

Annual report for the Alex project in 1999

NUFU PROJECT NR 28/96

The annual report for The ALLEX Project 1999 was produced jointly in Harare and Oslo by Oddrun Grønvik and Dr. Herbert Chimhundu on the basis of reports, meetings, minutes etc during the year and decisions taken during the ALLEX International Seminar in Harare 24.-27.11.1999 and meetings in Oslo 4.-10.12.1999. The report was presented for comments to the whole of the ALLEX team in January - February 2000, and all comments are integrated.

A. MAIN ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

Survey of events and activities

Expectations to the ALLEX Project are at present very high in Zimbabwe, both within and outside UZ. Focus is on ALRI and the main task of the ALLEX Project, i. e. completion of the dictionaries. They are eagerly awaited and must go to press before the end of 2000.

The ALLEX Project took a major step forward in 1999 in that

- mother tongue lexicography now is institutionalised at UZ in the African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) as from 1.1.2000. This was noted by NUFU as a goal for Phase 2 (1996-1999) in the original application for funding.
- the dictionary manuscripts are on schedule
- the three Ph. D. scholars have all been registered under the Dr. Arts Programme at the UO Arts Faculty, and are doing well. (They will take their degrees at UZ)
- important progress has been made in training and competence building for the rest of the team as well

However, This progress has led to unforeseen expences and delayed the work on the dictionaries in that

- the institutionalisation process itself was demanding and took up a lot of time for the UZ team, especially the academic co-ordinator. The Project bore the cost of the very important ALRI launch seminar, cf. A.1 below
- the three central team members pulled out for Ph. D. scholarships had to be replaced by trainee editors to keep up work on the dictionaries
- The Ph. D. sandwich course is very intensive, and the cost of courses, equipment, field work expences etc was not part of the original ALLEX budget.

The ALLEX Project has exceeded its budget with ca NOK 221000 in 1999 for these reasons.

The chief events of the ALLEX Project 1999 were, in time sequence

- The 1999 January Workshop (18.-22.1.1999) at UZ, Harare, for the joint team (GU, UO, UZ) cf. A.4a.
- Two three-month guest researcher visits to UO 15.4. - 5.7.1999, cf. A.5a.
- The first ALLEX Ph.D. scholar, completed his first academic year at UO and the other two started theirs, cf. A.5b.
- ALLEX participation in corpus lexicography course at Tuscan Word Centre, cf. A.4b.
- ALLEX Participation in Afrilex, cf. A.4c

- Additional field work in Zimbabwe June-August 1999, cf. A.2b
- Programming course (PERL) for selected team members at UZ by Dr. C. E. Ore 15. - 19.11.1999, cf. A.4d
- Planning visit re Phase 3 by Oddrun Grønvik to UZ 19.-23.11.1999, assisted by Dr C. E. Ore, Dr Ridings, Professors E. Hovdhaugen, R. T. Endresen and L. S. Vikør (all UO) and Bo Ralph (GU). cf. Plan for Phase 3
- International seminar 24.-27.11.1999 at the launch of African Languages Research Institute (ALRI), A.1b
- Planning meetings between Oddrun Grønvik and Dr Herbert Chimhundu in Oslo 4.-10.12.1999 (during Dr. Chimhundu's visit to Oslo on other business), cf. a.1c end.

1. Getting lexicography institutionalised at UZ through African Languages Research Institute (ALRI)

a) Decision Process and Implementation: When the ALLEX Project got NUFU funding for Phase 2 (1996-1999), it was noted by NUFU that lexicography as an academic discipline was planned to be institutionalised at UZ before the end of Phase 2. The proposal to institutionalise lexicography at UZ, through creating a Centre for research in African Languages from 1.1.2000 directly under the UZ Vice Chancellor was ready for presentation 16.2.1999. The Proposal was passed by the Department Board 8.4.1999, by the Arts Faculty Board 30.6.1999 (Paper FPC /5/99) and by the UZ Senate 9.11.1999 (Paper Sen/33/99). The name is African Languages Research Institute (ALRI).

