

A History of the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum

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1 Introduction

We are very proud and honoured to be allowed to write about the history of our beloved department and second home, the Department of Linguistics at the University of Khartoum. Thus, this chapter provides an extensive and comprehensive account of the history of the department from its inception to the present time.



FIGURES 1 and 2: Gate of the Department of Linguistics, University of Khartoum (2022) / The emblem of the University of Khartoum

We all believe in Nelson Mandela's saying "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart".¹ From this, the Department of Linguistics draws power and encouragement for its new direction of studying and documenting the Sudanese languages. Sudan is a fertile soil that has more than 120 languages spoken within its borders.² In such a multilingual country, it is very important

¹ <https://polyglotdreams.com/closer-look-famous-quotes-about-language-multilingualism/>

² Source: Abdelhay et al. (2015), referring to both countries, South Sudan and Sudan.

to find a close tie between indigenous Sudanese languages and emotions associated with speakers' identities. This new attitude gives the department its strength and makes it well-known both within and outside of Sudan.

2 From the department's founding until today: an overview

In the early 1970s, with the gracious initiative of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Dr. Abdullah Al-Tayeb (1921-2003), a proposal was submitted to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Khartoum to establish a Department of Linguistics. This proposal was a result of his strong belief in the importance of creating such a department within the Faculty of Arts. It was approved, and the department was officially established in 1973. The Egyptian scholar and Arabic language specialist, Dr. Tammam Hassan (1918-2011), professor at the University of Khartoum, was appointed as the first head of the Department of Linguistics.

Many scholars have since chaired the department, totalling about thirteen at the present time, all of them holding PhD degrees except for the current chair, who holds a master's degree. Their names are listed in chronological order from the earliest to the most recent one in TABLE 1.

NO.	NAME	PERIOD
1	<i>Dr. Tammam Hasaan</i>	1973-1974
2	<i>Dr. Mustafa Abdel Majed</i>	1980-1986
3	<i>Dr. Mohammed Salah Aldeen</i>	1986-1988
4	<i>Dr. Madani Osman</i>	1988-1993
5	<i>Dr. Mohammed Al Busairy</i>	1994-1995
6	<i>Dr. Abdul Munaem Al Hassan Al Karouri</i>	1996-1998
7	<i>Dr. Samira Abdel Allah Merghani</i>	1998-2002
8	<i>Dr. Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam</i>	2003-2008
9	<i>Dr. Suzan Alamin</i>	2009-2012
10	<i>Dr. Maha A. Aldawi</i>	2012-2015/ 2017-2020
12	<i>Dr. Abeer M. A. Bashir</i>	2015-2016
13	<i>Ustaz. Waleed Mudathir Alshareef</i>	2020 up to now

TABLE 1: The heads of the Department of Linguistics

From the moment of its foundation onwards, the Department of Linguistics faced many obstacles and challenges, obvious even in TABLE 1, where one can observe a gap between heads of department between 1974 and 1980, which will be accounted for below. In the following, we will go into detail regarding these challenges in chronological order (SECTIONS 2.1-2.4), before presenting some demographic details (SECTION 3) and mentioning influential scholars (SECTION 4). SECTION 5 outlines national and international collaborations. All of these

aspects have contributed in one way or another to the progress and development of the department.

It is certainly no exaggeration to say that the obstacles which the Department of Linguistics had faced could have led to its complete closure. However, these same obstacles became sources of strength and revival, and they were overcome. This resilience is attributed to the strong determination of the department's members over the years and their unwavering belief in the importance of the department's academic presence among the language departments in the Faculty of Arts. More specifically, they recognize its significance in preserving the Sudanese linguistic identity. That is, a number of its scholars became leading figures regarding this new trend for the department.

2.1 1974-1980

In 1974, only shortly after its foundation in 1973, the department was temporarily suspended due to various circumstances. Among them was Tammam Hassan's return to his home country, in addition to financial issues related to the administration of the University at that time. As a result of that suspension, the later head of the Department of Linguistics, Dr. Abdul Munaem Al Hassan Al Karouri, known as Al Karouri, at that time the only teaching assistant with a master's degree in Arabic in the linguistic department, was transferred to the Department of Arabic, where he took on the responsibilities of Tammam Hassan. Before plans for the re-establishment of the Department of Linguistics could be pursued, Al Karouri was sent to Edinburgh, United Kingdom, in order to acquire his PhD in Linguistics.

Finally, the idea of re-establishing the Department of Linguistics was revived in the late 70s and in 1980, with the PhD holder Mustafa Abdel Majed being officially recruited as the head of the Department of Linguistics. He had been transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum. Later, when there was a need for a head for the Department of Linguistics, he took on this assignment. During Mustafa Abdel Majed's tenure as head, the department experienced a period of revitalization, with the appointment of several professors, including Dr. Madani Osman and Dr. Mohamed Salah Aldeen (both of whom later headed the department for some years) and others whose appointments were only for a short period of time (Al Karouri 2011).

2.2 Arabization of the department

The second and biggest challenge was the issue of the Arabization of the Department of Linguistics. In the early 1990s, the Minister of Higher Education issued a political decision mandating that all Sudanese universities, without

exception, should use Arabic as a means of instruction and not English. This was known as the Arabization policy. It was one of the goals of the Al-Ingaz regime (starting in 1989) during that period (Osman: 2010). Naturally, the University of Khartoum and all of its faculties, including the Department of Linguistics, were not excluded from this decision.

