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Final report for NUFU supported projects

funded under the NUFU agreement 2002 – 2006 (third programme period)

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NB! Please limit your texts in each field to a maximum of 300 words.

Basic information

Project ID

PRO 18/2002

Project title

African Languages Lexical Project (ALLEX)

Cooperating institutions (main partners)

UiS: University of Zimbabwe

Department: African Languages Research Institute

UiN: University of Oslo

Department UiN: Section for Lexicography and Dialectology

Network partners/affiliated institutions

Project coordinator UiS (present)

Chimhundu, Herbert

Project coordinator UiN (present)

Grønvik, Oddrun

Web site where information about the project can be found:

<http://www.edd.uio.no/allex/index.html>

1. Research and dissemination

1.1 Has the project met the goals and objectives stated in the Project Document regarding research? Are there any deviations compared to the goals and objectives stated at the outset of the project period? Why?

The objective of phase 3 was to make African Languages Research Centre (ALRI) at the University of Zimbabwe into a sustainable and independent research institution by

1 producing corpora, dictionaries, terminological glossaries and other ICT language products for Shona, Ndebele, and one local language

Result: We have published all we planned for Shona and Ndebele (5 dictionaries, 6 monographs, 2 corpora, one morphological parser), and we have a small corpus for Nambya, also published. We have also established a web page where a number of the ALLEX Products are available for searching.

2 testing out models for monolingual lexicography on languages with different structures and different socio-linguistic settings

Result: Done, especially in database format development and developing the fieldwork and consensus process with the most important target user groups.

3 developing software for lexicography and linguistics which further insight in languages with different structures and different socio-linguistic settings

Result: one published morphological parser for Shona, one for internal institutional use for Ndebele.

Deviations: Corpus enlargement did not go according to schedule. The reason is lack of skilled research personnel to manage corpus enlargement (3 Ph.D. scholars out of a staff of 8 have in practice been out of the project much of the time, working at their studies at UZ and UO).

1.2 Please describe in "popular terms" the most important findings and results from the research conducted in the project.

The ALLEX Project has in phase 3 come strongly forward as a language raising project for the African mother tongues in Zimbabwe, representing a long term effort to prove the African languages of Zimbabwe to be fit tools for describing all fields of human activity at methodically and consistently, and at a high academic level. The phase 3 dictionaries - all monolingual - focus on development of vocabulary and terminology to cover subjects up to tertiary education, and show that it is possible to study and qualify in these subjects in Zimbabwe without having to teach or be taught in English. While supporting the use of English as a second language, the aim of the ALLEX Project is to promote confidence in and development of the Zimbabwean mother tongues.

1.3 How many articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals as a result of the project?

Year	National or regional journals in the South	National or regional journals in the North	International journals
2002	8		
2003	4	3	
2004	3		
2005	5		
2006			
2007			
To be published	7		

1.4 To what extent and how have research results from the project influenced policy development or change at the

a. local level?

We take the local level to mean Harare and the University of Zimbabwe itself. The ALLEX project - now at the end of its 3. period - has vitalised mother tongue studies at UZ from the language angle. The improvement in teaching staff qualifications and capacity and the development at UZ of research tools and important language products for African languages has raised enthusiasm and engendered self confidence amongst staff and students. The two staff members holding a Ph.D. in African linguistics were both ALLEX scholars. The ALLEX Project has also improved contacts with other universities and teaching institutions, partly by taking students from other institutions on one year attachments, partly by involving other institutions in field work and quality control for the dictionaries of Phase 3, and partly by seeing to it that essential academic works documenting the language have become accessible to greater numbers (re-issuing Clement Doke's report on Shona from 1931 etc).

b. national level?

The ALLEX Project has

- 1) contributed heavily to raising the mother tongue issue in relation to education and public communications as a general modernisation issue, above party politics
- 2) established ALRI and the UZ as the national reference point for language research and policy within Zimbabwe, supporting other universities with staff and student training
- 3) spread an understanding of lexicography and terminology and of how the ALLEX Project works, through wide spread field work and consensus work through reference groups behind each dictionary
- 4) created a number of general language tools accessible to all - five new dictionaries aimed at specific target groups, i.e. 2 illustrated general dictionaries for Shona and Ndebele, covering primary and secondary school needs, and 3 special language dictionaries (music Shona/Ndebele and language and literature Shona).
- 5) caused the dictionaries to become accepted school and university course syllabus supports though working with the institutions for tertiary education and the education authorities. The Shona dictionary of linguistics and literature was in 2006 set as the official metalanguage standard for teaching Shona (and other languages) with Shona as the medium of instruction.
- 6) improved Zimbabwean understanding of what it means to be a multilingual community, supporting work on the minority languages (Kalanga, Shangani, Nambya) as well as the two official African languages Shona and Ndebele.
- 7) ALLEX UZ participants have also been instrumental in supporting the creation of a national African Language teachers' association, which is very active.