It was decided by the UZ that the new African Languages Research Centre would be located at the former Visitors' Lodge with occupancy starting 1.1.2000 (cf. Appendix 9), and that it would initially be staffed with 1 Director and 3 Research Fellows (cf Appendix 10), the latter to be recruited from the staff trained through the ALLEX Project.

b) Launch: In order to launch ALRI as a lexicography centre in Southern Africa, an International Seminar with the title "Taking African Languages into the New Millenium" was held at UZ 24.-27.11.1999. The seminar was hosted by the ALLEX Project.

The ALRI seminar opened 24.11.99 with two well attended public lectures at UZ by Professor Hovdhaugen and Professor L. S. Vikør. Other team members and distinguished visitors gave papers at the sessions launch seminar itself. For programme and details see Appendix 11. Excluding the Project team members (which comprises almost all academic staff at ALL/UZ), the partner institutions were represented as follows:

GU: Dean of the Arts Faculty Professor Lennart Olausson, Professor Bo Ralph

UO: Dean of the Arts Faculty Professor Even Hovdhaugen, Professor Rolf Theil Endresen, Professor Lars S. Vikør

UZ: Vice Chancellor Professor Hill and the Dean of the Faculty for Curriculum and Education.

The following research institutions for African languages were represented: University of Botswana, Pan South African Language Board, Bureau of WAT, University of Stellenbosch (SA), Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania). The Language Board, Malawi, was invited, but lacked funding. All institutions presented papers.

The Embassies of Norway (Ambassador Arild Eik) and Sweden (Charge d'Affaires Ms Irina Schoulgin) were present and spoke at the opening 26.11.99. The official launch was performed by the Minister of Technology and Higher Education Mr I. Chombo. He also donated a check of Z\$ 500 000,- to ALRI. Mr. E. Matimati, from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, spoke on behalf of the minister Mr. G. Machinga.

c) Impact of ALLEX Project: Through the institutionalisation process, the contribution of the ALLEX Project to Zimbabwean language policy and cultural life has been focussed repeatedly in many different fora in Zimbabwe. At the UZ, both the Department and Faculty Boards and Senate have characterised the creation of ALRI as an important step in national modernisation and development, and as furthering Zimbabwe's cultural strength and independence, cf. Appendix 8. The same view was put strongly and repeatedly by Vice Chancellor Hill during his visit to UO in October 1999, and again at the SUM 20th anniversary seminar 15.12.1999. The Norwegian and Swedish official commitment to furthering cultural and linguistic independence in Zimbabwe is today much appreciated at UZ and outside.

The ALLEX Project, the constitution of ALRI and the project leaders themselves have also received an unprecedented degree of media attention and coverage, especially in Zimbabwe, in connection with the launch of ALRI. In the media, the constitution of ALRI was linked directly to the suggestion in the then draft constitution that Shona and Ndebele be upgraded to official languages of Zimbabwe. Although the ALRI seminar took place at a time of very intensive political debate of the new constitution, ALRI headed the national television news in the evening of 26.11., and the academic co-ordinators from GU, UO and UZ + Ms Dube from the Ndebele team got 20 minutes direct on breakfast television on that day. Other items: Dr. Chimhundu was interviewed by the Norwegian weekly *Dag og Tid* in December 1999 (printed 16.12.99). The ALLEX Project was presented by *APOLLO 2 - 1999* (s. 41) and in *Mål og Makt 1 - 1999* (s. 18-21). A poster was made by SUM in connection with the SUM seminar (15.12.1999).

In 1999, Dr. Chimhundu also visited Oslo in his capacity as chairman of the National Arts` Council. During his visit he was interviewed by The Norwegian weekly *Dag og Tid* (printed 16.12.99) and found time to visit *Noregs Mållag*, (The Norwegian Language Association), to be briefed about their work and their methods.

