

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MODERN EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL STUDY AND POLICY ANALYSIS OF HAUSA IN NORTHERN NIGERIA SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the historical transformation of Hausa from a language of indigenous and Islamic learning into a continuing instrument of modern education in Northern Nigeria. Using a historical-documentary method, the study synthesizes evidence from scholarship on Hausa literacy, colonial education, Nigerian language policy, curriculum documents, and recent empirical research on Hausa-English literacy. It argues that the educational value of Hausa rests not only on its status as a widely spoken regional lingua franca but also on a long literate tradition in Ajami, the subsequent development of standardized Roman-script Hausa (boko), and its incorporation into schools, teacher education, publishing, broadcasting, and digital communication. Colonial authorities institutionalized Hausa for administrative and educational purposes while restricting the expansion of English in parts of Northern Nigeria; this simultaneously strengthened Hausa as a language of formal schooling and embedded it within an unequal colonial order. After independence, national policies repeatedly recognized Nigerian languages as resources for early education, although implementation remained uneven. Recent studies in Northern Nigerian schools show significant cross-language relationships between Hausa and English literacy skills, supporting a multilingual rather than an either-or conception of educational language. The article also analyzes persistent constraints, including the social prestige of English, shortages of materials and trained teachers, policy inconsistency, and the risk that the regional dominance of Hausa can marginalize smaller Northern languages. It concludes that Hausa can contribute to contemporary education most effectively within an additive multilingual framework that combines strong Hausa literacy, planned transition to English, modern terminology development, teacher preparation, and digital content production.

Keywords: Hausa language, indigenous languages, multilingual education, Northern Nigeria, language policy, history of education

Introduction

Language is not merely a vehicle through which a curriculum is delivered; it is one of the principal means by which learners interpret experience, acquire literacy, construct concepts, and connect school knowledge with the social world. This is particularly important in multilingual African societies, where the language of the classroom may differ sharply from the language of the home and community. UNESCO's recent guidance on multilingual education reiterates that learning through familiar languages can strengthen access, participation, comprehension, and inclusion, while also emphasizing the need for realistic multilingual planning rather than symbolic policy declarations (UNESCO, 2025). In Nigeria, the language question has remained one of the most persistent issues in educational planning because English carries national and international advantages while hundreds of indigenous languages continue to embody local knowledge, identity, and everyday communication (Akinnaso, 1993; Igboanusi, 2008; Obiakor, 2024).

Within this national problem, Hausa occupies a distinctive historical position. It is an indigenous Chadic language whose traditional heartland includes Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Sokoto, and adjoining areas, but whose communicative reach extends far beyond ethnic Hausaland. Its expansion through trade, Islamic scholarship, political administration, migration, broadcasting, and urban life made it a major lingua franca of Northern Nigeria and parts of West Africa. Hausa also possesses a long written tradition. Before colonial rule, it was widely written in an Arabic-derived Ajami script within Islamic scholarly networks; in the twentieth century, Roman-script Hausa, generally called boko, became increasingly standardized and dominant in secular schooling and print (Dobronravine & Philips, 2004; Newman, 2022; Philips, 2004). These historical resources gave Hausa an institutional depth that many African languages were denied under colonial and postcolonial education systems.

The phrase 'instrument of modern education' in this study therefore refers to more than the use of Hausa as a school subject. It includes its functions as a medium for initial literacy, explanation of academic concepts, production of textbooks and literature, teacher-pupil interaction, civic and health communication, educational broadcasting, translation, and increasingly digital learning. The central argument is that Hausa became educationally modern not by abandoning its indigenous history but through repeated adaptations of script, vocabulary, curriculum, media, and institutional use. At the same time, the history is not a simple success story. Hausa has existed in tension with Arabic in Islamic education, with English in formal schooling and social mobility, and with smaller Northern Nigerian languages whose speakers may experience Hausa as both a practical lingua franca and a competing language (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016).

This article addresses three questions. First, how did precolonial and colonial literacy traditions shape the educational use of Hausa? Second, how did post-independence policies and institutions reposition Hausa within modern Nigerian schooling? Third, what does the historical record suggest about the contemporary value and limits of Hausa in multilingual education? By connecting historical evidence with recent literacy research and current policy developments, the study seeks to move beyond the familiar opposition between English and indigenous languages and toward a historically grounded account of educational multilingualism in Northern Nigeria.

