

## **RUSSELL G. SCHUH: A BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Roxana Ma Newman

Russell Galen Schuh, affectionately known by his Hausa sobriquet as Malam Takalmi (“Mr. Shoe”), was born on March 14, 1941, in Corvallis, a small town in Oregon, although he spent most of his childhood in Klamath Falls, which he considers his hometown. Russ took an early interest in foreign languages, and earned a B.A. in French at the University of Oregon in 1963. He spent the following year at Northwestern University as a teaching assistant, earning his M.A. in French. It was there that he was introduced to the relatively new field of linguistics and began to develop his lifelong curiosity about the structural properties of the world’s different languages. After his M.A., he spent a year studying linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, where he was exposed to Asian and Native American languages. By then, he knew he was “hooked, born to be a linguist.”

Not content to continue being just a student, and wanting to broaden his experience, Russ embarked on a path that he says was “*the* defining moment” of his life: he volunteered for the Peace Corps in 1965. He went to Niger, a franco-phone African country, and there he spent two years supervising adult literacy programs in the Agadez-Tahoua-Bilma region, applying his linguistics training to learn both Tamashaq, a Berber language, and Hausa, a Chadic language.

Like many returned Peace Corps volunteers, Russ came back ready to go on to graduate school. He enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), which had a nationally prominent program in African studies and African linguistics, and in a year (1968) earned a second M.A., this time in linguistics. Russ supported himself at UCLA as a teaching assistant responsible for teaching all levels of Hausa. In 1969-70, he interrupted his degree program to

return to West Africa as a research assistant for Paul Newman, who had received a National Science Foundation grant to conduct research on a number of Chadic languages in northern Nigeria. Working on this project, says Russ, gave him the research and geographical focus that he would subsequently develop over his linguistic career. Russ, accompanied by his wife Maxine, was based in Potiskum, now a thriving commercial center, but then a small town without electricity or running water. There he did research on Ngizim while Maxine collected data on Karekare, another West Chadic language. Russ's nearly 500-page dissertation on Ngizim syntax earned him a Ph.D. in 1972.

Russ stayed on at UCLA as an acting assistant professor, teaching Hausa and general linguistics, until Newman, who had been appointed director of a newly formed Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages (CSNL) at Abdullahi Bayero College in Kano—now Bayero University—again tapped Russ to join him, this time as a research fellow of the center. Russ spent most of his two years (1973 to 1975) in Gashua, a remote town out in the bush doing ground-breaking fieldwork and writing up grammatical sketches on Bade, continuing to gather further data on Ngizim, while also learning about the little-known Manga dialect of Kanuri, a non-Chadic language. It was during those years that their first daughter Gretchen was born. (Their second daughter Elizabeth was born in the States.)

In 1975, a tenure-track position in African linguistics opened up at UCLA, for which almost all of the research staff at CSNL applied, but for which Russ was ultimately and wisely chosen. He has been there ever since, teaching with enthusiasm about the nature of language, phonological analysis, the principles of historical change, and Hausa *per se*. He became full professor in 1984. Over the past 30 years, Russ has made some 15 trips to West Africa, some teaching related, but mostly for field research. For example, in 1982–83, Russ accepted a visiting professorship at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria, teaching courses on Hausa linguistics—taught entirely in Hausa! He spent two summers in 1987 and 1988 as director of the University of California's Education Summer Abroad Program in Togo, where he also worked on two Togolese languages, and the summer of 1991 in Dakar, Senegal, where he interviewed Wolof linguists and poets and collected Wolof poetry and songs, related to his growing linguistic interest in poetic meter in West African languages.

