This is a summary of the full report, which is more than 50 pages long.

The full report is available upon request from the authors.
1. Introduction

1.1. Goals and concepts

The goal of this sociolinguistic survey was to research the Bakor [bakɔ]\(^1\) language cluster\(^2\) of Cross River State, Nigeria, to give insights as they consider developing their own languages with the help other interested parties. The focus was to collect data to help them determine how many and which speech varieties spoken by the Bakor peoples need to be developed into a written form in order to ensure that they all have access to literature that they will understand well. Due to the existence of literature in Ekajuk, one of the Bakor speech varieties, another goal of the survey was to examine the possibility of literature extensibility. In other words, we wanted to verify whether the Ekajuk literature would be comprehensible and acceptable to speakers of other Bakor speech varieties.

The survey was conducted in two phases during the months of January and February, 2008.

Data was gathered concerning a large variety of concepts, namely the peoples’ own sense of social and linguistic identity, intelligibility between these varieties, the bilingual ability of the people, the vitality of each Bakor speech variety, the acceptability of literature in each variety, and the level of literacy in the villages visited. Research questions were chosen to explore each concept. The research questions are individually introduced and answered in the main sections of the full report, these are excluded for brevity in this summary. The actual instruments and questions used in the field are different from the research questions; these are summarized in the methodology section, and expanded upon in the full report. The answers to the research questions are summarized in section 2.

---

1 The name Bakor is commonly written with an ‘r’ to indicate that the o sound is more open [ɔ] than a normal [o]. There should be no [r] or [ɹ] in the pronunciation.
2 The individual language varieties of the Bakor language cluster are introduced in section 1.3.
1.2. Acknowledgements

This survey would not have been possible without the support of many people throughout the land surveyed. We are grateful in particular for the support of Rev. Wilfred Ebo and family for their hospitality and help with the administration of our tests during the second phase of the survey.

We also appreciate the time and energy of those who volunteered to help us in eliciting the wordlists from the nine Bakor varieties, as well as all the families who hosted us. Our special thanks go to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Rupprecht who generously opened their home and their hearts to us. We also appreciate the support of Hon. Friday and Emmanuel, councillors representing Nnam and Nta ward respectively in Ikom LGA.

Our thanks also go to the Principals/head-teachers and teachers of the various schools we visited who willingly volunteered as interpreters and allowed their students\(^3\) to listen to the recorded stories in various Bakor dialects.

- Nkum Comprehensive Secondary School, Agbrumbede
- the primary school at Aladim
- Ndok Comprehensive Secondary School, Ndok
- St. Cornelius Secondary School, Alabmbohg
- Egre Egede Memorial College, Nkpakna
- Nnam Comprehensive Secondary School, Alok
- Nkim Comprehensive Secondary School, Nkim-Abanyom
- Presbyterian Primary School Nde Three Corners
- the secondary school in Nsak,
- Nselle Community Secondary School, Nselle;
- Nta Comprehensive Secondary School, Nta
- and the primary and secondary schools in Alesi

Most of our data was collected in the following villages. Without the support and patience of the leaders and people, especially village heads, chairmen, chiefs and

\(^3\) In Nigeria, primary school children are called pupils. However, for simplicity we will refer to both secondary and primary as students.
pastors of these villages, we would not have been able to complete the work. The villages we visited in various dialect areas are as follows: in the Nkim dialect, Adagom and Ndok villages; in the Nkum dialect, Aladim and Ishiaya villages; in the Ekajuk dialect, Alabmbohng, Mfom 2 and Ekagongho villages; in the Nnam dialect, Akorofonor and Alok villages; in the Abanyom dialect, Nkim Inland and Nkum villages; in the Nde dialect, Nde Three Corners and Nsak villages; in the Nselle dialect, village of Njemetop; in the Nta dialect, Ngo and Adon villages; in the Efutop dialect, village of Alesi.

