

On Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance: A Case Study of Zarma of Sokoto State of Nigeria

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Abstract

The focus of inquiry in this paper is to examine the nature of language endangerment with specific reference to *Zarma*, one of the indigenous but minority languages of Sokoto State of Nigeria visa-vis the processes and strategies exploited in preserving the language in the face of overwhelming predominance of Hausa.

Keywords: Zarma, Language endangerment, Language maintenance, processes and strategies

1. Preliminary Remarks

This is essentially a preliminary study of the nature of language endangerment and language maintenance with respect to *Zarma*, one of the indigenous minority languages spoken in Sokoto State of Nigeria (Muhammad: 2001). Much of the material in this paper is based on work I have carried out for the past six years in *Bankanu* and its environs. This is augmented by comments and remarks from a number of displaced *Zarma* native speakers in the state who have displayed high level of language awareness with regards to this language.

In particular, our task here are twofold: first to determine and establish whether or not *Zarma* can be properly called an endangered language, given the particulars of what typically constitute endangered language in the literature and second to examine the sociolinguistic strategies exploited by the language as mechanism for language sustainability.

Recent estimates of language population (Crystal 1997:286) suggested that half of world's languages are prone to extinction in this century, and that only 1,000 or so languages may be preserved by the 22nd century. He further argued that the speed and the rate of this inevitable decline is largely attributable to the political, economic, and if I may add, social pressures which are motivating people to consciously or unconsciously commit language suicide by replacing their mother tongues by one which gives them access to the languages of more powerful cultures, invariably increasing their social mobility and making them more politically relevant. This, therefore, necessitated the need to carry out research on languages, whether endangered or otherwise, hence the *raison deter* for the present effort. The study also hinges on an important key point of inquiry stressed by Grenoble and Whaley (1998:vii) that it is imperative to gather "more accurate assessments of current language vitality based on empirical data on languages of the world with a view to serve as a sound and valid basis for genuine and authentic research findings on language loss, language assessments that include not only head counts of speakers and estimates of fluency in native language, but also evaluations of the possibility of the continuation, decline or revitalization of the languages in any given community". Since, as they further pointed out, only with detailed and comprehensive data on language vitality is long-term prediction of the global linguistic picture a real possibility.

Again, inseparably connected to the questions about current language vitality is the crucial issue of identifying precisely the kinds of situations which will facilitate or alternatively hinder language loss or expansion. This, further underscores the crucial nature of the present endeavor. But then, before we proceed, in order to put our discussion in clear perspectives the following questions are pertinent and this in turn is our point of departure:

What is the linguistic affiliation of *Zarma*?

Where is *Zarma* found globally and particularly in Sokoto?

What are their historical antecedents and identities?

What is the sociolinguistic profile of *Zarma* in Sokoto?

How can we classify *Zarma*, within the larger endangered language characterisation and

categorisation?

What are the internal cohesive mechanisms for language preservation that characterized *Zarma* speech community of *Bankanu*?

Why is *Zarma* still linguistically vibrant in *Bankanu* town of Sokoto State?

What are the linguistic prospects of *Zarma* in Sokoto state?

These and other related issues engage us in the following sections and subsections. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 deals with cursory exposition of the fundamental terms that constitute the focal subject of our inquiry (i.e. language endangerment vis-a vis language maintenance and their correlates, such as language shift, language attitude and loyalty) equally discussed here, are the linguistic affiliation of *Zarma* and its geohistorical and sociolinguistic profile in Sokoto, including the issue of typology. Issues of methodological considerations are the subject matter of Section 3. In Section 4. the sociolinguistic strategies employed in *Zarma* particularly in *Bankanu* speech communities are identified and discussed. We conclude our discussion in Section 5.

2. Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance: A Brief Expose

Generally, language endangerment could be said to be a function of sociolinguistic and geohistorical forces that cause language decline and / or language loss of varying magnitude prototypically variously characterized as potentially endangered, endangered; extinct, nearly-extinct etc (see Crystal 1997, 2000 for a detailed account and the polemics therein). Within the five-level classification of endangered languages proposed by Wurm (1991) *Zarma*, presumably, fall under the potentially endangered languages, because, preliminary investigation has shown that it is socially and economically disadvantaged and under heavy pressure from a larger predominant language *Hausa* and beginning to lose child speakers of the displaced native speakers across Sokoto State and Nigeria, at large. In contradistinction, *language maintenance* refers to “cases where one language is holding its own despite the influence of powerful neighbours (Crystal 1997:362). In this conception, a distinction is commonly drawn between the external sociolinguistic force (ie language maintenance defined above) and cases where a language is subdued and yielded to the influence of neighbouring languages, and speakers have assimilated to the dominant culture often referred to in the literature as language shift: and finally cases of complete language elimination as evident in the history of the Celtic languages known as *language death*. Anticipating our discussion in section 2, *Zarma* in *Bankanu* and its environs represent an interesting and exotic sociolinguistic scenario of language maintenance.

