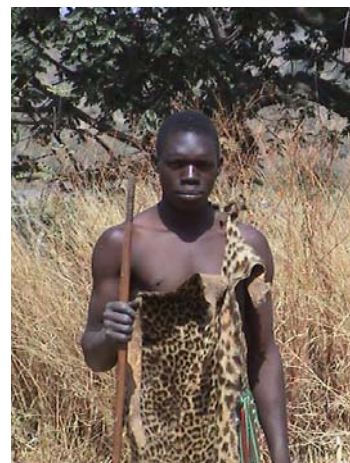


Reading and writing εBoze [Buji]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LOCATION, HISTORY AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION	1
2.1 Nomenclature	1
2.2 Location and settlements	1
2.3 Language status	2
2.4 What languages are related to εBoze?	2
3. PHONOLOGY	2
3.1 Vowels	2
3.2 Consonants	4
3.3 Tones	5
4. A WRITING SYSTEM FOR EBOZE	6
4.1 Stages of orthography development	6
4.2 Options for the εBoze writing system	6
4.2.1 Consonants.....	6
4.2.2 Vowels.....	7
REFERENCES	7

TABLES

Table 1. Nomenclature of the Boze peoples	1
Table 2. Boze settlements	1
Table 3. Vowel contrasts in εBoze	3
Table 4. Vy and Vw sequences	4
Table 5. Genesis of superhigh tones in Boze	5

1. Introduction

This is a preliminary phonology and suggestions for an orthography of the εBoze language as spoken in Nok and nearby villages in Central Nigeria. The εBoze language is often called Buji in earlier literature. The present document should be seen as *a preliminary draft only*. The analysis of εBoze is only in the first stages, both at the phonetic level and in terms of tone. It is written in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) which is used by linguists and is not written in an alphabet recommended for Boze.

The Boze (Buji) language forms part of the ‘Jere cluster’ and is in turn part of the Northern Jos group of the East Kainji languages spoken north and west of Jos town in Central Nigeria. The Boze live east and west of the Jos-Zaria road which runs northwest of Jos, in Bassa Local government area.

2. Location, history and sociolinguistic situation

2.1 Nomenclature

εBoze is the language of the AnaBoze people. The correct name for one Boze person is unaBoze and for the people anaBoze, while the name of the language is εBoze. The Boze are divided into two main dialects, εGorong and εKòkòŋ as well as a third rather divergent speech form, εFiru. The ‘original’ Boze are considered to be the anεKòkòŋ.

Table 1. Nomenclature of the Boze peoples

Language	One person	People	Short form
εBoze	unaBoze	anaBoze	B
εKòkòŋ	unaKòkòŋ	anεKòkòŋ	K
εGorong	unaGorong	anaGorong	G
εFiru	unoFiru	ànòFíru	F

This document uses the convention whereby the capitals are placed on the main part of the word, the stem, and the prefixes, which vary, are written in small letters.

2.2 Location and settlements

The main settlements where the εBoze is spoken are;

Table 2. Boze settlements

No.	Original name	Modern name	Etymology	Group	Location
1.	Ugbìrì ògòṁṁ		settlement of chief	F	
2.	Àbénjòlò		name of nearby hill	F	
3.	Ànujà		people of farmland	F	
4.	Ànó Tèwò Tebò		people of the black hills	F	
5.	Kirango	Tumbakiri		F	
6.	Abènjèl			G	
7.	Ádòŋkòròŋ			G	
8.	Ásèrsiŋ	Minta		G	
9.	Bicizà	Mista Ali		G	
10.	Bìdiri	Kongo	sticky soil	G	
11.	Gòròŋ I	Gurum	River name	G	
12.	Gòròŋ II	Gurum		G	
13.	Lindàŋ			G	
14.	Màlèempe	Jejin Fili		G	
15.	Owòyoyò	Owoyoyo		G	West
16.	Rèshòkò	Reshoko	shrub sp.	G	East
17.	Rèwò	Rafin Gwaza		G	
18.	Ùrèkuùŋ	Urakun		G	East
19.	Àmarujà		behind farmland	K	East