(Map 1, showing these villages, is excluded for brevity, see Map 2)

Above all, we are grateful to God for His care, protection, guidance and grace during the course of this survey.

1.3. Previous research

In 1956 Dr. David Crabb published the first in what was intended to be a series of research on the Ekoid Bantu languages, including the Bakor cluster.

Crabb's research was undertaken as part of the Field Fellowships of the West African Language Survey, followed by subsequent research on the Ogoja Project supported from other sources in the early 1960's. He grouped the Bakor languages into four sub-groups based on the vocabulary, morphology and reconstructed forms. He put

- Nkim and Nkum (ISO 639-3 identifier: [isi]);
- Ekajuk and Nnam ([eka] and [nbp]);
- Abanyom [abm];
- Nde, Nta, Nselle, and Efutop ([ndd] and [ofu])

together as the most closely related to each other (Crabb, 1965:6).

Since Crabb, the only linguistic work done to our knowledge was a basic initial survey done by Russ Anderson. Anderson arrived in Nigeria to work among the Nkum and Nkim in 1977. After about a year and half he heard that “when the chiefs and elders of Bakor come together there is no interpretation needed.” The chiefs of the Bakor clans desired to have one writing system for all Bakor people. After comparing some wordlists (see appendix, section 5), it became clear that the lexical similarity was too low for all to use one writing system – only adjacent languages
had high enough similarity to be considered. “Therefore, after our initial survey we felt a more extensive survey needed to be done before more linguistic work was undertaken.” (Anderson, personal communication, 2008)

1.4. Summary of methodology

1.4.1. Group Interviews

In each village we visited, we asked the village chief if we could ask questions of a group of people of various ages and both sexes. The number of people assembled for the interview varied from one place to another. With people coming and going throughout the multi-hour conversation, the size of the group almost never remained the same from beginning to end of the interview.

1.4.2. The Recorded Text Test

We use the Recorded Text Test (RTT), based on a model developed in Mexico, as a tool for comparison studies of related speech varieties (Casad, 1974). In the RTT technique, a sample of speech in the form of a narrative text is recorded from one location and replayed at a second location where people speak a speech form related to that of the first location. Ten or so questions covering the content of the narrative are interspersed into the playback of the text in order to measure how well the subject is understanding the text. RTT scores are averaged for the ten or so participants for each location. For a thorough description of the slightly modified steps in the preparation and administration of the RTT, see the full report.

1.4.3. Post-RTT Interview

Immediately following the administration of each RTT a few questions were asked about the subject’s perception of the story. This is a simple interview technique designed to yield valuable information on perceived intelligibility and reflections on subjects’ attitudes toward tested speech varieties.

1.4.4. Word Lists

We used the word lists as instruments for comparison of a wide range of lexical items. We elicited a 355 item word list in each of the nine locations we visited during the first phase of our survey.
1.5. **Social setting**

1.5.1. *Geographical setting*

The Bakor are located in Ikom and Ogoja Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Cross River State, Nigeria. The areas they inhabit include Igoli, Abakpa, and the surrounding area down to Igoli. Most of their settlements are found on the main road and in the bush to the west, as far as the major river that runs from the north to the south into the Cross River.

1.5.1. *Other languages in the area*

The Bakor languages are located among other Bantoid (Ejagham, Mbe, Ndoe cluster), Bendi (Bekwarra, Bokyí, Obe cluster), Idomoid (Yala), and the Upper Cross Central (Kukele, Olulumo, Mbembe) languages. (See Map 3)

1.5.1. *Interrmarriage*

It is not uncommon for the Bakor people to marry mostly among themselves or to intermarr) with their neighbours. They report they would allow their sons and daughters to marry anyone, with the exception of Efutop who reported that they wouldn’t want their children to marry Ugep people.

1.5.1. *Agriculture and markets*

The three main crops of the Bakor peoples are yams, cassava and rice. Other frequently reported crops are cocoa-yams, plantains, bananas, maize, oranges, pepper, okra, melons, beans and cocoa.