2.1 A Brief Subcontinental –Geohistorical and Sociolinguistic Profile of Zarma

The *Zarma* (variously spelled *Djerma*, *Zerma*, *Dyerma*, *Zabarma*) people are found scattered in various subregions of Africa largely and particularly West Africa. More specifically, a large concentration of the speakers are located in the Westernmost part of Niger Republic; Other speakers inhabit adjacent areas of Burkina Faso and Mali and Nigeria, with small pockets of the speakers living in urban areas of northern Ghana (Grimes 1996). Based on the

1996 population figures (Harrison et al 1997: reported in the 14th edition of the ethnologue) about 2,042,000 people spoke the Songhay dialect in Niger (representing about 23% of the total population) and approximately 804, 000 in the neighbouring countries; this figure 50,000 are said to be Nigerians. The dialectal spread represented by number of the speakers based on dialect and country is given in the table below:

Table 1. Population of Speakers of Southern Songhay dialects (Source; Harrison et al (1997) taken from the edition of Ethnologue of world's languages)

	Mali	Niger	Burkina Faso	Beni	Nigeria
Songhay (W.E.C K)	6003 000 (W.E.C)	489,000 (K.E)	122, 700 (C.K)	-	-
Songhay-Kurtey	-	44,100	-	-	-
Songhay-Wogo	-	28.800	-	-	-
Zarma	-	1,427,00	600	Some	50,000
Dendi	-	53,100	-	30,00	A few

W.E.C K. – Western, Eastern, Central, Kaado

Zarma speech communities are made up of several dozen of smaller ethnic groups, who were either indigenous to the area prior to the creation of Songhay Empire and have assimilated into the Djerma-Songhai or otherwise are people of Djerma-Songhai who have distinguished themselves sometimes in the pre-colonial period via dialect, political structure or religion. Groups usually taken to be part and parcel of Djerma, but who are said to be historically distinctive are the Gabda, Kado, Tinga, and Sorko peoples. The Zarma largely live in the arid lands of the Sahel. Many are also found in the Niger River for irrigation, growing millet, Sorghum and rice (See Fuglested 1983).

According to (Fuglestad (1983) and Grimes (1996) the Zarma are believed to have migrated, from what is now the Fula region around Lac Debo Mali during the Songhai Empire and settled first in Anzouna and Zarmaganda in the 16th Century. In the 18th century many Zarma are said to resettled south to the Niger River valley, the Fakara plateau and Ziguï in what is now Southwest Niger near Niamey. They formed a number of small communities, each led by a Djermakoy, these polities soon found themselves pressured from the north by the Tuareg and the Fula from the Southeast, Presently, Zarma is after Hausa, the second largest ethnic groups in the Niger Republic and they are reported to have close cultural affinities with Songhay.

Djermakoy Aboubakar is said to be the founder of the Dosso state from his Taguru clan around 1750 AD, which remained as a small collection of villages in the Dallol Basso valley until the 1820s, when it led much of the resistance to the Sokoto caliphate. Even though, subsequently, Dosso fell under the control of the Amir of Gando (a subdivision of Sokoto) between 1849 and 1856, they retained their Djermakoy and the nominal rule of a much larger Zarma territory and were converted to Islam. During the reign of Djermakoy Kosson (C. 1856-65) all of the eastern Zarma were united, and a small state stretching from Tibbo and

Beri in the north to Gafiadey in the south and Bankadey and Tombokware in the east, were left out (for a detailed discussion see Decalo 1979, Fuglestad 1983).

2.1.1 The *Zarma* Language

Zarma is one of the important Songhay speech varieties. It is also differently called *Djerma*, *Dyarma*, *Dyabarma* *Zabarma*, *Adzerma* and *Zarbana*. *Zarma* language is subsumed under the larger grouping of Songhai language family. Differently put, it is a tonal dialect of Songhay dialect cluster (with Songhay and Dendi) and is generally considered to be unrelated to any other known language or language group. Greenberg (1963) considers it to be a part of the Nilo-Saharan language family, it has also been classified as Congo-Kordofanian.