2. Lexicographical work

a) Database Development: In 1999 there has been a further development of the dictionary databases. The ALLEX 99 workshop resulted in a few minor changes. During the visit of the guest researchers in April to June the database system was adjusted and streamlined towards the defining process. This work was continued in close co-operation with the guest researchers at UO April-June 1999.

b) Additional field work: SIDA/SAREC granted Z\$ 265000 for additional data collection in the field in June-August 1999. 19 students were engaged to conduct interviews in poorly covered areas (from the '93 and '96 field work) and were later on trained in using the corpus and basic defining techniques. It was a very successful exercise for the students, but also revealing as to the corpus shortcomings, cf. A.3b.

c) Advanced Shona Dictionary (ASD): The main thrust in the defining process has been to try to explain the words within their contexts of usage, so as to make users understand not only the meaning but also how these words are used in Shona. And so there has been increased use of the corpus to identify contexts of usage, enhance existing definitions (DRC) as well as uncover new senses. For progress, see table 1.

d) General Ndebele Dictionary (GND): A certain quantity of definitions were drafted on paper in 1998, cf. Annual Report 1998. For the Ndebele team at UZ, focus in 1999 was a) establishing as many and useful definition formats as possible, b) writing definitions for as many headwords as possible c) making sure that the definitions formats were implemented in the same way by all team members. The team worked closely over task a), mostly under Karren Dube's leadership. Good progress was also made under b), despite difficult working conditions. For GND progress, see table 2.

3. Corpus Work

a) Corpus Development and administration: The size of the corpora grew in 1999, though not as much as in 1998, as work on the dictionary databases was in focus this year. The importance of constant quality controls at UO under Oddrun Grønvik's direction before the material reaches the corpus administrator, Daniel Ridings in Gothenburg still has to be emphasised. Corpus administration has continued as in 1998. For corpus expansion, see tables 3 and 4.

b) Morphological parsers. Since the morphological parsers are not ready, we cannot yet say how many different word base forms the corpus contains. The UZ teams feel that the corpora, though still too small, are getting good on the central vocabulary, but short on less frequent vocabulary (traditional terms, dialect words, special language).

Another aspect of the corpus work done under 1999 has to do with extraction of information. In order to save time in the analysis of corpus material it is necessary to focus significant combinations of words. In order to gain information about a single word in a large corpus one studies the context that the word in question is used in. The larger the corpus becomes, the more difficult it becomes to isolate interesting examples. One "can't see the forest for the trees."

Daniel Ridings has worked on applying phrase extraction methods that have been developed for handling large corpora of Swedish to Shona and Ndebele. In contrast to the morphological system, which is by necessity linguistically oriented, the extraction routines use some common statistical methods. The initial results are promising and it is soon time to incorporate them into the corpus access system so that they are available for everyone. The goal, as always, is the routines be made available on the web so that they can be used from Harare, Oslo and Göteborg.

4. Training in lexicography, computational linguistics and programming

a) Workshop 1999: Apart from administrative meetings, The ALLEX Workshop in 1999 was devoted to in-house training and seminars in lexicography, corpus use and programming. Important topics were sense differentiation based on context analysis, lexicographical treatment of international concepts (the loan word/neologism issue), search techniques and result analysis for corpora. Ph. D. candidates and junior team members presented task results in plenary sessions and got comments from the senior team members from all partner institutions. A discussion on the refinement of definitions formats was started for both teams.

b) Corpus Lexicography Course: To make up the course requirements for the Ph. D. scholars, the ALLEX Project sent Edgar Mberi on a corpus work course at the Tuscan Word Centre, run by the internationally acclaimed corpus lexicographer Dr. John Sinclair. The two guest researchers also went for training purposes. All three did presentations there (reports delivered) and came back enthusiastic and more confident than before.

c) Afrilex: Six ALLEX UZ team members (Batidzirai, Chabata, Mangoya, Matambirofa, Mawema, Mpofo) presented papers at the AFRILEX conference in the first week of July, reflecting experiences from working on the ASD and the GND. cf. Appendix 6.

d) PERL Programming course: During 1999 two one weeks course in linguistic programming were given by Dr. Ore, one to the guest researchers and Ph.D. students in Oslo in June and one to selected team members in Harare, both during November 1999. The objectives were to give a basic introduction to programming in general, to linguistic programming specially and thereby enable the participants to formulate and perform more advanced searches in and create statistics based on the existing electronic texts. The two courses constitute the start of a longer series of such courses that should be given to all project participants.

e) ALRI International seminar: See A.1.b.

5. Competence building

The ALLEX Project in 1999 had 2 guest researchers, 3 Ph.D. scholars, and three M.A. scholars at UZ.

