

TITLE: Pictorial and Audio-Visual Documentation of Oral Genres of Okpẹ

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

About the Language: Okpẹ (ISO 639-3 OKE) is one of the five languages of the South-Western Edoid sub-group of the Benue-Congo family. People of one ethnic nation, the Urhobo people, speak three of the languages of this sub-group (Okpẹ, Urhobo and Uvwie). Isoko and Erohwa belong to another ethnic nation.

Significance of the Project to the Community:

1. The project will provide pedagogical material for the teaching of Okpẹ language to the young generation at home and at school.
2. The project will provide information for national and local language policy makers to make decisions on the use of all three languages of Urhobo people, including Okpẹ.
3. The project will highlight the role of language diversity and the need to recognize the use of all three languages.
4. The materials to be collected (audio-visual, visual and document) will serve as resource materials for future revitalization of Okpẹ language because copies will be deposited at the traditional palace and public library at Orokpe, the capitol of Okpẹ kingdom.

Significance of the Project to Linguistic Science:

1. The project will provide academics, particularly linguists with sociolinguistic information for further studies in Okpẹ language, especially stylistics and poetics of Okpẹ language.
2. The results will help linguists understand some levels of the semantics, the lexis and structure of Okpẹ and the social use of the language.
3. The results of the project will serve as reference materials for documentary linguists.

Goals of the Project

1. To document the oral genres of Okpẹ language
2. To disseminate materials produced from the project locally and globally and thus ignite local enthusiasm in the inter-generational transfer and teaching of the language
3. To archive the materials for possible future revitalization.

Degree of Endangerment of Okpẹ: Urhobo nation is made up of twenty-four kingdoms. Okpẹ is spoken in one kingdom; Uvwie is spoken in two kingdoms; and Urhobo is spoken in twenty-one kingdoms. A variety of Urhobo language was adopted as the standard language for all twenty-four kingdoms, including the kingdoms where Okpẹ and Uvwie kingdoms are domiciled. Additionally, due to perceived federal and state marginalization of minority ethnic nations, the Urhobo people of all the three languages discourage all forms of linguistic diversity by presenting themselves as one big ethnic nation. Therefore, there is not much attention on the need to develop Okpẹ and Uvwie languages. The singular use of Urhobo as the language of writing, reading and communication at gatherings of all Urhobo people play a role in the endangerment of Okpẹ.

Moreover, Okpe language faces external impact from the use of English, from neighbouring Itsekiri and Izon languages and from globalization. English is the lingua franca, and it is considered a “language of enlightenment,” therefore, parents encourage the younger generation to excel more in the use of English. English is the language of instruction in schools in Okpe communities, and pupils are not permitted to communicate in Okpe during school hours. This is supposed to make them focus on the learning of English language. Itsekiri (a Yoruboid language) and Izon (an Ijoid language) also have an impact on the use of Okpe in Sapele, an urban centre where speakers of these languages also reside. Globalization has led to the increased use of English and Nigerian Pidgin English, and the neglect of Okpe, as younger generation children get used to television programmes, home video programmes, video games and mobile applications in English.

In 2000, Ethnologue gave the population of Okpe people as 25,400. This was the population of the people affiliated to the language, and not the number of speakers. During my research work in Orerokpe in 2013, I discovered that Okpe is not being transmitted to the younger generation of the native speakers. Moreover, my frequent visits to other Okpe communities indicate that the language is definitely endangered. There are no pedagogical materials for teaching of Okpe to the young generation, neither is the language taught in local schools.

Briefly, Okpe is endangered by the following factors:

1. Non-generational transfer of the language
2. Standardization of one language for speakers of the three languages
3. Impact of neighbouring languages
4. Impact of English language and globalization
5. Non-availability of pedagogical materials for teaching of Okpe.