The language is called *Zarma* by the speakers in Nigeria, Benin, and Burkina Faso, but *Zarmaci* in Mali (Grimes: 1996). Having provided a general cross-regional account of the historical and geolinguistic distribution of *Zarma*, we shall, at this point, venture to provide a brief sociolinguistic and demographic profile particularly, in *Bankanu* District of Kware Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

2.2 Historical and Sociolinguistic Account of *Zarma* in Sokoto State of Nigeria

Perhaps, it might not be out of place, at this juncture, to briefly trace the historical origin of *Zarma* generally in Sokoto state and Bankanu, in particular. Equally important, is the need to identify and sociolinguistically characterize *Zarma*, as a community both within the confines of the state and the context of *Bankanu* and its environs. The historical account is based largely on the oral source through a long series of interactive interview sessions and discussions with the chiefs and elders of the speech community as well as the educated youth. This is however, collaborated with the documented information found in the archives of Waziri Junaidu History Bureau of Sokoto State. To this we now turn.¹

2.2.1 A Brief History of *Zarma* in Sokoto State

The presence of *Zarma* speakers in *Sokoto* State of Nigeria, presumably predates the period of Sokoto Jihad and includes the times during the preparatory stages, during the Jihad and its aftermath, stretching as far back as two centuries. The founding father of *Zarma* in *Sokoto* state and the neighbouring states of *Kebbi* and *Zamfara* and beyond was *Saidu Alfa* (*Alfa* means scholar) a disciple of Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo who first came from *Birnin Bayero*, specifically, the town called *Danchando*, about 200 years ago. He is a descendent of a scholarly ancestry. His grandfather was called *Idirisu*. After a long academic sojourn across the states mentioned above and a long period of participation in the proclamation for the Jihad and the Jihad itself he settled down in *Bankanu*.² During the course of the Jihad struggles that include teaching and preaching of Islam across Old Sokoto State (an aggregate

¹ I would like to express my sincere and profound gratitude to Amiru Shehu of Bankanu and Sarkin Rafinkasgada for their unflinching support hospitality and patience during the course of my research.

² **Bankanu** is derivable, originally from “*Bani Zumbu*” quoted from the speech made by *Sulton Muhammad Bello* (the Son of Usmanu DanFodiyo) after he prayed his jummaa prayer, he said “*Bani Zumbu*” meaning “there is peace after all and no more wars”.

of present Sokoto Kebbi and Zamfara states) *Saidu Alfa* used to leave behind a large number of his learned students wherever he went across these states. This is responsible for the scattered *Zarma* speakers within these states. But then what are the sociolinguistic and geographical credentials of the speakers of this language in the state. This we address presently.

2.2.2 Sociolinguistic and Geographical Profile of *Zarma* in Sokoto State

Zarma is predominantly spoken in *Bankanu* district of Kware Local Government Area of Sokoto State of Nigeria, with large number of speakers found in speech communities that include, *Bankanu* and its hamlets: *Nyale*³, *Hebbewa*⁴, *Bangu*, *Fandu*, *Gandu*, *Kuube*, *Rahim giginya*, *lawal*, *Tungat Bahago*, *Kwaazaarii*, *Kodai*, *Kasgada*, and *Kainuwa*. Speakers of the language are also found in local government areas, such as *Gwadabawa*, *Binji*, *Illela*, *Shagari* (particularly in *Tudun Zabarmawa*, *Darin Guru*, *Bulanyaki*, and *Gidan Tudu*), *Tambuwal* (located precisely in the area called *Zabarmawa*, 5km away from *Tambuwal* town), Sokoto South (in *Tudan Zabarmawa*) and *Wammako* (in *Gidan Dare*, *Runjin Sambo*, and *Gidan Igwai*) located in Sokoto metropolis). Most *Zarma* speakers are bilinguals (with proficiency in *Zarma* and *Hausa*) with a sizeable number of monolinguals. There are 12 ruling families and these include: *famai*⁵, *Bankadawundi*, *Lawzai*, *Taya*, *Sabirai*, *Badilawa*⁶, *Garasai*, *Gigunai Tondicirai*, *Kafi*, *Koftikwara*, and *Sasukwara*. The past and present rulers of *Bankanu*, Sequentially comprises of *Saidu Alfa*, *Maiyaki Alfaizi* (Son of a scholar), *Abdul Rahman Mallam*, *Abdullahi Haliru Amiru*, *Ibrahim Amiru Sarkin Yaki*, *Liman Musa*, *Amiru Umaru*, *Amiru Ibrahim Amiru Almusdafa*, *Amiru Shuaibu*, and *Amiru Shehu* (the current chief) The title bearer of *Sarkin Gona*, a member of the emirate council of the Sultanate, is normally exclusively reserved for its indigenous *Zarma* native speakers of regal descent. Generally *Zarma* native speakers exude a strong sense of ethnic and language loyalty. This loyalty is so pronounced that they don't allow inter-marriage; only inter-marriage of females from other ethnic groups are condonable. Once a female from another tribe is brought into the family hold of *Zarma*, she has no choice other than to learn to speak the language. The present research, has shown that, it takes only a minimal period of one year to do so. It is noteworthy, that *Zarma* speakers in *Bankanu* district as a whole, largely only marry native speakers of the language. However, cases of inter-marriages evident in this study is found among the indigenous native speakers that relocated to Sokoto metropolis. But to the contrary, immigrant speakers are vehemently opposed to inter-marriages and hardly allow it. This brings us to the issue of typology with regard to *Zarma* native speakers found in Sokoto State.

