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## Arabic in the Sudan

Current Problems and Future Needs

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### The Use of Arabic in the Sudan

Ferguson's diglossia model with its division into high and low variety, provides a convenient framework for studying the use of Arabic in the Sudan. However, within the Sudan the situation is much more complex than what might be suggested by a dual division into a high as opposed to a low variety. A continuum of lower and higher varieties is more appropriate. Before discussing this continuum I should like to state that though the regional dialects are by and large mutually intelligible, they can, nevertheless, exhibit fundamental linguistic differences. For instance, if we take the Shaigiyya dialect of Arabic from the northern Sudan, the Baggara dialect from the West and "Juba Arabic" from the southern Sudan, we can anticipate some lack of intelligibility. Besides these regional dialects, there is Khartoum Arabic which frequently serves as a lingua franca between persons whose mother dialects are regional, and which is moving towards being a colloquial standard.

Within the continuum of low varieties, a person from the South, for instance, may be a speaker of both Juba Arabic and Khartoum Arabic. In fact, the same speaker may add classical Arabic to the lower varieties—depending on the nature and level of his education. Khartoum Arabic will act for him as a high variety and be considered prestigious within certain domains in comparison with Juba Arabic; and yet it ranks as a low variety compared to the classical. If we choose as another example a Shaigiyya woman who has been heavily exposed to Khartoum Arabic, we may find two different varieties co-existing in very interesting relationships. She uses the feminine variety while talking to other females, minors and youngsters. While addressing a man of her own ethnic group—the Shaigiyya—she will most probably use the Shaigiyya regional dialect; whereas Khartoum Arabic will be reserved for cross-dialectal, and, possibly, for prestigious communication.

While the colloquial is used in casual and relaxed conversations, the high variety in one form or another is used in education, in law courts, in the mass media, on certain religious occasions and sometimes in social gatherings of the educated elite. At one end of the continuum we have the very formal classical variety with its special diction and structure—such as the ceremonial speech in the Friday prayer, in funerals, on the anniversary of the prophet or of leading Muslim saints. At the other end of the continuum we have the more relaxed speech which dominates the meetings and social gatherings of the elite and which may be interspersed with a lot of English words (Osman). Such speech is at the very end of the continuum of the higher varieties and tends to merge into the lower forms. Midway between these two ends we find another kind of variety which is used in courts, classrooms and other places.

The use of Arabic in the Sudan is governed by tremendous switching which sometimes takes place within the same setting.

For instance, within the classroom the teacher gives the lessons in a formal manner through the medium of classical Arabic. If he is asked for more explanation he may immediately switch to the casual low variety. Also in different radio and T.V. programs such as in televised debates and topical discussions, the program may start in classical, but as soon as the discussion becomes heated and lively, the discussants switch to the lower varieties. Sometimes the moderator announces the name of the program and introduces the topic in classical. Then the whole discussion proceeds in the colloquial varieties and only the final statement and the announcement of the end of the program are made in classical.

The southern Sudan, the least Arabized part of the country, calls for a special mention in a discussion of the position and role of Arabic. The pidgin Arabic of the southern Sudan goes back to the last decades of the nineteenth century (Tucker).

A more recent study of Juba Arabic shows the spread of this variety and indicates the possibility

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**NOW AVAILABLE**—*Tower of Babel: On the Definition and Analysis of Concepts in the Social Sciences* by Giovanni Sartori, Fred W. Riggs, and Henry Tuene. An occasional paper of the International Studies Association. Pittsburgh, 1975. (Mervis Hall, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260) 107 pages.

The Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (COCTA) has entered the field of language planning by seeking to encourage the recognition and retrieval of concepts as defined by social scientists, leading eventually toward the acceptance of agreements among users of key concepts concerning the most appropriate terminology to be used by specialists in each field for referring to the concepts they find particularly useful. As a device to promote widespread discussion of key issues involved in this process, the committee, working through the International Studies Association, which has financed the monograph, recently published the title listed above.

The work contains three chapters. The first, by Giovanni Sartori, University of Florence, and chairman of COCTA, spells out the scope of the conceptual and terminological difficulties confronting social scientists, stressing the dangers which lie ahead if something is not done to prevent the growing confusion of our contemporary "Tower of Babel."

The second chapter by Fred W. Riggs, University of Hawaii and secretary of COCTA, focuses on the definition of concepts. Setting aside the question of terminology, he distinguishes between the definition of concepts and the definition of words, going on to discuss some criteria, both as to parsimony and adequacy, of concept definitions. A computerized concept inventory is being launched at the Information Utilization Laboratory of the University of Pittsburgh, under the aegis of COCTA and the editorship of George Graham, Vanderbilt University, in which definitional problems will be more fully explored.