No.	Original name	Modern name	Etymology	Group	Location
20.	Àmarujà dizi			K	
21.	Àturu	Ulu Aturu		K	West
22.	Bintirí	Bintiri		K	West
23.	Boolò	Zabolo		K	
24.	Behòlè	Bihol		K	East
25.	Bèri	Sarari		K	East
26.	Bèsòò	Beso		K	East
27.	Gbàndaŋ			K	East
28.	Icizà	Fadan Gwamna		K	
29.	Màkuŋ	Makun		K	East
30.	Ògbènakùrá	Mairaga		K	
31.	Ógwara	Ugwara		K	East
32.	Òpeègo			K	
33.	Pepeeŋ	Tila		K	
34.	Ribàmboze			K	
35.	Ridapòò	Ridapo		K	East
36.	Tipòò I		barren rocks	K	
37.	Tipòò II		barren rocks	K	
38.	Tùùmu	Sarari ?		K	East
39.	Ukweshi	Ukwashi		K	East
40.	Zàèlèki	Zallaki		K	East
41.	Zùku	N.N.P.C. Depot		Mixed	East

Many of these settlements are very small and dispersed and often adjacent to one another. Hence numbers of speakers are smaller than might at first appear.

2.3 Language status

The number of εBoze speakers is hard to gauge as Hausa has made inroads into many areas. But taking all three groups together, there must be 6-7000, not all of whom will be fully competent.

2.4 What languages are related to εBoze?

IBoze is usually considered part of the Jere cluster, which includes;

εBoze
iZeLe
iSanga
iBunu with iLoro
iPanawa

Most εBoze speakers can understand these languages with only minor adjustments, although some other languages have very different tone systems.

3. Phonology

IBoze phonology is relatively simple, which makes writing the language less of a challenge than some others in this area.

3.1 Vowels

εBoze has eight phonemic vowels;

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-Mid	e	ə	o
Open-Mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

All the vowels in εBoze exist in long and short forms;

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i:		u:
	e:	ə:	o:
	ɛ ^l		ɔ:
Open		a:	

We usually write these as doubled vowels, because they are really a sequence of two similar vowels, each of which can have its own tone. This is different from the long vowels in Hausa, which do not bear separate tones. Examples;

Table 3. Vowel contrasts in εBoze				
Vowel	εBoze	Gloss	εBoze	Gloss
a	maasa	to wrestle	kaa	to receive
ə	ùgbəərə	diarrhoea	ùwə̀rú	evening
e			tèene	charcoal
ɛ	mèé	to catch	tɛɛjo	story
i	rìi	river	rìjì	root
o	sòòy	to put on clothes pl.	òomò	grass
ɔ	ɔwɔɔ	mountain	ɔ̀pɔ̀ɔ̀	flat stone
u	ànyimúúja	bush	ùbuuzu	harmattan

Diphthongs

εBoze has no true diphthongs, that is, sequences of dissimilar vowels. There are words, however, with sounds like ai, ou etc. These are really a + y and o + u. In Hausa these would be written ‘ai’ and ‘ou’ but this is a misleading convention. It is probably better to write them ‘ay’ and ‘ow’, as they would be in English.

Vy and Vw sequences

Table 4. Vy and Vw sequences		
	εBoze	Gloss
ay	bìgây	mushroom
	rìwày	year
oy	cǒy	to drop pl.
	sòòy	Put on (clothes) pl.
aw	isáw	grave
	udákánkâw	tree sp.
ew	ùgew	hole in ground
əw	udântəw	tree sp.

Vowel harmony

εBoze exhibits what is known as ‘vowel harmony’. In other words the stems of Boze words tend to show the same types of vowel. So, if a stem has /ɛ/, the other vowels are likely to be /ɛ/ or /ɔ/, but not /e/ or /o/. Similarly, if you see /e/ or /o/ the other vowels will be of the same type. The central vowels can go with either harmony set. The prefixes do not harmonise with the stem, but this is an incipient process, in other words some speakers tend to harmonise them. So, you might hear a word with a ri- or ti- prefix from one speaker, and find someone else saying rɛ- or tɛ-, so that the vowel will be of the same type as those in the stem. Deciding how such words will be written is typically part of the work of a literacy committee.

3.2 Consonants

εBoze consonants without prosodies are as follows:

	Bilabia	Labio-	Alve-	Alveop	Palatal	Vela	Labial	Glotta
	l	dental	olar	alatal		r	-velar	l
Plosive	p b		t d			k g	gb	
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ		
Trill			r					
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ				h
Affricates					tʃ dʒ			
Approximant					y		w	
Lateral			l					
Approximant								

The labial-velar /gb/ seems to alternate freely with /gw/ in many speakers. This occasionally surfaces with non-contrastive labialisation as /gbw/. However, /kp/ is always realised as /kw/.

