

## *Original Paper*

# The Role of Demographic Factors in the Process of Language Maintenance and Shift in Khartoum, Sudan

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### **Abstract**

*This paper intends to investigate the role of demographic factors such as sex, age, education, ethnicity, intermarriage, migration and job status in the process of language shift among ethnic migrant groups in Khartoum, Sudan. The paper depends on structured questionnaires to collect data on language presidency, language use and language attitudes among fourteen ethnic groups living in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. The main objective of the study is to investigate the role of these factors in accelerating or hindering the process of language shift among the groups under study. PSS was used in the process of data analysis using Qui square test to find correlation between demographic factors and language shift among the groups under investigation. Results showed a significant correlation between language shift and factors such as age, sex, and education among the Beja, the Darfurians and the Nuba Mountains ethnic groups. A less degree of significance between demographic factors and language shift was registered by the groups descending from Southern Sudan who showed a strong tendency to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage during their stay in Khartoum.*

### **Keywords**

*language maintenance, language shift, Khartoum, Sudan*

## **1. Background**

From a distant time in history to the nineteenth century efforts to create an artificial language to play the role of a universal language have been attempted. The prime objective was to find a language that would bind the linguistically diverse people of the world into a cohesive whole. With English on its way to assume such a position in recent decades, many people have been deeply concerned at the prospect. For them, English is an imperial language that threatens the world's rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Linguistic human right activities have begun countering this universalizing trend with language repair and maintenance programs. They stress the importance of diversity comparing the loss of a language to

the loss of species in the natural world. This trend contributed considerably to the growing concern for indigenous languages in a variety of multilingual countries around the world.

The concern for local languages in Sudan has come into being since 1972 when the Institute of African and Asian studies started the linguistic survey of Sudanese languages. The main aim of the program was to find an effective solution for the language problem in the country. To achieve this, a considerable amount of financial and human resources was provided. Unfortunately, despite the time and efforts spent, the program did not achieve the desired goals. Since then a number of studies were conducted on the linguistic situation in Sudan with special focus on language maintenance and shift among vernacular-speaking communities notably Abu Manga (1978), Mahmoud (1983), Zumrawi (1980), Miller and Abu Manga (1992), Jahalla (2001), Mugaddam (2006 a & 2006 b). Most of these studies proved that language shift towards Arabic was progressing significantly among the language groups examined.

This study tries to find a link between language shift and demographic factors such as age, sex, ethnic affiliation, and education among ethnic immigrants in Greater Khartoum. The reason behind choosing Khartoum as a field for the present study was its cosmopolitan nature and strategic location as a center for immigration movements from all over the country. Immigration movements to Khartoum have particularly increased in recent decades due to economic and political instabilities in vast areas of Sudan. As a result, people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds came into a close contact in an Arabic dominated environment. Since Arabic is the language of everyday communication, education, media, and official transaction in the new environment, immigrant ethnic groups will find themselves obliged to learn the language should they participate actively in Khartoum life. However, this process of adaptation takes some time to complete. As a first generation, the new settlers tended to retain their ethnic languages, but they were faced by a new reality: their languages were no longer viable and lacking social recognition in the new setting. As a direct consequence, they used more Arabic in speaking to their children even within the home domain. The next generation, being exposed to more Arabic will show a lesser degree of ethnic mother tongue retention. Thus, with each succeeding generation the proficiency in ethnic languages decreases with a simultaneous increase in the dominance of Arabic. If things go on this way, vernacular-speaking communities in Khartoum will experience an inevitable language loss or even language death in the long term.

In the light of the above arguments, the researcher has randomly selected 14 language groups planned to offer some geographic representation for Sudanese languages. They provide a very interesting case study as they are very traditional in the sense that each group is very loyal and committed to its own language and culture, yet directly confronted by Arabic, a powerful language on its way to displace ethnic languages in all domains of communication.

