

Annual report for the Alex project in 2000

NUFU PROJECT NR 28/96

The annual report for The ALLEX Project 2000 was produced jointly in Harare and Oslo by Oddrun Grønvik and Dr. Herbert Chimhundu on the basis of reports, correspondence, minutes etc during the year and decisions taken during meetings in Oslo March 2000 and Gothenburg October 2000. The report was presented for comments to the whole of the ALLEX team at the annual meeting held at ALRI UZ, 12.01.01, 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 tasks of the ALLEX Project, i. e. publication of the Phase 2 dictionaries, which have now gone to press.

The ALLEX Project has moved forward according to plan in 2000 on the following points:

- The African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) started operating as from 1.1.2000, and moved into their own quarters in August 2000, after extensive renovation works on the former Visitors' Lodge at UZ. The ALRI Board of management was appointed in the course of 2000 and had its first meeting 17.10.00.
- The dictionary manuscripts are typeset and have gone to the publisher (College Press, Harare)
- The three Ph. D. scholars, all registered under the Dr. Arts Programme at the UO Arts Faculty, are progressing according to schedule. (They will take their degrees at UZ)
- Important progress has been made in training and competence building for the rest of the team
- The application for the NUFU programme 2002-6 is completed and handed in

Activities causing unplanned delay and expense were:

- Setting up ALRI as an organisation has taken up a lot of time for the UZ team, especially the academic co-ordinator.
- Moving into the ALRI building required planning, administration, renovation and rebuilding – valuable administrative experience, but also time-consuming for the UZ team
- Finishing the dictionaries took a new turn when school vocabulary needs came to be fully appreciated in the spring of 2000.
- In order to get the dictionaries finished on time, the chief editors had to spend the autumn in Oslo, working closely with the UO team, which entailed considerable travel expenses.

The chief events of the ALLEX Project 2000 were, in time sequence

- Two standard three-month guest researcher visits to UO 15.8. - 10.11.00, and one additional visit 20.11.- 21.12.00 cf. A.5a.
- Dr Chimhundu's guest researcher period at UiO 31.8.-22.12.00
- The first ALLEX Ph.D. scholar finished his sandwich year at UZ and returned to UiO for his last year 21.8.00.
- The second and third ALLEX Ph.D. scholar both completed their first academic year at UO, cf. A.5b. Both returned for project work connected with their theses, cf point A.5.b.
- ALLEX participation in corpus lexicography courses at Tuscan Word Centre, cf. A.4b.

- ALLEX Participation in regional conferences, cf. A.4c
- Additional field work in Zimbabwe June-August 2000, cf. A.2b
- Planning meetings between Dr Herbert Chimhundu, Oddrun Grønvik, Dr C.E.S. Ore and Dr D. Ridings in Oslo March 2000 (during Dr. Chimhundu's visit to Oslo on other business) and in Gothenburg October 2000, cf. a.1c end.
- Dr Chimhundu visited Aasen-tunet, Ørsta, as a guest lecturer 15.-16.11.2000 (where his portrait forms part of a wall decoration)
- ALLEX Project presentation by Oddrun Grønvik, Dr. Christian-Emil Ore og Edgar Mberi, 02.12.00 at the 12th EAIE conference Leipzig (30.11.-2.12.00).

1. ALLEX at African Languages Research Institute (ALRI)

a) Infrastructure and moving: The former Visitors' Lodge was very run down and needed extensive renewal before ALRI could move in. The entire building had to be rewired for an internal network and linking to an external network (according to specifications laid down by Dr. Ridings and Dr. Ore). By the end of August 2000 the renewal had advanced to the point where the ALRI staff could move in and install the internal network for the offices. The room that is to house the language lab is ready and completely wired. Installation and maintenance is the responsibility of the UZ.

b) Staffing: In 2000, ALRI was assigned 12 out of desired 18 posts, i.e.

1 Director (5-year contract) (Dr. Herbert Chimhundu)

5 Research Fellows

3 Research Assistants

1 Secretary and 2 Data entry operators

All posts were filled with qualified staff trained through the ALLEX Project. Three RFs and the three RAs started as ALLEX Project MA scholars. The other two RFs and two DEOs have been in the project from the beginning (1992), the secretary joined the project several years ago. ALRI staff has already proved its stability and professional qualifications, and ALRI is accordingly off to a sound start. As Dr. Herbert Chimhundu spent August-December 2000 as a guest researcher at UO, leading the work on completing the ASD, (Ms) Karren Dube (from ALL,UZ) acted for him at ALRI in those months.