2.2.3 Typology of *Zarma* Speakers in Sokoto State

Broadly, two distinct groups of *Zarma* native speakers can be identified in Sokoto State; indigenous and non-indigenous immigrants. We have already extensively discussed the former in the preceding sections, we now turn to the latter in due course.

³ “Nyale” are originally Hausa and Fulani native Speakers who settled there and now speak *Zarma*

⁴ The same thing applies to *Zarma* speakers of *Hebbena*

⁵ The present chief is from *Famai* ruling family

⁶ Presently, no surviving member of this Royalty

The non-indigenous *Zarma* speakers are migrants who migrated to Sokoto from the neighbouring Niger Republic in search of economic livelihood. This is a case of labour migration attributable to colonial and post-colonial socio-economic and geopolitical and historical forces affecting sub-Saharan Africa, with the attendant sporadic movement of population all over the environment (Saulawa, P.C).

The identities of *Zarma* labour migrants are conspicuous enough, generally, distinguished by menial professions (Semi-Skilled) and petty trades. According to Saulawa (Personal Communication) typically, they are *Yan Taula* (drawers of water), '*Yan gyaran takalma* (cobblers), '*Yan goge takalmi* (shoe shiners), *Yan dauke* (carriers of assorted petty trade items and or itinerant sellers) retail shop-keepers and few other successful traders. The fact that these professions and trades in most cases involve virile young men and requires diligence, perseverance and patience, perhaps, sometimes despised by the host society have made the migrant *Zarma Speakers* to have a monopolistic control in the area. Undoubtedly, any attempt at momentarily withdrawal of such services would produce a multiplier effect on the entire consuming population, especially the have-nots, But what is worth noting, however, is that those migrants have remained self-employed and their migration appears neither regulated nor a fully registered type but heavily dependent on social networks and support from migrant 'bridgeheads' already established in Sokoto state and beyond.

These particular *Zarma* speakers have, also, established a kind of communal residences at the city's peripheral layouts encouraged possibly with a view to preservation of their social and cultural networks. This however, is not to deny the fact that some of them have intergraded with the larger community and the process of language shift is beginning to set in. Another sociolinguistic characteristic of these speakers is their insistence on communicating via their language and ethnic cohorting. Other salient features that set them off distinctively, from the rest of their host speech communities is that generally they neither marry from other nor give out the hand of their females to non-native speakers of *Zarma*, contrary to the dictates of their religion, which is Islam. However, there are few cases of male speakers marrying from other linguistic groups. Immigrant *Zarma* speakers generally (i.e both the young and the old) attend traditional Islamic schools that are necessarily operated by only *Zarma* speakers It is also evident that the language of instruction is *Zarma* and Arabic texts are translated into *Zarma* during the formal process of teaching and learning.

3. On the Methodological Considerations

The present study employ the techniques of fieldwork in the sense of Hyman's (2001:16) conception of fieldwork, as that which constitutes" a study that involves human participation beyond the investigator, typically conducted not only in the first person, but also involves either a second person (elicitation) or a third person (observation). A further characterization of fieldwork advanced by Hyman (ibid) which is the framework of investigation within which the present study is conducted, is "the necessity for the researcher to acquire linguistic material directly from other speakers."