Local markets are one of the major social and economic events among the Bakor people where these crops are bought and sold. The Bakor markets are on a five-day schedule.
2. Summary of research answers

2.1. Language Identification

*How do the speakers of the varieties identify with other varieties?*

All the Bakor recognize themselves as Bakor. At the same time they also recognize themselves as having different (though similar) cultures, speaking their different (though similar) languages.

*How similar are the varieties of language?*

The Bakor varieties share some vocabulary, but not enough to suppose they would all be one language.

2.2. Intelligibility

*Which varieties do the people think they can understand?*

The people generally believe they can communicate with their immediate neighbours without needing to use English. Most likely some of this is due to the adults having learned to speak the neighbouring varieties of Bakor.

*Which varieties can people score > 75% (RTT) on?*

Within the following groups all the languages can understand the others, scoring >75: Nkim/Nkum, Ekajuk/Nnam, Abanyom, Nde/Nta/Nselle, and Efutop. These groups match those described by Crabb, with the exception that Efutop is not grouped with Nde/Nta/Nselle.

*Is there one variety all groups score > 75% on?*

No. Based on a 75% comprehension cut-off, there will need to be five varieties developed.
2.3. **Bilingualism**

*What other languages are spoken by these peoples?*

English and Pidgin English are the languages of wider communication (LWC) in the area.

*What is the perceived proficiency of each social segment?*

*Which segments of society use which language?*

The oldest and youngest are weak in the LWCs, but almost everyone else reported to be able to speak some kind of English. The youth speak the best English, but even they report using their own Bakor varieties the most.

*How/where do people learn these languages?*

English is learned in school. Pidgin English is learned outside of the community.

2.4. **Language Vitality**

*Do the children speak a Bakor variety fluently?*

Yes, the children are still learning to speak their languages, in all the villages we visited.

*In what domains is a Bakor variety the primary language?*

In the home domain, and in many other village domains, Bakor varieties remain the dominant language. In the church some form of English is used for the sermon and for some youth programs, but it is often translated into the local language. The local language is commonly used alongside English for prayers and songs.

*Will the language be spoken in the future?*

We can’t speak for the distant future, but it seems likely for the next decade at least the languages will continue to be spoken.

2.5. **Acceptability**

*How do they feel about related languages?*

Generally, the Bakor people seem to have a positive attitude towards the other Bakor languages, while still seeing them as different languages. Some of the more
populated or economically central dialects (such as Nkim, Ekajuk, and Nde) consider the dialects within the groups we have described as the same as their own language.

Which varieties are people willing to read/write?

Most of the people interviewed were happy to use a Bakor variety in the same group as theirs, though Nnam resisted the idea of using any other, because they value their own culture.

Is there existing literature?

Ekajuk has a New Testament. No other dialects have significant literature that should affect which dialect will be developed.

2.6. Literacy

How many people have access to education? To what level?

There are many primary schools and even secondary schools among the Bakor people.

How many people can read and write? In which languages? How well?

In most of the villages the majority were reported to be able to read and write to some extent.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The nine Bakor language varieties are closely related, but each has its own identity. Many understand their immediate neighbours and are willing to work together with and use development in them. We suggest that the groupings set forward by Crabb be followed with the exception that Efutop will need to be separate from the rest. Thus we have the groups Nkim/Nkum, Ekajuk/Nnam, Abanyom, Nde/Nta/Nselle, and Efutop. Within these groups we suggest that anyone beginning work discuss with key leaders which variety should be developed. Even with Ekajuk and Nnam, the leaders need to discuss how they will work together; although Ekajuk clearly should continue to be developed, efforts may need to be made to help Nnam to accept Ekajuk language development as viable without displacing their own culture.
4. Bibliography


5. Appendix 2 – Wordlists

The full wordlist appendix is 30 pages long including 361 words in eleven varieties of Bakor (the nine mentioned plus two variations of Ekajuk). What follows is a sample of the wordlists. The full wordlists are available upon request.