At that time, attempts by the university administration and the Faculty of Arts to Arabize the department's courses from English to Arabic were opposed by the department's faculty members. The most notable defenders of continuing to teach in English were Madani Osman and Al Karouri. Though not entirely successful due to the prevailing influence of the higher education revolution, which implemented its policies in various ways (Dawod 2017), at least a compromise solution was reached, where teaching would be conducted in both languages, and exam papers would include questions in both languages. This situation persisted for several years, but from the early 2000s onwards teaching gradually reverted to English-only in the classrooms.

2.3 Departmental duplication

The third huge challenge was the department's struggle for survival as an independent body. A group of professors from the Department of English viewed the Department of Linguistics as merely another version of their department, based on the courses that were taught in both of the departments. Admittedly, at that time, the Department of Linguistics merely taught English Linguistics. Alamin, Bashir and Aldawi – who took turn as heads of department between 2006 and 2020 – witnessed this struggle, having been recently appointed as teaching assistants in the department in 1997. In the period between 1994 and 2006, Dr. Mohammed Al Busairy and Dr. Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam were strong advocates for the Department of Linguistics' survival and preservation, with the most prominent role in this effort being played by Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam. His voice was raised in all the official forums, and indeed, he succeeded in that.

2.4 Perceptions of and attitudes toward the department

An obstacle of a different kind was the department's reputation. There was strong propaganda among the students of the Faculty of Arts about the difficulty of the Linguistics Department's courses and the rigidity of the professors there. In addition, students in the Faculty of Arts were reluctant to choose linguistics as a major or minor because of the fear of their grades dropping; they referred to this department as the "Medicine of the Faculty of Arts", a metaphor for its difficulty. During her time as a linguistics student from 1989 to 1993, Dr. Sawsan A. M. Nashid (p.c.), mentioned another reason why students avoided choosing linguistics as their major, namely the lack of specialized linguistics

professors. As a result, the burden of collecting and preparing course materials fell on the fifth-year students themselves, that is, they had to completely organize the seminars themselves. This explains why the number of students was very few at that time.

This propaganda continued for a long time, until new blood was recruited into the department. The new staff members did their best to improve this image of the department and tried to convince the students about the new trends in the department (see SECTION 3 on the development of the department). Mohammed Al Busairy had a humorous take on this issue: If a student of English drives the car, the student of linguistics will drive the same car but he/she can repair it if it stops. He consistently emphasized to the students the importance of studying linguistics as a joint specialization with English. In addition to that, taking linguistics courses would improve their level of English and give them a chance to gain deep knowledge about the language. The author of this anecdote was one of the students who were convinced by Mohammed Al Busairy's argument. This was as early as 1992. At any rate, in the following years, the number of students increased in the department compared with the previous years (for details about the students' numbers see SECTION 3.1).

3 The department's progress and development

The historical account in this section highlights and outlines the chronological map of the significant developments and the renaissance of the Department of Linguistics, in addition to the notable academic achievements in its history, particularly from the early 2000s until today. The following points will be covered: students' demographics (SECTION 3.1) and the new admission policy (SECTION 3.2).

3.1 Students' demographics

As previously mentioned in SECTION 2.4, the number of BA linguistic students was very small compared to student numbers in language departments such as English, French and Arabic in the Faculty of Arts. In fact, their number barely exceeded the fingers on one hand, especially in the early days of the department's existence.

In his notes, Al Karouri (2011) stated that at the beginning of its establishment in 1973, the department began offering a Master's program (MA) in linguistics through coursework, lasting two years. However, this project was stopped after only one year, for the reasons described in SECTION 2.1.

After the re-establishment of the Department of Linguistics in the 1980s, a Bachelor's program was approved. That is, students took courses for four years,

ending with their graduation. Only the ones with the highest marks were allowed into the fifth year, i.e., the BA honours class. The nature of the courses in the fifth year differs from the other courses in the undergraduate program due to their in-depth focus on the specialized subject. The academic degree that a student receives upon completing this year is called 'Honours'.

The first batch of BA students consisted of only two students: Abdullah Osman and Abdel Khaleq Mohamed. They are now considered as prominent figures, with the former in Canada and the latter in the United States (Makki Bashir, p.c., 2024). The second batch, admitted in 1989, consisted of six students. Only two of them took the honours class: Sawsan A. M. Nashid and Awatif Mohammed Musa. In 1993 Sawsan A. M. Nashid was the first MA student to gain an MA degree in linguistics from the Institute of African and Asian Studies (IAAS) (Sawsan A. M. Nashid, p.c. 2024). She later obtained her PhD from the Department of Linguistics.

In 1992, the department witnessed a significant increase in the number of bachelor students admitted, with the number exceeding 30. It became clear that the department was taking clear steps to accommodate as many students as possible to guarantee its continuity.

In the last six years (2016-2022), the department has admitted more than 100 students. This is due to the radical change in the admissions policy that the Faculty of Art has adopted. For more details on the new admissions policy, see SECTION 3.2.