Method and Material to be Produced: I will collect data on oral cultural narratives (including folktales), conversations, life histories (personal and historical narratives), traditional royal song-poems, knowledge of medicinal plants and visual (photographic) data associated with these narratives. Instruments for data collection will include an adapted “Oral Traditions Questionnaire” developed by Margaret Florey for the 2000 East Nusantra Linguistic Workshop. Others are an audio recorder, a camcorder, a camera and field notes. I will use participant observation and unstructured interview based on the questionnaire to ensure minimal external influence on data collection as I probe the informants for rich in-depth data. I will analyse the data collected and use the information to produce a pictorial reader and audio-visual disk for children aged between 6 and 12 years old. I will use ELAN linguistic software to analyse the data. The photographs will serve as illustrations, and the narratives from the data will form comprehensive passages in the reader. The passages will be followed by “Questions on the Passage,” “Words and Meaning,” “Spoken Okpe” and “Lexis and Structure” sections. These will help learners of Okpe to understand the basic semantics and vocabulary of the language and how to use it.

Time schedule: Fieldwork will take four months, tentatively from December 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. Thereafter, post-field data analysis production of the reader and final report will take 8 months (April 1, 2020 – November 31, 2020). This is because data analysis is a time-consuming enterprise.

Budget

S/N	ITEM	UNIT PRICE	QUANTITY	AMOUNT (€)
1	Blank DVDs		200	14
2	32GB Micro SDHC Flash Memory Cards	15	2	30
3	Jabra Move Wireless Headphone	100	1	100
4	HP Pavilion Sleekbook laptop	380	1	380
5	Basic 60-inch Tripod	24	1	24
6	Accommodation during fieldwork		4 months	200
8	XLR Microphone cables	10	1	10
9	AAA Batteries for Audio Recorder and Microphones (12 per pack)	14	2	28
10	PowerDeWise Lavalier Lapel Microphone	23	2	46
12	Shipping of Equipment		13	50
13	Consultants' Compensation	40	5	200
14	Local travel		1	70
15	Supplies			280
	TOTAL			€ 1,432

Other Financial Support: I do not have other support for the project. The proposal to document Okpe has been rejected by other documentation funding agencies, including Endangered Language Fund. My host institution (Southwestern Edoid Institute) will support the project with the the printing of the Reader and some of the needed equipment: a Beyerdynamic MCE 85 BA external microphone, a camcorder, an Audio Recorder and a camera for fieldwork; duplication of the audio-visual disk for local distribution, printing of questionnaires and related work during data analysis.

Budget Justification

Memory cards: I need two memory cards, one each for the camera and audio recorder.

Headphone: I need one closed-back headphone to monitor the recordings and for use on the laptop during audio data analysis.

Laptop: I need a laptop for analysis (typing of transcriptions, translations, annotations and ELAN analysis) of collected audio data for accuracy in the “Spoken Okpe” section of the reader and for archiving with Language Archive Cologne and publication in linguistic journals.

Tripod: I need this to help stabilize the camera during fieldwork.

Audio Recorder: I need this for collection of audio files that will be later analyzed.

Lavalier Lapel Microphone: I will clip these microphones to the clothes of the consultants during interview so their audio sounds can be recorded directly to the recorder.

XLR Microphone cables: I need this to connect the external microphone to the audio recorder.

Consultants' compensation: I will pay at least five informants for their time on the project. I plan to spend a total of 336 hours (3 hours/day for 112 days) with them.

Local travel: I will need to travel from my place of residence (where Urhobo is spoken) to Orerokpe and other villages (where Okpe is spoken) and fro.

Supplies: I need supplies of food, water, toiletries and medicine for the period I will be in the field away from home.

Accommodation: I will spend for months doing ethnographic fieldwork in several Okpe villages. I would need secure accommodation where I can sleep and keep the equipment and collected data.

Related Projects: There are publications *about* Okpe language, although they are not written in Okpe. These include mostly works on Okpe phonology - Pulleyblank, (1986) *Underspecification and low vowel harmony in Okpe*; Omamor (1988) *Okpe and Uvwie: a case of vowel harmony galore*; Omamor, (1990) *Introduction to the Phonology of Okpe*; Prescott (1993) *Okpe vowel harmony: a radical CV phonology analysis*; Diffre-Odiete (2014) *A Wordlist of Noun and Verb Groups in English-Urhobo-Uvwie-Okpe*. Except for the wordlist, these publications mainly serve linguistic science but not the community. Moreover, the wordlist contains fewer than 1,000 Okpe words. The reader to be produced from this project will complement these publications by being of greater use to the natives of Okpe. It would help revive the people's enthusiasm in their language and serve as pedagogical material for the younger generation learners of Okpe language, who cannot understand their written language from a study of existing texts on Okpe phonology.