In a nutshell, the apt characterization of fieldwork as conceived by Hyman is the requirement of "going to the field. According to him, in principle, "anything can be studied in the field.

Hence, the present work is typical of a fieldwork research, since it falls within the rubric of Hyman's (Ibid) definition of the term.

Basically, the reason for going to the field is of course to find speakers of language chosen for linguistic investigation. Beyond this, two situations are identified in the literature: the first is where the research question(s) could have been studied at home, if only native speakers were available, according to Hyman (2006) most important works fall in this category; the second situation is where the research could only have been done *sur place*. In Hyman's view virtually all sociolinguist and ethnolinguistic work fall in this category. Precisely the present on-going research is typical of this second category.

The field-work linguistic techniques employed in this study include field trips of several days at different times over a long period of time, observing and interviewing the speakers in their original "aboriginal locations chatting in a relaxed atmosphere with the prospective consultants and cross-section of several speakers that cut across class, age, and gender boundary lines (ie chiefs, local Islamic teachers, young males and females *Zarma* speakers). These techniques could be subsumed under the research instrument "observer-participant" which avails one to experience "first-hand" information. (see Aronoff & Janie 2003, for a detailed account). However, these techniques are supplemented with information gathered from displaced *Zarma* speakers, away from their homelands. The virtue of doing this has been stressed by Munro (2003:140), where she argued that information gathered from displaced speakers is as valid as those gathered in their homelands.

Having established the framework within which this work is conducted we explore the strategies that serve as an effective machinery for language maintenance in the speech community under discussion.

4. Mechanism of language Maintenance in *Zarma* Speech Communities of Sokoto State.

In this section attempt is made to explore and make bare the various strata of sociolinguistic strategies evident in this study, that serve as an internal mechanism for sustainable linguistic growth and development of *Zarma* as a distinct linguistic entity defying the overwhelming sociolinguistic forces of linguistic encroachment, language shift and language endangerment posed by Hausa, a predominant language in the state, despite a long period of contact between the two languages of about 2 centuries.

First and foremost, there are very few cases of exogamy (ie marriage outside one's ethnic group) which sometimes trigger language shift. The only exception, are few cases of male *Zarma* speakers marrying from other language speakers. This is true, both in the case of indigenous and non-indigenous immigrant *Zarma* speakers. Thus there is consistent and persistent refusal of this speech communities in Sokoto, especially in *Bankanu* district to engage in inter-marriages, they only engage in intra- marriages. This is the first formidable strategy, identified in this work that protect the language, supposedly from the processes of languages decline. This is sociolinguistically remarkable source of language growth. Because, evidences available to us have shown that virtually all cases of inter-marriages that involve male *Zarma* speakers marrying the daughters of other linguistic groups, including *Hausa* and

Fulbe speakers, particularly, in *Bankanu*, depict a linguistic scenario of language shift. In that, generally the married non-native speakers learn to speak the language within the shortest period of time. For instance, one of the chiefs in this speech community, married a Fulani lady from Wamakko and brought her into the family-hold and according to him, within a period of just one year she is able to speak the language. It is noteworthy that this society allows married women to go out only when it becomes necessary. The significance of this fact is that as they are losing child speakers of the *Zarma* in diaspora due to the dominant nature of the language environments in question; they are also gaining new speakers in *Bankanu*. Moreover, *Bankanu* is a polygamous social set up. Perhaps, this in a kind of language engineering, also a systematic linguistic repression.

Generally, mothers in most speech communities of the world are great custodians of their respective native languages (cf. Ehrlich 2006:311) and serve as the first viable linguistic repertoire for child first language acquisition. Presumably, this underscore why *Zarma* in *Bankanu* and some parts of Sokoto never give out their daughters to *non-Zarma* speakers no matter the socio-economic and political benefits or prospects such an exercise entails; real cases exist where highly placed (socio-economically and politically) *non-Zarma* indigenous native speakers that requested for the hand of *Zarma* daughters, but were turned down. These facts dovetail into the next possible identifiable internal linguistic resource that fosters language preservation in the speech community under consideration- the phenomenal language loyalty.

Arguably, the subjective attitudes of speech communities towards its own and other languages are paramount for predicting language shifts, in this study, there is evidence to the contrary. In *Zarma* speech communities investigated they exude a strong sense of language loyalty. They do not exhibit the slightest linguistic inferiority complex. This language attitude constitutes a formidable fortress that shields the language from language degeneration or decline.