Nasal prefixes in εBoze are quite rare and are shifting to i- prefixes. However, they exist and are tone-bearing. They are usually homorganic with the following consonant. Thus N is realised as;

- [n] before alveolars
- [ŋ] before velars
- [m] before bilabials

εBoze words usually end in a vowel, but can end in approximants (-w or -y) and a nasal. Where the final letter is -N, it seems to always be realised as -ŋ.

εBoze has one unusual feature related to final nasals, doubled consonants in the middle of words. You will find that when people write a word such as **ùgàllùṅ** ‘wing’, they are tempted to write **uganlung**. This is because the word is a compound and the first part originally ended with an –n. Because it is followed by a consonant of similar type, –n, –l, and –r, there is a process of assimilation, whereby the –n becomes the same as the consonant following. So we get;

Wing	ùgàllùṅ
Squirrel (ground)	bìgèllɛ
Sleep	ìrrɔ

One of the interesting features of these (rare) words is that the first consonant of the two bears a tone, as it would if it were –n.

εBoze has no palatalised consonants, i.e. consonants with a –y- following, except for /ɲ/ which is a separate consonant in its own right. However, non-phonemic palatalisation can be heard before front vowels, /i/, /e/ and /ɛ/.

εBoze has no labialised consonants except for /kw/ which appears to be an allophone of /kp/. However, non-phonemic labialisation can be heard before back vowels, /u/, /o/ and /ɔ/.

3.3 Tones

εBoze has four level tones and rising and falling tones. Some of the glide tones arise from long vowels and diphthongs, but others occur on single vowels. Level tones are marked as follows;

SUPERHIGH	double acute accent above the syllable	˝
HIGH	acute accent above the syllable	ˊ
MID	unmarked	
LOW	grave accent over the syllable	ˋ

The superhigh tones seem to arise from a tone rule which requires all tones in singular nouns to be raised one level in the plural. Thus;

Table 5. Genesis of superhigh tones in Boze

Gloss	sg.	pl.
Guest/stranger	ógèṅ	ǎgen
Doctor	óbèrè	ǎbere
Grave	isáw	ǎsáw

εBoze has a variety of glide tones, symbolised as follows;

RISING	hachek over the syllable	ˆ	cǒy	to drop
FALLING	circumflex over the syllable	˘	ipôṅ	baboons

Glides can occur between almost any two adjacent tone-heights. In addition, when the tones are raised in plural formations, the glides are raised in the same way. Thus a glide tone in a plural is usually one level higher than the singular.

Normally, nouns exhibit only three levels within a word and the superhigh appears in the contrast between singular and plural. But there are some words demonstrating four tone levels;

bìshèshéně tree sp.

4. A writing system for εBoze

4.1 Stages of orthography development

An orthography is developed in the following stages;

1. Phonemic analysis of the language establishing key contrasts, both phonologically and morphophonologically
2. Proposals made for orthography
3. Consideration of proposals by a committee representing major interested parties and those with a knowledge and commitment to literacy and consensus on the writing system to be adopted
4. Preparation of an alphabet chart and pre-primer
5. Testing of these with potential literacy classes and recommendations for change and adaptation
6. Adoption of final orthography by literacy committee
7. Preparation of reading and writing materials

If any of these stages are omitted or carried out in the wrong order, conflict and disagreement is likely to arise further down the line.

4.2 Options for the εBoze writing system

4.2.1 Consonants

The following letters in εBoze resemble those in English and can be used ‘as they are’.

English	εBoze
p	p
b	b
t	t
d	d
c [=tʃ]	c
j [=dʒ]	j
k	k
g	g
m	m
n	n
f	f
v	v
s	s
z	z
h	h
y	y
w	w

‘c’ is sometimes written ‘ch’ following English convention but this is redundant.

The following can be converted from IPA to εBoze by ‘standard’ conversions;

IPA	εBoze
gb	gb
ɲ	ny
ʃ	sh
ʒ	zh

Problems requiring resolution

Consonants

ŋ can be written either as ‘ng’ or the IPA character retained, i.e. as ‘ŋ’. Both solutions are used in Nigerian languages.

4.2.2 Vowels

εBoze vowels /a e i o u/ can be represented by their standard English equivalents. The vowels /ɛ ɔ ə/ are non-standard characters drawn from IPA. There are two main solutions, to use IPA characters or to use standard vowels with diacritics. Both are used in Nigeria. Some common solutions are;

ɛ	<u>e</u>	ɛ	
ɔ	<u>o</u>	o	
ə	<u>a</u>	ə	ɨ

Non-IPA solutions were devised in the period before computers and are still widespread in Nigeria. However, in the era of modern book production there is now no reason not to use IPA characters.

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