Collaboration with the Speech Community: I am working with a group of indigenous members of Okpe who share the same concern for the documentation of their dying language. The network I have formed with the community since 2013 cuts across the young and the old. In 2013, I worked with Mrs Anna Akpojivi and Mrs Emojevwe Okomado to develop a short wordlist where few Okpe words were documented. As concerned leading women in the community, they are still ready to ensure the future generation of their community retain their language. However, they lament the lack of adequate resource materials. Hence the need for the new project which will produce a reader and an audio recording to assist the younger generation learners of the language. I am also collaborating with Southwestern Edoid Institute, which is dedicated to documenting and preserving the cultures of Urhobo, Isoko and other ethnic nations of the region.

Practical Matters: There are no national or local restrictions on research work here. I have also formed a research rapport with the local people. My previous research and a study of the experiences of other researchers have shown the necessity of ethical concerns in research. I will follow our traditional ethical guidelines and those of African Studies

Association, and do no harm to my people and to the environment in which we live but to respect them.

Archiving/Accessibility: I will distribute printed copies of the pedagogical reader and audio disks at the palace of the traditional ruler, at community schools and other traditional centres. I will also publish articles on the oral literatures of Okpe in open access linguistic journals and share on social media. I also plan to approach Language Archive Cologne to deposit the finished work with them.

Use of Equipment: After the project is completed, equipment will be given to the South-Western Edoid Institute, which is dedicated to documenting the cultures and languages of the Okpe, Urhobo, Uvwie and other peoples of the region.

Applicant's Details

Name of Applicant: Akpobome DIFFRE-ODIETE

Address: 7 Kuyinu Street, Off NNPC Housing Complex Road, Ugboroke-Effurun,
Delta State, Nigeria.

Date of Birth: September 16, 1976

Nationality: Nigerian

Mobile: +234 (0)805 3688 999

e-mail: akposdiete@gmail.com

Blog: <https://themowoecentre.wordpress.com/>

Social media page: <https://web.facebook.com/urhobostudies/>

Languages skills: Urhobo – native speaker; Okpe - listening and understanding skills; Uvwie - listening and understanding skills; English – second language speaker

Curriculum Vitae

Name Akpobom Chas Sebe DIFFR-ODIETE
Address 7 Kuyinu Street, Off NNPC Housing Complex Road, Ugboroke-Effurun,
Delta State, Nigeria.
Mobile +234 (0)805 3688 999
Date of Birth: September 16, 1976
Nationality: Nigerian
e-mail akposdiete@gmail.com
Objective To continue to acquire and develop skills required to form an inter-disciplinary career and to impact society positively through research in Christian theology, linguistics and socio-cultural anthropology.
Languages skills: Urhobo □native speaker; Okp□- Understanding level; Uvwi□- Understanding level; English □second language speaker.

Computer and Software Skills

Corel Draw, Power Point, Microsoft Word, ELAN, WeSay

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

In view - M.T.S Theological Studies, Nations University, Tennessee, USA.
2014 B.A in Linguistics and Urhobo, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.
2013 B.A in Religious Studies, Nations University, Tennessee, USA.

GRANT AWARDS FOR FIELDWORK RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2019 Research Collaborator in □Documenting the Endangered Material Knowledge of the Broom and Fibre Rope Production of the Urhobo People of Nigeria,□with grant from The Endangered Material Knowledge Programme of The British Museum.
2018 Documentation of Noun and Verbal structures of child naming in Uvwie, with grant from Endangered Language Fund.
2013 Documentation of Noun and Verb Group Lexicon in Okpe, Urhobo and Uvwie, with grant from Foundation for Endangered Languages Documentation (<http://www.ogmios.org/grants/reports/index.php?grantee=Akpobome+Diffre-Odiete>).
2013 Documentation of the Odjema Festival of Eghwu-Urhobo (BA thesis).

