

Dual-Plural as a Formal Category in the History of Hausa Language

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Abstract

This paper examines the plural forms in Hausa to build a case that the language recognized dual plural in the past. The article suggests that having words with two plural forms in Hausa is an element of resistance to the historical change of getting rid of dual forms. It is considered that change does not occur in all words or environments simultaneously, but rather some environments are more conducive than others. Thus, the paper analyses the parts of the human body as a distinct register, and it has found that dual organs are more likely to have two plural forms than the other organs. Therefore, there could be reasons to suggest that one of the forms stood for the dual plural in the past and the other for the general plural. By critically examining a Hausa proverb, the paper traced the usage of this dual plural in the language and which among the plural forms referred to the double.

Keywords: Language, Hausa, Plural, Dual-Plural, Historical Change

Introduction

Change is an inevitable phenomenon to the language, just like it is to all other aspects of this life. All languages change over time; as Aitchison (1991: 76) poetically puts it, "a change tends to sneak quietly into a language, like a seed, which enters the soil and germinates unseen. At some point, it sprouts through the surface." Historical linguists see it as a significant challenge to chart out how and why such long-term and far-reaching changes occur. There are several reasons why the study of such change has become so crucial for both sociolinguists and historical linguists. Prescriptivism, the dominant ideology in language education, holds that changes in language norms occur to the detriment of the language and result from sloppiness, laziness, and a lack of attention to logic. Sociolinguists feel that there is thus a need for a more scholarly understanding of the processes of change and their social contexts.

Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) showed that tracking down changes required close attention to the language system and the social system. All change is preceded by variation. This is not the same as saying that all variation leads to change. Linguists have a

greater interest in variables undergoing change, and by studying how variation triggers a change in contemporary speech communities, sociolinguists have been able to make inferences about how similar changes must have occurred in past centuries (Masthrie, Swann, Deumert, and Leap 2009).

Historical Changes in Hausa

In the most comprehensive study of the Hausa language, Newman (2000) gives some historical changes undergone by Hausa. Most of the given examples of the historical changes are on phonology:

1. **Creation of onset for vowel-initial words:** Words written as vowel-initial in standard Hausa orthography phonologically contain an initial glottal stop /ʔ/, e.g., *abu* 'thing' is pronounced /ʔabu/. In old Hausa, true vowel-initial words did exist. As Newman (2000) explains, subsequently /ʔ/ and /h/, which previously had not existed as a distinctive phoneme in old Hausa, were inserted at the beginning of vowel-initial words. Examples:

Work: *'aiki* = **aiki*

Three: **'uku* < **uku*

Shaving: *'aski* < **aski*

/h/ Liver: *hanta* = *anta*

Give birth: *haihu* < **aihu*

Nosebleed: *habo* < **abo*

2. **Non-initial /r/ changed to /y/ or /i/.** For example:

Fish: **kirfi* > *kifi*

Oli: **mar* > *mai*

Work: **arki* > *aiki*

3. **Dropping of word-final /m/ and /n/:** In old Hausa, nasals used to appear in word-final position but were dropped at some early historical period (Schuh 1976, Newman 2000). Examples of these words are:

Rat: *kusu* < **kusum*

Crocodile: *kada* < **kadam*

Elephant: *giwa* < **giwan*

Nile monitor: *guza* < **guzan*

Guinea fowl: *zabo* < **zaban*

- 4 **Syllable-final coronals changed to /r/ or /l/ depending on dialect.** For example:

Damage: *barna* < **batna*, cf. *bata* 'to damage'

Wake up: *farka* = *fadaka*

Negative command: *kar* = *kada*

5. **Syllable-final velars changed to /u/.** For example:

Tooth: *haure* < **hakre*, cf. *hakori* 'tooth/teeth'

Poverty: *talauci* < **talakci*

Left: *hauni* < **hagni* cf. *hagu* 'left'

6. **Syllable-final labials changed to /u/ (eastern dialects only).** For example:

Cotton: *auduga* = *abduga*Get down: *sauka* = *sabka*Thickness: *kauri* = *kabri*

As we have seen in the examples above, Hausa had undergone many historical changes in the past, and we can say that modern-day Hausa is very different from the old one. Still, without thorough research, we cannot understand to what extent they differ. Even though the given examples are based on phonological changes, we have reasons to believe that there must have been some historical changes across all other linguistic levels (morphology, syntax, lexicology, semantics, etc.). The main aim of the research of this kind is to help discover historical changes undergone by Hausa, which were not previously recognized.

