ms-perf. tear'
 NP → Hd² + Ref.⁹
 Hd2 → wàndo
 Ref. → -n
- (5) *Riigâ-r taa yaagèe.* (The shirt is torn)
 'shirt-ref3 pro. fs- perf. tear'
 NP → Hd² + Ref.
 Hd2 → riga
 Ref. → -r
- (6) *Xaakunà-n sun ginu.* (The rooms are well built)
 'rooms-ref.3pl-perf.Well-build'
 NP → Hd² + Ref.
 Hd2 → xakunà
 Ref. → -n

Short Possessive

In short possessive construction, bound linkers [-n] and [-r] are used alongside Objective pronouns, both bound linkers [-n] and [-r] and objective pronoun are attached to preceding NP as enclitic. Semantically the construction shows that the preceding NP is possessed by the following objective pronoun . Consider the following:

- (7) *Gida-nkà*(your house)
 'house-poss.-you'
 Poss. → LE + Pr.
 LE. → -n
 Pr. → Ka
- (8) *Gida-nkù*(your house)
 'house-poss. you-pl'
 Pos. → LE + Pr.
 LE. → -n
 Pr. → ku
- (9) *Motà-rka* (your car)
 'Car-poss. you'
 Poss. → LE + Pr.
 LE. → -r
 Pr. → ka

⁹ Under PSG, NP has the structure of (Q¹) + Hd² + (Q³), where Q¹ and Q³ are optional and Hd² is always compulsory.

[Xin] serves all the grammatical functions of [-n] and [-r] as in the above examples (1) - (9) consider the following:

(10) As short genitival linker

- a. *Gànjárxin qarfe* (A pipe wrench made of iron)
 'pipe wrench of iron'

Gen. Cx. LE + NB
 LE → xin
 NP → qarfe

(11) As referential marker

- a. *Jigal xin taamùtu.* (The vulture is dead)
 'Vulture Ref. 3pfs-perf.die'

NP → Hd2 + Ref.
 Hd2 → jìgal
 Ref. → xin

(12) As short possessive

- a. *Gànjárxinkà* (your pipe wrench)
 'pipe wrench poss.-2ms'

Pos. → LE + Pr.
 LE. → -xin
 Pr. → Ka

Though [-n] and [-r] are number and gender sensitive, it is important to note that [xin] is not, as observed in (10) - (12) above.

Phonological issues on [xin]

It is clear that [-n] and [-r] and [xin] work interchangeably grammatically, but the question here is when and how does this occur? Where do we use [-n] and [-r] and where does [xin] come and why? These are the two important questions this section will address.

In all grammatical constructions that [-n] and [-r] featured, they serve either as linkers or markers. The structure is either:

(13) $Hd^2 + Linker$ ([-n]/[-r]), in both genitival complex and referential constructions.

Or,

$Hd^2 + Marker$ ([-n]/[-r]) + pronoun, in short possessive constructions.

In the first structure [-n] and [-r] are attached to the Hd^2 , as Hausa, and of course some Languages, do not have C syllable. In (4) above, the construction is *wàndoo* + [n], in (6) *xaakunàa* + [n], and in (9) *mootàa* + [r]. Both [-n] and [-r] are attached to the preceding Hd^2 s, thus producing *wàndôn* (the trousers), *xaakunàn* (the rooms) and *mootàr* (the car).

But where the final syllable of the Hd^2 is a heavy syllable¹⁰, i.e. CVC or CVV, as in the words *gànjár* (#CVC#), *fyes* (#CVC#), [*afùjaajàn* - #CV#CV#CVV#CVC# (helter-skelter), *àcìcìncìn* (a small mat), *adàabîr* (a lost potash) etc., the attachment of [-n] and [-r] to the Hd^2 cannot be possible, because Hausa syllable structure does not allow consonant cluster. Thus: **ganjarr*, **jìgaln*, **afujajann* and **adabirr* are not grammatically acceptable in Hausa. Due to this phonological constraint [xin]¹¹ is therefore used to serve as a referential element in conjunction with [-n] or [-r] as in the following:

(14) *Gànjárxîn taa vatà* (The pipe wrench is missing).

'Pipe wrench Ref. 3pfs-perf. Missing'
 NP → Hd² + Ref.
 Hd² → gánjar
 Ref. → xîn

(15) *Fyes xîn dà ka yì ya ba nì shà'awà* (I admire your cleanness).

'cleanness Ref. [pro. 2psm do] 3psm give me admiration'

(16) *Na ga adabir xîn* (I have found the lost potash).

'Pro. 1ps-perf. see Lost potash Ref.'

The words *ganjar*, *fyes* and *adabirin* (14), (15) and (16) have the syllable structure as (#CVC#CVC#), (#CVC#) and (#CV#CV#CVC#) respectively. All their final syllables is 'CVC', therefore, they cannot accept consonant suffixation of -n and -r. Due to this phonological constraint the word [xin] is used.

