

Goundo, a dying language of Chad

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This paper is a preliminary report on the only data extant on the Goundo language. To my knowledge, there are only about 20-30 speakers left of this language, all over 50 years of age. The data reported on here come from two sources: (1) a sociolinguistic survey of the language conducted by the author and other SIL researchers in 1998, and (2) primary linguistic data on the language, including a word list of about 1500 items, some basic grammatical information, and very brief recorded texts. The language data was provided by one of the remaining speakers of the language who lives in N'Djaména, Chad's capital.

Goundo is an Adamawa language, one of three languages in the Kim subgroup (Greenberg's Group 14). Its home area is a cluster of three villages located on the Logone River, in the East Tandjilé prefecture of southern Chad.

The paper begins with a brief presentation of the sociolinguistic context of the language, principally based on the information collected in the 1998 survey, along with an update on what is known of the situation today. The younger members of the Goundo population have all shifted to the neighboring languages Kabalay and Nancere, both Chadic languages which are linguistically unrelated to Goundo; no children have been learning the Goundo language for many years.

The second part of the paper presents a preliminary overview of the phonological and grammatical structures of the language, based on primary data collected over the period 2004-2008. This overview involves a minimum of analysis. Nonetheless, it attempts to propose, for phonology, a phoneme inventory and syllable structure constraints; and for grammar, the basic word order and the rudiments of phrase and clause structure.

The paper will conclude with remarks on the experiences and challenges in collecting and analyzing data on a moribund language.