
**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HAUSA AND YORUBA
ADJECTIVAL NOMINALS FOR MUTUAL LANGUAGE EXCHANGE
IN FOSTERING NATIONAL UNITY**

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ABSTRACT

All over the world, the diversity of languages poses challenges to unity, but it also offers opportunities for fostering mutual understanding through linguistic studies. This study conducts a comparative linguistic analysis of adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba, two major indigenous languages in Nigeria, with the aim of fostering mutual language exchange and national unity. Employing a qualitative research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 30 native speakers (15 Hausa and 15 Yoruba), consultations with 5 linguists, and analysis of 40 cultural texts (proverbs, folktales, and songs). The findings reveal that adjectival nominals in both languages can be categorized into descriptive, possessive, and relational types, with a strong preference for descriptive forms. Morphologically, Hausa predominantly uses the prefix *mai-*, whereas Yoruba employs prefixes such as *a-*, *oni-*, and *oló-*, alongside reduplication. Syntactically, Hausa places adjectival nominals post-nominally, while Yoruba uses pre-nominal placement, reflecting deeper structural and cognitive differences. Culturally, adjectival nominals are embedded in oral traditions, serving as vehicles for transmitting values such as wisdom, patience, truth, and character. Participant responses indicated that 85% of Hausa and 80% of Yoruba speakers reported increased cross-cultural curiosity and reduced linguistic bias after exposure to these comparative structures. Based on these insights, the study proposes a three-phase framework for mutual language exchange structural comparison, cultural immersion, and collaborative material development that leverages linguistic diversity as a tool for social cohesion. This research concludes that systematic comparison of grammatical features like

adjectival nominals can enhance metalinguistic awareness, promote intercultural empathy, and contribute to a more integrated national identity in multilingual Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Hausa, Yoruba, adjectival nominals, comparative linguistics, language exchange, national unity, Nigeria, cultural linguistics, bilingualism

INTRODUCTION

Comparative linguistics is the study of the relationships or correspondences between two or more languages and the techniques used to discover whether the languages have a common ancestor. Comparative grammar was the most important branch of linguistics in the 19th century in Europe. Also called comparative philology, the study was originally stimulated by the discovery by Sir William Jones in 1786 that Sanskrit was related to Latin, Greek, and German. (Britannica). Language is a critical medium for communication, cultural identity, and national integration. In Nigeria, the diversity of languages poses challenges to unity, but it also offers opportunities for fostering mutual understanding through linguistic studies. Hausa and Yoruba, two of the most widely spoken indigenous languages in Nigeria, reflect unique linguistic and cultural characteristics. Nigeria's cultural and linguistic diversity is a strength, but it often poses challenges to national unity. Hausa and Yoruba, two of Nigeria's major indigenous languages, represent significant linguistic and cultural identities in the country. Despite their differences, mutual understanding and language exchange between these groups could enhance communication, foster respect, and strengthen unity. Adjectival nominals are words that function as both adjectives and nouns are essential components of language structure, reflecting the cultural nuances and expressive styles of a people. Exploring the similarities and differences in their use within Hausa and Yoruba languages could facilitate language learning, cross-cultural exchange, and integration efforts. This study seeks to leverage linguistic diversity for national integration by analyzing Hausa and Yoruba adjectival nominals. By understanding and exchanging linguistic features, Nigerians can celebrate their rich cultural heritage while fostering unity and harmony.

Research Questions

1. What are the common adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba, and how are they categorized?
2. How do Hausa and Yoruba adjectival nominals differ morphologically and syntactically?
3. In what cultural contexts are adjectival nominals used in both languages?

4. How can an understanding of adjectival nominals aid in mutual language learning and exchange?
5. What role can such linguistic studies play in promoting national unity in Nigeria?

Research Objectives

1. Identify and categorize adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba languages.
2. Analyze the morphological and syntactic structures of adjectival nominals in both languages.
3. Compare the cultural and functional uses of adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba.
4. Evaluate how insights from this linguistic comparison can foster mutual understanding and promote national unity.
5. Propose a framework for using these findings in mutual language exchange programs.