Conceptual and Historical Framework

The concept of indigenous language in education is sometimes treated as if it referred only to cultural preservation. Such an approach is too narrow. Indigenous languages can perform epistemic, pedagogical, political, and developmental functions. They allow learners to relate

abstract school concepts to familiar categories of meaning; they provide access to oral and written cultural archives; and they can widen participation by reducing the linguistic distance between schools and communities. Mother-tongue and bilingual education research in Nigeria has repeatedly shown, however, that language alone cannot correct weak educational systems. Akinnaso (1993), in his assessment of Nigerian mother-tongue policy and the Ife experiment, warned that successful language policy also depends on facilities, materials, teacher capacity, and wider social conditions. This remains essential for interpreting the Hausa case.

A second conceptual issue is the distinction between mother tongue and lingua franca. Hausa is the first language of millions of learners, but it is also acquired as a second or additional language by many communities across Northern Nigeria. Therefore, a policy that labels Hausa simply as ‘mother tongue’ may conceal substantial linguistic diversity. For some pupils, Hausa can make schooling more accessible than English even when it is not their home language; for others, replacing a smaller local language with Hausa may reproduce exclusion at a regional scale. Igboanusi and Peter (2016) emphasized the political character of language-in-education choices in Nigeria, where language status is connected to population, power, institutions, and access to public life. A historically responsible argument for Hausa in education must consequently support Hausa without erasing the rights and educational needs of Fulfulde, Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv, Gbagyi, and numerous other Northern languages.

The third element of the framework is additive multilingualism. Rather than framing Hausa and English as mutually exclusive, additive multilingual education treats literacy and academic knowledge developed in one language as potential resources for learning another. Recent evidence from Northern Nigerian primary schools is especially relevant. Humble et al. (2024) found strong positive relationships between Hausa and English literacy measures among Grade 3 pupils and reported bidirectional associations in word decoding. Dixon et al. (2025), studying children in government pre-primary schools, likewise found strong correlations between Hausa and English letter-sound and word-reading skills. These findings do not imply that any language policy automatically produces better outcomes, but they undermine the assumption that time spent developing Hausa literacy necessarily delays English. Historically, the strongest case for Hausa as an educational instrument is therefore a bilingual or multilingual one: strong foundational literacy in a familiar language, accompanied by systematic development of English and other required languages.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical-documentary design. It does not claim to present new survey, experimental, or archival data. Instead, it analyzes published historical scholarship, language-policy research, official Nigerian education documents, curriculum materials, and recent empirical studies of literacy in Northern Nigerian schools. Historical sources were selected for their direct relevance to the development of Hausa literacy, colonial educational administration, and the institutional history of schooling in Northern Nigeria. Key works include Graham’s (1966) study of government and mission education, Philips’s (2004) account of Hausa in the twentieth century, Dobronravine and Philips’s (2004) analysis of Hausa Ajami and Newman’s (2022) linguistic history of Hausa.

For the postcolonial and contemporary periods, the study draws on Nigerian language-policy literature, official curriculum and policy documents, and peer-reviewed research on bilingual education and literacy. Documentary evidence was read chronologically and thematically around five categories: literacy tradition and script; colonial schooling and administrative language; post-independence policy; classroom literacy and teacher capacity; and

contemporary multilingual and digital education. Because education language policy in Nigeria changed significantly in 2025, the analysis distinguishes historical policy aspirations from the current federal position. The purpose is interpretive rather than statistical: to identify continuities, turning points, contradictions, and implications in the historical development of Hausa as a language of education.

Hausa Before Colonial Schooling: Indigenous and Islamic Foundations

Any history that begins Hausa education with the arrival of British schools risks reproducing a colonial definition of education. Long before the twentieth century, Northern Nigeria contained established systems of indigenous socialization and Islamic learning. Children learned occupational skills, norms, genealogy, farming and craft knowledge, moral expectations, oral literature, and community responsibilities through family and apprenticeship structures. In Islamic settings, Qur'anic schools and advanced scholarly networks taught Arabic literacy, religious sciences, jurisprudence, poetry, and commentary. Hausa interacted with this learned environment through speech and through Ajami writing, an adaptation of Arabic script used to represent African languages (Fafunwa, 2018).

Hausa Ajami demonstrates that indigenous-language literacy in Northern Nigeria did not originate as a colonial gift. Dobronravine and Philips (2004) show that Hausa writing in Arabic script had complex precolonial and colonial histories, and Philips (2004) describes the broader twentieth-century development of Hausa across administration, scholarship, and print. Ajami linked Hausa to Islamic intellectual culture while permitting religious, poetic, historical, and practical communication in a language more widely understood than Arabic. The Sokoto Caliphate and related nineteenth-century reform movements intensified literary activity in Arabic, Fulfulde, and Hausa. Thus, the educational modernization of Hausa later rested on a prior culture of literacy, translation, memorization, commentary, and textual circulation.