During Phase 3, the Norwegian partner (ILN, UO) has had its own dictionary project *Norsk Ordbok* changed (by parliamentary decree) to a Constitution bicentenary project with a substantial increase in funding and the completion date set to 2014. This would not have happened without the experience gained through the ALLEX Project.

c. regional level?

The ALLEX Project has inspired others who work with African languages through the region, chiefly by showing that it is possible to do as much for and with an African language as with any European language, and that properly trained linguists who are mother tongue users can do it themselves. Particularly, the ALLEX Project has

- 1) supported academic language work in Africa through participating and presenting regularly in regional conferences (Afrilex, ALASA) throughout the project period (in order of frequency South Africa, Botswana; Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique)
- 2) contributed regularly to refereed publications on African languages (Lexikos 2007 (under publication) is wholly devoted to contributions from ALLEX project participants).
- 3) run an open institution, receiving visitors from all countries in the region and including them in ongoing academic meetings, seminars etc
- 4) participated in regional development of language studies and policies through CASAS, ACALAN, UNESCO etc.

The dictionaries produced through the ALLEX Project are also used by Shona speakers in Mozambique.

The ALLEX dictionaries, the terminological ones in particular, have been sought as models for corresponding dictionaries in other African languages.

In the last years ALLEX project participants have been involved in cooperation with West African countries who use French, on their initiative. This is a totally new development.

d. international level?

The ALLEX Project has contributed materially to the understanding of African language issues among africanists here in Norway, and changed the image of what is possible to achieve. This was particularly evident at the LEA conference at UO in 2006.

The language issue has grown world wide independent of the ALLEX Project, but the invitations the project has received in the last years, especially from Latin America and from North Africa, shows that there is increasing interest in the ALLEX approach of thorough linguistic work with a high technical standard, aimed for the general public. There is in short an increasing understanding that good policies and high intentions are not enough. You have to produce language tools that people can use themselves, and once they are produced, they have to be brought out to the users.

1.5 Have research results from the project been disseminated to local communities, and contributed to development in these communities? How?

Yes, All the ALLEX dictionaries and other publications have been disseminated in the sense that they are published by Zimbabwean publishing houses in cooperation with the ALLEX Project, can be bought in book shops and are to be found in educational institutions and libraries across Zimbabwe. They are used in schools and by the general public, in so far as they can afford to buy books.

The academic publications were printed in 100 - 300 copies (at project expense), distributed to libraries and published electronically through the ALLEX web site.

1.6 Describe how the project has contributed towards poverty reduction and national development in the South country/region?

Developing spoken languages to written standards is part of the modernisation that all European communities have had part in from the reformation onwards. It is part of the infrastructural development of any community, being a prerequisite for an efficient education system.

The ALLEX Project has made a direct contribution to national development through increasing national self confidence when it comes to language, culture and identity. The ALLEX Project has convinced people in Zimbabwe that speaking an African language need not exclude you from getting a first class education, and that language development is essential for the future of Zimbabwe.

The contribution to poverty reduction is therefore an indirect one, but it is essential.

1.7 Has the project caused effects (positive or negative) that were not foreseen?

The speed of change in attitude within Zimbabwe has astounded the ALLEX Project participants many times. When we started in 1991, mother tongue studies were not highly regarded. Now, everyone seems to want language development and standardisation at a high level without loss of time. Public expectations have been and are unrealistically high when it comes to what can be done and how soon, especially in relation to the minority languages. This has had its background in an insufficient understanding of the amount of work involved, and of the skills required from mother tongue linguists working on standardisation, orthographies, lexical documentation etc. However, we have dealt openly with all requests and never promised what cannot be delivered, and this has had positive effects, in the sense that people understand more of what is involved, take more initiatives and cooperate very well with ALRI.