## 2. Methodology

The subjects of this study were randomly selected according to age, children, youth, and old people. The original number of respondents was 900 drawn from 15 language groups: Nobiin, Kenzi-Dongolese, Beja, Dinka, Shilluk, Viri, Madi, Gulfan, Nyimang, Miri, Zaghawa, Fur, Massalit, Daju, and Ingassana (60 subjects from each group). These groups were selected purposely to form some sort of geographic representation for the Sudanese languages. Thus, the eastern part of Sudan was represented by Beja, the Blue Nile by Ingassana, the South by Dinka, Shilluk, Viri, and Madi, the Nuba Hills By Gulfan, Nyimang, and Miri, Darfur by Zaghawa, Fur, Massalit, and Daju, and the North by Nobiin and Kenz-Dongolese. After checking and coding the completed questionnaires, the data representing the Ingassana were eliminated (the number of the target subjects was insufficient) and subsequently the number of subjects included in data analysis dropped to 840.

Subjects from the first age group (children) were selected randomly from the three towns constituting Greater Khartoum: Khartoum, Khartoum North, and Orndurman. Most of them were students of primary and secondary schools. Their overall number was 280 (20 subjects from each language group) and their age ranged between 10 to 19 years old. The schools in which these subjects were enrolled usually follow the ministry of education syllabus where Arabic is used as a medium of instruction as well as a subject. The second group of subjects, youth, consisted of university students, civil service employees, soldiers, workers, etc. They were 280 subjects representing the fourteen language groups examined (20 subjects from each language group). Their age ranged between 20 to 39 years old. The third group of subjects (old people) was also selected randomly from a variety of areas in Greater Khartoum and occupational backgrounds (teachers, soldiers, physicians, merchants, farmers, housewives, etc.). They were 280 subjects and their age ranged between 40 years and above. What is important about this group is that it included subjects from different educational backgrounds ranging from illiteracy to university level. Most of the educated ones had followed syllabuses in which Arabic was considerably represented as a medium of instruction and a subject.

### 2.1 Instrument

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher has found it very useful to adopt qualitative data collection methodology. A questionnaire was used to collect data on demographic information, language proficiency, multilingualism, language use, and language attitude. The questionnaire employed has been designed, developed and revised by Miller and Abu Manga (1992). However, the researcher made some minor changes and modifications so that it can meet the objectives of the study.

While subjects were asked to list the languages they could speak and order them according to the time of their acquisition, the remaining parts of the questionnaire required them to rate the languages specified as to the frequency and importance in space provided (always, often and sometimes). This rating is particularly significant for determining the level of language proficiency and the extent to which a language is used in a variety of domains. In other words, by means of this rating we were able to know

which language was spoken natively, as a second or third language and which ones were used predominantly in what societal domain.

Using SPSS package in the process of data analysis, we tried to find out whether a significant relationship exists between language shift or maintenance and demographic factors such as age, sex, occupation, level of education, intermarriage and place of birth. To this end, a Chi-square Test was conducted to determine whether there was an association between speaking a language natively and each of the demographic factors specified. The prime objective here is to present an empirically based evidence for the contribution of demographic factors to the process of language shift currently experienced by ethnic minority language communities in Khartoum.

### 3. Data Analysis, Discussion of Results and Interpretation

The main question of this study is “Is there a significant correlation between language shift and such demographic parameters like age, sex, occupation, level of education, intermarriage, and migration?” Demographic factors are particularly relevant in accounting for the speed of language shift. Resistance to language shift tends to last longer in rural than in urban areas. This is partly a reflection of the fact that rural groups tend to be isolated from the centers of political power, and they can meet almost all of their social and economic needs in the environment of the ethnic or minority language. For example, because of their relative isolation, ethnic minority immigrants who live in settlements outside Khartoum, where their social and economic needs are not directly linked with urban life style are more likely to maintain their ethnic languages longer. When they come to Khartoum and become deeply involved in its Arabic dominated environment, their social and economic needs will cease being met in the ethnic or minority language.

#### 3.1 Age Composition

The fact that language shift tends to spread faster among younger generations makes it very important for the purpose of this study to investigate the relationship between language shift and age with special focus on younger generations. This is because if a language is no longer spoken by children in a given community it will most likely be lost in the future. Table 1 below gives the relationship between age and ethnic mother tongue retention.