This foundation matters for modern education in two ways. First, it shows that Hausa already possessed mechanisms for translating complex ideas into local linguistic forms. Second, it explains why Northern educational policy could not simply transplant a southern Nigerian missionary-school model without encountering established institutions and cultural authority. The colonial school entered a field in which Islamic education already had legitimacy. The resulting system was therefore negotiated, hybrid, and politically cautious. Hausa became central partly because it could bridge colonial administrative needs and local communicative realities without immediately requiring mass English-language education.

Colonial Rule, Vernacular Schooling, and the Standardization of Hausa

British rule transformed the institutional position of Hausa. Colonial administrators required workable languages for taxation, courts, political reporting, communication with emirates, and the implementation of indirect rule. Hausa's pre-existing regional reach made it attractive as an administrative lingua franca. British officers were encouraged and, in important periods, required to learn Hausa; language examinations became part of colonial administrative practice (Philips, 2004). The state's interest was pragmatic rather than emancipatory. Hausa was valued because it enabled administration and reduced dependence on interpreters, not because colonialism was committed to indigenous cultural equality.

Education policy followed a similar logic. In Northern Nigeria, officials attempted to construct schools that would train clerks, teachers, artisans, and the sons of chiefs while avoiding rapid social disruption and minimizing missionary conflict with Muslim rulers. Graham (1966) documents the cautious expansion of government education and the influence of Hanns Vischer in the early twentieth century. Vernacular instruction, including Hausa, fitted the colonial

preference for gradualism. English was not promoted uniformly at the earliest levels, and in some periods the administration deliberately restricted its spread. The paradox was striking: colonial domination elevated Hausa institutionally while limiting access to the imperial language that later became the principal currency of higher education, civil-service advancement, and elite mobility.

The development of Roman-script Hausa was another turning point. Hausa had previously been written primarily in Ajami, but the colonial period accelerated the use and standardization of Latin script. Newman (2022) notes the coexistence of the Latin-based boko and Arabic-based Ajami systems, while Philips (2004) traces the twentieth-century political and administrative processes that consolidated Roman orthography. Romanization facilitated type-based printing, school textbooks, dictionaries, grammars, government notices, and later mass-circulation literature. It also reoriented literacy toward a secular educational system increasingly tied to European print conventions.

This script transition should not be interpreted simply as a movement from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern.’ Ajami remained a living literacy tradition, and the boko system itself was shaped by Hausa phonology and local usage. Yet the institutional power of the school, examination system, government press, and later mass media increasingly made Roman-script Hausa the dominant form of formal literacy. Modern Hausa education thus emerged through digraphia: one script deeply associated with Islamic learning and another increasingly associated with state schools, publishing, bureaucracy, and secular knowledge. The long-term consequence was an enlarged written domain for Hausa, but also a division between educational traditions that policy makers have often struggled to integrate.

The colonial promotion of Hausa also had regional linguistic consequences. Because administrators used Hausa beyond areas where it was the first language, the language gained further reach as a lingua franca. This helped create a wider communicative zone for schooling and public information. At the same time, the spread of Hausa could displace or reduce the institutional space available to smaller languages. The history therefore contains both expansion of indigenous-language education and the creation of a hierarchy among indigenous languages. That ambiguity remains relevant to current debates.

Post-Independence Education and the Institutionalization of Hausa

Nigeria’s independence in 1960 did not remove the colonial language hierarchy. English remained the official language and the dominant medium of secondary and higher education, administration, national examinations, and much elite employment. Nevertheless, post-independence policy increasingly recognized Nigerian languages as essential to cultural development and basic education. The National Policy on Education, beginning in the 1970s, endorsed early instruction through the mother tongue or language of the immediate community, followed by transition to English. The broader intellectual case for this position was strengthened by Nigerian scholarship and experiments such as the Ife Primary Education Research Project, which demonstrated the feasibility of sustained mother-tongue instruction when curriculum materials, terminology, and teacher preparation were deliberately developed (Fafunwa et al., 1989).