What is immediately evident in reviewing Russ's record as a scholar is his wide intellectual curiosity about languages, his indefatigable energy as a field linguist, and his uncanny ability to write with little revision, which has permitted him to be so prolific. It is therefore no surprise that Russ has published studies on a wide array of languages. Within Chadic, he has done major work on Hausa,

Ngizim, Miya, Bade, Bole, and Ngamo, and to a lesser extent on Bele, Galambu, Gera, Geruma, Karekare, and Kirfi, all West Chadic languages, as well as on Biu-Mandara (Central) Chadic languages Bura, Gude, Kilba (whose speakers he managed to locate among the international film and television students of Columbia College in Hollywood!) and Gidar, an East Chadic language. To broaden his knowledge of the Afroasiatic phylum to which Chadic belongs, Russ has taken classes at UCLA on Arabic, Hebrew, Ancient Egyptian, and Tigrinya. Among non-Chadic West African languages, he has done what he calls “a non-trivial amount of work” on Tamashaq (Berber); Fula (West Atlantic); Akposso, Avatime, and Ewe (all Kwa); Kanuri (Nilo-Saharan); and Wolof (West Atlantic), and has even published studies on some of these. Not to be confined to the languages of Africa, Russ has more recently developed a keen interest in the structures of Bulgarian, Korean, Russian, Tamil, and Turkish!

Russ’s gift for understanding languages, his “no-nonsense” approach to analysis, his ability to focus his energies, and his love of writing converge in a way that enables him to write easily and clearly. I remember during the CSNL years when Russ and Maxine came to Kano for a center meeting or to get supplies that Russ would typically find a place to sit in the middle of our living room with people all around, focus his thoughts, and simply start writing, blocking out any conversation or noise going on around him. As part of his teaching, Russ often writes up short original studies of language data for his students as models for the kind of research papers he expects from them. On top of his many publications, Russ has a long list of unpublished manuscripts including a monograph-length manuscript on Gidar written in French. Many of these are available on his personal web pages.

Among the more than 100 items in the accompanying list of books, articles, reviews, and edited series that attest to Russ’s energy and productivity, the following are highlighted. (Individual items are noted here by a square bracketed number.) His first book, published in 1978, consists of grammatical sketches of five previously undescribed West Chadic languages spoken in the Bauchi area [22]. This work, based on a mere four days of intensive fieldwork in five different villages, includes descriptions for each language of the verbal complex accompanied by a short wordlist. His delimited goal was to get a glimpse into certain areas of the verbal systems and provide a general phonological sketch that could be used for subgrouping purposes. His *Dictionary of Ngizim* (1981) [24], based on fieldwork done in 1969 and at various times from 1973 to 1975, comprises a substantial base of data from direct elicitation and transcribed texts of

folktales, oral history, ethnography, and proverbs. The dictionary has a large Ngizim-English section and a smaller English-Ngizim wordlist.

Russ's most remarkable work is his 1998 *Grammar of Miya* [46], a language of the North Bauchi subgroup of West Chadic. It is a work that took many years in the making and is surely one of the most thorough descriptions of a Chadic language other than Hausa ever published. He first started work on Miya in 1982-83 while he was a visiting professor at ABU, and wrote a nearly complete draft in 1987, but with teaching obligations and five years in administration, he was unable to get a final version done until 1995. In 1996, he made a final short field visit to Miya country to check some data while absorbed in a completely different project in Kano. In other published work, Russ has written a range of descriptive and historical studies on aspectual systems in verb morphology, determiner systems, phonological systems, tonal systems, language in relation to history, and metrical structures in the poetry of several African languages.

Closely related to Russ's long years of involvement with a closely-knit group of Chadic languages has been his determination to give something back to the communities that have worked so enthusiastically with him—an attitude no doubt inspired by his earlier Peace Corps experience in literacy projects. He has always sought to involve his speakers in the work that he was doing, and to consider them as collaborators, producing works together that they could use with pride of ownership. When he was in Gashua in 1973-75, he worked with educated native speakers to develop orthographies for Ngizim and Bade, which were then employed in the preparation of booklets of traditional oral literature (with Russ's own illustrations) that were printed locally for community use [93 to 96].

More recently, between 2001 and 2004, he received a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation for a "Yobe Languages Research Project" to do further research on the five Nigerian languages indigenous to Yobe State (Bade, Bole, Karekare, Ngamo, and Ngizim), working with his former Ph.D. student Alhaji Maina Gimba (Maiduguri University) and teams of educated speakers and community leaders. The primary goal was to develop good-sized, linguistically sophisticated dictionaries of each language documenting such features as derivational morphology, compounds, idioms, and loanwords. The project resulted in a remarkable set of attractively designed trilingual (with Hausa and English) dictionaries—ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 head entries—that were locally printed and published [59 to 64], works of great pride for these language communities. The linguistic value of the dictionaries lies in the methodic documentation and phonological accuracy of the data, attesting to a rich lexical store that will be useful for further research and comparative work. The Yobe

project also produced a parallel set of oral literature readers in these languages [97 to 105]. Of this highly intensive project, Russ says he had never worked so hard, but also never felt so satisfied as when it was all accomplished.