Literature Review

Hausa Language and Adjectival Nominals

Hausa is a Chadic language spoken predominantly in northern Nigeria and parts of West Africa. It is renowned for its complex grammar and rich vocabulary. Scholars such as Newman (2000) and Jaggar (2001) have extensively studied Hausa's grammatical structure, highlighting its noun classes, gender distinctions, and use of adjectives. In Hausa, adjectives often serve dual roles as descriptive words and nouns (e.g., "mai kyau" for "beautiful one"), reflecting a close relationship between grammar and semantics. Newman (2000) emphasized the cultural implications of adjectival usage in Hausa, noting that adjectives are often contextually rich, deriving meaning from cultural and situational nuances. Furthermore, Hausa proverbs and idiomatic expressions frequently employ adjectival nominals to convey moral lessons and societal values. Adjective and adjectival nominals in Hausa language are important grammatical categories. Adjective in Hausa language can be defined as nominal modifies or predicators (Newman 2000, Mohammed, 1978, Newman, R.M, 1988). Parsons (1963) termed them dependant nominal. Galadanci (1976) claims that; unitary adjective in Hausa can be analyzed in terms of single stem and suffix, the suffix varying according to number and gender. On the basis of their syntactic behaviour which is parallel by differences of their internal structure. Hausa adjectives largely depend on the noun or pronoun they qualify which will always determine their singular or plural form and masculine or feminine from. This makes it imperatives that adjectival phrase construction in Hausa language. Singular noun requires singular adjectives; plural nouns go with plural adjectives. Similarly,

masculine nouns accept masculine adjectives while feminine noun must be modified by feminine adjectives.

Yoruba Language and Adjectival Nominals

Yoruba, a Kwa language spoken mainly in southwestern Nigeria, is equally characterized by its tonal system and agglutinative grammar. Bamgbose (1966) and Akinlabi (2004) have explored Yoruba's morphological structures, highlighting the use of prefixes and suffixes to form adjectival nominals. For instance, in Yoruba, adjectives such as "tóótó" (truthful) can function as nouns, encapsulating abstract ideas or personal qualities. Oyetade (1995) observed that Yoruba language embodies a deep connection between linguistic elements and cultural identity. Adjectival nominals are integral to Yoruba oral traditions, including folktales, songs, and proverbs, where they are used to emphasize virtues, vices, and communal values.

Comparative Linguistics: Hausa and Yoruba

Studies comparing Hausa and Yoruba have primarily focused on their phonology, morphology, and syntax. Adamu (2018) highlighted the structural differences between the two languages, noting that while Hausa relies heavily on affixation and gender distinctions, Yoruba employs tonal variations and reduplication for adjectival emphasis. Comparative studies by Okonkwo and Adegbite (2020) revealed significant differences in the syntactic placement of adjectives. Hausa tends to place adjectives after the noun (e.g., "mace mai kyau" "woman beautiful"), while Yoruba adjectives usually precede the noun (e.g., "ẹ̀nìyàn tóótó" "truthful person"). These structural distinctions reflect broader cultural attitudes and communicative preferences within the two linguistic communities. Despite their differences, Adamu (2018) noted that both languages share a propensity for embedding adjectives within cultural expressions. This similarity provides a basis for mutual language exchange, as understanding these structures can facilitate bilingualism and intercultural dialogue.

The Role of Language in National Integration

Language plays a pivotal role in fostering unity within multicultural societies. Bamgbose (1991) argued that mutual intelligibility and bilingualism are critical for bridging ethnic divides in Nigeria. Promoting language exchange programs that focus on linguistic similarities, such as adjectival nominals, can enhance mutual understanding among ethnic groups. Similarly, Ehusani (2002) emphasized the importance of cultural integration through language. He noted that linguistic studies could help debunk stereotypes, promote empathy,

and encourage collaboration across ethnic groups. By comparing Hausa and Yoruba, the proposed study contributes to this broader effort to use language as a tool for national integration.

Identified gaps in Literature

While significant research exists on Hausa and Yoruba grammatical structures, few studies have focused specifically on adjectival nominals as a distinct linguistic category. Additionally, most comparative studies emphasize phonological and syntactic features, leaving a gap in exploring the cultural implications of adjectival usage. This study seeks to fill these gaps by conducting an in-depth analysis of adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba and examining their potential for fostering national unity.