Although UO accepts Ph. D. scholars who have English as their working language on scheduled Faculty programmes, the teaching and courses required are not always offered in English. The Project has had to guarantee that the course requirements will be fulfilled for our Ph. D. scholars through training outside UO. This had consequences for the 1999 budget. For courses, conferences etc, see point 4 above.

a) Guest researchers: Both men, one from the Shona team and one from the Ndebele team, spent 15.4.- 5.7.1998 at INL/UO as guest researchers in 1999. Both brought work plans from UZ and reported in writing on the work done and the quality of their stay. Copies are available on request.

Emmanuel Chabata:(7.4.-30.6.99) Worked on defining headword S- Z, rate 160 pr week. problem areas: handling of collocations, and of synonyms/variants. Also did some scanning and tagging on Shona drama.

Langa Khumalo: Worked on defining headword S-T, rate 75 pr week (pioneer stage).

Both emphasise importance of interaction with the UZ team while at UO, i.e. being able to send work down, have it commented on and refine results here.

Karren Dube: on contact leave to INL 3 weeks in February 1999. Updated on translation theory, worked on corpus materials and collected headwords for GND.

Bernard Batidzirai: OU's first ALLEX guest researcher on contact leave at INL (June 1999), working on the ASD and especially finalising the revised Style Manual.

b) Ph. D. Candidates:

All three Ph. D. Candidates have reported on their work and academic progress in 1999, cf. Appendices 12 - 14.

Moreblessings Mawema: Registered as a UO Quota scholar 1999 - 2002 at UO. Applied and registered under the Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme March 1999. Arrived UO early August 1999. UO supervisor is professor Ruth Vatvedt Fjeld (SLM/INL). UZ supervisors are Dr. Ann Jefferies (Linguistics) and Dr. Herbert Chimhundu (African Languages).

Samukele Hadebe: Registered as a UO Quota scholar 1999 - 2002 at UO. Applied and registered under the Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme March 1999. Arrived UO early August 1999. UO supervisor is professor Lars S. Vikør (SLM/INL). UZ supervisor is Dr. Herbert Chimhundu (African Languages).

Edgar Mberi: Registered as a UO Quota scholar 1998 - 2001 at UO. Applied and registered under the Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme March 1999. Arrived UO early August 1998, completed first year of Sandwich course July 1999 and returned to UZ. UO supervisor is professor Rolf Theil Endresem (ILF). UZ supervisor is Dr. Herbert Chimhundu (African Languages).

c) M. A. Students: The 2 1998-99 M.A. scholars, Mandlenkosi Maphosa and Vezumuzi Ndlovu, completed their theses and course work as planned, cf. Appendix 6, and were also of great assistance to the ALLEX UZ team through their part time work on the corpus.

6. Technical development

In addition to corpus and database development, the following developments took place:

- a) UZ is investing heavily in computerising its campus and has upgraded its Computer Centre. ALL now has an URL but has as yet put nothing into it. ALRI does not yet have an URL. However, there is contact with the Computer Centre and as soon as ALRI has got itself organised, the matter will be dealt with.
- b) Both UO and GU contribute to the internet presentation of the ALLEX Project and its products.

The ALLEX homepage at UO is at <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/allex/allex.html>

The Front Matter of the DRC is now accessible at <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/allex/gsd/fm/1-frontpage.htm>

Duramazwi ReChiShona is still searchable at <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/allex/gsd.html>.

The Corpora are accessible at <http://www.gusd.holding.gu.se/>

Information on the net about the ALLEX Project can also be found at <http://www.orient.gu.se/afrikanska/prj002.html>

B. DEVIATIONS BETWEEN THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES (ANNUAL WORK PLAN) AND PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

The work plan 1996-99 has been adhered to in essentials, including the planned extension into the year 2000. If anything, the Project team members have crammed more activity into this year than we had planned for.

However, In the Project work plan for 1999 we had failed to work in the implications of some important factors:

- The increased workload in ALL/UZ because of the double intake of students
- The amount of work required to carry through the institutionalisation process
- The effect of withdrawing three central team members from Project work through fulltime Ph. D. scholarships

This heightened the pressure on the UZ ALLEX team, especially the Shona section, and affected the basic lexicographical work adversely. When this was recognised, a corrective plan was decided on by the ALLEX team as a whole and accepted by ALL, so that the main research work got back on schedule around the New Year.

