

## Abstract

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**Title:** Status and use of languages in Sudan: Data and results from surveys in Nyala and Khartoum

**Swedish title:** Språkens status och användning i Sudan: Data och resultat från enkätundersökningar i Nyala och Khartoum

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Based on the results of sociolinguistic surveys in Nyala and Khartoum, this thesis describes the status and use of Arabic and other Sudanese languages in the Republic of Sudan. The surveys were conducted among a total number of 1,368 speakers of Darfurian languages in Nyala and southern Sudanese languages in Khartoum, by means of questionnaires. In addition, this thesis presents a sociolinguistic profile of Sudan and defines and discusses sociolinguistic concepts and theories, relating to multilingualism, language attitudes, language shift and the relationship between language, nation, ethnicity, and identity in the light of the Sudanese context. Arabic is the first language, second language, or lingua franca of the majority of the Sudanese population, while the more than one hundred other Sudanese languages are minority languages both in numerical and functional terms. The dominant position of Arabic, strengthened by language policies and socioeconomic changes, such as migration and urbanization, has led to a process of language shift toward Arabic among speakers of other Sudanese languages.

Data from Nyala and Khartoum shows that a majority of the respondents are bilingual in Arabic and another Sudanese language. Arabic is spoken as first language by most bilingual Darfurian respondents in Nyala, while most southern Sudanese respondents in Khartoum maintain their mother tongues as first language. The data demonstrates that the Nyala respondents mainly speak their Darfurian languages in their places of origin, i.e. rural areas in Darfur, not in Nyala. The surveys also indicate that many children and youths among the respondents both in Nyala and Khartoum are monolingual in Arabic, which confirms the tendency of language shift to Arabic among non-Arab ethnolinguistic communities in Sudan. An interesting finding is that girls and young women seem to be more inclined to use Arabic than their male peers. In addition to the demographic factors of age, gender, and ethnicity, external factors, such as integration into and exposure to the dominant Arabic-speaking northern Sudanese culture, also influence language use and attitudes. The southern Sudanese respondents display a greater degree of positive attitudes to their languages than to Arabic. They maintain their social distinction and cultural heritage by resisting assimilation into the northern Sudanese culture. This attitude of the southern Sudanese has been reinforced and politicized by the civil war in the South and by their social segregation in northern Sudan. In contrast to the southern Sudanese, the Darfurians have adopted a strategy of social assimilation, which encompasses extensive use of Arabic and intermarriage, and economic cooperation with speakers of Arabic.

**Keywords:** Sudan, Arabic, African languages, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, language use, language competence, language attitudes, language shift.