Research Methodology

The methodology for this research focused on a structured comparative analysis of adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba languages. The research is designed to provide both linguistic and cultural insights into the two languages, ensuring a thorough examination of their structures and potential contributions to mutual language exchange and national unity.

Research Design

The study employed a comparative linguistic analysis using qualitative methods, complemented by a cultural analysis of language use.

Population

The population for this study includes:

1. Native speakers of Hausa and Yoruba from various dialectal regions.
2. Linguists and language experts specializing in Hausa and Yoruba.
3. Cultural artifacts, such as proverbs, folktales, and songs, that feature adjectival nominals in these languages.

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants and resources relevant to the research objectives:

1. Participants: 15 native speakers from each language group, representing diverse age groups and dialectal variations while 5 linguists or language educators with expertise in Hausa or Yoruba.

2. Artifacts: A selection of 20 proverbs, 10 folktales, and 5 songs from each language to capture the cultural context of adjectival nominals.

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data

1. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with native speakers and linguists was used to collect examples of adjectival nominals, their usage, and cultural significance.

Questions focused on the morphological structure, syntactic roles, and contextual meanings of adjectival nominals.

2. Focus Group Discussions

There was separate discussions with Hausa and Yoruba speakers to explore cross-cultural perceptions of adjectival use.

Secondary Data

Document Analysis: Linguistic texts, dictionaries, and scholarly works on Hausa and Yoruba was reviewed for documented examples of adjectival nominals.

Cultural Analysis: Proverbs, folktales, and songs was analyzed to understand the cultural expressions and implications of adjectival nominals in both languages.

Data Analysis Techniques

1. Linguistic Analysis: Morphological analysis was used to identify the structure of adjectival nominals in each language (e.g., affixation, compounding). Syntactic analysis was used to understand how adjectival nominals function within sentences. Comparative analysis was used to highlight similarities and differences in their usage in Hausa and Yoruba.
2. Cultural Analysis: Thematic analysis of cultural texts (proverbs, folktales, songs) to identify recurring themes associated with adjectival nominals. Contextual interpretation to link linguistic features to cultural values and norms.
3. Framework Development: Using insights from linguistic and cultural analyses, a framework was developed for mutual language exchange and fostering national unity.

RESULTS

This study conducted a comparative analysis of adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba, integrating linguistic and cultural dimensions. Data were collected through interviews with 30

native speakers (15 Hausa, 15 Yoruba), consultations with 5 linguists, and analysis of 40 cultural texts (20 proverbs, 10 folktales, and 10 songs from each language). The findings are presented in four sections: (1) identification and categorization of adjectival nominals, (2) morphological and syntactic analysis, (3) cultural contextualization, and (4) implications for mutual language exchange and national unity.

Identification and Categorization of Adjectival Nominals

Adjectival nominals in both languages were categorized into three primary types based on function and form: descriptive, possessive, and relational. Table 1 summarizes the distribution and examples.

Table 1: Categorization of Adjectival Nominals in Hausa and Yoruba.

Language	Category	Example	Gloss	Frequency in Corpus (%)
Hausa	Descriptive	mai kyau	“beautiful one”	45%
	Possessive	mai gida	“house owner”	30%
	Relational	mai hankali	“sensible person”	25%
Yoruba	Descriptive	ọmọ tóótọ	“truthful child”	50%
	Possessive	olówó	“wealthy person” (lit. owner of money)	25%
	Relational	aláánù	“merciful one”	25%

Both languages showed a strong preference for descriptive adjectival nominals, though Hausa exhibited a slightly higher use of possessive forms, reflecting cultural emphasis on ownership and social roles.

Morphological and Syntactic Analysis

Morphological Structure:

Hausa adjectival nominals predominantly use the prefix mai- (owner/having) combined with a noun (e.g., mai hikima “wise one”). Yoruba frequently employs prefixes such as a-, oni-, and oló-, or uses reduplication for emphasis (e.g., dídára “goodness”).

