

Text translations with transcriptions

The set of translations have a threefold purpose. The basic purpose is a representative documentation of the spoken Arabic of NE Nigeria. The locus of the recordings is the city of Maiduguri, as this was the site of the sociolinguistic research conducted between 1990-2000. In addition a survey was made in the rural areas of Borno where Arabic is spoken. In total three types of recordings are distinguished, interviews conducted in Maiduguri, interviews conducted in rural areas, and unstructured group recordings, all of which were made in Maiduguri. The basic background to this research design is found in Owens (1998).

A second purpose, the most interesting purpose from the editor's perspective, is a commentary on the linguistic properties of the texts. Any given text of course has an unlimited number of linguistic properties, so what is documented in footnotes are special linguistic phenomena which fall outside the main parameters of the grammar of the language, as summarized for instance in Owens (1994). These may include special phonetic features, for instance a glottalized /Q/, phonological phenomena, for instance the odd assimilation of *jamb-u-na*¹ → *jammuna* 'near to us', and morphological phenomena. Syntactic aspects are noted, for instance in IM51, the phrase *leenšaan inazzil xád'ab hana raasa ixud'd'a dugó inši* has three imperfect verbs without indicative b-. This suggests the translation, 'he **should** have gotten the firewood from his head, put it down and then gone back'.

Special lexical and idiomatic meanings are among the most frequently footnoted items. *Eeš* is the usual word for solid food that is not meat or fish, typically food that is pounded and added to boiling water. In one text, however, it appears in a meaning of what is opposed to milk. *Eeš* fills one up; milk does not. In some cases obscure etymologies are explained. For instance, *šartan matini* lit. „doubled conditions“ refers to a traditional bedouin practice of giving a calf as a part of the bride price. If the bride comes from a wealthy family, two calves are expected, hence *šartan matini*. In this class of remarks are included non-NA usages, for instance *ʔarabiyya* 'car' which is the Egyptian Arabic < *ʕarabiyya* word for 'car, but not the NA (= *watiir*).

Furthermore pragmatic and text-analytical challenges are highlighted. For instance, the following passage from IM34 has four referents: the protagonist, a thirteen year old child bride referenced by a first person pronoun, her in-laws, referenced by a plural pronoun, the explicitly mentioned hyenas, and her husband, also signaled by a second person imperative verb and first person pronoun. In the following, implicit referents never expressly identified in the text are given in sub-script.

karab-oo-ni jaab-oo-ni dada gaal-o ley-í xalaas xal-ha, aaxər minn-a hu da kan xallee-t-ha ti-mši al maraafiin y-aakul-ann-a, dedda xalaas, ana saamee-t -la,

When I came they_{in-laws} grabbed me and brought me after this week (in the bush) and when they had caught me and apprehended me and brought me they said on my behalf, okay 'let her go'_{addressing husband}. In the end, if you_{addressing husband} have her_{(go back}

¹ The regular process is *jamb* + *-na* 'next to us' → *jamb-u-na*, where /u/ is an epenthetic vowel regularly inserted in a CC_C context.

to your house) she'll run away again and the hyenas will eat her. So that was it. "I'm_{husband} reconciled with it" (the divorce)

There is nothing nothing explicitly identifying the husband as the addressee, nothing flagging a shift to direct speech, other than the imperative form which assumes such, nothing flagging a speaker shift to the husband who acquiesces to the advice of his relatives, no mention of a divorce. The fluent understanding of the passage assumes a familiarity with norms of reference and social norms. A simple translation gives the gist of the passage, but not how the translation is arrived at.

In some cases, phenomena are noted which are regular in NA and show little variation, but which are noteworthy compared to other varieties of Arabic. For instance, epenthesis occurs in the context CC_C, as in Egyptian Arabic, *šift-ha* → *šift-a-ha*, a rule so regular in NA and so well-known in Arabic that it bears no special mention in the text annotation. However, epenthesis is also quite frequent in the context VVC-C, *tammeet-ha* → *tammeet-a-ha* 'I finished it.F'. This is an insertion context which otherwise is found in a few Arabic dialects, for instance Najdi, but is on the whole rare, and is not found at all for instance in Egyptian Arabic, the immediate provenance of Nigerian Arabic.

Many of the remarks are ostensibly for idiosyncratic usages. For instance, whereas *ɣ is usually realized as /q/ in NA, one speaker consistently has /y/ in post-vocalic position. One speaker has *barrag-na* for *marrag-na* 'we left, took out'. Nonetheless, even if the sample is, by sociolinguistic standards, large, it is just a small sample of the total population, and more research could reveal communities where such forms are widespread.