Hausa benefited from these policies more than many smaller Nigerian languages because it already possessed standardized orthography, a large speaker base, teacher-training capacity, literature, publishing infrastructure, radio use, and a place within universities. It became a school subject across primary and secondary levels and a degree subject in higher education. NERDC curriculum frameworks have continued to include Hausa among Nigerian

languages in basic education, and the current national curriculum offerings require a Nigerian language at multiple levels (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council [NERDC], 2025a). This institutional continuity is historically significant: Hausa moved from vernacular colonial schooling into the formal architecture of the postcolonial national curriculum.

The rise of Hausa-language broadcasting and popular literature also expanded education beyond the classroom. Radio became especially important in Northern Nigeria because it could communicate with large populations across differences of formal schooling. Educational campaigns on health, agriculture, citizenship, elections, and social development used Hausa to translate technical information into accessible forms. The growth of Hausa newspapers, novels, drama, film, and later online media likewise widened the vocabulary and domains in which the language could operate. Modern education is not confined to textbooks; public pedagogies in broadcasting and digital communication have made Hausa a vehicle for lifelong and informal learning.

Teacher education has remained central. A language cannot function effectively as a medium or subject of education merely because it is spoken widely. Teachers need explicit preparation in literacy pedagogy, orthography, subject terminology, bilingual transition strategies, and assessment. Evidence from Northern Nigeria confirms the importance of structured teacher development for early reading. The contemporary curriculum has also brought digital literacy into basic education. This creates an opportunity for Hausa to function not only as a heritage language but as a language of technology-supported learning. Digital dictionaries, keyboard support, speech technology, online video, educational radio archives, e-books, and social media can extend Hausa literacy beyond printed school materials. The growing body of Hausa digital language resources indicates that the language has a stronger technological base than many African languages, though it still remains under-resourced in comparison with English. Modernization in this sense is not the replacement of Hausa by English; it is the expansion of Hausa into new knowledge and technological domains.

Hausa as an Instrument of Contemporary Teaching and Learning

The strongest educational argument for Hausa concerns comprehension at the foundational stages of learning. A child who already understands Hausa can use that linguistic knowledge to engage with print, classroom explanation, number concepts, environmental studies, social values, and stories without simultaneously decoding an unfamiliar language. This reduces the cognitive burden created when learners must master new subject matter and a new language at the same time. Yet the educational benefit depends on quality. Poorly translated materials, inconsistent terminology, or teachers who themselves are not confident in formal Hausa can weaken the advantage of linguistic familiarity.

Recent literacy research in Northern Nigeria gives the bilingual argument greater empirical precision. Humble et al. (2024) assessed 2,328 Grade 3 pupils learning to read in Hausa and English and reported strong positive relationships between the two sets of literacy skills. Their analysis supported bidirectional cross-language transfer, indicating that word-level skills in Hausa and English were not isolated systems. Dixon et al. (2025) reached a comparable conclusion in pre-primary settings, where Hausa and English letter-sound and word-decoding scores were strongly associated. These studies suggest that well-designed literacy instruction can treat Hausa and English as mutually reinforcing resources. The practical implication is not that Hausa should permanently replace English, but that strong Hausa literacy can be part of a planned route toward bilingual academic competence.

Hausa is also an instrument of conceptual mediation. Teachers frequently move between languages to explain difficult ideas, check understanding, manage the classroom, or connect abstract terminology with familiar experience. Even where English is the official medium, this multilingual classroom practice can be pedagogically rational. A rigid English-only policy may therefore conceal the actual linguistic practices through which learning occurs. Ezegwu et al. (2025) argued more broadly that Nigeria's colonial language inheritance continues to shape educational access and that decolonizing the medium of instruction requires attention to locally meaningful linguistic resources. Hausa provides one of the clearest Northern Nigerian examples of such a resource.

A further strength is the capacity of Hausa to connect formal schooling with community knowledge. Historical narratives, proverbs, agricultural practices, oral literature, religious concepts, local environmental knowledge, and social institutions can be discussed in forms that learners and families recognize. This does not mean confining Hausa to 'culture' while reserving science and technology for English. The historical task is precisely the opposite: terminology development and translation should allow Hausa to carry mathematics, science, civic education, health, and digital knowledge. The Roman orthography, long publishing history, linguistic scholarship, and widespread media use give Hausa a substantial base for such expansion (Newman, 2022; Philips, 2004).

However, modern educational use requires terminological discipline. Teachers and textbook writers need agreed equivalents for technical concepts, and where borrowing is necessary it should be systematic and intelligible. Language modernization has always involved borrowing, adaptation, semantic extension, and neologism. English itself developed through these processes. The presence of Arabic and English loanwords in Hausa is therefore not evidence of inadequacy; it is part of the ordinary history of languages used in changing knowledge environments. The relevant question is whether institutions consistently support terminology development, dissemination, teacher training, and high-quality educational publishing.

