

Proposing Texts and Socio-Cultural Themes for Amharic A1 & A2 Courses

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In the past 20 years, I have prepared several reading materials for the Amharic courses that I taught at the Beginner (ለጀማሪዎች), Intermediate (ለመካከለኛ ደረጃ) and Advanced (ለከፍተኛ ደረጃ) levels. The structure underlying these reading materials is based partially on the conception of A1 and A2 German language teaching textbooks, namely *Kurs- und Arbeitsbuch* (2022) and *Schritt für Schritt in Alltag und Beruf* (2019).

In this presentation, I will introduce a few selected texts and themes that enable students to improve their reading, comprehension, and writing skills, as well as their understanding of the rich socio-cultural traditions in Ethiopia. The texts invite the students to engage in practical activities both individually and in groups in the form of classwork, homework, and assignments. The following six texts will be presented combined with lesson plans and activities:

- A1a: የሳባ ቤተሰቦች እና ጓደኞች ‘Saba’s Family Members and Friends’
A1b: የዕለት ውሎዬ ‘My Daily Routines’
A1c: መርካቶ (ወደ ገበያ መሄድ) ‘Mercato – Going to the Market’
A2a: በምግብ ቤት፦ ‘At a Restaurant:
 “ነገር በምሳሌ ጠጅ በብርሌ” “A speech in parables (is) like mead
 in a mead-carafe”
A2b: ጉዞ ውደ ኢትዮጵያና ጥንታዊቷ የአክሱም ከተማ ‘Travel to Ethiopia and the Ancient City of Aksum’
A2c: የመስቀል በዓል አከባበር በአዲስ አበባ ‘The Celebration of *Mäsqäl* (Finding of
 the True Cross) in Addis Ababa

The selection of these themes is intended to teach students appropriate vocabulary and phrases that will help them in acquiring reading and speaking skills. For example, the text A1a shows students how to introduce themselves and talk about their family members and friends, as well as teaching them some useful terms for occupations, kinship relations, and expressions of citizenship. In the second text, A1b, students learn how to talk about their daily routines in the morning, during the day, and in the evening. Here, students learn to talk about specific intervals of the day and to describe their activities by mentioning the hours and using the fundamental pre- and postpositions. Furthermore, this lesson teaches students to express specific plans and practical activities that they intend to do. In the third lesson, A1c, students learn

important vocabulary for shopping, i.e., buying and selling different items, such as food and drinks, fruits and vegetables, clothes, etc., and they further practice the numbers, and how to calculate and pay the bills. Moreover, they will acquire useful expressions of quantities such as ‘half’, ‘one-third’, ‘one-fourth’, ‘package’, ‘kilo’, ‘liter’, etc. This theme also enables students to learn the formal and informal ways of greetings, expressions of thanking, and how to depart appropriately in various cultural settings.

The last three themes, A2a–c, are intended to put students in practical engagements by applying what they have learned, e.g., by going to the restaurant, reading the menu and ordering their food and drinks, paying their bills, expressing their wishes, etc. Here, the students will enjoy practicing spoken Amharic by directly taking over the roles of guests, shop owners, or waiters in the restaurant and communicating with one another. They also learn some recipes of Ethiopian food and drinks. The lesson in the form of a dialogue involves three to four participants letting each of them speak, and express their wishes. Finally, students will be invited to an Ethiopian coffee ceremony at which they learn useful vocabulary and expressions related to it.

The last two lessons will enable students to prepare to travel to Ethiopia and visit the cultural, historical, and naturally attractive places such as Bahir Dar, Gondar, Lalibela, and the ancient city of Aksum. Here, the students will get to know Ethiopian friends or host families and plan to visit attractions in Addis Ababa such as the National Museum, the *Mercato*, *Piazza*, Ethnological Museum of Addis Ababa University, *Entotto*, the Friendship and Unity Park, as well as *Mäsqäl*-Square. Ethiopian friends will guide the students who will learn a lot by asking questions and indulging in dialogues and conversations with local dwellers. The students also learn new grammatical features and vocabulary, as well as phrases and useful expressions, while going to restaurants, traditional performances in *Azmari* night clubs, churches, mosques, markets, etc.

At the end of the A2 course, students will be able to talk about themselves and their family members and friends, describe their daily activities, apply different forms of greetings at different times of the day, go shopping, and order meals at a restaurant. They also have a basic knowledge of traditional recipes of Ethiopian food, drinks, and the coffee culture. They will be able to communicate with native speakers at museums, shops, and public places, listen to music, and develop a fairly good level of linguistic and cultural competence in Amharic and in Ethiopia in general. Furthermore, these and other texts will enable students to develop effective communicative competencies in the form of reading, writing, understanding passages and conversations, retelling short folktales, and describing pictures and images.