**Table 1. The Relationship between Mother Tongue Shift and Age**

Children	Arabic	Beja	Northern	Southern	Nuba Hills	Darfurians	Others	Row Total
Children	188	11	2	53	13	8	6	281
	128.8	13.1	15.4	61.7	25.8	32.2	4.0	33.5%
Youth	139	13	17	56	19	31	3	278

	127.4	12.9	15.3	61.0	25.5	31.8	4.0	33.5%
Old	57	15	27	75	45	57	3	279
people	127.8	13.0	15.4	61.3	25.6	32.0	4.0	33.3%
Column	384	39	46	184	77	96	12	838
total	45.8%	4.7%	5.5%	22%	9.2%	11.5%	1.4%	100%

Inspection of Table 1 reveals that a significant relationship is present with Chi-square 155.67935,  $df = 12$ ,  $P < 00000$ , in that Arabic is spoken as a mother Tongue more by children and youth, while ethnic minority languages are spoken natively by old generation. This indicates the existence of a significant association between age and language shift among our selected sample. In other words, the process of mother tongue shift affects Children and youth, in our sample more than the old people, who have shown a higher level of ethnic mother tongue retention. The table also shows that there is a degree of association between vernacular maintenance among the old generations differing from a group to another. The highest degree of this association was found among the Southern and the Darfurian language groups. This means that the Northern language group and Nuba Hills language group are more endangered than the first three ones.

### 3.2 Sex Composition

Sex can be a determining factor in language shift and maintenance. In some immigrant societies male are inclined to mother tongue shift towards the dominant language in the new community as they are more actively involved in its socio-economic life. Females, on the other hand, have a great tendency to ethnic language maintenance because their role in the community is more or less limited to their house and family business. Table 2 gives the relationship between language shift and sex.

**Table 2. The Relationship between Mother Tongue Shift and Sex**

Children	Arabic	Beja	Northern	Southern	Nuba Hills	Darfurians	Others	Row Total
Male	253	29	22	133	46	68	10	561
	257.1	26.1	30.8	123.2	51.5	64.3	8.0	66.9%
Female	131	10	24	51	31	28	2	277
	126	12.9	15.2	60.8	25.5	31.7	4.0	33.1%
Column	384	39	5.5%	184	77	96	12	838
total	45.8%	4.7%		22.0%	9.2%	11.5%	1.4	100%

Inspection of Table 2 shows that there is a significant association between gender and mother tongue shift among the five language groups addressed in this study. The relationship is present with Chi-square

15.04965,  $dfr_6$ ,  $p < .01987$ . in that Arabic was spoken as a native language more by female, while there was no significant bias in the use of the language among male. This means that language shift towards Arabic is more evident among females. The result suggests that unlike what is conventional, females led language shift towards Arabic in Khartoum. In fact, the shift to another language may be led by men or women depending on the role played by each category in a given community. Evidence for this claim is widely available in the literature. Immigrant young woman in Oberwart (a city in Austria), for instance, were found to have taken the lead in language shift in the town because they were dominating most of the jobs created by the industrial changes (Clyne, 1982). Newly arrived immigrant women in New-Zeland, on the other hand, displayed a significant proportions of maintaining their ethnic languages because they spent most of their time in the house. When they got job opportunities they were employed in underpaid jobs such as night cleaning or in bakeries, where they normally worked with people from the same ethnic group and used their ethnic languages to them.

The situation in Khartoum is very much in conformity with this claim. Immigrant women are actively involved in the social, economic and cultural life of Khartoum community. They are working in private and public institutions, enrolled in schools and universities and significantly participate in the different aspects of social life in the city. Thus, their role in the new society is no doubt so serious, and far more influential than before, which caused an inevitable language shift towards Arabic, a key factor of success in the new setting. The table also shows that the association between gender and vernacular maintenance differs widely from a group to another. Significant association between vernacular maintenance and gender was found only among Southern males and Northern females. The results suggest that language shift towards Arabic is in progress among a large sector of ethnic immigrant females in Khartoum area.

### *3.3 Ethnic Composition*

As mentioned in section 4, the size of a minority language group in a given area plays a vital role in maintaining the language of that group. The bigger the number of speakers of an ethnic language, the more opportunities their language has to survive and flourish. This happened in New-Zeland, where Moan language survived longer in the areas almost completely populated with Moan people, who used their ethnic mother tongue in all domains of communication (Holmes, 1996). The demographic distribution of immigrant tribes in Khartoum then must have influenced language shift or maintenance among these communities. While some ethnic group societies reside in big numbers in some areas, others are found scattered in relatively small numbers here and there. This feature is supposed to offer some kind of distinction as to language shift and maintenance among the language groups constituting our sample. Table 3 gives the relationship between mother tongue and ethnicity.

