

## **THE INTERPRETATION OF LOANWORDS CLASSIFICATION IN ENGLISH-HAUSA LANGUAGES**

*By*

**Dr. Tijjani Shehu Almajir**

*Department of Linguistics and Translation Studies*

*Bayero University Kano*

*almajir002@yahoo.com*

**&**

**Dr. Ibrahim Garba Gwammaja**

*Department of Linguistics, Foreign and Nigerian Languages*

*National Open University of Nigeria*

*Gwammaja1@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

This study explores how loanwords are incorporated and understood in the Hausa language, highlighting the crucial role of interpreters in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps. It examines how loanwords from English are adapted and interpreted in Hausa, focusing on their classification, pronunciation, meaning, and usage in different contexts. The research aims to identify loanwords in Hausa, analyse their adaptation, and discuss their translation and interpretation, particularly among non-Hausa speakers. By investigating these aspects, the study sheds light on the complexities of language contact and the importance of cultural understanding in communication. The study employed a qualitative research approach, collecting data from various sources such as Daily conversations at various locations in Kano metropolitan, radio and television programs as well as books and academic researches. The data collection process involved observing and recording conversations, transliterating and analysing the data to identify loanwords, and examining their adaptation and interpretation in different contexts. The study discovers Hausa loanword from English and category them into various context.

**Keywords:** Lexical Interpretation, Hausa Language, Linguistic Borrowing, Single Words and Compound Words

## **1. Introduction**

Globalization might seem like a new thing, but languages have been borrowing from each other for centuries! The words we use are like a history book, showing how people from different places have been interacting and influencing each other. When languages meet, they borrow and adapt words, sounds, and even grammar, it's a natural process that's been happening forever (Thomason and Kaufman, 2001). The lexical interpretation of a loanword refers to the process of a word being adopted from one language into another and then integrated into the new language's vocabulary. This integration can involve direct borrowing or adaptation to fit the new language's rule often occurring due to cultural or linguistic contact through trade, migration or colonization. The loanword often retains its original meaning, through its pronunciation and spelling may be altered for the new language. Communication between cultures can be achieved through translation. Through translation, people introduced to different languages and ways of thought.

It is important to understand the relation between language and culture in order to train translators and interpreters (Roxana, 2016: 54). Briefly then translation may be defined as the rendering of a source language text into a target language with a view of preserving and / or domesticating the message and the form as much as possible. The source is the language from which the information is being obtained, while the target is the language receiving the information. Therefore, when one is translating English loanwords into Hausa, English is the source language, while Hausa is the target.

In addition, scholar like Newman (1991) provides an overview of loanwords in Hausa, discussing their sources, adaptation, and integration into the language. Also Jibril (1990) examines the impact of language contact on Hausa, including the adoption of loanwords from English and other languages. Abdullahi (2005) focuses on the phonological and morphological adaptation of English loanwords in Hausa. However, Umar (2012) explores the cultural and linguistic factors influencing the adoption and interpretation of loanwords in Hausa. Yusuf (2015) investigates the relationship between language and culture in contact situations, with a focus on Hausa and English.

Based on the above scholar's views, we can say interpretation of a word being adopted from one language into another and then integrated into the new language's vocabulary. These works demonstrate the various aspects of adaptation of loanwords in Hausa, including phonological, morphological, and

semantic adaptation but the current work focuses on the adaption and interpretation of loanwords classifications in Hausa language

## **2. Lexical Interpretation**

Interpretation is a communication process, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural heritage, through involvement with objects, items, landscapes and sites. (Veverka, 1994: 23). However, interpretation refers to oral interpretation of the oral communication.

Lexical interpretation is about understanding the meaning of words and phrases in a language. It's like decoding the vocabulary of a text or speech to grasp the intended message. This involves looking at the literal meaning of words, their context, and any cultural or historical references that might affect how they're understood.

Lexical interpretation involves:

- i. Understanding sign language grammar, vocabulary, and syntax.
- ii. Cultural competence and awareness.
- iii. Effective communication skills.