To some extent the same goes for international relations. It would be perfectly possible to spend more time going to meetings and conferences, but that would affect progress on concrete language products like the dictionaries.

1.8 What have been the main constraints in the implementation of the research components of the NUFU supported project?

External difficulties resulting from living conditions in Zimbabwe in late years have caused the chief constraints. These matters are public knowledge and will not be laboured here. We have had some difficulties in retaining staff (investing training without getting returns), and there have been difficulties like frequent power cuts, making work difficult. However, on the whole the loyalty of project participants to project aims has been outstanding, and this is the reason we have been able to complete phase 3 in good order.

2. Education and capacity building

2.1 Has the project met the goals and objectives stated in the Project document regarding education and capacity building? Are there any deviations compared to the goals and objectives stated at the outset of the project period? Why?

Education: In Phase 3 (2001-2006) the ALLEX Project had 3 Ph.D. candidates finishing their studies and completing their examinations successfully 3 Ph. D. scholars who were recruited after an open selection process at UZ who have carried through their studies (2 have submitted now, April 2007, one will submit in October 2007). All have had quota scholarships. They have all been accepted as Ph.D. scholars at the UO Ph.D. Programme for linguistics and they have had sandwich type scholarships, with a middle year spent at the home institution doing field work.

Of the three first Ph. D. scholars, only one was a member of the ALRI staff, ALRI being created from 1.1.2000 onwards. The other two were attached to the Department of African literature and languages. These two have returned to UZ and are working there now. The third one, Ms.

Mawema, left for England at the end of her studies (2002) to live with her family, that had already left Zimbabwe. This has meant that professor Chimhundu has been the only fully qualified senior researcher at ALRI throughout Phase 3, and has thus caused his burden to be heavier than planned or expected.

Capacity building:

As stated above, we had identified computational linguistics as a key area, with emphasis on being able to analyse needs, write software and construct simple databases. These are skills aimed at in many doctoral programmes for linguistics. But the Ph.D. candidates that applied for scholarships none of them had their research interest within this area. ALRI research staff will have the ability to describe their needs and in cooperation with the IT consultant look for and adapt adequate software, but they cannot at present do their own programming.

2.2 Describe how the educational activities in the project have contributed to development of capacity and competence at UiS department(s)/faculty(ies)?

The Ph.D. scholarships of Phase 2 lingering over into phase 3 has provided the Department of African literature and Linguistics with two staff members holding a Ph.D. in African linguistics. Both of them are now key staff members, one being responsible for the MA programme, one being head of the Department. They have also initiated research seminars at faculty level and assure a higher level of teaching at their department.

The past and present Ph. D. scholars have also contributed materially to ALLEX Project products.

2.3 PhD Candidates with support from the NUFU programme

How many PhD candidates were educated with support only or partly from the NUFU funds? 6

**How many of the completed PhD candidates are today staff members at UiS?
5**

How many PhD candidates that completed their degree with support from the NUFU programme (do not include candidates with other funding) have

- other positions in their home country? 2**
- left for another country in the region? 0**
- left the region? 1**

2.4 What have been the main constraints in the implementation of the education components of the NUFU supported project?

In phase 2 the main difficulty was getting the ALLEX Ph.D. scholars into the Ph.D. researcher training programme for linguistics at UO. To get in (a) the scholars had to qualify and (b) the Faculty had to agree to teach courses in English. Both of these issues were solved, but it took time and delayed the candidates, so that they all ran over into Phase 3 before finishing.

At the inception of Phase 3 (2001) Norway implemented a new university law that tightened up the application procedure and raised requirements for the attested competence of the candidates still higher. We started the selection procedure at UZ in 2001, and then gave the candidates an extra year of follow-up to prepare applications for UO. But the process all in all took long, and the first two candidates arrived in Oslo in 2004, the third one in 2005.

So the gap between what is expected by Norwegian Universities from doctoral candidates and what is possible to achieve, is a difficulty.

Another difficulty is the extremely meagre stipend offered by the Quota programme - 8000 NOK pr month, and this is supposed to include rent. The stipend has not been raised since around the year 2000. As long as the project exists and can offer additional financing, the Ph.D. scholars can work full time, but without that they have to take extra work.