Policy Contradictions and Persistent Challenges

The history of Hausa in education also reveals why indigenous-language policy often succeeds on paper more readily than in classrooms. One challenge is the continuing prestige economy of English. English remains strongly associated with higher education, professional employment, national mobility, international communication, and examinations. Parents may therefore perceive English-medium schooling as a direct investment in social mobility, even when children's early comprehension is weaker. Igboanusi (2008) found that attitudes toward bilingual education in Nigeria are shaped by precisely such practical and status considerations. Language policy cannot ignore these aspirations; an educational model that appears to postpone or weaken English will often face resistance, regardless of its pedagogical rationale.

A second challenge is implementation capacity. The 2022 National Language Policy sought to strengthen mother-tongue or language-of-the-immediate-community instruction, reflecting a long-standing Nigerian policy tradition (NERDC, 2022). Yet implementation required teachers, orthographies, curriculum materials, assessment systems, and transition plans across an exceptionally multilingual federation. Obiakor's (2024) national analysis found uneven implementation of language-of-instruction policy across school types, urban and rural settings, and regions. The study also reported higher measured literacy outcomes among pupils taught in English in the analyzed data, cautioning against assuming that mother-tongue policy will yield superior results irrespective of context and implementation quality. This finding is important

because it redirects attention from ideological preference toward the conditions under which different language models work.

In November 2025, the Federal Government formally reaffirmed English as the medium of instruction from primary through tertiary education and discontinued the earlier policy prescribing mother-tongue instruction in the early grades. The official explanation emphasized the difficulty of implementation across more than 500 languages, shortages of learning materials, inadequate teacher preparation for multilingual pedagogy, transition problems, and uneven state capacity (Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, 2025). The revised curriculum nonetheless continues to include Nigerian languages as subjects, including Hausa (NERDC, 2025a). This is a major policy shift, but it does not settle the pedagogical question. In practice, Hausa will continue to be used in classrooms, communities, early literacy interventions, nonformal education, and educational media. The historical record suggests that attempting to separate English-medium schooling completely from Hausa-speaking realities is unlikely to reflect actual teaching practice.

A third challenge concerns equity among Northern languages. The practical advantages of Hausa can become a disadvantage for minority-language communities if policy makers assume that one regional lingua franca is an adequate substitute for every child's home language. Igboanusi and Peter (2016) warn that the competition among English, Hausa, and minority languages is embedded in unequal power relationships. A multilingual strategy should therefore distinguish between using Hausa as a bridge language where communities already use it widely and imposing Hausa where another local language could better support early comprehension and cultural continuity.

Finally, the digital transition creates both opportunity and inequality. Hausa is increasingly visible online, but educational technology ecosystems remain overwhelmingly English-dominant. Search tools, learning management systems, digital textbooks, speech recognition, and automated translation vary greatly in their support for African languages. Without deliberate investment, digital education can reproduce the same hierarchy once created by print. The future educational strength of Hausa will depend on corpus development, standardized terminology, accessible fonts and keyboards, speech and text technologies, open educational resources, and teacher competence in using digital Hausa content.

Historical Lessons for Modern Education

Several lessons emerge from this historical study. First, Hausa's educational strength developed through a long process of institutional formation involving Ajami literacy, schooling, publishing, teacher preparation, broadcasting, and curriculum development. This historical accumulation explains why sustainable indigenous-language education requires more than policy statements; it depends on continuous investment in people, materials, and knowledge systems.

The second lesson is that the opposition between indigenous language and modernity is historically false. Hausa has repeatedly absorbed and communicated new political, religious, scientific, administrative, and technological ideas. Its movement from Ajami manuscripts to printed boko texts, radio broadcasting, film, and digital communication demonstrates adaptation rather than cultural stasis. Modernity is not a language; it is a changing set of institutions, technologies, and knowledge practices. An indigenous language can participate in modern education when speakers and institutions have the authority and resources to develop it for new purposes.

The third lesson is that English remains indispensable in Nigeria's present educational and socioeconomic structure, but this does not make Hausa educationally redundant. The more

promising model is additive bilingualism. A child should not be forced to choose between cultural-linguistic access and wider national or global opportunity. The educational objective should be high-level competence across languages, with the sequence and balance adjusted to learner context.