Interpreters work in various settings, such as education, healthcare, legal, and community events, to facilitate communication and promote inclusivity. We have varieties of interpretations, to mention few;

- Simultaneous Interpretation: real-time interpretation, often used in conferences, meetings, and lectures.
- Consecutive Interpretation: interpretation after the speaker finishes, often used in smaller meetings and interviews
- Sign Language: interpretation specifically for ASL users
- Tactile Sign Language Interpretation: interpretation for deaf-blind individuals, using touch (Gwammaja, 2018).
- Visual-Gestural Communication (VGC) interpretation using visual and gestural cues.
- Cued Speech Interpretation: interpretation using handshapes and positions to represent sounds
- Oral Interpretation: Interpretation for lip readers, focusing on spoken language
- Sign-to- Voice Interpretation: interpretation from spoken language to sign language
- Voice-to- Sign Interpretation: interpretation from sign language to voice language (Gwammaja, 2025).

### **3. Hausa language**

Hausa language is one of the three official languages used in Nigeria beside Yoruba and Igbo. Hausa people who numbered about millions originated in Northern part of the Nigeria, it came to be used as a lingua franca throughout West Africa, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia as well as Alexandria area and Tripoli. To this day there are regions with bilingual population, whose second language is Hausa. In term of traders had wide commercial connections and travelled by caravan across the Sahara to the land of the Maghreb in the Northern Africa. Hausa is the second only to Swahili Sub-saharan Africa being spoken by not less than 50 million people. Majority of Hausa people are muslim (Smirnova, 1982: 1-2).

Hausa, a Chadic language spoken in Nigeria and other West African countries, has borrowed words from various languages, including English, Arabic, and other local languages. The adaptation and interpretation of Hausa loanwords involve changes to the original words to fit the phonological, morphological, and semantic patterns of Hausa.

### **4. Linguistic Borrowing**

In the study of language borrowing, loan words are only one of the types of borrowings that occur across language boundaries. Borrowing is the process of importing linguistic items from one linguistic system into another, a process that occurs any time two cultures are in contact over a period of time. Haugen's 1950 article on borrowing marks the beginning of the current interest in the topic. Thomson and Kaufman (2001) opines that language contact breeds linguistic borrowing, a phenomenon as old as language itself, adoption and nativization of phonemes, morphemes, words and syntactic constructions from another language. Tsvetkov, Ammar, and Dyer (2015) posit that linguistic borrowing is the phenomenon of transferring linguistic constructions (lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactical) from a donor language to a recipient language as a result of contact between communities speaking different languages. They stress that borrowed words are found in all languages and in contrast to cognate relationships, borrowing relationships may exist across unrelated languages.

Haugen (1950: 213), refer the loanwords as “to bringing a form from the source language into the recipient language. A loanword may involve importing and retaining the source language form without substituting any of its elements by recipient language elements (e.g. register ‘rigista’). In many cases, however, substitution at the phonemic level occurs as in cup ‘kofi’.

English words loaned to Hausa are of two types: Simple words (e.g. English table – Hausa *teburi*) or compound ones (e.g English key-board – Hausa *ki-bodi*).

Borrowing is a distinctive and pervasive phenomenon: *all* languages borrowed from other languages at some point in their lifetime, and borrowed words constitute a large fraction of most language lexicons. Another important property of borrowing is that in adaptation of borrowed items, changes in words are systematic, knowledge of morphological and phonological patterns in a language can be used to predict how borrowings will be realized in that language, without having to list them all. Therefore, modeling of borrowing is a task well suited for computational approaches (Ikechukwu, 2017).

For Kemmer (2007), borrowing occurs when one language takes a morpheme or a word from another language and adds it to its lexicon. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003) corroborate this view when they argue that borrowing occurs when one language adds a word or morpheme from another language to its own lexicon. Borrowing is a consequence of cultural contact between two language communities (Ikechukwu, 2017)

Borrowing of words can go in both directions between the two languages in contact, but often there is no asymmetry, such that more words go from one side to the other (Hassan and Hussaini 2009). They continue that a loan word can also be called a *borrowing* and that the abstract noun *borrowing* refers to the process of speakers adopting words from a source language into their native language. *Loan* and *borrowing* as they describe are of course metaphors, because there is no literal lending process. There is no transfer from one language to another, and no *returning* of words to the source language. They simply come to be used by a speech community that speaks a different language from the one they originated in. This idea concurs with Haugen's (ibid) view that *the borrowing takes place without the lender's consent or even awareness, and the borrower is under no obligation to repay the loan*' (Ikechuku, 2017)

## **5. Methodology of the Study**

The data for this research were gathered from a combination of oral and written sources. The written sources included books, Master's theses, and Ph.D. dissertations, which provided a wealth of information on loanwords in Hausa. The oral data, on the other hand, were collected through daily conversations with families and friends, as well as interviews and discussions with scholars who specialize in translating English into Hausa and vice versa.