To a degree usages are cross-referenced from text to text. For instance, the discourse marker *hiya* 'then, and then' is quite rare in texts, but happens to occur in a father (IM8) – daughter (IM50) pair. This is probably not a coincidence, and is noted. Such cross-references are kept to a minimum, however. At a certain point, if the cross-references are frequent enough they belong to the realm of systematic sociolinguistic comparison rather than the realm of philological oddity.

Thirdly and finally, essential cultural and historical background is provided. IM01 mentions the British Resident from the 1920's, Lethem, Text IM80 talks about *šoora* 'insurgents' in Chad, and in EM09 *az zaawiya* refers to the Tijani religious community around Sheix Ibrahim Saleh. These and other personages and terms are elaborated on in footnotes.

The translations are idiomatic. No attempt is made to give a more or less literal rendition. The translations thus give a good sense of the texts, but will sometimes be difficult to follow for those looking to identify specific words corresponding to a given translated segment. On the other hand, for those with a knowledge of Arabic, the transcriptions along with the audio files will make it easy to follow the main flow of narrative, the translations providing a background cue. In all cases footnotes clarify idioms, expressions, discuss referential ambiguity, and provide specific explanatory background.

Translations, audio time stamps and conventions

The transcriptions and translations are accompanied by audio files. The complete audio files and their transcriptions are found under the menus “Group conversations”, “Maiduguri” and “Villages”. The translations are excerpted from the transcriptions and are found under the menu heading “Translations”. To follow the translations with the audio file, open the audio file separately and the translated text separately. The time stamps in the translation give an orientation as to where to find the audio in the corresponding text. It should be noted that most of the translations are excerpts and that the entire transcription (less translation) can be found on the page of the appropriate type.

Maiduguri Interviews

The Maiduguri interviews were originally made in order to obtain basic sociolinguistic information about the Arabic-speaking Maiduguri population. To this end the interviews, which lasted between 30 – 60 minutes, were based on a more or less standardized set of questions which elicited basic biographical information, information about language use in the family and in the wider community, the relation between language and ethnicity, questions about awareness of dialectal differences in Nigerian Arabic, and the degree to which Arabic media from the Arabic world is listened to. While a number of questions were formulated independently of any experience in working on Nigerian Arabic, others were added which elucidated topics that emerged as peculiar to Nigerian Arabic, for instance the status of the Koranic school (*sangaaya*) in education. A conversational style was strived for, and to the extent possible the questions were asked indirectly. For instance, to elicit awareness of dialect differences, a standard question was to ask where the best place to learn Arabic was, for someone like myself who came to Nigeria to learn Arabic. The question evoked responses based on different parameters (e.g. where Arabs are most numerous, what dialect speaker liked most) and provided a format for asking about specific linguistic traits that identified the areas in question. A favorite question turned out to be one which asked about language and ethnicity. “If there was one man who knew Arabic but was not an Arab by ancestry, and another who knew no Arabic, but had Arab ancestry (e.g. had grown up outside Borno – see Text IM9 for concrete example), which man would you give your daughter to in marriage. The question, in fact, turned out to be so popular that three or four years after formulating it, while sitting in an informal evening gathering when people would converse and tell stories, the question was formulated by one of the participants, “If there was one man ...”

The translated segments have been chosen in part to reflect the range of “standardized” questions which can be found among the entire set of Maiduguri interviews. However, the interviews were much more than a questionnaire-like list of answers. The conversations about language attitudes and traditional education themselves took many interesting turns, but as often as not they led to entirely unexpected episodes and revealed a multi-faceted engagement of the Nigerian Arab community with the larger Nigerian and Lake Chad area society. The texts tell about early-age marriage, and a young girl’s attempts to escape it, ending in her confronting a hyena from inside the small lean-to hut she was camping in. They reveal how a brother and sister evaluate marriage prospects for the divorced sister, including some less than flattering comments on potential suitors. They tell about Nigerian Arabs and cattle. Cattle traders going as far as the western Sudan to buy cattle, drive them across the entire country of Chad to Nigeria, and eventually bring them in trucks – a three-day non-stop venture – to their ultimate markets in southern Nigeria. We learn about the Nigerian cattle nomads, their movements determined by the rains and the availability of water, as they erect their houses and dismantle them to move onwards day after day. The texts contain historical snapshots. Impressions of the dictator Rabeah, whose association with Nigerian Arabs colors their relations with the Kanuri until today. They tell about how early British colonial educational policy led to one individual being among the first Nigerian Arabs to attend school, and eventually rise to the highest ranks of the Nigerian Civil Service. The major demographic movements of the last half century are described. Arabs moving between Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon, villagers moving to the city,

for education, to escape the travails of the countryside, to escape famine. And those who succeed in establishing themselves in an urban way of life look back nostalgically on the simple routine of cattle nomadism, while at the same time trying to re-establish an urban ethnic solidarity through clubs, songs and cultural groups. The transition to an urban setting poses special problems for the maintenance of Arabic. Social differences between Arabs and others, especially the Kanuri are described, and within Arab society itself, cast in terms of skin color, geographical provenance and assumed origin.