c) Equipment: For budget reasons no new equipment has been bought in 2000. The newest ALLEX equipment was brought from ALL/UZ, in agreement with the ALL leadership. Four of the older machines are of limited use (small storage space). The renewal needs are getting urgent, as most of the equipment dates from before 1997, and lacks the capacity to handle data and relevant software for project continuation. The photocopier needs to be replaced.

d) The Board of Management: ALRI has a board of 17 members, which was appointed in 2000 (cf appendix 8). The board met for the first time 17.10.00. The Board is chaired by the Vice Chancellor professor Hill, and comprises prominent supporters of Zimbabwe's indigenous languages from inside and outside the UZ, covering many of the indigenous languages and a cross section of the major institutions within education and culture in Zimbabwe. The Board of Management will hear reports from ALRI staff and meet with project partners, and decide on ALRI policy, but leave the daily work to the ALRI director and staff. The intention is that the Board will function as a link between ALRI as a UZ institution and Zimbabwean society.

2. Lexicographical work

The year 2000 focused on practical lexicography, as both teams had dictionaries to finish before the end of the year, and both teams started the year behind schedule. However, the dictionaries were finished on time and as far as we can see, hold the promised standard both in content and technically.

a) Dictionary databases: The databases have an in-built system for progress control, which made it possible to keep a detailed check on work done in 2000. The use of this system, with very frequent reports to the partner institutions, made it possible for the UZ lexicographical teams to keep abreast with the revised work schedule up to the end of August 2000, when the databases were moved to UO for revision etc. The dictionary databases were quality controlled and formatted for printing from the revised databases at UO.

b) Front and back matter: To mark their status as academic works, both dictionaries have prefaces by UZ Vice Chancellor Professor Hill and a prominent writer of each language. Both dictionaries are equipped with a front matter explaining the dictionary set up, and giving enough grammatical information about each language to make the task of teaching Shona or Ndebele manageable for a poorly equipped mother tongue teacher in a local school. Both dictionaries also have a number of appendices at the back, partly designed to assist in the teaching of other subjects with the mother tongue as language of instruction, partly included for their cultural relevance. The front and back matter was worked out and agreed on by the complete teams for both dictionaries, cf below.

c) Dictionary publication: for practical reasons, ALRI will from now on hold the copyright of the ALLEX Project dictionaries. Agreement was reached in 2000 to continue working with College Press, on the publishing model worked out for *Duramazwi reChiShona*. College Press will bring out the dictionaries as part of a series. The editorial teams have tailored content, format, and lay out to give as uniform an impression as possible of the two books in publication. This process was managed and executed in co-operation between the UZ guest researchers and the UO team members.

d) Advanced Shona Dictionary (ASD): The ASD database was completed at UZ towards the end of August 2000, after a very intensive revision period, starting at UZ and lasting well into the guest researcher period. Lexicographical and technical controls, corrections and consistency checks were performed by the guest researchers at INL/UO between 15.8.00 and 30.11.00, in close co-operation with Oddrun Grønvik and Dr. Ore. Front and back matter was as far as possible drafted by the UZ Shona teams, and checked and revised by the guest researchers (including the chief editor) at UO in co-operation with the UO team members. The completed manuscript covers 1280 pages.

d) General Ndebele Dictionary (GND): THE GND team defined 10500 entries in 2000. The GND database was completed at UZ towards the end of August 2000, after a very intensive revision period which started at UZ and lasted well into the guest researcher period. The lexicographical and technical controls, corrections and consistency checks were performed by the guest researchers at INL/UO between 15.8. and 30.11.00, in close co-operation with Oddrun Grønvik and Dr. Ore. Front and back matter was as far as possible drafted within the UZ Ndebele team, and checked and revised by the guest researchers (including the chief editor) at UO in co-operation with the UO team members. The completed manuscript covers 608 pages.

3. Corpus Work

Corpus work has been secondary in 2000 to both lexicographical work and to the practical establishment of ALRI. Nevertheless, some progress has been made, especially towards the end of the year, when dictionary processing moved to UO. Details of the corpus work at ALRI can be found in Appendix 9.

a) Corpus Development and administration: Corpus administration has continued as in 1999. Some GND materials were sent to GU early in 2000. In the autumn of 2000, when the work on finishing the dictionaries moved to UO, the ALRI staff went back to corpus work. These materials are not yet quality controlled and included in the corpora. The aim for the GND team was to manage a corpus expansion of 300 000 words, thus reaching 1 mill in all, before the end of the year; some processing remains to be done, but the bulk is encoded (oral material) and scanned (printed material). The ASD team has had a more ambitious dictionary project in 2000, but has nevertheless managed to enter (scan and key) a fair quantity of text and oral material for processing. Both teams have started work on including the Bible in their corpora.

b) Minority languages pilot project: A pilot project has started in Kalanga, with 13 SRAs collecting data for corpus building. This has been funded by a contribution from SIDA/SAREC of Z\$ 338 640,-. This is outside the scope of what the NUFU project allocation can be spent on, but depends on the competence and computer tools developed through the ALLEX Project. This work points forward to ALLEX plans for Phase 3. These materials are housed at ALRI, UZ, but processing has not started.