The data extraction process involved carefully selecting and extracting relevant loanwords from the main texts of various documents. It is assumed that the loanwords found in these documents provide a representative sample of Hausa borrowing from English, encompassing both vocabulary and grammatical aspects.

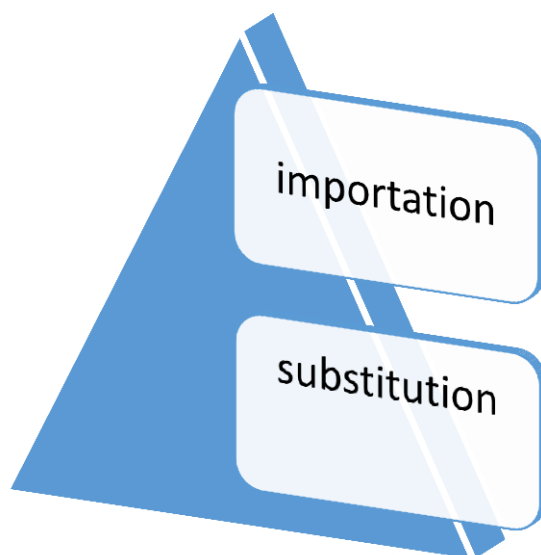
## **6. Adaptation and Interpretation of Hausa Loanwords Classifications**

The adaptations and interpretations reflect the dynamic nature of the Hausa language and its ability to incorporate and adapt loanwords from various languages. It is important to remember that the communication process of interpretation did not spontaneously appear one day. Interpretation (the profession, and the techniques and approaches) are a wonderful mix from communication principles from many other professions. Interpreters should have a basic working knowledge of each of these to include: Journalism, Marketing, Psychology, Non-formal and adult education theory and presentations. Business management and finances. Recreation and tourism planning/principles, Media planning/design principles. In reality, we see the use of interpretive techniques and principles every time we see an advertisement in a magazine or on television (Veverka, 1994). Since around nineteenth century, scholars have paid much attention to the classification of lexical borrowings. Some scholars categorize lexical borrowings in different ways. In this part of the paper, I will the method used Haugen to analyse the extracted data.

Haugen (1950) divides the loanwords into three broad categories based on the relationship between morphemic and phonemic substitution, which are *loanwords*, *loan meanings*, and *creations*.

- a. *Loanwords* refer to lexis imitating the phonological shape as well as meaning in the source language, and also involve pure loanwords, e.g., English window.
- b. *Loan meanings* include semantic changes of a recipient language word influenced by a source language. For example, *gift* once meant “bride price”, its new meaning “something acquired without compensation” was influenced by Old Norse *gíft* or *gift*.
- c. *Creations* mean that foreign concept is expressed by innovatively using native elements (e. g. English phrase *black humour* from French *humour noir*).

The unique feature of Haugen's classification is the focus on the linguistic



processes are The terms 'importation' and 'substitution' are two important notions in Haugen's analysis. The adoption of a foreign form or meaning is called *importation*, whereas *substitution* is defined as the process of substituting sounds and morphemes in recipient language for those in source language. Then, this paper employs the Haugen's model analysis.

### **7. Adaptation of Loanwords Processes**

The adaptation processes can be formed in phonological, morphological and semantic. The phonological adaptation refers to a situation where Hausa speakers adapt English words to fit Hausa phonology, changing pronunciation and syllable structure as needed. Whereas the morphological adaptation defines as how Hausa speakers adapt English words to fit Hausa morphological patterns, adding or removing prefixes and suffixes as needed. Lastly, the semantic adaptation denotes how Hausa speakers may change the meaning of English words to fit Hausa cultural and linguistic contexts.

These adaptation processes allow Hausa speakers to incorporate English loanwords into their language, expanding their vocabulary and expressing new concepts and ideas.

The data of this study, interpretation of English loanwords into Hausa language were divided into two main classes namely; *One word* and

*Compound words.* However, each class has some categories of loanwords structure. Let us begin with one lexeme:

### **8. Hausa Single Loanwords**

The single lexemes of Hausa loanwords are referred to free or morphemes borrowed by adoption or adaptation from English which is the donor language into the Hausa language which is the receiving language. Based on this study, the lexemes are categorized into various structures. Let us begin with category A:

#### **i) Category A**

S/N	SL – English	TL- Hausa
1	Table	Teburi
2	Brake	Birki
3	Manager	Manaja
4	Bumper	Bamba
5	Computer	Kwamputa
6	Mercedes	Marsandi
7	Bearing	Boris
8	Balance	Balas
9	Scale	Sikeli