Words with more than one plural form:

Nowadays, plural formation in Hausa has regularized to a great extent, especially within dialects. It is very common for nouns in Hausa to have more than one plural form, but many people consider the alternatives the products of dialects. Essentially all dialects and all speakers have a preference among the alternatives. Nevertheless, scientific research on the Hausa language has shown that standard Hausa allows nouns to have more than one acceptable plural. The alternative plurals are given under the entries of words in dictionaries like Abraham (1962), Bargery (1934), and Newman (2007). Similarly, Jinju (1980) gave a list of Hausa nouns with more than one plural form in his grammar. Here are some examples of nouns with more than one plural form in standard Hausa:

Word	singular	plural	alternative plural
Male (man)	<i>(na)miji</i>	<i>maza</i>	<i>mazaje</i>
Female (woman)	<i>mace</i>	<i>mata</i>	<i>mataye</i>
Horse	<i>doki</i>	<i>dawaki</i>	<i>dawakai/dokuna</i>
Goat	<i>akuya</i>	<i>awaki</i>	<i>awakai/akuyoyi</i>
King	<i>sarki</i>	<i>sarakaisarakuna</i>	
Eye	<i>ido</i>	<i>idanu</i>	<i>idanuwa</i>
Head	<i>kai</i>	<i>kanu</i>	<i>kawuna</i>
Hand	<i>hannu</i>	<i>hannaye</i>	<i>hannuwawa</i>
Leg	<i>kafa</i>	<i>kafafu</i>	<i>kafafuwa</i>

Wood *icce* *itace* *itatuwa* (in plural, 'trees')

It has been an acceptable norm for nouns to have more than one plural form, but some allow only one. My view is that, historically, the Hausa language recognized a category dual in addition to plural, but it was discarded over some time. Where we now observe alternative plurals, one of them stood for the dual form in ancient Hausa. Initially, the change began with discarding the dual forms for objects that always appear as singles but retained them with things likely to appear as pairs or duals. Then the dual was lost entirely, but some words survived through to modern-day Hausa as alternative plural forms.

Duals in the Register of Human Body

this study analyzed parts of the human body as a distinct register to prove the hypothesis that Hausa had words that referred overtly to duals in the past. It appears that, within the register, pair organs are more likely to have two plural forms than those that are

not dual, either being single or more than two. The following are examples of dual organs that use more than one plural form:

Word	Singular	Plural	alternative plural
eye	<i>ido</i>	<i>idanu</i>	<i>idanuwa</i>
hand	<i>hannu</i>	<i>hannaye</i>	<i>hannuwa</i>
leg	<i>kafa</i>	<i>kafafu</i>	<i>kafafuwa</i>
heel (of foot)	<i>diddige</i>	<i>digadigi</i>	<i>digadigai</i>
jaw	<i>mummuke</i>	<i>mukamuki</i>	<i>mukamukai</i>

All these words share one thing in common, which is duality. There are two eyes, two hands, two legs, and two heels, and the jaw, unlike the chin, has two sides: all these nouns accept two plural forms. Therefore, one denoted dual, and the other denoted the plural (more than two). The explanation for exceptions could be this: due to the fact that the dual organs of the human body that accept two plural forms outnumbered the exceptions, we can say that words like 'ear' lost its dual form over time just like the other organs that are singles in the human body. The examples are:

Word	Singular	Plural
face	<i>fuska</i>	<i>fuskoki</i>
mouth	<i>baki</i>	<i>bakuna</i>
neck	<i>wuya</i>	<i>wuyoyi</i>
chest	<i>kirji</i>	<i>kiraza</i>
stomach	<i>ciki</i>	<i>cikkuna</i>
chin	<i>haba</i>	<i>habobi,</i>
navel	<i>cibiya</i>	<i>cibiyoyi</i>

From the above, we can see that *face (fuska)* has only one acceptable plural form in Hausa; which is *fuskoki*. The words *mouth (baki)*, also has one plural form: *bakuna*, *neck (wuya)* accepts *wuyoyi* as plural *chest (kirji)* takes *kiraza* and *stomach (ciki)* take *cikkuna* as plural. Exceptions are found, but often can be explained. The dual form for head, for example, survived because it could fit into the group of dual organs in a different context. There is a fairy snake in Hausa (*bida*) that was imagined to have two heads. Some non-living objects are also referred to have heads in Hausa, and some of them possess two. Therefore, there could be dual heads somewhere that is why *kai* (head) accepts both *kanu* and *kawuna* as its plural; one for two heads (e.g., for the fairy snake: *bida*) and the other form for more than two.