Henry Tuene, University of Pennsylvania, has written the third chapter, on the analysis of concepts. Bringing to bear some ideas drawn from the philosophy of science, he differentiates various types of concepts and discusses their relationships to each other. The monograph makes clear that little consensus now exists among social scientists, logicians, or philosophers of science, about the metaconcepts required for the analysis of concepts, or about the metaterminology needed for referring to them.

A concluding statement by Riggs points to the possibility of a technique for reaching terminological agreements among scholars working in selected fields, but this subject is left for fuller analysis at a later date. The preface and introduction to the monograph provide a history of COCTA, which started as a research committee of the International Political Science Association, and a preliminary statement of its purposes and program.

### CALL FOR ARTICLES

Language planners are invited to submit articles for editorial consideration by *La Monda Lingvo-Problemo* (The World Language Problem), a thrice-annual journal published by Mouton & Co., The Hague-Paris. Past articles of language-planning relevance have included L.M. Khubchandani, "Planned change in the media of instruction: Problems of switch-over," M. Mayrhofer, "Zur Problematik der Plansprachen," Y.R. Chao, "Some contrastive aspects of the Chinese national language movement," K.H. Pfeffer, "Sprachenfrage und soziale Unruhe in Pakistan," Richard E. Wood, "Linguistic problems in the Netherlands Antilles," etc. Book reviews will also be considered, and unsigned notes on language planning and related activities. Articles are published in major national languages with quarter-length summaries in Esperanto. Potential contributors should write the Editor, Richard E. Wood, Dept. of Languages & International Studies, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY 11530, USA.

THE EAST-WEST CENTER is a national educational institution established in Hawaii by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to "promote better relations and understanding between the United States and the nations of Asia and the Pacific through cooperative study, training and research."

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of its becoming a creole. Children in the large towns are already beginning to use it as their first language (Nhiāl). At the same time southern politicians have recently been observed to make speeches in Juba in a sort of Khartoum Arabic.

### Problems with Arabic as a national language

Before discussing the different aspects of the national language, it is essential to raise some important issues about nationalism. Within the Sudan a potential ideological conflict is centered around the concept of nationhood. A nation may mean two different things for a northerner and a southerner. The national aspirations of numerous southerners are centred around Juba, the regional capital; and with some optimism we may believe that such aspirations reach as far as Khartoum, the national capital. On the other hand the concept of 'nation' or 'nationhood' for a northerner is overwhelmed by ideas about pan-Arabism. In such cases, aspirations extend beyond the boundaries of the Democratic Republic of Sudan and reach Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. They also try to link up with the religious and ethnic past.

The linguistic counterpart of these aspirations could only be fulfilled by classical Arabic which is the link with earlier greatness as well as the substance of greatness itself. This attitude envelopes classical Arabic with enormous sentimentality and leads many people to believe that it is the only potential national language.

Political and sociolinguistic studies, however, indicate that the vernacular is usually the medium of nationalism and the potential national language. For instance, the dialect of a leading political and economic centre may provide the basis for the prospective national language (Guxman, Awn al-sharif Qasim). We also maintain that Khartoum Arabic (together with some of its offshoots) is the vernacular-based variety which provides the most effective common ground for the national language. Thus, we have a potential conflict between Khartoum (or Juba) Arabic and classical Arabic. The constitution of the Democratic Republic of Sudan states that Arabic is the national language of the country without even vaguely recognizing the multitude of divergent varieties of Arabic, let alone trying to cater for inherent problems of the linguistic situation.

Besides the ideologically oriented problem there is need for awareness of the difference between varieties of Arabic. Also, in spite of the fact that the practical facts of the linguistic situation indicate that the vernacular, e.g. Khartoum Arabic, is the dominant and more significant variety for a wide sector of the community, it is, nevertheless, implicitly rejected and ignored. This rejection, however, is sometimes explicitly and elaborately verbalized. Again, we notice here the conflict between what is practically needed and what is aspired to by a wide sector of the community. The exaltation of the classical language which is the medium of the Holy Qur'an, and the link with the past golden age of the Arabs and the expression of pan-Arabism has, un-

doubtedly, led to underestimation of the role of Arabic vernaculars in nation-building. In fact both in the Sudan as well as in other Arabic-speaking countries any attempt to draw attention to Arabic dialects, folklore or national literature has been considered an anti-national movement advocated by missionaries, colonialists and their followers. Moreover, such movements are also considered anti-Islamic (Al-Jundī, Harrān). This is why it should not be surprising to see that in most Arab countries measures pertaining to national language policy are largely realized within the context of classical or literary Arabic.