4. Training in lexicography, computational linguistics and programming

a) Visits from GU and UO to UZ: for budget reasons and because of the political unrest in Zimbabwe last year, the UO and GU team members did not visit UZ in 2000.

b) Corpus Lexicography Course: To make up the UO course requirements for the Ph. D. scholars, the ALLEX Project sent Moreblessings Mawema and Samukele Hadebe on a course in corpus use in linguistic research (2.-7.5.00) at the Tuscan Word Centre, run by the internationally acclaimed corpus lexicographer Dr. John Sinclair. Two of the guest researchers, Nomalanga Mpofu and Jesta Masuku, also went for a TWC course on lexicography in October 2000. All did presentations there (reports delivered and available on request) and came back enthusiastic and more confident than before.

c) PERL Programming course: in June 2000, Dr. Ore gave a course in PERL programming at UO for two of the Ph.D. candidates to help them make better use of the corpora and prepare them for independent corpus use development. This course was very useful and more teaching on these lines is requested in the future.

d) Conference participation: Apart from participation at local events, research based on the ALLEX Project has been presented on the following occasions: Emmanuel Chabata, Herbert Chimhundu and Webster Mavhu, International Colloquium of Kiswahili 2000, 20.-23.3.00, University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Nomalanga Mpofu, Conference at University of Botswana, 5.-6.7.00; Herbert Chimhundu, Aasen-senteret, Ørsta, Norway, 15.11.00; Edgar Mberi, Christian-Emil Ore, Oddrun Grønvik, 12. EAIE Conference, Leipzig, Germany, 30.11.-2.12.00.

5. Competence building

The ALLEX Project in 2000 had 3 guest researchers and 3 Ph.D. scholars. Two of the Ph.D. scholars also spent some time at UO as guest researchers, working on the GND and ASD.

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 2000 budget. For courses, conferences etc, see point 4 above.

a) Guest researchers: *Nomalanga Mpofu:* (Shona, 15.8.-10.11.00 and 22.11.-21.12.00) *Jesta Masuku:* (Ndebele, 15.8.-10.11.00)

Both women, one from the Shona team and one from the Ndebele team, spent 15.8.-10.11.2000 at INL/UO as guest researchers. Both brought work plans from UZ and reported in writing on the work done and the quality of their stay. Both focused on development of terminology and special language, and had tutorials on these topics. Report copies are available on request. Nomalanga Mpofu came back 22.11.-21.12.00 to help finish ASD.

b) Ph. D. Candidates:

All three Ph. D. Candidates have reported on their work and academic progress in 2000 and delivered work plans for 2001, cf. Appendices 12 - 14.

Moreblessings Mawema: Registered as a UO Quota scholar 1999 - 2002 at UO. Registered under the Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme. At UO from January to June 2000, doing coursework and theoretical groundwork on her thesis. At UZ from July 2000 onwards. Has been involved in helping to finish ASD at UZ and UO (guest researcher 22.11.-21.12.00). She is accordingly late in starting her fieldwork, and may need to extend her scholarship period beyond July 2002. 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. Registered under the Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme. Spent January-June 2000 at UO doing coursework and theoretical groundwork on his thesis. Involved in finishing the GND at UZ and UO (guest researcher 31.8.-30.11.00), an activity very closely allied to the subject of his

thesis. He may need to extend his scholarship period beyond July 2002. 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. Spent January – August 2000 at UZ doing fieldwork and processing results from fieldwork. Back at UO from August 2000, engaged in writing thesis and completing coursework. Mr. Mberi will probably need an extra 6 months to finish his work, i.e. to the end of 2001. The chief reason for this is that the theoretical groundwork for his thesis proved more demanding than foreseen, in that his training at UZ in general linguistics has not been on a level with what is presumed known at UO. The UO supervisor, professor Rolf Theil Endresen (ILF), is giving Mr. Mberi very close follow-up. UZ supervisor is Dr. Herbert Chimhundu (ALRI).

c) **M. A. Students:** There were no MA scholarships in 2000.

6. Technical development

a) UZ will finish computerising its campus in 2001 and has upgraded its Computer Centre. ALRI will be connected to the cable system later this year. ALRI does not yet have an URL at UZ, nor does the ALLEX Project. However, there is contact with the Computer Centre at UZ, and the matter will be dealt with in 2001. ALRI has appointed an internet editor (Esau Mangoya), and is beginning to plan how to organise and present its collections on the net.