**Table 3. The Relationship between Ethnic Background and Mother Tongue Shift**

Tribe	Arabic	Vernacular	Others	Total
Beja	20	39	1	60
	27.5	2.8	0.9	7.2%
Mahass	34	20	5	60
	27.5	3.3	0.9	7.2%
K. Dongolese	34	26	0	60
	27.5	3.3	0.9	7.2%
Dinka	11	48	1	60
	27.5	13.2	0.9	7.2%
Shilluk	15	44	1	60
	27.5	13.2	0.9	7.2%
Madi	18	42	1	60
	27.8	13.9	0.9	7.2%
Viri	10	50	0	60
	27.5	13.2	0.9	7.2%
Gulfan	38	19	0	60
	27.5	5.5	0.9	7.2%
Nymang	23	37	0	60
	27.5	5.5	0.9	7.2%
Miri	38	21	0	59
	27.0	4.5	0.9	7%
Zaghawa	41	17	0	59
	27.0	6.8	8	7.0%
Fur	29	31	1	60
	27.0	6.6	0.8	7.2%
Massalit	41	19	0	60
	27.5	6.9	0.9	7.2%
Daju	32	28	0	60
	27.5	6.9	0.9	7.2%
Colum Total	384	442	12	838
	45.8%	52.7%	1.4%	100%

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between ethnicity and language maintenance with Chi square = 1910.557 14, df = 78. P = .0000. The result suggests that while some ethnic groups

displayed a significant association with their ethnic mother tongues, others showed similar association with both Arabic and vernaculars. This means that the degree of language maintenance among the first group is much higher than that among the second. The strongest association in this context was found among the Southern group (Dinka, Shilluk, Viri and Madi). The prime reason for this association is the heavy existence of members of this group in Khartoum, which enables them to use their ethnic languages in almost all domains of communication. The remaining groups, on the other hand, are distributed in small numbers in a variety of areas in Khartoum and consequently they have to use Arabic in all communicative settings including the home.

What is more interesting is that Zaghawa, Gulfan and Massalit groups have shown a significant association with maintaining their ethnic languages and shifting to Arabic. This is a strong indication that language conflict is so intense among these groups. The conflict in this case is taking place between Arabic and ethnic minority languages. If we put into consideration the fact that over 90% of children in these groups have already undergone mother tongue shift to Arabic; it will be obvious that these languages are seriously threatened by an imminent death. Moreover, the association found between the three groups and Arabic is more significant than that with ethnic languages. In other words, members of the groups concerned tended to shift to Arabic more than to maintain their own ethnic mother tongues.

#### 3.4 Interethnic Marriage

Inter-marriage between ethnic groups can contribute significantly to language shift. German community in Australia sets a good example in this regard. When a German-speaking man marries an English-speaking woman, the children usually pick up English as their mother tongue. The same thing is true for many multilingual communities worldwide. In the United States, for instance, it has been found that whenever a Cherokee speaker has married outside the Cherokee community the children spoke only English (Folmes, 1992). In this section we are going to test this hypothesis among our sample by correlating inter-ethnic marriage cases to the phenomenon of language shift and maintenance. Table 4 gives the relationship between language shift and interethnic marriage.

**Table 4. The Relationship between Mother Tongue Shift and Interethnic Marriage**

Pattern	Arabic	Beja	Northern	Southern	Nuba Hills	Darfurians	Others	Row Total
Same tribe	248	37	43	182	77	95	11	793
	363.4	36.9	43.5	174.1	72.9	90.8	11.4	94.7%
Different tribe	36	2	3	2	2	1	1	45
	20.6	2.1	2.5	9.9	4.1	5.2	0.6	5.4%
Column total	384	39	46	184	77	96	12	838%
	458	4.7	55	22	9.2	11.5	1.4	



With 6 degrees of freedom, the observed Chi-square values (27.00422) are significant at  $P < 0.0014$  indicating a significant relationship between language shift and intermarriage. The result suggests that there is a strong association between mastery of Arabic as a mother tongue and intermarriage. This means that whenever a vernacular speaking man marries a woman outside his ethnic group, Arabic is usually the dominant language in the home and subsequently the children pick it up as a mother tongue. The table also shows that a significant relationship exists between marriage within the same ethnic group and mastery of vernaculars natively. This is a strong indication that interethnic marriage plays a substantial role in the process of language shift currently taking place among speakers of ethnic languages in Khartoum. Interethnic marriage then can be regarded as one of the essential factors accelerating the progress of language shift among the ethnic community addressed by the present study.