The experiences of the Nigerian Arab individuals documented in these texts cover a region from eastern Chad to Lagos, a distance of nearly 3,000 kilometers (1800 miles) – a distance further than Washington D.C. to Denver Colorado, or Moscow to Paris - they speak about urban life, about farming, about cattle herding, they present stylized verbal art next to the unalloyed idiom of the rough and tumble life of security guards or siblings evaluating acquaintances with graphic invective.

All in all a panorama of Nigerian Arab society from the late twentieth century is depicted. It is today a society and way of life disrupted by the ongoing tragedy of Boko Haram, as entire villages have fled to Cameroon, to refugee camps in Maiduguri and other Nigerian cities, the traditional nomadic subsistence lost to the deprivations of bandits. The texts therefore also describe the end of an era, and will hopefully usher in the documentation of the new.

Summary of translated interviews, Maiduguri interviews (IM). Note that the numbers refer to the time stamps in the audio files where the relevant text can be accessed.

Tape IM01

- 1.1 Brief account of how Musa Daggash interprets Nigerian Arabic history, 0- 8:11
- 1.2 Arabs and intermarriage, marriage in former times, 11:23-13:44 and 39:40 – 40:38
- 1.3 How Musa Daggash became a high-ranking Nigerian civil servant, 25:03-32:45
- 1.4 Circumcision, 41:51-43:53

Tape IM05

Brief introduction

- 5.1 Abu Bakr describes life in a Koranic school as an itinerant student, 15:22– 22:55
- 5.2 Abu Bakr talks about his village of origin, 32:23 – 34:13

Tape IM08

- 8.1 Abdul Gadir introduced; why he left Kirenawa and came to live in Maiduguri, 0-7:22
- 8.2 Issue of language use in Maiduguri, Abdul Gadir's education and why it was cut short, 10:52-13:15
- 8.3 A discussion about Rabeh, with Mohammad Allamin and Abdul Gadir, 34:05-end

Tape IM09

- 9.1 Introduction, the person, his family, 0-5:43
- 9.2 The language of Emma's household, 7:25-8:40
- 9.3 Arabs in the Nigerian diaspora: what happens to their language? 17:05-21:10
- 9.4 Where is the best place to learn Nigerian Arabic? 23:45-24:51

Tape IM11

- 11.1 Bashir's background, 6:00-8:09
- 11.2 Bashir praises Arab solidarity, but regrets that in recent years many Arab women have married outside their group, 16:00-18:15
- 11.3 Is language or genealogy the definition of who an Arab is? 21:12-24:37
- 11.4 Bashir describes the logic behind the Arabic Association "Al-Hayaa?" 32:30-36:32

Tape IM34

- 34.1 Basic biography, language usage, 0:10-5:06
- 34.2 Khadija, her early life 5:52-9:40
- 34.3 Khadija the cowherd, 11:54-end

Tape IM38

- 38.1 Hajje Habbaba's biography and her account of her life as a cattle nomad, 0-7:29
- 38.2 Habbaba talks about differences between Kanuri and Arab traditions and describes how a typical wedding was in the nomadic camps she lived in, 24:59 - 34:37

Tape IM80

- 80.1 Brief biography of Nayim, his work as a cattle trader in Chad and Nigeria, 0-9:20
- 80.2 Nayim describes how he transported cattle to southern Nigeria from Maiduguri, 26:40-35:50

Tape IM101Fa1-translation

Fadhume describes how she sold milk products in Maiduguri when she was a child, 4:0-12:10

Translated completely

IM19, Gursa Bashir

IM50, Xadija am Shigine

Group Conversations (GR)

The conversations are all relatively unstructured events in which groups of individuals who know one another speak freely about open-ended questions. None of those offered here are totally spontaneous – in all cases the participants knew they were being recorded, and in some cases one individual facilitated the conversation by suggesting a topic of discussion. I was present, but with a few exceptions did not intervene in the conversations. However, since the participants usually knew one another well and often were relatives, the topics could be discussed without reservation, and as the turn overlaps and background participation in some of the texts indicate, in fact a number of the texts achieve a high degree of spontaneity.