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 chief aims of this year were to a) complete ASD and GND, b) move the ALLEX Project physically to ALRI, c) carry through the Ph.D. scholarship and guest researcher support. These aims have been reached. For budget reasons all other activities listed in the original work plan for 2000 have been cancelled.

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 2000

There were no investments in 2000.

F. MAJOR OUTSIDE FACTORS AND INPUTS

a) **The situation at UZ in 2000:** Work at UZ has been marked by the financial difficulties that the University of Zimbabwe is going through. In spite of these difficulties, the UZ leadership has supported the ALLEX leadership as far as possible in terms of providing facilities and staff for ALRI, cf appendix 10.

Communication has been adequate in 2000. The Project has had email contact most of the time, though not direct to

ALRI. A new and direct telephone line to ALRI (00 263 4 333 652) has made communications easier from August 2000. Co-operation with the management at the UZ computer centre is good, but limited by the fact that ALRI is not yet connected to the UZ network. The ALRI telephone exchange is slow and inadequate for handling incoming calls, and ALRI as yet has no fax of its own. These needs cannot be addressed before the UZ budget situation improves.

The situation at UO in 2000: In 2000, 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 preparing for phase 3 of the NUFU programme.

Administrative follow up of guest researchers and Ph. D. candidates was in 2000 a major project task for the UO academic co-ordinator, and for Dr. Ore. We emphasise identifying learning needs and organising and giving relevant training. Especially the individual computer courses given by Dr. Ore to interested candidates should be mentioned. Focus on tutorials, supervision and teaching is maintained. All three Ph. D. Candidates are enrolled under the UO Faculty of Arts Dr. Arts Programme, receiving the required courses and supervision, and being followed up by the Dr. Arts Programme co-ordinator Professor Kjartan Ottoson.

G. ORGANISATIONAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN THE ALLEX PROJECT

There has been no organisational or administrative change of importance in the ALLEX Project. Status is as follows:

Co-operation with GU: Dr. Ridings is now attached to Lexilogik AB, a holding company owned by GU and intended to develop GU product within computational lexicography and linguistics. This has not led to changes in the running of the ALLEX Project. GU continues to wish for involvement in the ALLEX Project and their assistance is necessary for project success. The departments involved continue to be The department of African and Oriental languages (through professor Tore Janson) and the Department of Swedish Language Studies (through professor Bo Ralph).

Administrative assistance at UO: The INL has in 2000 provided office space and equipment for The 3 Ph.D. scholars and the four guest researchers of the ALLEX Project, at the most for five people at the same time. The department also has provided administrative services, especially for finance administration. Relations have been very good, and the department leadership uniformly helpful and supportive. Co-operation with and support from the International department at UO has also invaluable to project efficiency.

UZ support: UZ Support to the ALLEX Project has been remarkable, granted that the year 2000 has been extremely difficult for UZ. There is no doubt that UZ has gone a long way beyond the institutional support required in the Programme Agreement. The whole of the ALLEX team is very much aware of this, and also of the expectation of project results implicit in this support.

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

Embassies of Norway and Sweden in Zimbabwe: For some years now the UO and GU project partners have made a point of keeping embassy staff informed of project development, and sought relevant information there. Both embassies have proved supportive and have shown interest in and understanding of the ALLEX Project, and relations have been good.

H. FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES

SIDA/SAREC: In 2000 SIDA/SAREC contributed Z\$ 338 640 to additional field work in UZ, cf. A.2b., carried out by the the ALLEX UZ teams. This field work can be seen as an extension of the ALLEX Project, but goes beyond Project plans in NUFU Phase 2, as it concerned a local language. However, the support can be seen as piloting part of project plans for NUFU Phase 3.

The Quota Programme at UO: All three ALLEX Ph.D. Candidates, i.e. Edgar Mberi, Moreblessings Mawema and Samukele Hadebe, are 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 guest researcher expenses for Dr. Herbert Chimhundu at UiO, cf. point A.1.b.

Travelling expences to the EAIE conference for Oddrun Grønvik and C.E.Ore were covered by the Internationalisation fund at UO NOK 16000. Travelling expences to the EAIE conference for Edgar Mberi were covered by the Section for International Programmes at UO (ca NOK 6000) and the EAIE (DEM 1500).

GU participation: The GU team members of the ALLEX Project have had their funding through the ALLEX Project in 2000. Expences have been minimal, owing to the lack of travelling from North to South.

J. ANY OTHER FACTORS

All factors of relevance have been mentioned above.