

## Hausa

RUSSELL G. SCHUH AND LAWAN D. YALWA

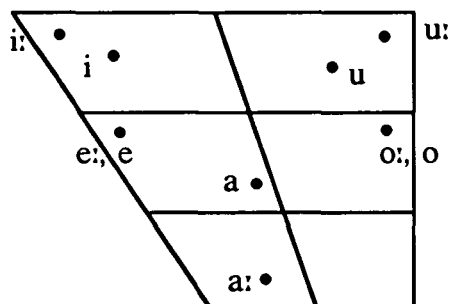
*UCLA Department of Linguistics, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1543, USA*

The following description of Hausa is based on the variety of the language spoken in Kano, Nigeria. The sample text is transcribed from a recording of a male native of Kano in his late 30's. This variety of Hausa is considered "standard". Though Kano is a large urban center with some internal variation in speech, the sound inventory is relatively homogeneous within the city and surrounding area. Kano Hausa is the variety most commonly heard on national and regional radio and television broadcasts in Nigeria as well as most international broadcasting, such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio Moscow, and Voice of America. Kano Hausa is therefore familiar throughout the Hausa speaking areas of Nigeria as well as Hausa speaking communities in Niger, Ghana, and other areas outside northern Nigeria. Hausa has a standard orthography, in use since the 1930's and also based on the Kano variety. It is familiar to all Hausa speakers literate in the Romanized orthography. (Many Hausas are also literate in Arabic orthography, a variety of which has been used to write Hausa, probably for several centuries. The Arabic orthography for Hausa is less standardized than the Roman orthography and has little formally published literature.)

### Vowels

Phonologically, Hausa has a 10 vowel system comprising five vowels, each with a long and a short counterpart. The five long vowels occupy roughly the five canonical vowel positions [i, e, a, o, u]. Their pronunciation is relatively stable regardless of environment, and they are consistently longer in duration than their short counterparts. Before pause, the five short vowels also fall roughly into the respective canonical positions, but medially (both word medial and word final when not followed by pause), they are strongly influenced by environment, including both preceding and following consonants and vowels in contiguous syllables. Short /i/ may thus range across [i ~ ɪ ~ i] and short /u/ may range across [u ~ ʊ ~ u]. In normal conversational speech, medial short high vowels are probably frequently neutralized to a high, centralized vowel, with rounding or lack of rounding determined by environment. The placement of the short high vowels in the vowel chart below is a compromise for their variant pronunciations. Short /a/ is a fairly low, central(ized) vowel, with fronting, backing, and rounding determined by environment. In the sample text below, short /a/ has been consistently transcribed as [ə], but it should be understood that this represents a range of pronunciation in the low to mid area. Medial short /e/ and /o/ are neutralized with short /a/. Thus, the words [zo:bè:] 'ring' and [re:jè:] 'branch' in their plural forms (formed by lengthening the second consonant and changing the final vowel to [a:]) are, respectively, [zəbba:] and [rəssa:]. See Parsons (1970) for a discussion of vowel variability in Hausa. See notes introducing the illustrative text below for the marking of tone. Orthographic forms are in italics:

|    |           |             |               |
|----|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| i: | k'i:ɾà:   | <i>kira</i> | 'forging'     |
| e: | k'i'e:ɾà: | <i>kera</i> | 'to forge'    |
| a: | k'a:ɾà:   | <i>kara</i> | 'to increase' |
| o: | k'w'o:ɾà: | <i>kora</i> | 'to chase'    |
| u: | k'w'ù:ɾà: | <i>kura</i> | 'dust'        |
| i  | k'ɪɾà:    | <i>kira</i> | 'calling'     |
| e  | tà:ɾe     | <i>tare</i> | 'together'    |
| a  | kaɾa:     | <i>kara</i> | 'stalk'       |
| o  | g'w'o:ɾò  | <i>goro</i> | 'kola nut'    |
| u  | k'w'ɪɾà:  | <i>kura</i> | 'to stare'    |



## Consonants

|  | Bilabial | Alveolar | Post-Alveolar | Palatal | Palatalized Velar | Velar | Labialized Velar | Glottal |
|--|----------|----------|---------------|---------|-------------------|-------|------------------|---------|
| Plosive & Affricate                    | b        | t d      | tʃ dʒ         |         | kʲ gʲ             | k g   | kʷ gʷ            | ʔ       |
| Implosive & Ejective Stops & Affricate | ɓ        | ts' ɗ    | (tʃ')         | ʔʲ      | kʲ                | k'    | kʷ               |         |
| Nasal                                  | m        | n        |               |         |                   |       |                  |         |
| Fricative                              | ɸ        | s z      | ʃ             |         |                   |       |                  | h       |
| Tap/Trill                              |          | r        | ɾ             |         |                   |       |                  |         |
| Approximant                            | w        |          |               | j       |                   |       |                  |         |
| Lateral Approximant                    |          | l        |               |         |                   |       |                  |         |

