

Oroko



Reading and Writing

A Quick Start Guide

For Oroko speakers who are literate in English or Duala, reading Oroko need not be difficult. This pamphlet has been designed to accompany the chart *ABC wa Oroko*, explaining the alphabet and some basic spelling rules. More complete lessons will be available in a *Reading and Writing Manual*.

The Oroko alphabet has a total of 27 letters - 7 vowels and 20 consonants. It has been designed to create a unified writing system for all Oroko clans. Of course, some letters will be said differently based on the clan or village of the speaker. Each reader is encouraged to maintain their unique way of speaking. However, it is very important that all writers use the common writing system presented in this paper to facilitate communication.

The following letters are familiar from English:

A a	<u>a</u> kpana	'yellow cocoyam'
E e	<u>e</u> bongo	'chair'
I i	<u>i</u> diba	'stream'
O o	<u>o</u> ko	'rat mole'
U u	<u>u</u> na	'door'
K k	<u>k</u> uma	'python'
M m	<u>m</u> okondo	'tail'
N n	<u>n</u> adende	'type of grass'
S s	<u>s</u> ombo	'drill monkey'
T t	<u>t</u> oko	'spoon'
W w	<u>w</u> ana	'mouth'
Y y	<u>y</u> obi	'hook'
Ch ch	<u>ch</u> oo	'very dark'

The following consonant combinations are not in English, but the individual parts are:

Mb mb	<u>m</u> bodí	'goat'
Nd nd	<u>n</u> dondi	'fish'
Nj nj	<u>n</u> janga	'crayfish'
Ny ny	<u>n</u> yaka	'cow' [ń in old Duala]
Ng ng	<u>n</u> gnde	'moon'

The remaining sounds have a unique Oroko pronunciation. Sometimes the pronunciation varies between Oroko dialects. Say the key word for each letter to see how it should be pronounced in your dialect. Then, no matter how you pronounce the sound, use these symbols when you write.

Ɛ ɛ Ɛnɛ! 'See!
Pronounce like the <e> in 'bed'.
[Written as <e> in old Duala.]

Ɔ ɔ kɔ 'snail'
Pronounce like the <aw> in 'hawk'.
[Written as <ɔ> in old Duala.]

F f fiko 'kidney'
Pronounce /f/ or /ɸ/.

Some dialects pronounce this letter as /f/ just like in English. Other dialects pronounce this sound by incompletely closing the lips as if one is about to say /p/.

B b bana 'children'
Pronounce /b/ or /ɸ/.

This letter is usually said the same as an English /b/ at the beginning of words. In the middle of words it is usually pronounced with the lips incompletely closed. This "soft" /b/ is not the same as /w/ and should still be written .

Kp kp ikpa 'salt'
Pronounce /kw/ or /kp/.

The sound of this letter varies by both word and speaker. Sometimes it is said as /kw/ and sometimes as /kp/. No matter how it is said, it should be spelled <kp>.

ŋ ŋ ŋana 'child'
Pronounce like the <ng> in "sing" or like the <ng> in "sing" plus <w>.
[Written as <ń> in old Duala.]

In some dialects, this letter sounds like /ng/ in the English word 'sing' and in other dialects a /w/ sound also follows behind. For the Ekombe clan, this letter is usually pronounced /m/.

Ngb ngb ngba 'dog'
Pronounce /ŋmgb/, /nv/, /nf/ or /ngw/

The sound represented by this symbol varies considerably across the dialects. Each dialect will keep their unique pronunciation but everyone should use the same spelling.

D d díso 'eye'

Pronunciation is similar to /l/, /r/ and /d/, depending on the dialect and word.

The small tail on the top of this special letter has been added to show that this is not an English <d>. Instead, it is a unique Oroko sound that includes the sounds of the English letters /l/, /r/, and /d/. This symbol has been designed to look like the combination of all three. Say "stream" in your dialect to hear how this letter sounds in the middle of a word.

J j eja(ni) 'leaf'
Pronounce /ch/, /y/, or /j/.

For some dialects, this symbol will sound exactly like <y>. For other dialects, it will be pronounced /ch/ or /j/.

Practice Reading Oroko:

Bunya woko ngia emonangaka iyɔ. Fonda ngia enange iyɔ, ama yenyɔɛ dítokoa, em'ɛnɛ etodo ebiaka. Ngia emoboka fidí. Em'aka díbanda etodo.

Etodo emokeka ama "Nga osadefí mba, nga osabodo mba, bunya ma mbok'ongoɛnɛ."

Ngia em'ɔyɔ dɔdɔ. Emomata etodo. Em'aka. Basongɔ bamobanda ngia. Bam'anja mekodí, bamokata na ngia o tina ja wede. Ngia ekakekaka.

Etodo emoboka mokekako ŋa ngia. Etodo emofɔ. Em'ɛnɛ dínaɔama ngia emakataba o tina ja wede. Emoboteɛ dídena na mesinga masonga ime. Emise dídena mesinga bi.

Emoboteɛ dí tubede ngia ama, "Bunya wa omobande mba, nam'ɔmeɛ owa dínaɔama nga osadefí mba, ma mbok'ongoɛnɛ bunya, waboteɛ dí n'ɔyee dɔdɔ." "Yɔboni osam'ijoa dínaɔama etodo ma ek'ongoɛnɛ oma ngia?"

Punctuation Rules

Punctuation should be the same as in English. Two special rules should be noted:

1. The near past verb prefix < mó > should be marked with an accent above the < o > . This is to make it different from the far past verb prefix < mo > which will be unmarked.

Practice Reading:

Jana, ko emóda besumbu.
'Yesterday, a rat-mole ate grass.'

Ko emóda besumbu.
'A rat-mole ate grass.' (Recent past)

2. When a letter has been deleted, an apostrophe will be used just as in English. For example, < a > + < mo > + < ene > *'He saw'* should be written as < am'ene > . Note: If the < o > of < mó > is deleted, there will no longer be an accent mark to indicate near past.

Spelling Rules

Long Vowels:

- For adverbs where the vowel sound is longer than normal, a double vowel will be written. For example, < chɔɔ > *'dark'*.
- For the infinitives of verbs which begin with a vowel (like < d'aka > *'to go'*), an apostrophe will be written to show that the < i > of the infinitive prefix < di- > has been deleted.
- For verbs conjugated in the 3rd person whose root begins with a vowel, such as < eneke > *'he is seeing'*, the first vowel of the root will be written twice. This will avoid

confusion between statements (e.g. Eneke inɔ. *'He sees a bird.'*) and commands (e.g. Eneke inɔ! *'See the bird!'*)

Word breaks

Write prepositions separately if the noun that follows is a valid word, as in < o boso > *'in front of'*. If what follows is not a valid word by itself, write it together, as in < ose > *'down'*.

The endings < te > and < fe > are found after many different words or phrases. Write these as separate words (e.g. Moto te adingi nana. *'Everyone likes a child.'*)

Words of the same grammatical category should not be broken up. For example, a noun will be one word, and a verb will be one word, even if each has many prefixes and suffixes.

Practice writing Oroko:

'He wants to eat fish.'

Asakaka dɪda ndɔndi.

'He looked for snails.' (far past)

Amosaka kɔ.

'Every child likes to play.'

ŋana te adingi dɪsa/dɪtonda etondi.

Written by the OLDC Literacy Sub-Committee and published by the Oroko Language Development Committee (OLDC), Nov 2004.