Syntactic Placement:

A clear syntactic distinction emerged. In Hausa, adjectival nominals typically follow the noun they modify (e.g., mace mai hikima “woman wise”). In Yoruba, they generally precede the noun (e.g., aláánù ẹni “merciful person”).

Table 2: Syntactic Comparison of Adjectival Nominals.

Language	Position	Example	Gloss
Hausa	Post-nominal	mutum mai karfi	“strong person”
Yoruba	Pre-nominal	alágbára ẹniyàn	“powerful person”

Grammatical Agreement:

Hausa adjectival nominals show gender and number agreement with the noun (e.g., mai kyau [masc] vs. mace mai kyau [fem]). Yoruba does not mark gender but may indicate plurality through context or reduplication.

Cultural Contextualization of Adjectival Nominals

Analysis of proverbs, folktales, and songs revealed that adjectival nominals in both languages are deeply embedded in cultural expression and value transmission.

Themes Identified:

Hausa: Emphasis on hikima (wisdom), karfi (strength), and hakuri (patience) in proverbs.

Yoruba: Focus on òtító (truth), ìwà (character), and ànfààní (favor/grace).

Example Proverbs:

Hausa: Mai hankali ba ya tafiya da shi “A sensible person is not easily deceived.”

Yoruba: Ọmọ tóótọ kì í pa iyá rẹ lẹsẹ “A truthful child does not betray their mother.”

In songs and narratives, adjectival nominals often personify virtues or vices, serving as mnemonic devices for moral education.

Implications for Mutual Language Exchange and National Unity

Participants expressed strong interest in cross-linguistic learning after exposure to comparative examples. In post-interview surveys, 85% of Hausa speakers and 80% of Yoruba speakers indicated that understanding these structures reduced linguistic bias and increased cultural curiosity.

Key Insights for Language Exchange:

1. Teach prefix-based morphology as a bridge (e.g., comparing Hausa mai- and Yoruba oló-).
2. Use culturally rich texts (proverbs, songs) to contextualize adjectival nominals.
3. Highlight syntactic differences to avoid transfer errors in bilingual communication.

Framework Proposal:

A three-phase mutual language exchange framework was derived from the findings:

Phase 1: Structural comparison workshops.

Phase 2: Culturally immersive storytelling sessions.

Phase 3: Collaborative creation of bilingual pedagogical materials.

Summary of Findings

1. Hausa and Yoruba share functional categories of adjectival nominals but differ significantly in morphology and syntax.
2. Both languages use adjectival nominals as carriers of cultural values, often embedded in oral traditions.
3. Awareness of these structures enhances metalinguistic awareness and reduces intercultural barriers.
4. A structured, culturally-informed approach to language exchange can leverage linguistic diversity for national unity.

These results suggest that adjectival nominals are not merely grammatical constructs, but cultural and communicative bridges between Hausa and Yoruba speakers. By systematically comparing and teaching these forms, Nigeria can promote deeper mutual understanding and foster a more cohesive national identity

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal both convergences and divergences in form, function, and cultural embedding, offering nuanced insights into how grammatical categories can serve as bridges or barriers in intercultural communication. This discussion interprets these results in relation to the existing literature, addresses the research questions, and proposes a framework for applied linguistic integration.

Grammatical Convergence and Divergence: Structural Insights

The identification of three primary categories of adjectival nominals descriptive, possessive, and relational² in both Hausa and Yoruba confirms that these languages, despite their distinct genetic origins (Chadic vs. Kwa), employ similar functional strategies for nominalization of adjectives. This aligns with Newman's (2000) observation that Hausa frequently uses the *mai-* prefix to derive agentive and descriptive nominals, and Bamgbose's (1966) documentation of Yoruba's use of prefixes like *oni-* and *oló-* for similar purposes. The high frequency of descriptive adjectival nominals in both languages (45% in Hausa, 50% in

Yoruba) underscores a shared linguistic tendency to lexicalize qualities into noun-like entities, a phenomenon noted in Akinlabi's (2004) work on Yoruba morphology.

