

Preparations of New Chinese–Amharic Textbooks at Beijing Foreign Studies University

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In 2012, the Amharic program was approved to be established at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) by the Ministry of Education of China. One year later in 2013, Amharic began to be taught as a selective course at BFSU. Since there was no Chinese teacher who knew Amharic, Ethiopian lecturers from Addis Ababa University were employed to teach Amharic at the selective program until 2020. To facilitate the promotion of the training in Amharic from a selective program to an BA program, two Chinese students from BFSU were sent to Addis Ababa University (AAU) to learn Amharic from 2016–2020. After these Chinese students graduated from AAU in July 2020, they have become Amharic teachers at BFSU, and the first batch of Amharic students were admitted in the new BA program in September 2020.

At that time, the lack of textbooks was the biggest challenge for the Amharic BA program. To solve this problem, BFSU implemented a special policy and provided financial support to help the newly established programs for less commonly taught languages, such as Amharic, to develop appropriate textbooks. Accordingly, the publication of *Introduction of Chinese Culture in Amharic* has been one of the achievements of the textbook development project “Double First-Class Major Landmark Project of Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2020”. In addition, the co-authored *Amharic Textbook 1* by the Ethiopian teacher and Chinese teacher was successfully completed in 2023 as part of BFSU’s project “New Classics Series of Textbooks for Less Commonly Taught Language – Majors at Colleges and Universities”.

In order to further promote the preparation of teaching materials for the less commonly taught language programs, BFSU established a Textbook Department on May 07, 2021, which provides specially trained personnel and financial support for the entire process of textbook compilation.

In January 2022, BFSU organized a meeting and initiated the Oral Textbook Series for less commonly taught languages in which multilingual textbooks and dictionaries are prepared. Under the framework of this project the Amharic Department was able to publish the *Oral Amharic Textbook* in 2023. With further generous support from BFSU, the *Amharic Textbook II* is under preparation and expected to be published in 2025.

Besides the important policy and budget support from BFSU, the cooperation of Chinese teachers and Ethiopian language experts, who are Amharic native speakers, is essential for the successful preparation of these textbooks. On the one hand, native

speakers have a natural understanding of acceptable grammatical constructions in Amharic, and knowledge of subtle cultural distinctions and context-specific language use, which is important for the development of authentic teaching materials. On the other hand, Chinese teachers of Amharic as nonnative speaker understand well the common challenges that Chinese-speaking students commonly face. Their teaching experience and their knowledge of the challenges for Chinese native-speakers help to develop more effective teaching materials.