|   |        |                 |       |           |               |    |          |                 |
|---|--------|-----------------|-------|-----------|---------------|----|----------|-----------------|
| b | bà:ɾa  | 'last year'     | t     | ta:ɾà:    | 'to gather'   | k  | ka:ɾà:   | 'to screen off' |
|   |        |                 | d     | da:ɾà:    | 'to laugh'    | g  | ga:ɾa:   | 'wedding gifts' |
| ɓ | ba:ɾà: | 'to peel'       | ts'   | ts'a:ɾà:  | 'to arrange'  | k' | k'a:ɾà:  | 'to increase'   |
| m | ma:ɾà: | 'belly'         | ɗ     | ɗa:nà:    | 'to measure'  | kʲ | kʲa:wù:  | 'goodness'      |
| ɸ | ɸa:ɾà: | 'to begin'      | n     | na:mà:    | 'meat'        | gʲ | gʲa:ɾà:  | 'to repair'     |
|   |        |                 | s     | sa:ɾà:    | 'to excavate' | kʲ | kʲ'a:ɾa  | grass (sp.)     |
|   |        |                 | z     | za:nà:    | 'to draw'     | kʷ | kʷa:ɾà:  | 'to pour much'  |
|   |        |                 | r     | ra:dà:    | 'to flog'     | gʷ | gʷà:no:  | 'stink-ant'     |
|   |        |                 | ɾ     | ɾa:na:    | 'sun'         | kʷ | kʷ'a:ɾà: | 'shea-nuts'     |
|   |        |                 | l     | la:ka:    | 'mud'         | ʔ  | sa:ʔà:   | 'time'          |
|   |        |                 | tʃ    | tʃa:ɾa:   | 'crowing'     | ʔʲ | ʔʲa:ʔʲa: | 'offspring'     |
|   |        |                 | dʒ    | dʒa:n:    | 'assets'      | h  | ha:dʒà:  | 'goods'         |
|   |        |                 | (tʃ') | tʃ' à:da: | 'expensive')  |    |          |                 |
|   |        |                 | ʃ     | ʃà:ɾa:    | 'sweeping'    |    |          |                 |
| w | wa:ɾà: | 'to select out' | j     | jà:ɾa:    | 'children'    |    |          |                 |

**Plosives and affricates:** Word initial voiceless plosives and affricates are moderately aspirated. We have no information on voice onset time for the voiced counterparts. Among the velars, the plain/palatalized/labialized distinction is neutralized to labialized before rounded vowels, e.g. [kʷo:ɾa:] *kora* ‘ringworm’ but no contrasting \*[ko:ɾa:] or \*[kʲo:ɾa:]. The plain/palatalized distinction is neutralized to palatalized before front vowels, e.g. [kʲi:fɪ:] *kishi* ‘jealousy’ but no contrastive \*[ki:fɪ:]. Labialized velars contrast with the plain/palatalized counterparts before front vowels, e.g. [kʷi:fɪ:] ‘side of body’. The glottal stop contrasts with other consonants medially. It also occurs predictably before words written in the standard orthography with initial vowels, e.g. [ʔa:jà:] *aya* ‘verse of the Koran’, and as a terminator of short vowels before pause, e.g. [goɾɔʔ] *goro* ‘kola nut’. See Carnochan (1952) for a discussion of these and other glottal phenomena.

**Implosive and ejective stops and affricates:** The sounds [ɓ, ɗ] have glottal vibration. Ladefoged (1968:16) transcribes these sounds as [ʔb, ʔd] respectively and notes that “these sounds may be incidentally implosive on some occasions; but they are always distinguished from their voiced counterparts by being laryngealized.” Unpublished instrumental studies by Schuh showed consistent and strong implosion with these consonants. One can therefore only conclude that the production of these consonants varies depending on speaker and probably rate of speech. The sound represented here as [tsʰ] ranges from an ejective alveolar affricate with clear plosive component to an ejective fricative [sʰ]; In the Kano dialect, it tends to be realized as the affricate. Some dialects, though not that of Kano, have a post-alveolar ejective affricate [tʃʰ] in contrast with the alveolar affricate or fricative. The velar ejectives [kʰ, kʲʰ, kʷʰ] show the same distribution with respect to following vowels as do the pulmonic velars discussed in the preceding paragraph. Finally, a broad range of dialects, including that of Kano, have a sound described here as a palatalized glottal stop, [ʔʲ]. This is often considered a glottalized palatal sound, and it has been placed in the palatal column on the chart. Historically, it represents a contraction of the sequence [dij], as can be seen in dialects which preserve the original pronunciation, e.g. Sokoto dialect [dʲi ja:] ‘daughter’, Kano dialect [ʔa:] (orthographic *dīya* and *ʔya* respectively).

