

Linguistic Connotation and Structure of Hausa Personal Names

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Abstract

Several researches have been conducted in the area of Hausa personal naming system. However, very few were based on the linguistic aspects of these names. Some of the researches carried out on linguistics aspects of Hausa personal names include Labaran (1990), Buba (2008), Abbas (2012), Abbas (2013) and Chamo (2013). Most of the personal traditional names in Hausa are labels which connote people as well carry different messages about the bearers. These messages are beyond the surface meaning of the word as a name. This paper therefore looks at the socio-semantic connotations as well as linguistic structure of some Hausa personal traditional names within the premise of use theory of meaning. With this therefore, the paper is set to fill the linguistic gap in the studies of Hausa names, hence the previous researches concentrated on the cultural aspect of the phenomenon.

Keywords: *Hausa personal names, socio-semantic connotations, linguistic structure*

Introduction

People's worldview can be seen in many faces of their socio-cultural aspects of life. Hausa names serve as a mirror which depicts different aspects of the socio-cultural life and worldview of Hausa people.

The study of Hausa personal names is an area which attracts the interest of many scholars and researchers even though most of the early works conducted in the area of Hausa names were based on the cultural undertone of the names. These include Yahaya (1978), Alhassan, et al (1982), Aminu (1992), Kwantagora (1997), Shuaibu et al (2009), Abbas, (2012), Abbas, (2013) and Chamo (2013) who are of the view that Hausa personal traditional names have cultural values attached to them that reveal something about the bearers. Some cultural factors that impinge on Hausa personal names include; time of child birth, manner or circumstances in which a child is born, physical appearance or structure of a child, kinship relationship as well as parental occupations in some instances. In his study on Fulbe names, Daudu (2003) asserts that every society or community has its own source of naming its people. Factors such as linguistic, political, economic, social, cultural and religious would play a central role in giving a personal name to a Hausa child like it is obtainable in other tribes. Hausa personal names like most African personal names carry different messages about the bearer and serve as mirror through which we look at different aspects of the culture of the Hausa people. It is in the light of the above that this paper is set to look into the meaning and linguistic structure of Hausa personal names. Onomastics is the area which studies names in linguistics and tries to answer questions on meaning of names, their etymology, how they are used in various cultures and why some are chosen by parents more often than others.

Theoretical Framework

This study identifies and adopts 'the use theory of meaning'. The theory claims that the meaning of a word or an expression is determined by the context of its use. Eze (2006) further explains that the use theory of meaning contends that the meaning of any object at

all is the use to which it is put in the society. Meaning as such is function-dependent. The proponents of this theory are Wittgenstein and Horwich. It is against this background that the study of Hausa names in this paper can be hinged on this theory considering the fact that most of Hausa personal traditional names are words that have more than one meaning and their meaning are mostly determined by the context in which they are used. The few instances that can be cited here are in the case of a name *Ango* which means bridegroom in Hausa but also used as a personal name and *Buda* which means haze in Hausa but equally used as a personal name. It should be noted in this two preceding examples that *Ango* and *Buda* do not change in the Hausa autography in either pronunciation or in spelling whether they are used in the first case or in the second case. In normal conventional way of Hausa autography personal names derived from common names are written the same way as the common names but when deeply analysed linguistically, the common names always end with a long vowel in the last syllable as opposed to personal name that ends with a short vowel.

Methodology

The data for this paper were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from an interview conducted among older people of Marina market in Sokoto metropolis. Fifteen people were interviewed on sources and meaning of some selected Hausa names discussed in this paper. While the secondary data were collected from some research works on Hausa names. These include Yahaya (1978), Aminu (1992), and Kwantagora (1997) among others. The paper concentrates on the linguistic structure of Hausa personal names.