The fourth lesson is that multilingual education must be designed regionally and locally rather than through a single national formula. Northern Nigeria contains Hausa-dominant communities, multilingual cities, minority-language rural areas, Arabic-influenced Islamic schools, and populations affected by conflict and displacement. A uniform language rule may be administratively simple but pedagogically crude. Hausa can serve as mother tongue, lingua franca, school subject, transitional language, or supplementary explanatory language depending on the setting. Policy should recognize these different functions and require schools to document the linguistic profiles of their learners.

Finally, the historical evidence supports a broader definition of educational quality. If quality is measured only by short-term English test performance, the cultural, civic, and cognitive value of indigenous-language literacy may disappear from view. If, on the other hand, indigenous-language education is defended only as cultural preservation, the demand for academic rigor, employability, science, and global communication may be neglected. A balanced conception of quality includes comprehension, literacy in more than one language, access to further education, cultural knowledge, civic participation, and the ability to learn through changing media. Hausa has the historical resources to contribute to all of these outcomes, but only if its educational development is planned as part of a multilingual system rather than as a symbolic alternative to English.

Conclusion

The history of Hausa in Northern Nigerian education demonstrates that indigenous languages can be powerful instruments of modern education when they are supported by literate traditions, institutional investment, trained teachers, curriculum development, and expanding media. Hausa entered the colonial period with a substantial oral and Ajami-based intellectual heritage. British administration then elevated it as a regional language of government and vernacular schooling while simultaneously placing it within a colonial hierarchy. Roman-script standardization, print, teacher education, broadcasting, and post-independence curriculum policy further enlarged its educational functions. Today, Hausa operates across school subjects, literacy programs, universities, popular culture, public communication, and digital spaces.

The contemporary challenge is not to decide whether Hausa or English should ‘win.’ History shows that both have become deeply embedded in Northern Nigerian education for different reasons and functions. Recent literacy research indicates that Hausa and English skills can reinforce one another, while policy experience warns that language reform fails when teacher supply, materials, transitions, and local diversity are neglected. Hausa therefore has its strongest future as part of an additive multilingual system: a language through which learners can enter literacy and knowledge, preserve and reinterpret historical experience, and build bridges to English and other languages required for wider participation. In that form, indigenous language is not the opposite of modern education. It is one of the means through which modern education can become more intelligible, inclusive, historically grounded, and socially connected.

Recommendations

First, Hausa should be strengthened as a foundational literacy and curriculum language wherever it is the learner’s dominant or widely shared community language, while English should be introduced and developed through explicit bilingual progression rather than abrupt

linguistic replacement. The recent evidence on cross-language transfer provides a strong basis for coordinated Hausa-English literacy planning (Dixon et al., 2025; Humble et al., 2024).

Second, federal and state education agencies should invest in teacher preparation for multilingual classrooms. This should include formal Hausa literacy, orthography, subject-specific terminology, bilingual reading instruction, assessment, and strategies for transitioning between Hausa and English. Teacher professional development should be continuous and linked to coaching and classroom materials, reflecting evidence that structured teacher training can improve early reading outcomes (Counihan et al., 2022).

Third, curriculum developers, universities, language centers, and professional associations should maintain systematic Hausa terminology development for science, mathematics, technology, health, citizenship, and vocational education. Updated glossaries and open digital dictionaries should accompany textbooks so that teachers are not left to invent inconsistent equivalents in individual classrooms.

Fourth, the educational use of Hausa should not weaken smaller Northern Nigerian languages. State-level planning should identify where Hausa functions as a genuine community lingua franca and where a different local language is pedagogically more appropriate. Multilingual materials and bridge programs should be developed for minority-language communities, with Hausa introduced additively where useful rather than imposed as a substitute for linguistic diversity.

Fifth, Hausa should be treated as a digital education language. Public institutions should support open educational resources, e-books, educational video, radio archives, keyboard and font support, text-to-speech and speech-to-text resources, and high-quality translation tools. Digital investment would extend the historical trajectory through which Hausa moved from manuscript literacy to print and broadcasting into contemporary learning platforms.

Finally, language policy should be evaluated through transparent evidence. Rather than oscillating between sweeping mother-tongue mandates and English-only declarations, Nigeria should support longitudinal research comparing well-resourced bilingual models, English-medium models, and context-specific multilingual approaches. Such research should measure comprehension, Hausa literacy, English literacy, mathematics and science learning, transition outcomes, equity, teacher capacity, and parental preferences.

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