

**Everyone Did as They Saw Fit:
The Challenges of Substandard Transcriptions for Resourcing and Teaching
Amharic**

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A cursory glance at the internet or a pass-time visit to a local bookshop shows that hundreds of Amharic textbooks and phrasebooks are swarming the market. A close look by the trained eyes reveals, beyond availability, most of them, if not none of them, are of any use for language acquisition because of the substandard and inconsistent transcriptions used. One need not to skim any further than the first pages to notice this. In some cases, the very first word of the title of the book says it all. Take, for example, Dawit, L. G. (2021) *Selam! Learn Amharic: An Amharic Language Course for Beginners*. Addis Ababa: Rehobot Printers, as a show case. One of the ways to properly transcribe, ሥላም would be *Sälam*. For linguists and language teachers alike, *Selam* reads as ሥላም.

The problem of substandard transcription is not limited to Amharic textbooks and phrasebooks. It is so pervasive that it affects everything including how we spell our names, the names of our towns and cities, food, songs, public holidays, etc.

In this paper, I endeavor to highlight the challenges shoddy transcriptions pose to resourcing and teaching Amharic, identify the root cause of the problem and amplify the need for interdisciplinary collaboration as a long-term solution to the problem.