Classification of Hausa Personal Names

Hausa personal names are symbols of socio-cultural values of the people. This means from a person's name in Hausa, the circumstances of his birth or the period he was born or even to some extent his social background and his physical structure can be easily identified. In fact, there is almost a consensus among Hausa scholars that Hausa personal names can be classified on the rationale of how they are culturally sourced in the culture of the Hausa people. Madauci *et al.* (1968), Yahaya (1978), Alhassan *et al* (1982), Kwantagora (1997), Yusuf (2011), Abbas (2012) and Chamo (2013) classify Hausa personal names in the following order:

- (a) Names indicating time/period of birth
- (b) Names indicating circumstances of birth
- (c) Names relating to physical appearance/structure of a person
- (d) Kinship names
- (e) Occupational names

Names Indicating Time/period of Birth

These are names that indicate time of birth (in the day time or at night) as well as a certain period or season a child is born. People can easily identify the period of one's birth from the name he bears in this category. Some examples of these names are:

Name	Gloss
Aadarè	A male child born in the night
Anàaruwa	A male child born while it is raining

Ciitumu	A male child born at the time of harvest
Dàamana	A male child born during farming season
Dare	A male child born in the night
Duma	A male child born during the harvest of gourd or pumpkin
[aari	A male child born during cold season
Geero	A male child born during the harvest of millet
Gyà]a	A male child born during the harvest of groundnut
Hantsi	A male child born during sun rise, between 7 a.m to 11 a.m
Kàakalè	A male child born during the harvest season
Kàssu	A male child or female child born on a market day
Màrka	A female child born during the period of constant rain during rainy season
Raana	A male child born in the day time between 12pm to 3pm
Roorò	A male child born during the harvest of beans

Names Indicating Circumstances of Birth

Circumstantial names reflect the circumstances surrounding the birth of a child (Chamo 2013; 474). There are quite a number of Hausa names in this category which give a replica of a bearer's circumstance of birth based on the socio-cultural belief of the people. Some of these names include:

Name	Gloss
Àbarshì	A male child born and survived after the death of many children gave birth before him
Àrzikà	A male child born while his parents are in abundance of wealth
Àyàashe	A female surviving child after all early siblings died intermittently
Bàfaashi	A male child born after divorce of his mother
Baiwa	Surviving female child after all early siblings were dead
Bàakùsò	A male child born after divorce of his mother
Bakwài	A male child born at a seven months pregnancy level
Bàa }o	A male child born when his mother was on a visit to her relatives
Bàrmanì	A surviving female child after all early siblings were dead
Dèelu	A female child born after many male children
Dòogarà	A surviving male or female child after all early siblings died
Gàmbu	A male or female child born directly after twins
Irì	A male child whose father died during his birth
Waakàasò	A surviving male child after all early siblings died
Yauci	A male child born in the evening time

Names Relating to Physical Appearance/structure of a Child

Physical appearance of a child is another way of naming a child culturally in Hausa. Some of the names belonging to this category include;

Name	Gloss
Àfiriirùwà	A slim female child
Bàtuurè	A child born with fair complexion (looking at the natural fair complexion of the British who colonised Nigeria).
Ciibì	A child born with protruding navel
Cindò	A male child born with six fingers
Doogo	A tall child
Duunà	A child with a very dark complexion
[anjaa	A child with extremely fair in complexion
Fari	A child born with fair complexion
Giiwà	A male or female child born very fat
Gòoshi	A male or female child born with bald forehead
Hinci	A smallish child at birth

Kumàatu	A female child born with big cheeks
Kurma	A deaf child
Kwàada	A female child born with ugly face
Jàatau	A male child born with very fair complexion
Ziinàaru	A female child born with a beautiful face

Kinship Names

A kinship name in Hausa reflects kinship relationship among family in the society. Though there are very few examples of kinship names yet they are used as personal names among Hausa people. Some of these names include:

