

## Seventy-Five Years of Teaching Amharic in Poland

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The Amharic language has been taught at the University of Warsaw for nearly 75 years. First introduced in 1950 by Stefan Strelcyn – the Chair of Semitic Studies – it was offered alongside Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez) as part of Ethiopian Studies courses.

The initial approach to teaching Amharic was philological and did not differ much from that of teaching Ge'ez. Students were taught to read and analyze Amharic literature leaving out conversational skills. In the decades that followed, attitudes and approaches began to change as slowly new materials began to appear and were used in teaching. At the University of Warsaw, this change was followed by the transfer of Ethiopian Studies from the Semitic to the African Chair. At present, a more pragmatic way of teaching Amharic prevails with a focus on active communication. It is taught as one of the three major African languages, the other two being Hausa and Swahili. This new approach is driven by the changing reality of intercultural contacts and expectations of students, who are willing to learn Amharic to communicate with Ethiopians, as well as to gain knowledge about their culture from authentic sources.

In my presentation, I examine the different approaches used and the challenges experienced throughout the entire period of 75 years of teaching Amharic at the University of Warsaw. These experiences might help to reflect on teaching methods and to contribute to the development of a common framework of reference for Amharic.