Even with the number of students increasing in the BA program, only the few distinctive students with the highest grades could continue to the fifth year and take the honours class. However, due to the pandemic and the temporary closure of the university, the courses of the academic year 2020/2021 were postponed so that, in 2022/2023, 14 students were admitted to the honours class. However, on average, the number of honours students does not exceed five to seven students per year.

The Master's degree program in Linguistics by research – which includes the PhD degree – was approved in a faculty council session in 1993. None of the faculty members who were consulted could remember the date of the first approved PhD dissertation in the department. However, everyone attested to the significant increase in the number of PhD students in the Department of Linguistics from 2004 to the present day. Ten PhD holders graduated from the department; six out of those ten are staff members at the Department of Linguistics: Nasir A. O. Satti (2008), Suzan Alamin (2009), Abeer M. A. Bashir (2010), Maha A. Aldawi (2010), Sawsan A. M. Nashid (2014) and Issam Eddin M. M. Awad (2014).

Referring to the department's inception mentioned above, the Department initially suffered from a shortage of officially appointed staff members (Al Karouri 2011). Currently, a group of professors, lecturers and teaching assistants who have been selected based on high academic standards are responsible for the department's performance. They work hard according to a planned strategy aimed at positioning the department at the pinnacle of academic excellence among linguistics departments in universities worldwide. TABLE 2 lists the names of the staff members in 2023. For various reasons, some of the staff are temporarily outside the country; some, however, volunteered to give online classes to diminish the burden for the others.

STAFF MEMBER	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE
<i>Dr. Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam</i>	Professor
<i>Abeer M. A. Bashir</i>	Associate Professor
<i>Suzan Alamin</i>	Assistant Professor
<i>Maha A. Aldawi</i>	Assistant Professor
<i>Nasir A. O. Satti</i>	Assistant Professor
<i>Sawsan A. M. Nashid</i>	Assistant Professor
<i>Issam Eddin M. M. Awad</i>	Fellowship
<i>Helene Fatima Idris</i>	Fellowship
<i>Nada Faisal Y. M. Sukkar</i>	Lecturer
<i>Waleed Mudathir Alshareef</i>	Lecturer (current head)
<i>Ahmed Sosal Altayeb</i>	Lecturer
<i>Elsadig Omda</i>	Lecturer
<i>Mona Hashim Ibrahim</i>	Teaching Assistant
<i>Mohamed Yusif Mohamed Ali</i>	Teaching Assistant
<i>Eman Abubaker</i>	Teaching Assistant

TABLE 2: Staff members of the Department of Linguistics 2023

3.2 The new admissions policy

According to the decisions of the Ministry of Higher Education regarding university admissions for 2018/2019, the admissions system at the Faculty of Arts was changed radically. The faculty was divided into two tracks: the Humanities track and the Languages track. This decision benefited the Department of Linguistics by increasing the number of BA students admitted. An arts student could now major in any language, for instance, English, French, German, Russian or Chinese, in addition to taking linguistics courses if they wished. Thus, linguistics became the optimal choice for many students to specialize in alongside their language studies.

The increase in the number of students in the department led to a rise in the activities and programs offered by the department. Additionally, the department began to play an active role even at the level of the Sudanese community. For example, the students participated in events such as the celebration of Mother Language Day, held every year on February 21.³ Moreover, the students played a significant role in organizing conferences together with the staff members, as well as holding workshops focused on Sudanese languages. These are just a few examples among many, some of which will be introduced in more detail below.

4 Influential scholars

SCHOLAR'S NAME	AFFILIATION
<i>Gerrit J. Dimmendaal</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Gertrud Schneider-Blum</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Birgit Hellwig</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Angelika Jakobi</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Anne Storch</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Marcus Jaeger</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Isabel Compes</i>	University of Cologne
<i>Nicolas Quint</i>	LLACAN/CNRS, Villejuif
<i>Pascal Boyeldieu</i>	LLACAN/CNRS, Villejuif
<i>Claude Rilly</i>	LLACAN/CNRS, Villejuif
<i>Stefano Manfredi</i>	SeDYL/CNRS, Villejuif
<i>Heleen Smith</i>	Leiden University
<i>Caroline Roset</i>	University of Amsterdam
<i>Bert Remijsen</i>	University of Edinburgh
<i>Harald Hammarström</i>	Uppsala University
<i>Leoma Gilley</i>	Summer Institute of Linguistics
<i>Russell Norton</i>	Summer Institute of Linguistics
<i>John Vanderelst</i>	Summer Institute of Linguistics
<i>Andrew Wolfe</i>	Summer Institute of Linguistics
<i>Kwesi Prah</i>	CASAS
<i>Pamela Munro</i>	UCLA
<i>Sharon Rose</i>	UCSD
<i>Bernard Comrie</i>	Leipzig University
<i>Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei</i>	University of Aberdeen
<i>Torben Andersen</i>	Aalborg University
<i>Dörte Borchers</i>	University of Graz
<i>Frank Kammerzell</i>	Humboldt University Berlin

TABLE 3: Influential visiting scholars

³ <https://www.unesco.org/en/days/mother-language>

The Department of Linguistics is fortunate to have a distinguished group of visiting scholars who have, depending on their disciplines, exerted great influence on the development of the department (see TABLE 3).

The significance of their achievements and of their vital and effective roles can hardly be overstated. However, we can at least mention here the significant impact they have had on the academic qualifications of the Department of Linguistics, on its staff members and on its students.