¹⁰ Though few word have final CVC syllable in Hausa

¹¹ As a word, not clitic

Words having final CVV syllable, do not also accept any consonant suffixation, since the Hausa syllable system does not allow CVVC, to use [-n] and [-r] in such words, the last vowel has to be shortened, except for the words ending in a diphthong (*au*). Instead, [xin] is used. Thus words like *tamau* (tightly), and *farau farau* (some kind of drink) can only function with [xin] as marker or linker as in (17) and (18) below respectively:

(17) Kaa xaurèe shi tamau xin (have you tied him well)?

'2ms-ques. tie 3ms well ref.'
 NP → Hd² + Ref.
 Hd² → tamau
 Ref. → xin

(18) Farau farau xin kùnuu na sha.

NP → Hd² + Gen. Cx.
 Hd² → farau farau
 Gen. Cx. LE + NP
 LE → xin
 NP → kùnuu

Sometimes, the use of [xin] in some words is optional, that is, either to use [xin] or apply some other phonological processes and use '-n' and '-r', word like *ofis* (office), *Bashir* (Profer Noun), *adabir* (lost potash) and *bakwai* (seven), select to use '-n' and '-r', by inserting 'i' vowel to break final consonant cluster or delete final vowel [i] in case of 'ai' diphthong. Therefore, the following pair of sentence are both grammatically acceptable:

(19) *Oofis xin Auudu na je* and *Ofishin Auudu naje*
 (I went to the Audu's office)

(20) *Bàshîr xin yaa zo* and *Bàshirùn yaa zo*
 (The Bashir has arrived)

A close observation of these words that one can either use [xin] or apply some other phonological operations to use bound linkers, i.e. [-n] and [-r] reveals that they have something in common: that is they all have [i] final vowel, in their sound sequence. The word *oofis* (#CVV#CVC#)¹², *Bàshîr* (#CV#CVC#), and *adabir* (#CV#CV#CVC#) have options to use [xin] or [-n] and [-r]; and those that do not have [i] as the final vowel in their sounds sequence, like *takwàs* (eight), *jigal* (vulture) and *gànjâr* (pipe wrench), do not have this option.

Morphological Issues

Morphologically, lexemes (part of words and sometimes words in themselves) are divided into two: those that receive addition, like nouns, verbs and adjectives, and those that do not, like pronouns and conjunctions (Yule, 1997, p. 79). In morphology, additional morphemes are either derived or inflected through morphological processes of affixation, reduplication, compounding, etc. If a class of word can neither be derived nor inflected, the said morphological processes do not apply to them. Attaching [-n] and [-r] to an Hd² is an affixation, and morphologically, all pronouns do not take affixation. Therefore, wherever a pronoun is involved in the use of [-n] and [-r] linkers, [xin] is used instead. Consider the following examples in a and their structure in b below:

- a. Kai xin (you)
 'you Ref.'
 Ni xin (I)
 '1ms + Ref.'
 Ita xin (she)
 'Pro.3fs + Ref'
- b. *Suu xîn ne suka zo.* (It is them that came)
 'Pro.3pl. Ref. stab. 3pl.-past come'
 NP → Hd² + Q³
 Hd² → Pr.
 Pro. → Su
 Q³ → Ref. + Stab.
 Ref. → xin

¹² In Hausa there is no syllable that begins with a vowel. Though, some words are written with a vowel at the beginin but phonologically they have a glottal stop /ʔ/ (ʔ) before the vowel which is not written in normal orthography.

Stab. -> ne

This is applicable even where pronouns are used in short possessives like:

(21) *Faxin naa sayaar dà gidankà' xìn nee ya tsooràtaa ni.* (it was the saying 'I have sold your house' that put me off balance)

'saying [Pro. 1s perf. sell Conj. House-poss.-you] Ref. stab. Pro.3fs fright 1s'

Conclusion

The particle [xìn] as discussed in this paper serves as genitival linker, referential marker and plays a role in short possessive construction just as [-n] and [-r] do, as demonstrated. Though it is neither gender nor number sensitive, it is used to avoid consonant clusters, and long vowel in coda position like *#CVCC# and *#CVVC# respectively, which are not applicable in Hausa. Moreover, some morphological constraints play role in using the word in some cases, like where pronoun is involved in construction short possessives.

Abbreviation used

Adj.	→	Adjective
Gen. Cx.	→	Genitival complex
Hd2.	→	Head2
LE.	→	Link element
NP.	→	Nominal phrase
Poss.	→	Possessive
Pr.	→	Pronoun
PSG.	→	Phrase structure grammar
Q.	→	Qualifier
Ref.	→	Referential
RR.	→	Rewriting rule
S.	→	Sentence
Stab.	→	Stabilizer
VP.	→	Verbal phrase

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