**Nasals:** Hausa has only two contrastive nasals, /m, n/. Phonetically there are also [ɲ, ŋ]. The palatal nasal [ɲ] is orthographically *ny*, which represents the correct phonemic analysis, shown, for example, by the fact that in a word like *hanya* ‘road’, the phonemic syllable boundary falls between *n* and *y* (cf. plural *hanyoyi*, where only the *y* is reduplicated, not *ny* as would be expected in this plural type if *ny* represented a unit phoneme). The velar nasal [ŋ] is the predictable form of /n/ before velar and glottal consonants and the labial-velar approximant [w], e.g. [səŋkʰo:] ‘baldness’, [səŋhò:] a type of basket, [kəŋwa:] ‘potash’ (orthographic *sanƙo*, *sanho*, *kanwa* respectively). The velar nasal is also a frequent variant (probably universal for some speakers) of any nasal before pause, e.g. [wənnəŋ] ‘this one’, [mòtŋ] ‘person’ (orthographic *wannan*, *mutum* respectively).

**Fricatives:** In the Kano and many other dialects, the only voiceless labial consonant phoneme is phonetically a bilabial fricative [ɸ], represented as *f* in the orthography. However, there is much dialectal and individual variation in the pronunciation of this phoneme. Some speakers tend to pronounce it as a bilabial plosive [p]. A labiodental variant of the fricative, [ɸ], as well as bilabial variants of varying degrees of constriction are also heard. Some dialects, particularly in the north and west, have no voiceless labial

consonant at all, instead having plain glottal fricative before front vowels, e.g. [hi] ‘to exceed’ (cf. Kano [ɸi, fi, pi]) and a labialized glottal [hʷ] elsewhere, e.g. [hʷa:rà:] ‘to begin’ (cf. the Kano example in the list above).

**Tap/trill:** Most Hausa speakers distinguish two tap sounds in the alveolar region, [r, ɾ]. The first is the “canonical trilled r” sound, found in many of the world’s languages. It can be realized minimally as a single tap, but often has multiple taps, especially word initially or finally, and obligatorily when geminated for morphological purposes. The [ɾ] is a retroflex flap, realized by flipping the tongue forward across the alveolar ridge. Newman (1980) provides the most extensive discussion of the status, distribution, and history of these sounds in Hausa. Ladefoged (1968:30) was the first to investigate the sounds instrumentally, and though he notes the distinct articulations, he states, “Indeed I have not been able to find any consistent acoustic difference between the two sounds.” The two are clearly contrastive as shown by the oft-cited though far from unique minimal pair, [bərà:] ‘begging’ vs. [bɛr̀à:] ‘servant’ (both orthographic *bara*), but in the one tap mode illustrated by a pair such as this, they are often difficult to distinguish. However, when they are lengthened through one of several morphological processes, the long variants share little articulatory or acoustic similarity. In pairs such as [ja: rərrə̀bke: ji] ‘he flogged him’ vs. [jà:rə̀r̀r̀e:] ‘swept’ (orthographic *ya rarrabke shi* and *shararre* respectively), the long [rr] is an alveolar trill whereas the long [ɾɾ] is a prolonged retroflex approximant (see Ladefoged and Maddieson (forthcoming) for instrumental data and discussion). It should be noted that in the sample text below, the distinction between the two r’s is not indicated. The speaker for this text is among the minority of Hausa speakers who have only the single r sound, [r].

### Transcription of recorded passage

The transcriptional style adopted in this illustration is a relatively narrow one, which reflects the particular pronunciation used in the recording of the passage made for the illustration. Note the following features of transcription: (1) *Tone*: Hausa has two distinctive tones, high, which is unmarked here, and low, which is marked with a grave accent (˘) over the vowel of the syllable bearing the tone. There is also a phonetic falling tone, occurring only on heavy (CV: or CVC) syllables and analyzed by most Hausa specialists as high followed by low on a single syllable. This falling tone is marked with a circumflex accent (^) over the vowel of the syllable bearing the tone. Aside from the normal high and low tones, certain classes of words, particularly interjections and ideophones are pronounced with an extra-high tone, which falls above the normal pitch register. These are marked with acute accent (´). (2) *Punctuation*: Hausa has a downdrift intonation pattern, i.e. in a sequence high-low-high-low, each subsequent high is somewhat lower in pitch than the preceding high, and likewise for succeeding lows, but with less pitch declination than for the high’s. In the transcription here, | = a significant pause at a fairly large syntactic boundary but with the downdrift intonation carried on after the pause; , = a significant pause at a fairly large syntactic boundary with the intonation level reset to a higher register after the pause; . = sentence level boundary, after which a new intonation register always begins. (3) *Glottal stop*: As noted in the section on Consonants, [ʔ] contrasts with other consonants intervocalically, it occurs predictably at the beginning of words written in the standard orthography with initial vowels, and before pause, it terminates words with final short vowels. In the transcription here, word initial and medial glottal stops are all written. Word final glottal