Further, Norwegian universities regard their own Ph.D. scholars as employees, while Ph.D. scholars from Southern institutions are not given this status. The quota scholarship offered is the same as for MA scholars, and their status is uncertain. This is a state of affairs that NUFU and its funders should not be content with.

Finally there is the issue of where examinations should take place. When the NUFU programme started, the NUFU programme management and the funders was concerned that examinations should take place at the candidates' home institution, as part of the institutional development. At present Norwegian universities have a funding system that makes them extremely unwilling to accept candidates unless they promise to submit for examinations at the Norwegian institution. We think this a breach of the original NUFU attitude and hope that this issue can be dealt with successfully in the next few years.

2.5 Did anyone connected to your project benefit from the so called “Magne Lerheim-scholarship”, administered by the Research Council of Norway?

No

3. Gender issues

3.1 Describe how gender related issues have been reflected in

Recruitment:

8 - 12

2 senior project staff members (of 6 in all) at the beginning of project period were women (both have since left UZ). One of them is editor in chief of the revised Ndebele dictionary, which is a major work.

One out of three Ph.D. scholars who have completed their examinations in this period is a woman, and one out of the three Ph.D. scholars active at present is a woman. She has also functioned as general project manager for the director of ALRI when he has been absent.

The ALLEX Project has involved large numbers of BA and MA students in field work and a number of students from other Zimbabwean Universities have been involved in project work for shorter periods and up to a year. A number of these students have been women.

- recruitment and participation in project activities?

Family considerations have caused one woman researcher and some technical staff members to leave. On one occasion we have failed to recruit a promising MA student for the same reason. But on the other hand, it is no secret that the current female staff are as essential to future project success and to developing lexicography at UZ as the male staff, and everybody knows that.

- research activities within the cooperation project?

The corpus of oral materials contain a roughly equal proportion of men's speech and women's speech.

One of the Ph.D. dissertations that is completed, concerned gender issues - an examination of Shona language use concerning gender related issues, based on the oral Shona corpus materials. In editing the dictionaries, knowledge that is traditionally gender-bound is utilised in writing definitions and this knowledge is thus made more accessible to all, irrespective of gender.

3.2 Have there been any problems/obstacles in recruiting and retaining female researchers and candidates/students in the project?

Family considerations have caused one woman researcher and some technical staff members to leave. On one occasion we have failed to recruit a promising MA student for the same reason. But on the other hand, it is no secret that the current female staff are as essential to future project success and to developing lexicography at UZ as the male staff, and everybody knows that.

3.3 How have the institutions and project coordinators worked to mitigate these obstacles?

There have not been major obstacles to recruiting female staff to the ALLEX Project.

To the extent that there are difficulties, it concerns lower levels in the academic system, i.e. recruitment to M.A. studies. but in this period (2001-2006) the ALLEX Project has not had M.A. scholarships.

The ALLEX Project has made a point of showing off staff competence on public occasions and we have tried to give both genders the same opportunities, also in the mass media like television. Both male and female researchers have managed sub-projects, acted for the ALRI director in his absence etc.

3.4 Has the project met the goals and objectives regarding gender issues? Are there any deviations compared to the goals and objectives stated at the outset of the project period? Why?

Yes, the ALLEX project has met its goals and objectives regarding gender issues.

4. Sustainability

4.1 Do you regard the capacity and competence that has been build up during the project period as sustainable after termination of the project?

Yes and no.

UZ:

When the ALLEX Project finally ends (Ph.D.-s completed 2007 - 2008), lexicography has been institutionalised at UZ through ALRI for 7-8 years. The staff comprises trained researchers (Ph.D.) with experience from project management, junior research staff and trained technicians (office staff that are used to working with databases and know the relevant formats and procedures) and a qualified IT engineer with very diverse skills. The integration of ALRI in the UZ is also very good, cooperation with the department of African languages and general linguistics and with the UZ library being particularly close.

The "no" concerns two items that are interlinked, i.e. the general difficulties encountered in academic work within Zimbabwe in late years, and the country's economic collapse. If ALRI is to do useful work on its own, there must be external funding. However, due to general project experience, ALRI staff is qualified to plan and manage projects and apply for external funding in the future.

UO:

The general project experience of the ALLEX Project has lifted lexicographic work at UO in many ways, especially in relation to the project Norsk Ordbok 2014, but also when it comes to managing mother tongue language collections and creating general language tools like corpora.