Owing to lack of experience, the cost of our three Ph. D.s was not fully budgetted for in 1999. This goes both for teaching expences and equipment. The Project has also suffered a computer crash (the UO academic co-ordinator) which involved costly data retrieval.

C. STATUS AND DEVIATIONS IN RELATION TO THE CO-OPERATION'S MAIN AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

There are no deviations under this point.

D. PROPOSAL TO NUFU OF MAJOR CHANGES

The ALLEX Project has no proposals of major changes.

E. MAJOR INVESTMENTS IN 1999

There were no major investments in 1999 (3 pc-s, 2 portables).

F. MAJOR OUTSIDE FACTORS AND INPUTS

a) **The situation at UZ in 1999:** UZ has had a double intake of students, and the teaching load on the African Languages department has been exceptionally heavy. African Languages has become a popular degree course, owing to the ALLEX Project. There has been little input from the Shona teaching staff at ALL into the ALLEX Project, except for participation in meetings and general and administrative support. The Ndebele staff has contributed more work to the GND. Conditions have been very difficult, as the student intake has put unprecedented pressure on department space and resources. The fact that key team members have had their chief tasks outside the department (three Ph. D. scholars, Academic co-ordinator UZ also in his last year as Dean of the Arts Faculty) increased this pressure.

Communication has been difficult in 1999, though improved from 1998. The situation at UZ is slowly improving and the new management at the UZ computer centre is more efficient than the former and very co-operative. The ALLEX email and internet connection through Samara has been terminated as it never got to work properly. Future communication will be developed from ALRI at the new location.

The situation at UO in 1999: In 1999, UO has had to cut its budget and plan for tighter budgets in the future. This development endangers project co-operation such as under NUFU, because the institutional cost (overhead) at department or faculty level is not compensated. These problems will have to be addressed in preparation for phase 3 of the NUFU programme.

Administrative follow up of guest researchers and Ph. D. candidates has grown to be a major project task for the UO academic co-ordinator, and for Dr. Ore. In 1999 emphasis has gradually been shifted from direct assistance to assistance in coping independently and learning to handle the Norwegian system. Focus on tutorials, supervision and teaching is maintained. All three Ph. D. Candidates were enrolled under the UO Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme in 1999. They received the required courses and supervision, and were followed up by the then Dr. Arts Programme co-ordinator Professor Kjell Johan Sæbø.

G. ORGANISATIONAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN THE ALLEX PROJECT

Co-operation with GU: In 1999, Dr. Ridings moved from the Department for Swedish Language Studies to GU Holding AB. This has not led to changes in the running of the ALLEX Project. GU has through its participation in the ALRI launch seminar signalled interest in a deeper involvement in the future.

Administrative assistance at UO: The INL has in 1999 provided a new office for the ALLEX Project, and furnished it so that it holds two workplaces. The department has also found temporary workplaces for up to three ALLEX guest researchers, and provided administrative services, especially for finance administration. Relations have been very good. Co-operation with and support from the International department at UO has also invaluable to project efficiency.

UZ support: Has been as before, i.e. a reasonable amount of support granted the difficult situation at UZ.

The NUFU coordinator at UZ: The NUFU coordinator at UZ, Mr Alexio Gumi, has continued to offer invaluable support to the ALLEX Project, particularly in connection with budgeting and accounts management.

H. FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES

SIDA/SAREC: In 1999 SIDA/SAREC contributed Z\$ 265000 which was used for additional field work, cf. A.2b.

The Quota Programme at UO: All ALLEX Ph.D. Candidates, i.e. Edgar Mberi, Moreblessings Mawema and Samukele Hadebe, are now included in UO Quota programme for the whole period of their UO Sandwich Scholarship (three years). They will need funding from the ALLEX programme, cf, A.5b and Application for additional funds.

Other extra funding from UO: Section for International Programmes at UO granted NOK 20 000 to The ALLEX Project to cover travel expences for Lars S. Vikør and Rolf Theil Endresen, cf. A.1b and Appendix xx. Travelling expences for the Dean of the Arts Faculty Professor Even Hovdhaugen were covered from his account at the Faculty.

GU participation: The GU team members of the ALLEX Project have had their own funding from SIDA in 1999.

J. ANY OTHER FACTORS

All factors of relevance have been mentioned above.