Name	Gloss
Aùta	Last born
Bàaba	Father
Bàabangìda	A male child named after his grandfather
Gwaggò	Aunt
Ìnnà/Iyà	Mother
Kàaka	Grandfather/grandmother (in this case it same both in feminine and masculine situation)
Kaawù	Maternal uncle
Magàaji	Eldest brother
Ùba	A male child named after his father
Uwa/uwani	A female named after her mother or grandmother

Occupational Names

Parental occupations also play a key role in giving personal name in Hausa society. Parents give names to their children to reflect their occupation. Such names include;

Name	Gloss
Màadugaa/Màaduguu	A female/male child born in the family of caravans
Keesò/[ankeesòo	A male child born in the family of musicians/poets
Baushì/Maidajì	A male child born in the family of hunters
Àbaamù/[an]wairo/Karòo	A male child born in the family of musicians/poets
Màitamaa/Zùgau/Mazùga	A male child born in the family of blacksmiths
Nòomau/Shìbkau	A male child born in the family of farmers
Màkwashè	A male child born in the family of fishermen

Structure of Hausa Personal Names

Beside the sociolinguistic interpretation of Hausa personal names, they also exhibit an interesting linguistic structure worthy of study. Hausa names like various words in Hausa language have different structures. Some of Hausa names are derivations from adjectives and common nouns while others are compound words with a verbal base. Likewise, there are some personal names that can be studied as Hausa phrases and simple sentences, though in Hausa orthography a name is written as a single word. However, some content of Hausa names when deeply analysed are beyond a single word, they can be seen as phrases as well as sentences in the language. In this section, such instances are examined; adjectives as Hausa personal names, common nouns as Hausa personal names, abstract nouns as Hausa personal names, Hausa names with verbal base, compounding in Hausa names as well as phrases and sentences as Hausa personal traditional names.

Adjectives as Hausa Names

The function of an adjective in grammar is modification of a noun. In Hausa naming culture there are some adjectives that serve as personal traditional names. These types of names are given to children based on their physical natural structure. The following examples are adjectives in word classification of Hausa.

Name	Gloss
Doogo	A male child born with a tall body structure
Duunà	A child with a very dark complexion
Fari	A male child born fair in complexion
Gàjeere	A male child born with a short body structure
Kyarce	A very cute but short and physically small male child
{àramà	A smallish female child
{àrami	A smallish male child

Common Nouns as Hausa Personal Names

Common nouns are some of the sources of traditional naming in Hausa. Some examples of common nouns that also serve as personal names in Hausa include the following:

Name	Gloss
Angò	Bridegroom
Azùmi	Fasting
Bàa }o	Visitor
Baawà	Slave
Buudà	Windy harmattan haze
Dare	Night
Gàdo	Bed
Geebè	A stream
Jiji	Dung heap (refuse dump)
Kànti	Canteen
{waarò	An insect
Maiwa	A variety of bulrush-millet
Talle	A small soup pot
Tumù	The first ripe heads of bulrush-millet

Abstract Nouns as Hausa Personal Names

Abstract noun are also part of the linguistic category that play a role in giving personal name in Hausa society. Some abstract nouns that serve as personal names include:

Name	Gloss
[aari	Cold/harmattan
Gòodiya	Blessing
{wàazo	Diligence/hard work
Nasarà	Success/victory
Ni'imà	Prosperity/fertility
Wàdaatà	Wealth
Yàlwa	Abundance
Yàuci	Lateness

Hausa Names with Verbal Base

These categories of names are derived from some transitive verbs of Hausa. Apart from sociolinguistic content of the names, their root is a transitive verb. Some of the examples of Hausa names with transitive verbal base include:

Name	Verb	Gloss
Bàr-au	Bari	Leave
Da]ì	Da]a/daji	Add
Jimr-au	Jure/jimre	Endure
Kòor-au	Koora	Chase/drive away
Màak-au	Maaka	Knock
Mày-au	Maye	Replace
Nòm-au	Noome	Weed/till
Saadà/Sàad-au	Saadà	Cause to meet
Shìbk-au	Shuukà	Sow
Sùnt-au	Suu	Fishing
Tùn-au	Tunà	Remember