Those scholars have generously shared their scientific and practical expertise and knowledge in African and Sudanese linguistics and fieldwork with the Sudanese researchers and students in the department. Here, we pause to express our gratitude and appreciation for their tremendous efforts. Some of them were PhD thesis supervisors, lecturers and workshop presenters, while others were trainers for linguistic software programs such as Toolbox, PRAAT and so on. A good number of the names listed above will show up when discussing international collaborations. We apologize for any names that may have been inadvertently omitted.

5 Department collaborations and partnerships

Talking about the department's collaborations and partnerships means describing the department's academic achievements in all their aspects. We will start with the internal collaborations between the Department of Linguistics and other Sudanese institutions before proceeding to its external collaborations, and the several projects that the Department of Linguistics takes part in there.

5.1 Internal collaborations

Several institutions from within the University of Khartoum and from other bodies within Sudan have been in close contact with the Department of Linguistics. The main ones are introduced below.

English Department

The cooperation between the Department of Linguistics and the English Department, Faculty of Arts, is as old as the establishment of the former department. The English staff members were of great help in teaching the students of linguistics because of the small numbers of teaching staff in the Linguistics Department. The most prominent teachers of that era were Dr. Mohammed Al Busairy and Dr. Gubara Al Hasan. This cooperation began when Mohammed Al Busairy was appointed as the head of the Department of Linguistics in 1994. In both departments, he established English courses called ELCA (English Language Courses for All) with the help of teaching assistants

from the Linguistics Department: Suzan Alamin, Maha A. Aldawi and Abeer M. A. Bashir.

The cooperation between the two departments has continued in recent years, with several staff members from the Department of Linguistics participating in the English Master's program offered by the English Department. This indicates the great trust, good reputation and high professionalism that the members of the Department of Linguistics have among their peers in other departments.

Institute of African and Asian Studies

The Department of Sudanese and African Languages is one of the departments within the IAAS at the University of Khartoum.⁴ A partnership was established between this department and the Department of Linguistics due to their shared interest in the importance of studying Sudanese languages. The cooperation between the two departments began when two teaching assistants from the Department of Linguistics, Suzan Alamin and Abeer M. A. Bashir, enrolled in this department of the IAAS to pursue their master's degrees in Sudanese and African languages in 1998. There they were supervised by Dr. Leoma Gilley, a faculty member of the Department of Sudanese and African Languages at the Institute. Since then, strong ties have been established between the two departments based on the aforementioned joint research interests. The cooperation between the two departments was strengthened when Professor Dr. Al-Amin Abu-Manga from the Department of Sudanese and African Languages supervised the same two students for their PhDs in linguistics by research. Further collaboration occurred when Professor Dr. Abdel Rahim Mugaddam took over the management of the Institute of African and Asian Studies, leading to several joint seminars and workshops on Sudanese languages between the two departments and other external universities from Germany, South Africa and France (see SECTION 5.2 on conferences and workshops). Recently, the collaboration has evolved, with the Department of Linguistics becoming a supporter of the Department of Sudanese and African Languages. Several members of the Department of Linguistics now participate in supervising the graduate students of the previously mentioned department of the IAAS; specifically mentioned should be Dr. Helene Fatima Idris's active involvement in teaching and supervising graduate programs for students of the Department of Sudanese and African Languages. This cooperation is considered the most successful, opening up significant opportunities and relationships for both departments with external educational institutions (see SECTION 5.2 on the department's projects).

⁴ The other two are the Department of African and Asian Studies (dealing with history, anthropology, etc.) and the Department of Folklore.

International University of Africa

The Yousif Alkhalifa Center for Writing African Languages in Arabic Script, affiliated with the International University of Africa, Khartoum, is one of the leading institutions in the field of writing and transcribing African Languages such as Fulani, Hausa and Swahili into Arabic script (Jah Allah 2015).⁵ Since the main objective of this institute is to transcribe other unwritten languages using the Arabic script, the Department of Linguistics has cooperated with the institute since 2003. Several workshops were held between the two departments focusing on attempts to transcribe Sudanese languages using the Arabic script, among them the Tagoi language (see SECTION 5.3.2 below).

National Council for Cultural Heritage and Promotion of National Languages

Since the National Council for Heritage and the Promotion of Local Languages specializes in documenting Sudanese heritage and languages, they reached out to the Department of Linguistics at the University of Khartoum to achieve one of their main goals, which is the documentation of Sudanese languages. This followed the growing reputation and success of the Department of Linguistics in this field, both internally and internationally. This cooperation became fruitful when Al-Amin Abu-Manga took over the management of the council, as he highly regards and recognizes the excellence of Department of Linguistics members, having previously supervised several PhD theses in the department. This collaboration has resulted in numerous workshops and in the annual joint celebration of International Mother Language Day with the participation of the department's students and staff alongside the council.



FIGURE 3:
Mother
Language
Day 2023 at
the
Department
of Linguistics

⁵ <https://youtu.be/vBd3iHFhFGc>

In addition, in 2021, the Department of Linguistics held a workshop in collaboration with the National Council for the Promotion of Local Languages. The main goals of this workshop were to promote peace through the study and documentation of local languages and to conduct a workshop on writing the Zaghawa language.