As with the Maiduguri interviews the topics reveal the variegated social life of Nigerian Arabs. In one conversation the nature of life among the cattle nomads is expounded upon. In contrast to IM34 and IM38 which tell of the individuals' own experience, the speaker here generalizes the events, customs and social institutions prevalent in the cattle camps. Another conversation picks up on the political events leading up to the cancelled 1993 presidential election. It reveals a politically-aware clientele able to gauge the potential implications of one or another of the gubernatorial candidates winning the election for the Nigerian Arabs. The conversation, moreover, elucidates the political factions among the Nigerian Arabs themselves. Many Nigerian Arabs are uneducated and poor² and as a result not infrequently work as security guards. In one conversation one guard elaborates on his escapades during his sojourn in Lagos working both for European and Nigerian firms. The two Nigerian Arab interlocutors are as captivated as the editor by his tales. Finally one of the conversations exemplifies the structured delivery of folk tales. Perhaps more than any other genre of text, the folk tales illustrate how critical it is knowing the myriad Nigerian Arab norms, unspoken in the text, in order to follow referential shifts, why a wife's getting angry automatically sets the stage for the husband's trip to her in-laws, why 'tassels' refers to 'tassels of corn' rather than the equally possible 'tassels of guinea corn', and a host of cultural ellipses into which the text provides only an initial entry.

The conversations

GR21: Nomads

Two of the interlocutors, E and A are interviewed in IM09 and IM15 respectively.

GR29a: The adventures of an Arab maigadi in Lagos

AJ traps a thief (0-3:31)

AJ overpowers a deranged person (3:31-5:32)

AJ, a Nigerian Arab, stands up to an Italian (5:32-7:36)

AJ escapes with his life by a hair (7:36- 10:31)

AJ works for a Yoruba and gets rewarded for a good deed by getting fired (11.02-12:42)

² See remark to this effect in IM001.

The two who pose questions, Kabir and AbuBakr Mohammad are interviewed in IM07 and IM05, respectively. AJ, the main interlocutor is interviewed in IM79.

GR51: Three folk tales

Two wood gatherers (0:24-1:40)

Two dim-witted ones (1:40-5:48)

The big fool and the fool (5:48-8:45)

The main speaker, AM (Amne) is also interviewed in IM17a.

GR104: An assessment of Borno politics, 1992

Interlocutor DAN, Danna, was one of the main assistants in the collection of the texts, and hence appears in many of them. H also participates in GR 106 and GR134, A in GR99 and GR106, and D in GR106.

GR136. Nigerian politics of the past (0:00-25:34)

Saleh Kwes (IM18), at that time a teacher in Maiduguri, Mohammad Al-Hasiiba (alias de Gaulle, IM10), Abba Hajj, visitor who had once been a local councilor in Balge. Recorded on mat outside of Mohammad Al-Hasiiba's house in Gwange.

Nature of politics: Mohammad Al-Hasiiba argues with G

G's experience in pre-independence politics, including his recollection of the Nigerian politician Herbert MacCauley (d. 1946)

G's experience as a councilor in Kaala Balge

Final section (from about 23:00) after MH and G leave for prayers, editor asks Saleh Kwes about his role in Arabic language programs at Borno Radio and Television.

GR167: Asta's children (0:00-24:00, 49:15-56:25, 24:00 to 44.51 untranscribed)

A recording with many participants, as explained in the translated text. The children take up many topics, often in a disjointed way as might be expected. Some of the main themes are:

The girls are playing with dolls, around which there is much discussion

Discussion about applying henna

Ad, the oldest, tries to organize the children by singing Sudanese songs and by telling folk tales (hijje)

Grownups intervene at intervals to stop children from speaking Hausa

The recording gives an excellent portrait of the discourse of children aged 4-13.

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Form of transcriptions, transcription conventions

The transcriptions mark each speaker turn with an “< >”, usually <S >” where “S” = speaker. The main speaker of the text is designated either with “M” or by the initials of his or her name. In conversations the speakers are identified by their initials. In all cases “<S I>” marks the researcher.

<S D> ...D speaking

<S I> ... researcher speaking

Etc.

Time stamps are in parentheses.

Odd occurrences, for instance a passage in Kanuri and marked in square brackets, [kanuri] = Kanuri spoken. In the codeswitching text of course each language is transcribed in full.

In many cases overlaps occur, and these are given a basic identification by X

[X] passage in text not audible or understandable

[...] Audio not clear enough for transcription

... [Y1] ...

[?] approximate translation; context not clear

..... [Y2] indicates speech overlap, overlapping part roughly indicated by the [Y1], marking the beginning and end of overlap by [Y2].