Although the works above were locally published and are available in print form only in Nigeria, they in fact are accessible to the larger public through a graphically attractive web site at UCLA. One of Russ's most admirable scholarly qualities is his strong belief in the openness of science and sharing of knowledge. The power of the Internet provides him the perfect means to do so, and his mastery of the technology enables him to make most of his recent works freely available as downloadable pdf files and searchable lexical databases (for example, see [www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Yobe/yobe.html](http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Yobe/yobe.html)).

Given his career-long devotion to the study of "minority" Chadic languages, it is ironic that Russ is probably more broadly known for what he has done for the largest and best known Chadic language, namely Hausa. Over the 30 years that he has taught Hausa, Russ has produced a substantial output of pedagogical materials, in print and non-print media, undoubtedly more than any other linguist involved in Hausa language teaching. In 1976, he co-authored a textbook, *Spoken Hausa* [85], modeled on now-outdated structuralist pedagogical principles, but still in print. In the 1980s he developed computer assisted language instruction (CALI) modules for Hausa [87] (and Wolof) in the form of interactive exercises using HyperCard software. In 1990, he completed the draft of a new pedagogical grammar, "Hausa a Aikace" [Hausa in Action], co-authored with then Ph.D. student, Lawan Danladi Yalwa (Bayero University), which, though never published, was widely used by Hausa language teachers. In the mid-1990s, Russ collaborated with Abdullahi Bature (Bayero University) and Richard Randell (Stanford University) on a videofilming project in Kano that produced a set of three videotapes, edited down to five hours, featuring more than 90 short segments of natural speech in cultural contexts, controlled for grammar and vocabulary [89]. Supplementing the tapes is an enormous body of written material (transcriptions, translations, exercise manual, grammatical explanations, vocabulary) that Russ has subsequently developed and made available on a UCLA Web site [90], thus creating an integrated video-based course to teach beginning and intermediate levels of Hausa. These materials constitute one of the best video courses ever developed to teach an African language. This ambitious project, on which he has spent thousands of hours by his own reckoning and which is still evolving, is by far his most successful pedagogical work.

As if his busy agenda of research and teaching were not enough, Russ has taken on major administrative responsibilities. For example from 1989 to 1993 he

served as chair of the UCLA Department of Linguistics, one of the largest in the country, a task he approached with the same dedication he exhibits in his scholarly work. He also devoted fifteen years (1976 to 1991) as editor of *Studies in African Linguistics* (*SAL*), the leading American journal for African linguistics.

Apart from his professional work, Russ manages to make time for personal pursuits. He has been an avid runner for years and during the past decade has participated in the Los Angeles marathon, where he came in fifth for his age group in 2002, one of his proudest moments. He considers running his major passion, doing an average of 45 miles a week, during which, he says, he does all his critical thinking about linguistics. In addition, Russ has recently resumed playing the clarinet—an instrument he had played throughout high school and college—and has been performing around the Los Angeles area for several years in a six-piece Bulgarian wedding band. The energetic, intricate rhythms and ever-changing meters of Bulgarian and other Balkan music are a source of fascination and challenging to play, but if anyone would be up to the task, it would be Russ. The band has developed such a reputation that they were invited in the summer of 2005 to perform in an international folk music festival in Bulgaria.

Given Russ's creativity, energy, enthusiasm, and youthfulness of spirit, we can be sure that he will continue to be engaged in all the areas of activity that currently drive him—Chadic linguistics, poetic meters, Hausa pedagogy, running, and musical performance—and we anticipate many productive years and new forays in the future.

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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Items (59) to (64) consists of linguistically sophisticated editions of trilingual dictionaries (local language-English-Hausa) of several northeastern Nigerian languages, published locally for a local readership.