5.2 External collaborations

This section highlights the external collaborations of the Department of Linguistics with various institutions and universities abroad.

In a television interview in March 2023 on Sudan's Al-Shorooq TV, the current head of department Waleed Mudathir Alshareef stated that the Department of Linguistics has made numerous contributions both domestically and internationally. One of the most significant contributions is the department's substantial role in promoting peace in Sudan through its collaboration with UNESCO, which places great importance on cultural and linguistic diversity and the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Sudan. Achieving this goal is only possible through the study and documentation of the languages of these communities to preserve them from extinction. The Department of Linguistics is considered one of the leading institutions in this effort, as it is the only academic and research entity capable of undertaking such a monumental task. To achieve this goal, several projects have been established in close collaboration with universities from outside Sudan. This section primarily focuses on sponsored projects and workshops in which the staff members of the Department of Linguistics actively participate.

5.2.1 University of Cologne

Significant collaboration exists between the Department of Linguistics in Khartoum and the University of Cologne in Germany, specifically with the Department of Linguistics (General Linguistics) and the Institute of African Studies and Egyptology. The latter "brings together the disciplines of archaeology, cultural anthropology, and linguistics",⁶ herewith pointing out a multidisciplinary approach. This institute has played a major and effective role in the professional development of several members of the Department of Linguistics, Khartoum by hosting them through various programs, such as Dr. Abdel Rahim Mogadam's postdoctoral studies and the MA studies of the current members of the Department of Linguistics, Waleed Mudathir Alshareef and Elsadig Omda. Several members of the department were supervised by Professor Dr. Gerrit J. Dimmendaal during their PhD studies. Other faculty members from the Institute of African Studies served as external examiners for PhD and MA

⁶ <https://aae.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/en/>

students, including Professor Dr. Anne Storch, Dr. Angelika Jakobi and Dr. Gertrud Schneider-Blum. Right now, the Department of Linguistics in Cologne is hosting Elsadig Omda as he does his PhD.

In addition to several workshops organized by members of both the University of Cologne and the University of Khartoum, there were two major projects carried out under the supervision of members of the Institute of African Studies and Egyptology at the University of Cologne and the Institute of Linguistics in Cologne in collaboration with members of the Department of Linguistics in Khartoum. The two projects are described below with details of the respective topic, the teams and the outcomes, including the most important publications.

Tima project

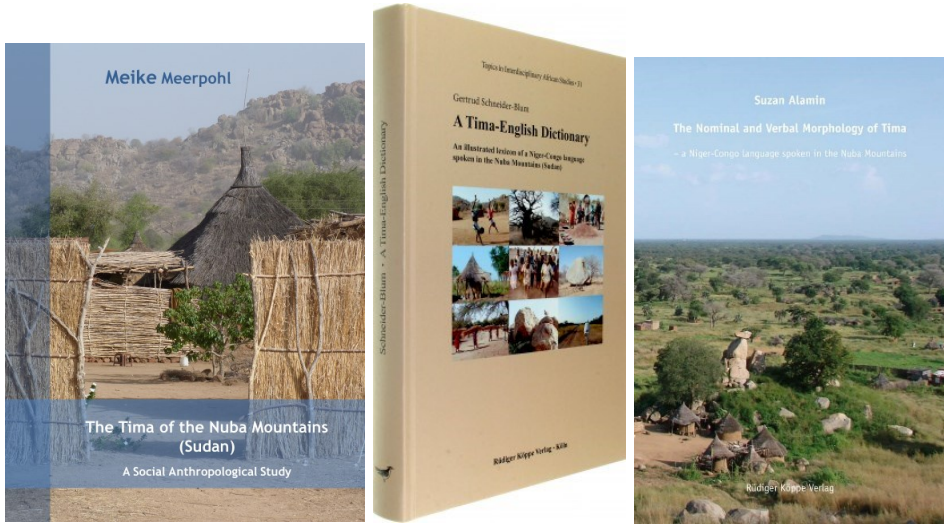
The idea for the Tima Language Project began in 2002, initiated by Gerrit J. Dimmendaal, who expressed his desire to study the Tama [sic!] language, one of the Eastern Sudanic, Nilo-Saharan languages spoken in Darfur in western Sudan (Dimmendaal 2009). This interest arose during his visit to Khartoum as an external examiner for Master's theses of students from the Department of Sudanese and African Languages at the University of Khartoum. While searching for speakers of the Tama language in Khartoum, Gerrit J. Dimmendaal was also contacted there by representatives of the Tima Language Committee. The latter expressed a keen interest in writing and documenting their language, which is spoken mainly in the Nuba Mountains. As a result, Gerrit J. Dimmendaal not only started studying Tama, but also the Tima language, and the latter initiative resulted in the initiation of a documentation project of this highly endangered language, with scholars from the Department of Linguistics in Khartoum and the Institute for African Studies and Egyptology in Cologne, Germany, as collaborating members.

The Tima project was sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation⁷ and lasted from 2006 to 2013. The project's team consisted of Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam, Gertrud Schneider-Blum, Meike Meerpohl, Abeer M. A. Bashir and Suzan Alamin (the latter two as PhD candidates) under the supervision of Gerrit J. Dimmendaal. In addition, there were two student assistants from the University of Cologne, Nico Nassenstein and Meikal Mumin, who helped in data archiving.⁸

The central themes of the project were twofold. The first theme focused on Tima language documentation. The second theme focused on the documentation and description of Tima anthropological facets.