stops are indicated in those cases where the speaker paused and pronounced a clearly audible ʔ. (4) *Short vowels*: As noted above, the pronunciation of short vowels is heavily influenced by consonantal context as well as vowels in contiguous syllables. The transcription of the short vowels in the text attempts to roughly approximate the phonetic variability.

### ʔiskà: dè rana:

wətə rana:, dè ʔiskàr hùnturù: tə ʔərə:wə? | dè rana: sukà ji gàrdəmə: ʔə kən ko:wà:tʃe:tʃè: dègə ʔfikinsù tə ʔi k'ərʔi:. tò sunà: ʔfikin wənnən gərdəmə: | səj gà: wəni mətəʔiji:, ja: zo: sənə? dè rì:gər səni:. tò ʃi:kè:nən, səj ʔiskàr hùnturù: dè rana: sukà ji jərdzɛ:dʒemɿja:, ʔə kən jəw, za:ʔə ji k'w'ure?, dən ʔə gə ko: wà: zəʃ ʔijə sà: mətəʔijn jə tuʃbè: rì:gərsə? ʔə kən ti:ləs. tò ʃi:kè:nən, səj ʔiskàr hùnturù: tə bu:so: səjntəʔ, dè k'ərʔi: | ʔijə jintə | əmma: ɪnà:. səj tə ka:sə sà: ʃi: wənnəm mətəʔiji: | jə k'wəbè: rì:gərsəʔ, dən k'wəwa, ja: dændənne: rì:gər gəmgəm ʔə ʔikinsəʔ. tò dègə k'ərʃe: dəj, səj ʔiskà: tə səlləma:, dègə nən nè: k'wəma, ʔitə rana: | tə ʃigə na:tə ʔajkɪŋ. ʔaj kò: rana: | səj tə bu:fo: hək'əntə dè za:fintə wərwr. həbà: | kən kə ʔfè: mè:, səj gà: ʃi: wənnəm mütòm | mətəʔiji: | ja: k'wəbè: rì:gərsà:, bā: gɿrma: də ʔərʒiki:. gənɪŋ həkə k'wəwa | səj ʔiskà: dólè tə ʔəmɪntʃe: ʔə kən ʔfè:wa:, ləlle: | rana: ta: fi: tə k'ərʔi:.

### Orthographic version

#### Iska da Rana

Wata rana, da iskar hunturu ta arewa da rana suka yi gardama a kan kowace ce daga cikinsu ta fi karfi. To, suna cikin wannan gardama, sai ga wani matafiyi ya zo sanye da rigar sanyi. To, shi ke nan, sai iskar hunturu da rana suka yi yarjejeniya a kan yau, za'a yi kure don a ga kowa zai iya sa matafiyin ya tube rigarsa a kan tilas. To, shi ke nan, sai iskar hunturu ta buso sanyinta da karfi iya yinta, amma ina?! Sai ta kasa sa shi wannan matafiyi ya kwaɓe rigarsa, don kuwa ya dandanne rigar gamgam a jikinsa. To daga karshe dai, sai iska ta sallama, daga nan ne kuma, ita rana ta shiga nata aikin. Ai ko, rana sai ta bufo haskenta da zafinta warwar. Haba! Kan ka ce me, sai ga shi wannan mutum, matafiyi, ya kwaɓe rigarsa, ba girma da arziki. Ganin haka kuwa, sai iska dole ta amince a kan cewa, lalle rana ta fi ta karfi.

### References

- CARNOCHAN, J. (1952). Glottalization in Hausa. *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 78-109. London.
- LADEFOGED, P. (1968). *A Phonetic Study of West African Languages*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LADEFOGED, P. AND MADDIESON, I. (forthcoming). *The Sounds of the World's Languages*. Oxford: Blackwells.
- NEWMAN, P. (1980). The two R's in Hausa. *African Language Studies* 17, 77-87.

PARSONS, F.W. (1970). Is Hausa really a Chadic language? some problems of comparative phonology. *African Language Studies* 11, 272-288.