It is important to note that some parents may make great efforts to pass the ethnic mother tongue to their children by using the language to, them or encouraging them to use such efforts may slow down the process of shift towards Arabic a little bit, but eventually language shift becomes a reality that has to be accepted and dealt with by parents. The shift towards Arabic is accelerated once children start school. Besides using Arabic as a medium of instruction, children usually use the language to chat and socialize with their classmates inside and outside the school. When they come back home they continue using the language to one another as well as their parents.

### *3.5 Immigration*

In this part of our analysis, the researcher intends to investigate the influence of migration on the process of language shift among the minority language communities employed for the purpose of this study. When members of a community migrate from one place to another, or from one country to another, where they are exposed to a new language with more speakers and social prestige, they usually undergo language shift towards that language (Prabhakran, 1998, p. 299). The same thing seems to await ethnic minority language groups who migrate from their native lands to Khartoum, where Arabic is dominating all aspects of communication. This section is planned to test this hypothesis by investigating the relationship between language shift and immigration. Table 5 gives the relationship between language shift and immigration.

**Table 5. The Relationship between Mother Tongue Shift and Place of Birth**

Place of birth	Arabic	Beja	Northern	Southern	Nuba Hills	Darfurians	Others	Row Total
Same	151	38	44	155	64	83	6	541
	247.9	25.2	29.7	118.8	49.7	62.0	7.7	64.6%
Different	233	1	2	29	13	13	6	297
	136.1	13.8	16.3	65.2	27.3	34.5	7.7	35.4%
Column total	384	39	46	184	77	96	12	840
	45.8%	4.7%	5.5%	22.8%	9.2%	11.5%	1.4%	100%

Inspection of Table 5 shows that a significant relationship is present with Chi-square 208.71362, df 6 and  $P < .00000$ . The Chi-square values indicate that there is a significant relationship between language shift and place of birth in that Arabic is spoken as a mother tongue by those who were born outside their native lands more than those born and grown up. Conversely, a strong relationship was found between mastery of vernaculars natively and birth in the homeland. These findings suggest that migration from the country of origins to Khartoum plays a vital role in language shift. When migrant families try to use their minority language in a predominately monolingual culture and society like that in Khartoum, they will discover that their ethnic languages are no longer viable. As a consequence, they resort to Arabic in order to meet their everyday socioeconomic needs. Although the order of domains in which the shift takes place differs from a group to another, Arabic will eventually displace the ethnic minority languages from all domains of communication.

In Khartoum as well as in many big cities in Sudan. one of the most important domains in which children of migrant families are exposed to Arabic is the school. They may have followed Arabic T.V or radio programs and heard Arabic in the streets before starting school, but at school the exposure to Arabic increases significantly as it is the only medium of instruction and interaction with teachers and other children outside the ethnic group. Thus, for many children of migrant families. Arabic soon becomes the only language for talking with other children including their brothers and sisters. In many families, however, Arabic gradually finds its way to the home through children, who tend to discuss their school life and everyday activities with each other in Arabic in the home. and gradually their parents start using the language to them.

### 3.6 Level of Education

The fact that education plays a substantial role in the process of language shift and maintenance inspired linguistic human rights activities to call for the adoption of endangered languages as media of instruction in the schools of the endangered language communities. The prime objective the activities had in mind was to help these communities reserve their ethnic languages and safeguard them against possible extinction in the future. This is absolutely true when ethnic minority children receive their education in

the motherlands. But, in a city of such a cosmopolitan nature like Khartoum, where only one language is used predominately; vernacular-speaking children will have no opportunity to receive instruction in their ethnic languages. Instead, they will be forced to use Arabic, as it is the only medium of instruction in the government schools and a large portion of private ones. In such an environment Arabic will gradually displace vernaculars from all domains of communication. In this section the researcher is going to investigate the effects of education on the mother tongue shift experienced by our sample. Table 6 gives the relationship between language shift and level of education.