A much subtler, yet more pervasive predictor of the continued use of language is the prestige attached to it. This obviously applies to *Zarma* a language used virtually in all daily activities.

Another equally important key factor in language maintenance are the culture of self-reliance and economic buoyancy of the speakers. These are some of the characteristic features of *Zarma* in Sokoto. This situation makes it possible for the speakers to assert their ethnic identity and socio-economic independence with the concomitant result of language preservation. This lends support to the suggestions made in the literature (Crystal 2000:132, Suzanne 2003) that “predictably an endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their wealth and prestige relative to the dominant speech community”. Thus, economics being the strongest force influencing the fate of endangered languages. More subtly tied to this and the preceding sociolinguistic catalysts responsible for language maintenance is citizenship and ethnic pride derivable from a long –standing rich, famous and reputable historical background. This is the next point we consider.

The indigenous *Zarma* speakers, possibly, are conscious of the fact that they are indigenous to the land and that their history could be traced back to the period before Sokoto caliphate

was established give them a strong sense of belonging and put them on par with their *Hausa* and *Fulani* indigenous linguistic counterparts. Invariably, too this provide a solid basis for the *Zarma* to remain as an independent sociolinguistic entity, thereby forestalling any external linguistic influence that may temper with the language which serve as strong cohesive ethnolinguistic device for language survival. Presumably, too, the fact that *Zarma* is a leading indigenous language in the not too far neighbouring country, Niger and the fact that the speakers are politically at the helm of affairs in that country provide a continued source of ethnic and language solidarity to *Zarma* in Sokoto state, Moreover, *Bankanu*, our primary subject of inquiry is close to the border.

Furthermore, it is evidently clear, that since the immigrant *Zarma* speakers usually concentrate in particular locations in the host community and establish an effective and efficient viable social networking, there is very high possibility for the language prosperity.

Again, interestingly enough, this also concur with the observation made in the literature that” where large groups of immigrants concentrate in particular geographical areas, they are often better able to preserve their languages. Perhaps in the case of our subject of inquiry there are elements of strong language awareness that dictate the linguistic behaviour of immigrant *Zarma*, which explains their resilience.

By and large, demographic factors, the statistical distribution of certain characteristics of a population such as sheer proportion in each ethnic or mother tongue group, degree of bilingualism , age and manner in which second language is acquired, birth rates, degree of segregation and territorialisation social class, age, sex patterns of in-migration and out-migration rates of exonomy have been reported in the literature (see, for example, Downes 1998) to have effect and intersect with or reflect other factors of maintenance and shift. The present study, has proved the presence of these fundamental ingredients of language maintenance consequently, preventing the linguistic hegemony of any potential language colonizer in the area under study.

5. Concluding Remarks

There is no doubt from the foregoing discussion and evidences gathered in this on-going research that certainly, language preservation is an interplay of several sociolinguistic variables that are both internal and external to the speech community in question. However, there other residual issues that only further research can establish. First, despite the tenacious language attachment depicted by *Zarma* speakers, and the various sociolinguistic strategies operating there is gradual latent language loss that has set in partly due to the inter-marriage practiced by the male speakers, which is hitherto considered to be sociolinguistically and culturally deviant to other *Zarma* native speakers. Second, other precursor to this likely imminent language shift and /or decline is the increasing number of loss of child speakers from those *Zarma* families that live in densely populated Hausa speech communities particularly in Sokoto. A case in point here is absence of *Zarma* speakers in *Tudun Zabarmawa*, originally an exclusive residential area for *Zarma* speakers in Sokoto metropolis. Third, there is the urgent need to carry out further research to establish whether or not there is linguistic borrowing into *Zarma* from Hausa or *Fulfulde* and vice-versa at least in *Bankanu*.

The *Zarma* speakers claimed there is absence of such process in their language. This can only be determined by further inquiry.

Finally, both *Hausa* and *Fulfulde* (ie the two indigenous major languages in the state) are used in the media (in the case of Hausa, both in radio and television; but in the case of *Fulfulde* only in radio) to the exclusion of *Zarma*, whether or not this can precipitate the process of language shift and portend some level of language endangerment is unclear at this stage of investigation. Perhaps a further research into these issues and other related ones such as codemixing, codeswitching patterns and linguistic borrowing from other neighboring languages into *Zarma* may possibly shed light on these state of affairs.

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