National language policy in the contemporary Sudan is in the form of uncoordinated measures and decisions which are taken by different ministries and institutions. The general direction of language policy is discernible. However, explicit and deliberate language planning measures are often lacking, though educational measures (like Arabicization) which have direct bearing on language are not uncommon. Furthermore, there is no national academy to regulate language use. Although some Sudanese scholars have become members of the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, the impact of such an academy is hardly felt by the ordinary citizen, nor does it exert any influence on language use.

Within the Sudan there is no institution responsible for conscious or deliberate efforts to make Arabic an international language that can cope with science, technology and cultural innovations. Direction, if any at all, comes from institutions and academies elsewhere in the Arab World. Besides the fact that such academies start from the premises of the classical language and try to combat irresistible trends, they are also surrounded by numerous problems.

To begin with, there are Arabic Language Academies in Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus. In spite of the efforts of the Permanent Department for the Co-ordination of Arabicization (a department of the Arab League) much co-ordination and standardization is still desired. Various studies have pointed out examples of un-coordinated attempts which stand in the way of standardization and, sometimes, create potential confusion. For instance, Kiford Minajyan, examined seven Arabic dictionaries and investigated the meanings they gave to the English word "pneumatic." He demonstrated very wide discrepancies and confusion in the meanings given by different dictionaries. He also indicated that the examples which he studied neither accepted direct borrowing from the source language (English in this case), nor resorted to the extension of meaning of the most relevant appropriate words.

Another criticism is that terms which are coined by the Arab Academies remain isolated from everyday usage and are unable to compete with borrowings and popular derivations which the layman has gradually acquired over the years.

For the above as well as other reasons the impact of Pan-Arab national language agencies such as the

Arabic Language Academy at Cairo has failed to influence the average Sudanese citizen.

### Future needs for language planning

What is needed first is a re-affirmation of the underestimated role of the Arabic vernacular. As earlier examination of the language situation shows, a specific variety, i.e. Khartoum Arabic, which incorporates a combination of various dialect characteristics, acts as a melting pot and a unifying medium. We can infer that this variety, or a literary language based on it, will be the logical future national language. However, the re-affirmation of the vernacular should not be at the expense of the classical, i.e. a mere reversal of what used to happen in the past and what is still happening in certain circles. This re-affirmation *must not be understood* as a plea for the eradication of the role of the classical. In fact, *both* the higher and lower varieties co-exist in appropriate places and with proper roles to play.

To begin with it is essential to establish an institution or an agency that plans, co-ordinates and implements policy measures. Once such an agency is made available and the general basic premises laid above are given due consideration, a general framework for a language planning scheme may be worked out, or a recognized scheme may be adopted.

With regard to *selection* it is evident that from amongst the multitude of languages spoken in the Sudan, Arabic is the potential national language. However, it is necessary to state that it is a specific variety of Arabic (Khartoum Arabic as shown earlier) that should be subjected to planned development.

Once the specified variety has been selected for development, the process of *codification* should be accelerated. The preparation of grammars for Arabic vernaculars, especially Khartoum Arabic, becomes an imperative and an urgent need. Till recently the compilation of grammars for Arabic vernaculars was almost exclusively undertaken by expatriates. For most Sudanese, Arabic vernaculars were considered to be the result of corrupt use of the high form, classical Arabic, and the compilation of grammars for such vernaculars was considered a needless waste.

It is also essential to re-consider the system of the Arabic code which leans heavily on the classical variety without being able to account for the phonological peculiarities of Arabic vernaculars. (It is important to mention here that a more elaborate system of Arabic orthography which could represent phonological variations with more subtlety was available and was sometimes employed in rendering different ways of Qur'anic recitations. However, such system was drastically simplified to the system presently known to Arabic readers.) Khartoum Arabic has picked many phonological features from the local vernaculars which it displaced and from the invading languages.

One of the immediate needs of *elaboration* is the

compilation of dictionaries with entries in local vernaculars and Khartoum Arabic such as Shilluk-Arabic, Dinka-Arabic, Nubian-Arabic... etc. Such dictionaries will help native speakers of local vernaculars increase their Arabic vocabulary and enable them to relate to, and converse with, other groups in the national language. At the present time very little attention is paid to the compilation of dictionaries.

Furthermore, specialized dictionaries for technical terminology will be needed. There is also a practical need, especially among those who do not speak Khartoum Arabic as a mother tongue, for an essential body of lexicon pertaining to different occupations such as agriculture, administration, law, medicine... etc.