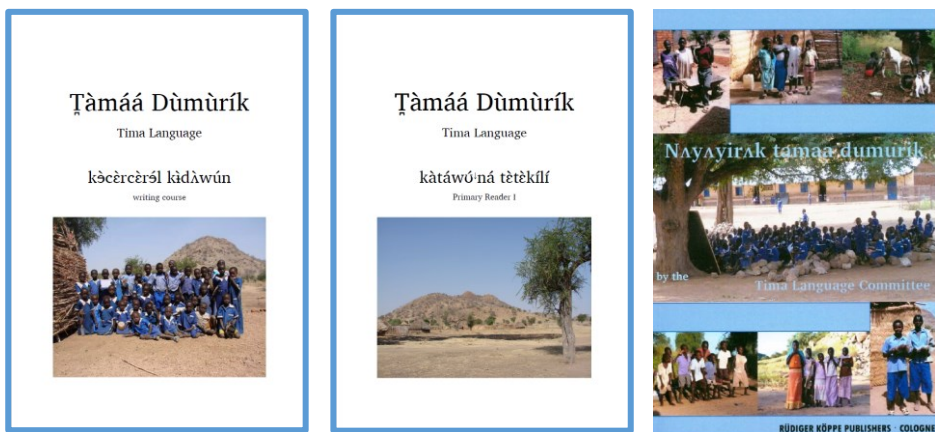
⁷ <https://dobes.mpi.nl/projects/tima/language/>

⁸ <https://dobes.mpi.nl/projects/tima/team/>



FIGURES 4-6: Selected publications on Tima

The outcome includes two PhD theses. The first one, presented by Abeer M. A. Bashir, is titled *Tima Phonetic and Phonological System* (2010). The second thesis was presented by Suzan Alamin under the title *Tima Nominal and Verbal Morphology*, published in 2012. Meike Meerpohl (2012) authored the social anthropological study *The Tima of the Nuba Mountains (Sudan)*. A multimedia Tima-English Dictionary⁹ was prepared by Gertrud Schneider-Blum with a printed version published in 2013. Moreover, numerous articles centred on Tima have been published throughout the project's duration and beyond, by its members as well as by its supervisor, Gerrit J. Dimmendaal.



FIGURES 7-9: Tima writing course and primary readers (covers)

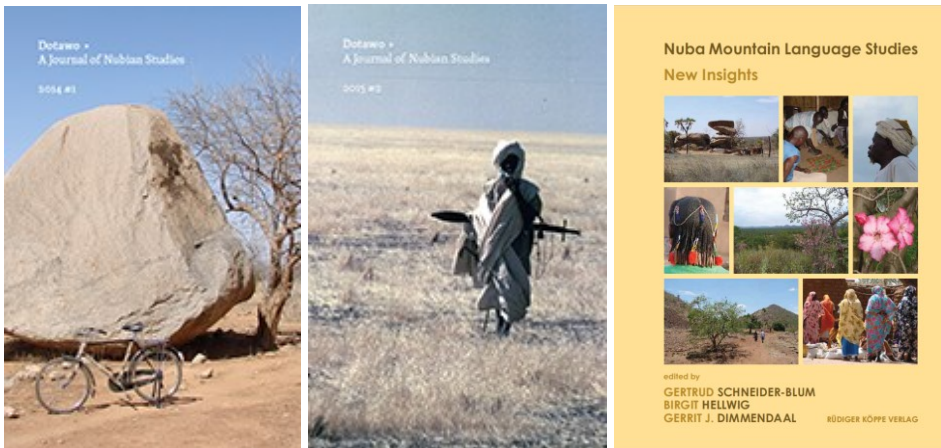
⁹ <http://tima-dictionary.mine.nu/>

The department has also hosted two workshops for selected Tima community members from Khartoum, as well as from their home area in the Nuba Mountains. On the one hand, the orthography for the Tima language was discussed, on the other hand, a writing course and two primary readers (building upon each other) were developed.

Tabaq project

The Tabaq project (01/07/2011 - 31/12/2013) was generously supported by an ELDP grant. All data from this Nilo-Saharan language are stored in the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR).¹⁰

Two Sudanese students, Khalifa Jabreldar Khalifa and Khaleel Ismail, supplemented the team from Cologne consisting of Gerrit J. Dimmendaal, Birgit Hellwig and Gertrud Schneider-Blum. Khalifa Jabreldar Khalifa collected socio-linguistic data for his PhD, while Khaleel Ismail aimed at achieving his MA in linguistics with a focus on anthropological linguistics. Several articles, three of which appeared in *Dotawo – A Journal of Nubian Studies*, and two contributions to the volume on *Nuba Mountain Language Studies – New Insights* (2018) focus on different aspects of this highly endangered language.



FIGURES 10-12: *Dotawo* 1 and 2 and *Nuba Mountain Language Studies – New Insights*, both with publications on Tabaq

5.2.2 CNRS / LLACAN

The French side has also played an active role in the development of the Department of Linguistics and the qualifications of its members by organizing several workshops and seminars, as well as initiating two big academic projects,

¹⁰ <http://hdl.handle.net/2196/00-0000-0000-0002-2EAA-F>

i.e. the NAPATA and PICS projects, between the two partners. These projects were active between 2016 and 2021 and were executed in cooperation of the University of Khartoum with the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). The projects, their teams, their themes and their most significant scholarly achievements will be presented in the following.