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## B. Reviews and Review Articles

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### C. Pedagogical Works, Print and Non-Print Media

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- (86) 1986. "How should we teach Hausa?" In *The Design and Evaluation of African Language Learning Materials*, ed. by D. Dwyer, pp. 67–77. East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
- (87) 1989-1991 (with A. Wysocki and Lawan Danladi Yalwa). *CALI Excercises for Hausa*. (Twenty interactive multi-media computerized exercises in HyperCard.)
- (88) 1989-1991 (with A. Wysocki and Dieynaba Gaye). *CALI Excercises for Wolof*. (Twenty interactive multi-media computerized exercises in HyperCard.)
- (89) 1996-1998 (with Abdullahi Bature and Richard Randell). *Hausar Baka—Gani Ya Kori Ji* [Oral Hausa—A Picture is Worth 1000 Words]. (Series of three videotapes for elementary and intermediate study of Hausa.) Windsor CA: World of Languages, Incorporated. (Available from East Bay Media Center, Berkeley, CA.)

(90) 1996-present. *Hausa*. (Evolving Web site on the Hausa language, including materials related to (89) and other grammatical, dialectal, cultural, as well as reference information.) [www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Hausa/](http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Hausa/).

(91) 2000 (with W. R. Leben). "Multimedia learning materials for African languages." *Journal of the African Language Teachers Association* 1(2):51–65.

(92) 2001. "Easy development of multi-media language teaching materials using QuickTime Pro." *Journal of African Language Learning and Teaching* 1:143–64.

#### **D. Language Texts Series**

Served as project designer, supervisor, translator, and editor of primary language text collections of the verbal arts (proverbs, riddles, songs) in different languages of northeastern Nigeria, published locally and designed for a local readership.

(93) 1974 (editor). *Tǎrzǎnan' Amsi* [Tales from Amshi] (in the Bade language). Kano: Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages.

(94) 1974 (editor). *Mimin' Yin* [Tales from Yin] (in the Bade language). Kano: Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages.

(95) 1975 (editor). *Tǎmtǎmen' Ad'o* [Tales from the South] (in the Bade language). Kano: Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages.

(96) 1975 (editor). *Tǎrzǎnako, Mimiko, Tǎmtǎmeko dǎ Makaranta Gasiwa* [Here's a Tale, Here's a Tale, Here's a Tale from Gashua School] (in the Bade language). Kano: Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages. (Reprinted in 2004 by the Yobe Languages Research Project.)

Items (97) to (105) are collections of folktales in five languages of Yobe State. The texts with line-by-line English translations can be downloaded in pdf format from [www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Yobe/yobe.html](http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Yobe/yobe.html).

(97) 2003 (editor). *Terzena Gabade* [Tales in the Bade Language]. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.

(98) 2003 (editor). *Dindi Bo Pikka ko gama Yagana Amma Mazawun* [Tales in the Bole Language from Yagana Amma Mazawun]. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.

(99) 2003. (editor). *Dindeno ka gi ma Malam Kariya Gambo* [Tales from Malam Kariya Gambo] (in the Karekare language). Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.

- (100) 2003 (editor). *Dintir Bo Ngamo* [Tales in the Ngamo Language]. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.
- (101) 2003 (editor). *Zenzen da rik Adamu Helman Sale* [Tales from Adamu Helman Sale] (in the Ngizim language). Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.
- (102) 2004 (editor). *Komno Bo Bole* [Verbal Arts in the Bole Language], compiled by Alhaji Maina Gimba, Malam Baba Ali, and Madu Bah. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.
- (103) 2004 (editor). *Asim ma Bo Karai-Karai* [Verbal Arts in the Karekare Language], compiled by Malam Kariya Gambo, Malam Umaru Manu Karofi, and Rifkatu I. Bumi. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.
- (104) 2004 (editor). *Asum Bo Ngamo* [Verbal Arts in the Ngamo Language], compiled by Isa Adamu Gashinge, Jibir Audu Janga Dole, and Umaru Mamu Goge. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.
- (105) 2004 (editor). *Gamzazegai Gagaya Ngezem* [Verbal Arts in the Ngizim Language], compiled by Ahmed Mohammed Bedu, Joseph Ya'u Yakubu, Mohammed Alhaji Adamu, and Usman Babayo Garba. Potiskum: Yobe Languages Research Project.

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