When Hausa speakers borrow English words, they often tweak them to fit Hausa's sound and structure rules. Like in the examples (1-10), the borrowed words get Hausa makeovers, changing pronunciation to fit Hausa phonology. In example 1, *table* (two syllables) becomes *teburi* in Hausa, they inserted [-u] to break up the consonant cluster, making it fit Hausa's sense. The same in 2, the word *brake* (two syllables) changes to *birki* in Hausa as a result of inserted [-i] to split the consonant cluster, to construct something that acceptable to the structure of Hausa. The English word *manager* is borrowed into Hausa as *manaja*. The pronunciation shifts, and it adapts to Hausa's patterns. Specifically, the [-ger'] ending changes to [-ja] in Hausa. The same pattern with *bumber* and *bamba*. English and Hausa versions sound similar. The [-er] suffix shifts to [-a]. It exactly happens on loanword 5 which is *computer* and *Kwamputa*, the [-er] ending changes to [-a'].

In addition, example 9, *scale* (two syllables) becomes *sikeli* in Hausa, they inserted {-i} to break up the consonant cluster, making it fit Hausa's sense.



ii) Category B

S/N	SL – English	TL- Hausa
11	Captain	Kyaftin
12	Court	Kotu
13	Cup	Kofi
14	Coal	Kwal
15.	Conductor	Kwandasta
16.	Carburettor	Kafireto
17.	Cholera	Kwalara

So in this category, English loanwords in Hausa share similar sounds and meanings, but with a twist the initials change. Words 11-17 start with consonant ‘C’ (voiceless, post-alveolar, affricate) in English, but shift to consonant ‘K’ (voiceless, velar, stop/plosive) in Hausa. Basically, the sound changes from a palatal [c] vibe to a velar [k]. So palatal [c] vibe refers to how the sound is pronounced (with the tongue near the palate), and velar [k] vibe refers to how it is pronounced with the tongue near the velar (back of the mouth). All the loanwords in this category are imported and, in some instance, substituted.

iii) Category C

S/N	SL - English	TL- Hausa
18	Plug	Fuloji
19	Paint	Fanti
20	Piston	Fistin
21	Propeller	Farfela
22	Passenge	Fasinja
23	Professor	Farfesa
24	Peugeot	Fijo

In Category C, English loanwords in Hausa exhibit a process of phonological adaptation, where the consonant [p] is substituted with [f] in the receiving language, resulting in variant pronunciations with identical meanings. This phenomenon is exemplified by the free variation of [p] and [f] in words like *Mustapha* and *Mustafa*. The consonants [p] and [f] occur in the same phonetic

environment, demonstrating free variation in Hausa phonology. This variation does not affect the meaning of the words, indicating that [p] and [f] are interchangeable in certain contexts.

This process highlights the adaptability of Hausa phonology to accommodate English loanwords, resulting in variant pronunciations that coexist with identical meanings.

## **9. Compound Lexemes**

Compounding is a fundamental process in language whereby two or more words are combined to form a new lexical item with a distinct meaning. While scholars like Spencer (1991) suggest that compounding can involve more than two words, others, such as Selkirk (1982) and Anderson (1985), restrict the process to the combination of two elements. The interpretation of compound loanwords in Hausa exhibits two distinct structural patterns. Some loanwords are adapted as single words, losing their original compound structure. Other loanwords retain their compound structure, mirroring the original English composition. This dichotomy highlights the flexibility of Hausa in accommodating English loanwords, either by simplifying compounds into single words or preserving the original compound structure. The compound lexemes are categorised into two, Compound Words to Single Word Adaptation and Compound-to-Compound Preservation. Let us begin with:

### **9.1 Compound Words to Single Word Adaptation**

This process involves adapting English compound words into single words in Hausa. The original compound structure is lost, and the loanword is treated as a single lexical item in Hausa. Examples:

S/N	SL – English	TL- Hausa
25	Ice cream	Askirim
26	Headquarter	Hedikwata
27	Chewing gum	Cingam
28	Pancake	Fanke
29	Wheel barrow	Wulbaro
30	Ten wheel	Tangul

31	Volkswagen	Boswaja
32	Crankshaft	Karanshaf
33	Centimetre	Santimita
34	Screw driver	Sukundireba
35	Water pump	Watafam
36	Wheel spanner	Wilsifana
37	Cauliflower	Kwarfulawa
38	Loud speaker	Lasifika
39	passport	Fasfo
40	Tear gas	Tiyagas
41	Prime minister	Firaminista

The above compound English words stand as loanwords in Hausa and interpreted as single word. The examples 25-41, show English compound words being adapted as single words in Hausa. All the examples show compounds becoming single words in Hausa.