WORK EXPERIENCE

2017 □2019 Part-Time Independent Researcher and Digital Editor
2014 □2016 Research Officer, Senator Ewherido Memorial Foundation for the Study of Linguistics and Urhobo, Akpo re Ufuoma Development Initiative.

PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL TRAINING

2019 Training in Material Culture Documentation and Digital Content Analysis at the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme of The British Museum, London (September 1- 8, 2019).

- 2019 Participant/Chair, Local Organizing Committee for Urhobo Terminology Development Workshop organized by Urhobo Studies Association, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. (August 7, 2019).
- 2019 Eight Weekly Language Documentation Training Webinars organized by The Endangered Languages Project (www.endangeredlanguages.com) in partnership with the Language Documentation Training Center (www.ldtc.org) and Staff of University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (https://web.facebook.com/groups/LDwebinar/learning_content/?filter=758193057879813&post=263395761265105). (January to March).
- 2016 Three-day hands-on training on audio recording equipment; Keppy Acoustic Technologies, Warri, Nigeria.

RELEVANT PUBLISHED WORKS

Book

Diffre-Odieta, A. (2014). *A Wordlist of Noun and Verb Groups in English-Urhobo-Uvwie-Okpe*. Effurun, Nigeria: BISON Publications.

Book Chapter

Diffre-Odieta, A. (2018). Oral Literature in G. G. Darah and the Urhobo Identity. *Scholarship and Commitment: Essays in Honour of G. G. Darah*. Awhefeada, S; Ojaruega, E. and Omoko, P. (eds.). Lagos: Malthouse Press. 101-108.

Journal Article

Diffre-Odieta, A. and Ekiugbo, P. (2018). Is Erohwa Still Alive? *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (JOLAN), Supplement III, 2018. Language Documentation And Description In Nigeria: Problems And Prospects*. 60-67.

RELEVANT CONFERENCE PAPERS PRESENTED

- 2018 □The Urhobo People: Linguistic Diversity and Political Autonomy. □International Conference of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. October 15 □19.
- 2017 □Endangerment and Preservation of Urhobo Language □at the 1st Conference on the Languages of Nigeria (CLN) on The Languages of Nigeria: Documentation, Description, Sociolinguistic Dynamics and Geopolitical Profiles. University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria. April 24 □27.
- 2016 □Indigenous Knowledge System of Urhobo: Saving the Wealth of Oral Literatures of a Dying Language □at the International Conference on The Humanities and Reconstruction of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Africa. Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. August 23 □26.

Journal Article in Review Process

- - - "An Ethnographic Account of the Documentation Of Uvwie Narratives □

INTERNET LINKS TO RELATED PERSONAL WORK

Blog on Urhobo studies - <https://themowoecentre.wordpress.com/>

Social media page- <https://web.facebook.com/urhobostudies/>

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Documentary Linguistics, Oral Traditions, Material Culture, Archaeology of the Bible

REFEREES

***Professor G. G. Darah, Professor Emeritus of Oral Literature**

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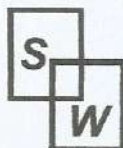
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SOUTH-WESTERN EDOID INSTITUTE

Documentation of Cultural Lives

253, Warri/Sapele Road; 3-Storey Building by Deco Junction, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria.

September 26, 2019

Dr. Frank Seifart
Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen
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Universität zu Köln
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Dear Frank Seifart,

RE: SUPPORT FOR AKPOBOME DIFFRE-ODIETE AND THE OKPE PROJECT

I am writing to indicate our institutional support for an affiliate researcher, Akpobome Diffre-Odiete and the Okpe language documentation project.

The languages of Nigeria are endangered due to many internal and external factors. Our institution is particularly interested in documenting the languages and wider cultures of the Southwestern Edoid family sub-group in southern Nigeria.

Mr. Akpobome Diffre-Odiete has singled himself out in the pursuit of projects that are of interest to us. We are therefore supporting him with the cost of printing the proposed Reader, some of the needed equipment and stationery costs.

We therefore recommend him for your grant.

Thank you.
Regards,

Oghenetega Oke Kregidi
Secretary

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