4.2 What are the main obstacles to achieving sustainability?

UZ at present: The external pressures arising from a collapsing national economy, and the way this situation affects the university of Zimbabwe. It is at present very hard to keep qualified staff at UZ and even harder to run research projects.

4.3 What has been done in the project to mitigate these obstacles?

The ALLEX project has focussed on

- 1) support to younger staff members - making sure that they are able to complete sub-projects, degrees, examinations etc.
- 2) maintaining links with individuals, groups and institutions that have an interest in seeing projects completed.
- 3) completing sub project products and publishing through established channels in and outside Zimbabwe

5. The NUFU set-up

5.1 What are the project coordinators' experiences with the joint planning, implementation and online reporting, which is embedded in the NUFU model?

- Positive experiences?

The precedence of South priorities, combined with joint planning and implementation is essential to project success. NUFU projects should not be umbrella projects where each participant does his or her own thing under a joint project description. There must be a common core to all activities. For the ALLEX Project the methodological issues have been the same for all sub projects, i.e. a stringent and documented empirical approach within carefully designed frameworks. Thus the same basic models and methods have been tested out on a series of different data sets, and have proved to be robust.

The online reporting system and the standardised accounting system makes reporting from each project a lot easier and it also improves overall project support from the institutional point of view, since the reports are presented in a standardised format and focus on the same information categories.

- Negative experiences?

We have had no negative experiences with the NUFU model in this project phase. In former periods we had no difficulty with the aims and general format of the cooperation, but there was a times some uncertainty regarding implementation, i.e. how were we expected to do things right.

5.2 Do you have suggestions for changes in the NUFU set-up?

The main objection to the NUFU programme is that the total financing package is too small. The need far outdistances what can be offered, and too many good projects and cooperations are sacrificed.

The two period limit is also unfortunate. As one of the projects that has had three periods, we can say that it was only in the third period that we had the assurance and total competence to give the younger project participants freedom to show what they could do as managers of sub-projects. For instance, both the Musical terms dictionary projects were managed in the South by junior staff who had not at the time completed their researcher training - planning, field work, editing and quality control (working with reference groups, other institutions etc).

Given these limitations, however, we would suggest focusing on the role of the project leader at both institutions in the future. Some sort of leadership training and a general focus on management skills would probably be gratefully received, since decentralised and weak leadership is a general condition at academic institutions, both in the North and in the South.

5.3 How do you assess the role that the NUFU institutional coordinating units at your universities/institutions has played as facilitator for project implementation?

At the University of Oslo, the support given by the Section for International Programmes is invaluable, and has been so throughout the existence of the NUFU Programme. At the University of Zimbabwe, the same holds good for the NUFU coordinator, who has been proactive in supporting every single project from the beginning and has played a very important role in making sure that project managers and departments are kept abreast of changes and expectations concerning the NUFU Programme. The institutional support has been important on many levels, but accountancy and support for researcher training (Ph.D.-s) stand out as areas that deserve special mention.

6. SIU's communication with the projects

6.1 Has the communication from SIU regarding reporting procedures and other information been timely, adequate and understandable?

Yes

6.2 Do you have suggestions for improvement of SIU's communication with the project coordinators?

We have said yes concerning communication procedures in Phase 3 (2001-6), but it must be taken into account that the ALLEX Project has been managed at large institutions that have their own central administrative support for the NUFU Programme. Without that support it would have been much harder to cope. Administrative support at the local institutional level has also been available (local accountants, IT-support).

Work in this Phase has been facilitated very much through the online reporting systems, especially for publications and accounts.

Other comments

Universities and academic institutions in general do not explicitly ask for management or leadership qualifications or offer such training, in general terms or in connection with externally financed projects. To focus this aspect we think that would-be project managers should be asked to document such skills in connection with applying for funding, and that the project managers could well be assessed on a regular basis. We would like to point out that high quality project management is very different from general academic administrative experience. A focus on the project leader function might inspire improvement in this sector, especially in the South.

Another difficulty which has to be faced, is that a project coordinator by necessity has to to some extent set his own research aside in order to run the project and support (younger) participants and colleagues, thereby, at least in the current Norwegian system, harming his or her own career. The current evaluation system for Norwegian universities rewards published research and nothing else. This could in the long run count against undertaking project management - or lead project coordinators to prioritise their own research interests instead of f.i. researcher training and project management.