## **9.2 Compound to Compound Preservation**

This refers to the process where English compound words are borrowed into Hausa and retain their compound structure. The loanword is adapted as a compound word in Hausa, imitating the original English composition. See examples:

S/N	SL - English	TL- Hausa
42	Permanent Secretary	Babban sakatare
43	World cup	Kofin duniya
44	African cup	Kofin Afrika
45	Key board	Ki-bodi
46	Schoch absorber	Shaka zoba
47	Governor- general	Gwamna- Janar

There are some English compound loanwords in Hausa maintain their original compound structure, with minimal changes in pronunciation and no shift in meaning. These loanwords are adopted as compounds in Hausa, mirroring the donor language (English). As we can see from 41-47, English compound words interpreted as they borrowed in Hausa and stand as loanwords. The

words appear with the same compound words formation or structure. The words in both donor and receiving languages share the same presentation in both languages. This preservation indicates Hausa's ability to accommodate English compounds without altering their structure. Often, the pronunciation adapts slightly to fit Hausa phonological patterns

## **10. Conclusion**

The paper with a title interpretation of English loanwords into Hausa, tries to explain how the English loanwords interpreted in the receiving language (Hausa language). Single-word adaptations show Hausa's tendency to simplify English compounds. The adaptation of English loanwords in Hausa exhibits flexibility, with patterns emerging in both single-word and compound adaptations. The paper identifies how the single lexeme (loanword) interprets from English into Hausa without changing the meaning. It also describes how compound loanwords change structure and maintained the pronunciation as well as the meaning. Finally, the paper discovers compound preservations indicate retention of original structure with phonological adjustments compound words to compound preservation.

## **11. Recommendations**

1. Compile comprehensive lists of Hausa loanwords to analyse patterns.
2. Explore how Hausa phonology influences loanword adaptation.
3. Study how loanwords impact Hausa's lexicon and usage.

## **References**

- Abdullahi, A. S. (2005). *The Adaptation of English Loanwords in Hausa*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kano.
- Anderson, H. (1996). *Constituent Ordering in Verb Phrase and Synthetic Compounds*. Qualifying Paper, Indiana University.
- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R. & Hyams, N (2003). *An Introduction to Language*. (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Boston: Thomson Wadsworth.

- Gwammaja, I. G. (2018). Aspects of Hausa Sign Language. Unpublished Thesis, Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Bayero University, Kano
- Gwammaja, I. G. (2025). *A Semantic Description of Homosigns in Hausa Sign Language. Lagos State University Postgraduate School Journal*. Second Edition, Vol.2, No2. Pp. 510-527.
- Hassan, S. & Hussaini M. (2009). Borrowing and Lexicon. In *Journal of Kerbala University*, Vol. 7 No.3 Scientific, pp 41-46.
- Ikechukwu, O. R. (2017) A Linguistic Study of Loanwords in Nigerian Pidgin. M.A Dissertation to the School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
- Jibril, P. J. (1990). Language Contact and Language Change in Hausa. In E. N. Emenanjo (Ed.), *Language and Society in Nigeria* (pp. 123-135).
- Kemmer, S. (2004). Loanwords. [http: www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/loanwords.html](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/loanwords.html).
- Newman, R. M. (1991). Loanwords in Hausa. In P. J. Jibril (Ed.), *Hausa and Other Chadic Languages* (pp. 201-215).
- Selkirk, E. (1982). *The Syntax of Words*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Spencer, A. (1991). *Morphological Theory: An Introduction to Word Structure in Generative Grammar*. Oxford and Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell.
- Thomason, S. G. and Kaufman, T. (2001). *Language contact*. Edinburgh: University Press Edinburgh.
- Tsvetkov, Ammar, and Dyer (2015). Constraint-Based Models of Lexical Borrowing. Language Technologies Institute, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA. Online Journal. Retrieved on 11/10/15
- Umar, M. S. (2012). Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Loanwords in Hausa. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 3(2), 12-20.
- Veverka, A. J. (1994). *Introduction to Interpretation*. Helena, MT. Falcon Press
- Yusuf, A. A. (2015). Language and Culture in Contact: A Study of Hausa and English. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 4(1), 1-10.