Napata projects

The first Napata project started in 2016 and was entitled *Arabic Borrowed Words in Some Sudanese Languages*. It aimed to study borrowed Arabic words in selected Sudanese languages, investigating their phonetic, morphological and semantic changes. The languages included were Tagoi, Tabaq, Zaghawa, Hausa, Lafofa, Tima, Kwilib and Dinka. The Sudanese and French researchers presented and discussed all drafts during a workshop in December 2016 in Khartoum. The paper on “Arabic borrowings in Tima” by Mona Hashim, Suzan Alamin and Gertrud Schneider-Blum was published in 2020 in a special issue of *Faits de Langues*, together with numerous contributions on different aspects of the languages of the Nuba Mountains.¹¹



FIGURE 13: *Faits de Langues*

The second Napata project, starting in 2017, was entitled *Sudan as a Linguistic Region: In Search of Common Features between the Various Sudanese Languages*. It was meant to extend the formerly established collaboration, as there were further areas of research and many topics that the researchers could jointly address. It investigated the common linguistic features that are shared by different linguistic groups living in the Nuba Mountain region.

¹¹ <https://fdl.univ-lemans.fr/fr/liste-des-numeros/n48-1-1-1-1-1.html>

The two Napata projects were coordinated by Stefano Manfredi and Nicolas Quint from France and Maha A. Aldawi and Abeer M. A. Bashir from Sudan. A third project was under the umbrella of both, Napata and PICS (see below).

PICS projects

The PICS project *The languages of the Sudan: a typological and areal crossroad* started in 2019 with Nicolas Quint and Abeer M. A. Bashir as the responsible coordinators. Besides the coordinators, a number of scholars participated in the project. Three were from the French partner associations: Claude Rilly and Pascal Boyeldieu, both from LLACAN / CNRS (France), and Stefano Manfredi, associated with SeDYL / CNRS (France).¹² The Sudanese scholars were Maha A. Aldawi, Suzan Alamin, Waleed Mudathir Alshareef, Ahmed Sosal Altayeb, Elnazir Mustafa Mohamed Salih, Elsadig Omda, Helene Fatima Idris, Issamedin Awad, Mona Hashim Ibrahim, and Sawsan A. M. Nashid, who all belong to the Department of Linguistics of Khartoum University.



PHC-Napata – Kin terms and anthroponyms in the languages of the Nuba Mountains

PICS - The languages of the Sudan: a typological and areal crossroad



Joined workshop and training seminar, Khartoum 10-12 October 2021

FIGURE 14: Napata and PICS: invitation to a joined workshop

¹² For a list of all participants see:

<https://sudanlinguisticarea.huma-num.fr/participants.html>

All in all, three workshops were held, two in Khartoum (Sudan) in 2019 and in 2021 (the latter one was a joined workshop and training seminar under the umbrella of both, Napata and PICS), while the workshop held in 2020 took place in Villejuif (France). The joined workshop of 2021 focused on *Kinship terms and Anthroponyms in the Nuba Mountains* (see the publication by Manfredi 2023).

5.2.3 CASAS

On the African side, the Department of Linguistics established a partnership with the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), University of the Western Cape, South Africa. In 2009, a workshop dealing with the standardized writing of African languages was organized in Khartoum. Many scientific papers were presented. The output was the launch of a book that consisted of several articles on this theme by the department staff members. It was edited by Mohamed J. Hashim and Abdel Rahim Hamid Mugaddam, and carries the title *Unity and Diversity of Nubian Languages: toward a Standardized Writing System of Nubian Languages* (2012).