Preparing textbooks and encouraging the growth of a body of literature in Khartoum Arabic, or in a literary variety based on Khartoum Arabic, is another important factor essential for the development and integrity of the future national language.

The above needs and proposed measures should ultimately aim at enabling all Sudanese citizens to function and operate completely in different spheres of life through the medium of Arabic.

The lack of a specialized agency to deal with language problems at the present time, makes *implementation* of language policy a difficult undertaking. For instance, broadcasters in Sudanese vernacular languages freely coin and disseminate their own vocabularies concerning cultural and technological innovations. With the establishment of the proposed agency for the national language, standardization of lexicon, syntax and orthography should be sought. The planned national language policy must also be fully integrated into the educational and economic development programs. Furthermore, the potentialities of mass media in this respect need to be tapped more fully.

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## INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE FOR TERMINOLOGY (INFOTERM)\*

Organizations and individuals have long felt the need for an international information centre for terminology which could enhance and co-ordinate terminological work carried out all over the world. However, it was not until 1971 that Infoterm was finally established within the framework of UNISIST, with the assistance of Unesco.

Infoterm works in close liaison with the Technical Committee 37 'Terminology (principles and co-ordination)' of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The Secretariat of ISO/TC 37, held by Austria since 1952, has been collecting terminological publications of any kind which served as essential sources for the elaboration of ISO Standards and ISO Recommendations on terminological and lexicographical principles. Infoterm is now continuing the task of collecting publications in the field of terminology. (A detailed description of its history is given in "The Road to Infoterm". See below under "Publications".)

### Tasks

Infoterm's tasks are defined in a contract between Unesco and the Austrian Standards Institute. The main tasks, in compliance with UNISIST Recommendation 4, consist of co-ordinating terminological activities carried out throughout the world for the development of a network of terminological agencies. In detail, these tasks are:

1. Co-ordination and advice in the field of terminology
  - Contact with all terminological agencies
  - Close co-operation with clearing-houses for thesauri, such as the Bibliographic Systems Center, Cleveland, Ohio (USA) and the Institute for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information (INTE), Warsaw (Poland)
  - Advice for organizations and individuals engaged in terminology (authors of vocabularies, etc.)
  - Assistance in the application of terminological and lexicographical principles (theory of terminology)
2. Documentation and information in the field of terminology
  - Collection and analysis of terminological publications
  - Bibliography of standardized vocabularies
  - Bibliography of specialized vocabularies
  - Inventory of all terminological agencies and committees
  - Inventory of terminological research projects
  - Information on terminological courses, research, and lectures
  - Investigations into the development of terminological word banks

### Working Plan

The work to be undertaken is very comprehensive as it includes all subject fields and all languages.

Funds at present, however, only permit a very small staff. This, and the concept of decentralization in documentation and information necessitate the delegation of specialized work to competent agencies. Thus, a worldwide terminological network is developed which can satisfactorily cope with all future needs.

At present, Infoterm is not able to undertake simultaneously all tasks mentioned above. Priorities had to be set and the tasks are undertaken step by step.

For the time being, priority has been given to:

1. Bibliography of standardized vocabularies—In 1955, Unesco published the "Bibliography of monolingual scientific and technical glossaries", Volume 1: National standards, prepared by Prof. Wüster. Continuations of this bibliography appear in the periodicals "Babel" and "Lebende Sprachen". An updated and enlarged version of this bibliography is in preparation and will be published as No. 2 of the Infoterm Series (see below under "Publications"). Such a bibliography is urgently needed for:

- the preparation of vocabularies and thesauri
- the international unification of concepts (a prerequisite for the development of an international network of information services)
- the development of terminological word banks.

2. Inventory of all terminological agencies and committees—A questionnaire has been prepared and will be sent out shortly. It is intended to prepare a "World guide for terminology" after analysis of the questionnaires. Such a guide is a valuable tool for the co-ordination of terminological activities. Attention will also be given to all other tasks mentioned above.

It is intended to prepare and publish in the Infoterm Series, an enlarged and updated version of "Bibliography of monolingual technical and scientific vocabularies—with definitions", (originally prepared by Prof. Wüster and published by Unesco in 1959) and "Bibliography of interlingual scientific and technical dictionaries" (the fifth edition of which was published by Unesco in 1969) as a "Bibliography of specialized vocabularies".

### Publications

The results of the work of Infoterm and of institutions working in co-operation with it will appear as Infoterm Series, published by Verlag Dokumentation, München-Pullach (Germany).