**Table 6. The Relationship between Mother Tongue Shift and Level of Education**

Level of education	Arabic	Beja	Northern	Southern	Nuba hills	Darfurians	Others	Total
Illiterate	3	1	8	19	16	4	0	51
	23.4	2.4	2.8	11.2	4.7	5.8	7.0	0.1%
Primary	131	15	11	68	34	57	4	320
	146.6	14.9	17.6	70.3	29.4	36.7	4.6	38.2%
Intermediate	20	2	2	21	7	9	1	62
	28.4	2.9	3.4	13.6	5.7	7.1	9.0	7.4%
Secondary	126	8	11	48	15	9	5	222
	101.7	10.3	12.2	48.7	20.4	25.4	3.2	26.5%
University	104	13	14	28	5	17	2	183
	83.9	8.5	10.0	40.2	16.8	21.0	2.6	21.8%
Total	384	39	46	184	77	96	12	838
	45.8%	4.7%	5.5%	22%	9.2%	11.5%	1.4%	100%

Table 6 shows that there is a significant relationship between language shift and level of education. The relationship found happened to be with Chi-square value 127.89425, degree of freedom = 24,  $P < .00000$ . The result indicates that there is a significant association between mastery of Arabic as a mother tongue and the level of education. The table also shows that there is a degree of correlation, though not remarkable as it should be, between illiteracy and vernacular maintenance. This correlation was found among the Northern, Southern and the Nuba I hills groups. Moreover, there was a significant association between vernacular maintenance and education among the Darfurian and the Southern language groups. (The Darfurian with primary schooling and the Southern with intermediate schooling). Apart from this, no significant relationship was found between vernacular maintenance and education.

What is more interesting is that the strongest association between language shift to Arabic and the level of education was found among subjects with high secondary and university education. This may be partially due to the fact that these subjects have been exposed to Arabic as a medium of instruction more

than those with a lower level of education. If we take the subjects with high secondary and university schooling as a unit, we will discover that they represent more than 59% of those who have shifted to Arabic. The figure suggests that the more educated a person is the more prone he/she is to lose his/her ethnic mother tongue. Thus, we can claim that the use of Arabic as the only medium of instruction in schools and universities has played a vital role in the process of language shift experienced by the groups in question.

Obviously, a group that manages to ensure the use of its language in educational settings will be in a better position to maintain its linguistic and cultural heritage. In Wales, for instance, Irish has been introduced widely in the education system, which leads to its revival after a long period of decline. The institutional support provided to Irish then, has played a vital role in its revival and maintenance. This implies that a similar institutional support is urgently needed for minority language groups in Sudan to help them maintain their ethnic languages or at least slow down the rate of shift the languages are currently facing.

### *3.7 Job Composition*

It is conventional that economic factors are among the most important reason causing a community to shift from using one language to another: Obtaining work is then the most notable reason for learning another language. In the United States and Britain where English is dominant, for instance, immigrant people have to learn English in order to get good job opportunities. The same thing is true for vernacular-speaking communities in Khartoum, where Arabic dominates all aspects of communication. This means that ethnic minority languages are used in rather limited domains especially in the workplace. The use of vernaculars in the workplace can be attributed mainly to the nature of the job in which a vernacular-speaking individual is involved. While some jobs require exclusive use of Arabic by all those involved in the environment including vernacular-speaking individuals, others require lesser degrees of using this language, which gives ethnic languages more opportunities to be employed in some communicative situations depending on the number of their speakers.

In this section the researcher is going to investigate the relationship between occupation and language shift among speakers of minority languages in Khartoum. Before doing this it is important to note that jobs like clerk, teacher, physician, engineer, ...etc., were grouped into one category: bureaucrats. Table 7 gives the relationship between language shift and occupation.