Compounding in Hausa Names

There is compounding in formation of a given personal traditional names in Hausa. Most often the compounding involves irregular verbs *ci*, *ja*, *sha* and *so* as bases plus common noun. We also have prefixation of *[an* and *Ba* plus a common name in the formation of some personal traditional names in Hausa. Consider the following examples:

Name	Gloss
Cìitumù	A male child born during the harvest of first ripe heads of bulrush-millet
Cìiwaake	A male child born during the harvest of beans
Jàagàba	A first male or female child born in the family
Shàa]aari	A male child born during harmattan season
Shàaraana	A male child born in sunny period
Shàarubutu	A male child born after his mother took many medications
Sòodangi	A male child bore while his family gathered for an occasion
[anangò	A male child born having several maternal grandmothers
[anaùta	A last male child
[anazùmi	A child during fasting
[andare	A male child born in the night
[antama	A male child born in the family of blacksmiths
Bàgòobirii	A Gobir man
Bàkabèe	A Kebbi man
Bàsakkwacèe	A Sokoto man
Bàzamfarèe	A Zamfara man

Phrases and Sentences as Hausa Personal Names

Simple sentences of command, statements and interrogative sentences as well as phrases are also some of the sources of traditional personal names in Hausa. The following examples will give us insight on how some personal names can be analyzed in this category.

(i.) Simple sentence of command. Simple sentences normally consist of subject, verb and object. Let us examine the following examples:

Name	agr	verb	object	Gloss
Àbaamù	À	bàa	mu	let us have it
Àbarshi	À	bar	shi	let him leave
Àbarta	À	bar	ta	let her leave
Jàagàba	×	Jàa	gàbaa	Pull forward
Sòodangi	×	Sòo	dangi	love of relations

(ii.) A statement explains a certain situation. The following Hausa names can be examined as statements in the language:

Name	agr	verb	object	Gloss
Kàada]e	Kàa	dà]e	×	May you live long
Kummayè	Kùm	màyè	×	you have replaced
Magàawaatà	Mài	ganin	wata	(the name was a contracted form) A moon sighter
Mundà]u	Mun	dà]u	×	we have stayed long
Naasaamù	Naa	saamù		I have gotten mine
Yaabaanì	Yaa	baa	nì	He gave me
Taahi	Taa	hi (fi)		She is better
Àgàda	À	×	gàda	on the bridge
Anàaruwa	A	nàa	ruwaa	it is raining

(iii.) There is a Hausa personal name with structure of question in Hausa sentences. Consider the following example:

Name	Interrogative word	agr	verb	object	Gloss
Waakàsoo	Waa	kà	soo?	×	Who like (him)?

(iv.) Phrases are part of sentences, major phrases in Hausa sentences are noun and verb phrases. Some Hausa personal names exhibit the structure of Hausa phrases. Examples:

Name	noun	gen/link noun	Gloss
Bàabangida	Bàaba	-n gida	the father of household
Mijinyawà	Miji	-n yawà	the groom of many brides

Name	negative particle	agr	verbal noun	Gloss
Bàafaashì	Bàa	×	fashii	no postponement
Bàagudù	Bàa	×	gudùu	no retreat
Bàakuso	Bàa	ku	sôo	you don't like
Hànàzuwà	Hànà	×	zuwàa	you must come

Conclusion

This paper discusses some linguistic connotations and structure of Hausa personal names. From the discussion we can deduce that Hausa personal traditional names serve as mirror that chronicles the cultural values of Hausa people as well the structure of their language. Though most of the sources of Hausa traditional personal names are culturally motivated but a deeper examination of the names can reveal more semantic and linguistic structure of these names. It is worthy to note that most of the studies carried out on Hausa names are on cultural aspects. It is also interesting to note that the formation of Hausa names is not only culturally motivated but linguistically designed to show the structure of the language as well.

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