

Preface

The volume evolved from the thematic panel on Hausa in cross-cultural communication which was part of the 3rd Symposium of West African Languages held at the University of Warsaw on 24th–26th September 2018. Aimed at presenting the achievements of West African linguistics dealing with many languages spoken in the area, the panel provided a unique opportunity to focus on Hausa which is distinguished by a long descriptive tradition within African studies. The specialists who represent various methodological backgrounds shared their research interests on Hausa to investigate the descriptive features of this language but also its status of the main language of the area and its development as a language of international communication in the globalizing world.

The authors presented the topics relevant for their research from different methodological perspectives. Prof. Aliyu Muhammadu Bunza, who was the lead paper presenter at the plenary session of the conference, opened a discussion on less-known aspects of using the Hausa language in modern communication and raised the question of the barriers that may result from its structural peculiarities, its vocabulary, phraseology and textual message that are deeply rooted in the Hausa culture.

Hausa is often presented as a language which extensively uses various strategies to adapt vocabulary and structures from foreign languages to structural properties and communicative standards of the Hausa language. But Hausa is also a donor language, especially in the context of language situation in West Africa. Taking into account various aspects of mutual contacts, including translation of literary texts from one language to another, linguistic evidence of inter-cultural communication includes linguistic means to encode the meanings which are linked to the cultural setting of the languages compared.

The papers collected in the volume contribute to the development of the idea of cultural distance which refers to the diversity of languages, conditioned by the otherness of cultural codes and linguistic means used to express them. The idea focuses on investigating differences rather than similarities between languages and enables the identification of the sources of possible misunderstandings in communication. In this context, both the similarities and differences of conceptual

patterns and their lexical exponents between languages which represent distant cultures are worth investigating.

Special attention is devoted to the problems associated with the translation of Hausa texts into other languages or the translation of the texts from foreign languages into Hausa. The idea of cultural distance finds its clear manifestation in translations of fixed phrases from one language to another. It is also exemplified by textual narratives which require a cultural interpretation and cultural perspective in their evaluation. The topic discussed includes Hausa language data from the perspective of other languages but also provides a clarification of cultural values embedded in the vocabulary and phraseology as well as textual messages.

The main language of linguistic comparison is English, which is not only a language of international communication, but also a language of the texts originally attributed to the British culture. Some other languages which represent other linguistic and cultural areas (Polish or Fulfulde) are also taken into consideration.

The chapters of the volume are mostly based on presentations delivered at the conference. The two institutions contributed much to the success of the conference and the summarization of the results in the volume, namely the Department of Nigerian Languages and Linguistics, Bayero University Kano and the Department of African Languages and Cultures, University of Warsaw. The two institutions realize the program of cooperation in the area of Hausa. Special thanks are due to the highest authorities of the two Universities, Professor Muhammad Yahuza Bello, the Vice Chancellor of Bayero University Kano and Professor Maciej Duszczyk, Deputy Rector of the University of Warsaw for their sponsorship which enabled the representation of scholars participating in the conference and the support for the realization of the program.

The Editor