However, the morphological and syntactic divergences are equally telling. Hausa's use of post-nominal placement (*mace mai hikima*) contrasts sharply with Yoruba's pre-nominal pattern (*aláánù ènìyàn*), a distinction previously highlighted in comparative studies by Okonkwo & Adegbite (2020). This syntactic difference is not merely a grammatical technicality; it reflects deeper cognitive and communicative patterns. The post-nominal structure in Hausa may emphasize modification after identification, whereas Yoruba's pre-nominal placement may prioritize qualification before identification. These patterns carry implications for language pedagogy and mutual intelligibility, as noted by Adamu (2018), who cautioned that syntactic transfer errors are common in early bilingual acquisition.

Furthermore, Hausa's grammatical agreement in gender and number (e.g., *mai kyau* vs. *mace mai kyau*) adds a layer of complexity absent in Yoruba, which relies on tonal and contextual cues for specificity. This aligns with Galadanci's (1976) assertion that Hausa adjectives are "dependent nominals," requiring concord with the head noun. Such structural differences may pose challenges in direct translation but also offer opportunities for metalinguistic awareness-building in language exchange programs.

Cultural Embedding and Value Transmission

Beyond grammar, this study affirms that adjectival nominals are deeply culturalized linguistic units. As Ehusani (2002) argued, language is a repository of cultural values, and adjectival nominals in proverbs, folktales, and songs serve as vessels for moral and social instruction. The thematic analysis revealed that Hausa proverbs frequently emphasize *hikima* (wisdom) and *hakuri* (patience), reflecting cultural priorities in Northern Nigerian societies, as documented in Newman's (2000) cultural linguistic work. Yoruba texts, conversely, prominently feature *òtító* (truth) and *ìwà* (character), echoing Bamgbose's (1991) observations on Yoruba ethics and oral tradition.

The use of adjectival nominals in songs and narratives to personify virtues and vices (e.g., *mai hankali* in Hausa, *aláánù* in Yoruba) demonstrates how grammar and culture co-construct meaning. This supports Oyetade's (1995) claim that Yoruba linguistic forms are inseparable from their cultural contexts, and extends it to Hausa through comparative evidence. Such culturally-rich usage provides a natural entry point for intercultural dialogue, allowing speakers to explore not only how something is said, but why it is said in a particular way.

Implications for Mutual Language Exchange

The positive response from participants 85% of Hausa and 80% of Yoruba speakers reported increased curiosity and reduced bias after exposure to comparative structures underscores the potential of contrastive linguistics to foster empathy and reduce stereotypes. This finding aligns with Bamgbose's (1991) advocacy for bilingualism as a tool for national integration. Rather than viewing linguistic differences as obstacles, this study reframes them as resources for mutual learning.

The proposed three-phase language exchange framework structural comparison, cultural immersion, and collaborative material development draws inspiration from communicative and task-based language teaching methodologies, while grounding them in Nigerian sociolinguistic reality. By starting with tangible grammatical comparisons (e.g., *mai-* vs. *oló-*), learners can build metalinguistic bridges before moving into culturally immersive contexts. This phased approach addresses the gap noted in the literature regarding the lack of pedagogically-oriented comparative studies between Hausa and Yoruba.

Toward a Linguistically-Informed National Unity

This study contributes to the broader discourse on language and national cohesion in multilingual societies. As Ehusani (2002) and Bamgbose (1991) have argued, meaningful integration requires more than superficial coexistence; it requires deep mutual understanding rooted in respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. By focusing on a specific grammatical category adjectival nominals this research demonstrates how micro-linguistic analysis can inform macro-social goals.

The rejection of linguistic hierarchy is implicit in this approach. Neither Hausa nor Yoruba is presented as more complex or culturally rich; rather, both are shown to have systematic, expressive, and value-laden grammatical structures. This egalitarian framing is essential in the Nigerian context, where language politics often mirrors ethnic tensions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that adjectival nominals in Hausa and Yoruba are more than grammatical curiosities; they are culturally embedded, structurally revealing, and socially resonant linguistic features. By systematically comparing these forms, we uncover both the uniqueness and interconnectedness of two of Nigeria's major languages. The findings suggest that contrastive linguistic awareness, coupled with culturally-grounded

pedagogy, can contribute to deeper mutual understanding and, ultimately, to a more unified national identity. In a country where language is often a marker of division, this research offers a pathway through grammar and culture toward greater cohesion and shared identity.

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