**Table 7. The Relationship between Mother Tongue Shift and Occupation**

Level of education	Arabic	Beja	Northern	Southern	Nuba hills	Darfurians	Others	Total
Bureaucrats	85	3	11	39	6	10	2	156
	71.5	7.3	8.6	34.3	14.3	17.9	2.2	18.6%
Peasants	42	5	19	31	10	26	3	136
	62.3	6.3	7.5	29.9	12.5	15.6	1.9	16.2%
Merchants	40	12	4	3	0	14	4	77
	35.3	3.6	4.2	16	7.1	8.8	1.1	9.2%
Laborers	71	8	2	44	39	25	1	190
	87.1	8.8	10.4	41.7	17.5	21.8	2.7	22.7%
Soldiers	146	11	10	67	22	21	2	279
	127.8	13.0	15.3	61.3	25.6	32.6	4.0	33.3%
Total	384	39	46	181	77	96	12	838
	45.8%	4.7%	5.5%	22.8%	9.2%	11.5%	1.4%	100%

Inspection of Table 7 shows that there is a significant relationship between language shift and job status. The relation is found to be with chi-square value 145.79442, degree of freedom 24 and  $P < .00000$ , in that public service employees, merchants and soldiers speak Arabic natively more than peasants and workers who showed a significant association with ethnic mother tongue maintenance. This is a strong indication that members of these jobs are more vulnerable to language shift because they use Arabic predominantly in communicating with colleagues and the public in the work setting. When they go to their houses, they use the language to their family members, which leads children to learn Arabic as a mother tongue. Peasants and workers, on the other hand, tended to retain their linguistic and cultural heritage partly because of their conservatism and rather limited contact with the people outside.

Evidence for the significant relationship between minority language maintenance and job status in the cases of peasants and workers can be found widely in the literature. Gal's (1972) study of language shift in Oberwart and Shumman's (1971) of Alberto's acquisition of English as a second language are among the best studies in the field. Gal found that when Oberwart village was granted to Austria in 1921, 75% of its population spoke Hungarian, whereas in 1971 only 25% did, and these were all peasants or children of peasants. Gal's investigation suggests that German was being introduced gradually into Oberwart, encroaching progressively on linguistic territories previously occupied by Hungarian. Thus, though peasant in Oberwart spoke little German before the 1920s or 1930s, all are now bilingual and use German to more interlocutors in each general one. Hungarian language is now a mark of peasant identity, and is used predominately by people of a high degree of peasantness. The reason behind this, as far as day-to-day

contact is concerned, according to Gal, is that peasants' contact with people outside their group is more or less limited. This is because peasants as a group are very much conservative and loyal to their traditions and customs. Their socio-economic interaction with the remaining Oberwart population was thus relatively limited, which helped them maintain their ethnic mother tongue in the city.

Shumman's study of Alberto's interlanguage development, on the other hand, provides a good explanation for the relationship between workplace and language shift. Alberto was a Spanish-speaking immigrant working as labor in a bicycle factory in Britain. His English was found to be much more pidginized compared to that of other speakers of minority languages in the same setting. The reason behind Alberto's poor English, according to Shumman, is that Alberto interacted mainly with Spanish-speaking workers in the work and home domains. The same linguistic behavior can be observed among vernacular-speaking labors in Khartoum, where a considerable number of the same ethnic language group is normally found working in the same work place. The assumption is that whenever these people come together in the workplace, they use their ethnic mother tongues in communicating with each other, which helps the languages last long.

The table also shows that there are some interesting contradictions in the relationship between language shift and job status across the groups studied summed up as follows:

- 1) Among the Southern group, a strong association was found between mastering ethnic language natively and all job statuses except merchant.
- 2) Labors in all groups displayed a strong association with mastering ethnic languages natively except those belonging to the Northern group.
- 3) Merchants in all groups displayed a strong association with mastering Arabic as a mother tongue except those belonging to the Beja and the Darfurian.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Analysis of language proficiency and use among ethnic minority groups in Khartoum revealed a significant relation between language shift/maintenance and demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnic affiliation, job and education among the population of the study. However, the groups descending from Southern Sudan showed a strong resistance to the process of language shift across the different age groups. Socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors seem to have convinced vernacular-speaking communities in Khartoum to learn Arabic for its importance in a variety of domains including education, economic activity and religion. Ethnic languages, on the other hand, were learnt only for symbolic reasons (representing group's ethnic identity). Lack of planning and devaluation of vernaculars might have contributed to the process of language shift to Arabic in Sudan in general and Khartoum in particular. In other words, lack of institutional support for vernaculars, being viewed as just symbols for group identity and cultural heritage, and using them in intimate communication will pave the way for the demise of these languages in the near future. In addition, the position of Arabic as a lingua franca for the linguistically diverse people of Sudan and its function as the gateway for education and socioeconomic

interaction and the absence of an effective and purposeful language policy will further worsen the situation.

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