At present, Infoterm Series No. 1 is in print: "The Road to Infoterm", by Eugen Wüster. Infoterm Series No. 2 is in preparation: "Bibliography of standardized vocabularies".

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**Editor's note:** Dr. Helmut Felber, director of Infoterm, regularly teaches a course at the University of Vienna, entitled: Introduction to the Theory of Terminology. The course is based on Eugen Wüster's ISO principles.

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\*Affiliated with the Austrian Standards Institute, Leopoldsg. 4, A-1021 Wien 2, Austria

## **ESPERANTO LEAGUE FOR NORTH AMERICA HOLDS INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COURSES**

This past summer the ELNA held two courses—one at San Francisco State University and the other at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Connecticut. This second course focused on the immersion method and lasted a week. The first course was from June 30 to July 25 and provided instruction at all levels. The Universal Esperanto Association elected its first American president October 1974. He is Dr. Humphrey Tonkin, Vice-Provost of the University of Pennsylvania.

## **SWEDISH-FINNISH LANGUAGE COMMITTEE CREATED**

In August of this year, a Swedish-Finnish language committee was created. The committee has as its major task the cultivation and development of the Finnish language used in Sweden. More than 200,000 Finnish immigrants now live in Sweden. The committee has 11 members, representing the Finnish institutions at the universities of Stockholm and Umea, the Swedish language committee, the Finnish language committee (in Finland), the language cultivation committee of Swedish in Finland, the Society of Finnish organizations in Sweden, the Finnish department of the Swedish Broadcasting Company, the National Swedish Immigration and Naturalization Board, the Society of Finnish writers in Sweden, the Society of Swedish Authorized Translators, the Cultural Foundation for Sweden and Finland. The President of the committee is Professor Osmo Hormia (Professor of Finnish at Stockholm University) and the Vice-President is Bertil Molde (see vol. 1, no. 3).

## **PROGRAM IN LEXICOGRAPHY—INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Courses in lexicography on the graduate and undergraduate levels are being offered by the Department of English and Journalism at Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana. "Introduction to Word Study" surveys systematically, historically, and pedagogically the form, function, and distribution of words. "The Dictionary: Form and Function" treats the function of a dictionary as a reference tool providing lexical information, the scope of the corpus covered by a dictionary, the kinds of linguistic forms described, the kinds of information given, the procedures for making a dictionary, and relations between dictionaries and society. "Evolution of Dictionaries" surveys the development from ancient bilingual word lists and glossaries to large general and various special dictionaries, in relation to their cultural setting. "Studies in Lexicography", a repeatable course, can be taken in such specialized areas as 20th-century American lexicography, dictionary making, analysis of word meaning, and definition writing. Defining can be practiced in work on dictionary projects. Address inquiries to:

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**Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Aspects of the Hebrew Revival**—Aaron Bar-Adon, University of Texas, Austin and Chaim Rabin, Hebrew University.

This project is a study of one of the major language strategists—Eliezer Ben-Yehuda—who was the most important single contributor in the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language for everyday communication from 1880 on in what is now the State of Israel. The study will focus on Ben-Yehuda's style to ascertain how he resolved two basic problems: (1) the integration of material inherited from different periods of written use, including often competing forms and words and (2) adaptation of the language used largely for religious or for purely artistic purposes to the needs of modern communication. The major corpus to be investigated will be his private letters. It is expected that the research will result in a complete evaluation of the place of Ben-Yehuda's vocabulary, grammar, and syntax within the historical development of the Hebrew language.

**The Language Strategists:  
Political Consequences of Linguistic Choice**—  
Brian Weinstein,  
Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Writers, dictionary makers, linguists, translators, poets, teachers, and others may make innovative linguistic choices which contribute to political change in their societies. These choices include the variety of language used, the alphabet or script, orthography, patterns of borrowing or rejecting words from other varieties of language; their influence may be greatest on the process by which an ethnic group or a nation redefines the boundaries between itself and others, and secondly on the opening or closing of channels to political and economic power within the ethnic group or nation.

The acceptance of their choices depends on the stability or change in the society, the interests of others who may or may not wish to bring about change; it depends on the quality of their literary skills or style; and it is closely related to the opinions of other language artisans. Thus, Chaucer's influence depended on English relations with France, the rise of the middle classes of London, challenges to the Roman Catholic doctrine and structure, his ability to capture the spirit of different characters in English society, and his acceptance by the scribe, John Shirley, and the printer, William Caxton.

His work will demonstrate that the Chaucers of different times and places should be considered as secondary political elites who consciously assist other political elites working to change patterns of identity and power. Professor Weinstein is spending a year as a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars to complete part of this project.