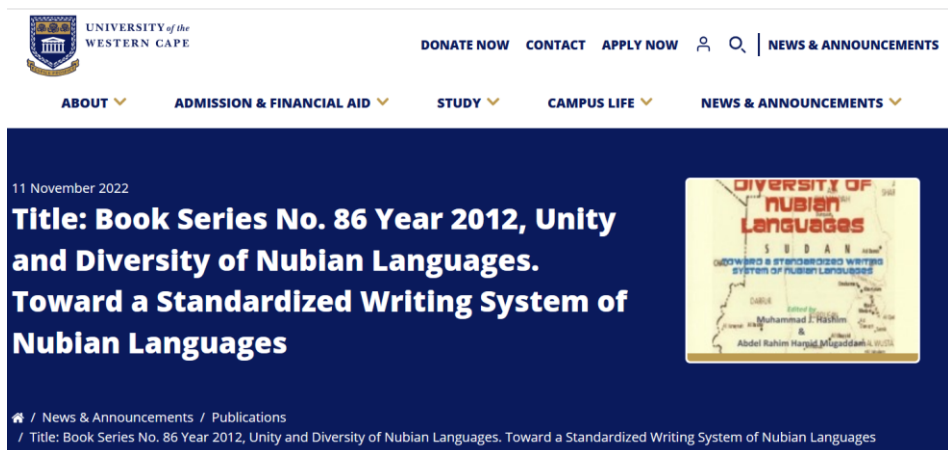


FIGURE 15: Outcome of the collaboration with CASAS

5.3 Tagoi project

5.3.1 Tagoi documentation project

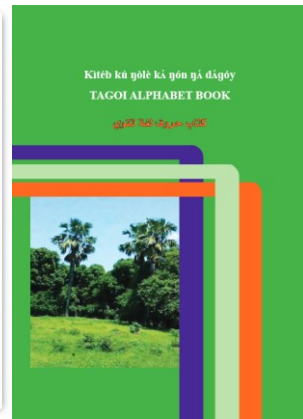
The experience we gained from working with our German colleagues on the documentation project about Tima allowed us to submit our own application. Thus, in 2012, Helene Fatima Idris (Department of Linguistics, Khartoum) applied for a small grant for a project from the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) hosted at SOAS, University of London,

UK. With the active support by Professor Dr. Birgit Hellwig (Cologne), the Department of Linguistics got the funding. The project is titled *A preliminary linguistic survey of the Tagoi language, Nuba Mountains, Sudan*. The project's team consisted of three staff members: Helene Fatima Idris, Abeer M. A. Bashir and Suzan Alamin (primary investigator), supported by representatives of the Tagoi community in Khartoum. Birgit Hellwig supported the project throughout its entire duration with her extensive experience.

The outcome of this project was the documentation of the language via the collection of electronic data which was later archived in the Endangered Languages Archive.¹³ The central theme of the Tagoi project was the focus on giving a sociolinguistic perspective on the Tagoi speech community, as well as on describing the phonological and the morphological structure of the Tagoi language. Several articles were published, among them "Noun class genders in Tagoi" by Abeer M. A. Bashir (2018) and "The Tagoi pronominal system" by Suzan Alamin (2015).

5.3.2 Tagoi orthography development

At the request of the Tagoi community, the Tagoi Orthography Development Project was conducted in 2016-2018. It was funded by a Haycock Research Grant from the British Institute in Eastern Africa. Almost all members of the department were involved, taking on different tasks.



FIGURES 16 and 17: At one of the Tagoi workshops / *Tagoi Alphabet Book*

During the project to develop the Tagoi orthography, the Department of Linguistics faced many challenges. One of these was that none of the participants had any previous experience of creating an orthography. To overcome this, the department held numerous meetings, conferences and workshops with the Tagoi

¹³ <http://hdl.handle.net/2196/00-0000-0000-0002-A34E-9>

language consultants. In May 2016, for example, a three-day workshop was held at the Yousif Alkhalifa Center for Writing Languages in Arabic Script at the International University of Africa (Khartoum). The main topic was to investigate the possibility of creating an orthography for Tagoi in Arabic script. In the end, the Tagoi Language Committee opted for an IPA-based Roman script. In August of the same year, Professor Dr. Pascal Boyeldieu from the CNRS, France, led a two-week workshop on phonological and tonal analysis of the Tagoi language to build up expertise.

The major achievement for the community was the publication of the *Tagoi Alphabet Book* edited by Helene Fatima Idris, Abeer M. A. Bashir, Sawsan A. M. Nashid, Mona Hashim Ibrahim and Ahmed Sosal Altayeb in April 2018. The contribution on “Language and identity construction among the Tagoi of the Sudan” by Sawsan A. M. Nashid (this volume) is also based on data obtained in the two Tagoi projects.

5.4 Fourth Conference on Nuba Mountain languages

In February 2023, the Department of Linguistics in Khartoum was happy to host the fourth Nuba Mountain Languages Conference. It was an overwhelming event. All members of the department, as well as the students, did their best to make it unforgettable.



FIGURE 18: Conference poster of the fourth NML Conference

This conference could not have been realized without the support from our French and German colleagues, plus the sponsoring institutions, namely the Université franco-allemande/Deutsch-Französische Hochschule, LLACAN, CEDEJ, SeDYL, Labex EFL, INALCO, CNRS, the Ambassade de France au Soudan, the University of Khartoum and the University of Cologne.

Experienced researchers from different countries, as well as students from Germany, France, Poland and Sudan, presented their research to colleagues and interested lay people. Vivid discussions followed each presentation. Some of the talks turned into contributions which were selected for publication in this volume.

This was the last event before the violent conflict between two rival armies started in Khartoum, soon spreading over most of the country.

6 Conclusion

The previous sections hopefully showed the significant impact the Department of Linguistics has had on the study of Sudanese languages and on the diversity of indigenous language communities in Sudan. Over time, the department has gained a good reputation among the different Sudanese cultural sectors, such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Sudan, the National Council for Cultural Heritage and Promotion of National Languages, and the Ministry of Culture and Information. This has also built bridges of trust and friendship between these institutions, and also with institutions worldwide, as mentioned above. Let's take this opportunity to pray for Sudan and call for peace, hoping that the department can regain its influence and spirit. There remains much to be done for Sudan, its languages and its people.

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Preparations for the 4th Nuba Mountain Languages Conference
(February 2, 2023)



To keep everyone in a good mood during the conference
(February 7, 2023)



Impressions from the excursion to Sabalouga after the 4th NML Conference
(February 8, 2023)



At the Begrawiya Pyramids (February 8, 2023)
(photos: Gertrud Schneider-Blum)