The two plural forms for pair objects survived due to the fact that dual forms for words that refer to the non-pair things were discarded earlier than those that are duals; that is why they had less chance of survival into modern Hausa. However, organs that are more than two in the human body or are non-count nouns, such as 'hair' are likely to have one plural form. This shows the connection between the duality with the having two plural forms. The examples of non-paired organs in the human body with only one plural form are:

Word	singular	plural
Tooth	<i>hakori</i>	<i>hakora</i>
Finger	<i>yatsa</i>	<i>yatsu</i>
Nail	<i>farce</i>	<i>farata</i>
Hair	<i>gashi</i>	<i>gasu</i>

Some organs are more than two and still have their alternative plural forms acceptable in modern-day Hausa. Some of these organs could be classified into a set of pairs. For

example, the noun: *guiwa* 'knee' (elbow) accepts both *guyawu* and *guiwoyi* as its plural forms. That is because they are two pairs (hands and legs). This isn't an exception in the least: it is an excellent example of a paired body part. Delete this note and add this example earlier. The word *gaba* (organ/joint) also accepts *gabbai* and *gabobi* as its plural but we can count so many pairs of organs or joints as well.

Dual in a Hausa Proverb

One of the best references to support any claim that a particular language had undergone historical change is something found in folklorist materials like folktales, proverbs, and riddles. Therefore, this study traced the use of dual form in a Hausa proverb: *Autan fukafuki, lalata abokin tashi* (petite among wings, impairs its companion). The word *fukafuki* (wings) used in the proverb has three forms: *fiffike*, *fukafuki*, and *fukafukai*, singular, dual, and plural, respectively. The proverb used the dual form because it referred to the two wings that are required for flying. After using *autan fukafuki*, the proverb said it impairs its companion, not companions, meaning that the word *fukafuki* referred to the pair of wings; petite and its companion. From this, we can identify that the following word had their forms as singular, dual and plural; in old Hausa, just like used in this proverb:

Word	singular	dual	plural
Wing	<i>fiffike</i>	<i>fukafuki</i>	<i>fukafukai</i>
Heel (of foot)	<i>diddige</i>	<i>digadigi</i>	<i>digadigai</i>
Jaw	<i>mummuke</i>	<i>mukamuki</i>	<i>mukamukai</i>
Bellows	<i>zuzzige</i>	<i>zugazugi</i>	<i>zugazugai</i>

The above examples refer to dual objects and Hausa has a lot more words with similar phonological structure in the singular (namely CVCCVce with high-low tone) that employ the the same plural form but lost their dual forms as they were discarded a long time ago because they are not dual objects. Examples of these words are:

Word	singular	dual	plural
Cloud	<i>girgije</i>	X	<i>gizagizai</i>
Pillar	<i>shisshike</i>	X	<i>shikashikai</i>
Mistake	<i>kuskure</i>	X	<i>kurakurai</i>
Log	<i>gungume</i>	X	<i>gumagumai</i>
Tree stump	<i>tsittsigee</i>	X	<i>tsigatsigai</i>

Conclusion

The paper contributes to the understanding of historical changes undergone by the Hausa language, particularly in relation to the recognition of dual plural forms. It describes the chronology in which duals were dropped in Hausa. It has been identified that duals as a nominal category existed in old Hausa. In the first phase of this historical change, the objects in pairs retained their forms as singular, dual, and plural even though the dual forms for other objects were dropped. Then in modern-day Hausa, the duals as a whole were lost, but some words that stood for dual forms are still accepted as alternative plural forms. Therefore, this paper also highlights the resistance to the historical change of eliminating dual forms in Hausa by analyzing how the parts of the human body that are pairs maintain their dual plural forms. The question that remains to be answered is why some nouns do accept more than two plural forms and are there some instances where two plural forms do not reflect the presence of a former dual? Of course, this could be related to dialect variations, but another possible

explanation is the existence in Hausa of forms that stand for double plurals, that is, plurals of plural forms (see Newman 2000). This is undoubtedly the case with words such as 'male (man)': (*na*)*miji*, *maza*, *mazaje* singular, plural, and double plural respectively). It could possibly also be the same for nouns like a horse: *doki*, *dokuna*, *dawaki*, *dawakai* (singular, dual, plural, and double plural, respectively). Details remain to be worked out, but the recognition of dual as a former category in Hausa opens up avenues of research that may lead to a fuller understanding of the history of the language. Overall, this paper can inform language education by providing insights into the historical development, usage, and sociolinguistic aspects of dual plural forms in Hausa, enabling educators to design more comprehensive and culturally sensitive language curricula.

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