

Gomez Adongo

Ethnic group: Frafra

Language (dialect): Frafra (Gurune)

Country: Ghana

Recording date: August 17, 2016 (stories), August 20, 2016
(interview and tongue twisters)

Recording location: Zoargo, Bolgatanga, Ghana (stories) and Dekiyo,
NorthEast, Ghana (interview and tongue twisters)

Total Recording time: 1h 13:36

Technician: Brian Nowak

Group members:

Gomez Adongo

Uncle Agana Azoah

Yamga Agana

Various Dekiyo community members for tongue twisters and short songs

Track names -- duration

- 1) Gomez Adongo interview -12:47
- 2) Story 1 - 13:28
- 3) Story 2 - 9:16
- 4) Story 3 - 7:30
- 5) Story 4 - 11:06
- 6) Story 5 - 13:41
- 7) Tongue-twisters and short songs - 5:48

Group introduction:

Few people are as dynamically engaged as Gomez Adongo. He is in charge of the civic education office in Bolgatanga, and his major passion and area of expertise is in the oral arts of the Frafra people, in particular the traditions of storytelling and tongue-twisters. Through informal and formal work with Frafra communities, urban and rural schools, and also Frafra language projects, whether paid or volunteered, Gomez is driven to contribute to improving lives and spreading the importance of stories and their linguistic and moral lessons.

Incorporating the public school system in this process is a unique, although obvious choice for Gomez, who sees both storytelling and classrooms as structured education systems. Stories should be an appropriate part of a standard learning for elementary children in Northern Ghana, and elsewhere where similar oral traditions exist. The

children's folktale, mixed with fable and complete with children's songs, provides a complex for learning in a linguistic structure designed to engage the audience's attention to participate and learn.

Recording context:

Gomez invited his Uncle to join him to recite a few of the popular stories. Many of the stories his Uncle taught him as a boy, hearing them at night while passing the time. Although difficult to remember at his old age, Uncle Agana chimes in and takes the lead a few times while reminiscing about when he learned the stories as a child, when he told them, and how he now sees the next generation carrying them on as he listens, comments and laughs along. A neighbor also came by to share a story.

The tongue twisters and short songs were spontaneous during a community interview with Gomez and the Dekiyo community following the recording of a performance there. The community enjoyed chiming in and they thereby influenced Gomez's approach to his interview. The interview turned into the summary of a community discussion, perfect for setting the stage to understanding this story-telling movement in Northern Ghana.

Notes on Language Use:

Stories designed for language acquisition, and socio-cultural and moral development, offer a scaffolding of learning areas and a variety of participatory approaches to basic and more complex levels of language development. The scaffold allows one to follow different levels of difficulty and their corresponding level of participation.

The first stage may be to repeat the rhythmic sounds featured in the chorus or refrain. A second stage may be to add the catch phrase of the chorus or refrain. A third stage would be to complete the chorus or refrain. All of these three levels could take place on the most basic levels of understanding, even before being able to understand the entire song or its message.

The next obvious level of understanding would be to slowly listen to more and more of the story between the chorus or refrain, now standard and memorized. After being able to listen to the entire story, an older child is then able to think more analytically about the message, symbolism, and socio-cultural and linguistic messages woven into the entertaining stories.

The format of the story-telling experience also features inter-generational participation as a standard part of the performer-audience relationship. Not a simple young-old dichotomy, the younger level of

participation, as mentioned, includes a variety of levels beginning with incredibly basic sound creation or listening and following along to repeat, so that even with the young age-group the children are also able to perform and help those less able to participate and learn from those more able to participate.

Individual voice and slight changes in format, both intentional and unintentional add to the sociolinguistic nature where voice, public performance and recitation, and language ability define one's ability as a storyteller. This format aims to preserve transmission while encouraging individual expression as a feature of mastery during a performance.