



Call for Papers

Workshop on Teaching Amharic as a Foreign Language: Developing a Common Framework of Reference (CFR) for Amharic

December 13–14, 2024

Department of African Linguistics and Ethiopian Studies
Asia-Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 (East Wing)
20146 Hamburg
Germany

Background

For over a century, Amharic has been taught as a foreign language at various European universities, for instance in Naples, Paris, Berlin, Hamburg, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Moscow, London. During this time, a variety of teaching materials have been prepared and used by the respective national institutions, including textbooks, bilingual dictionaries, grammars, conversation books, chrestomathies, and cultural and literary bilingual readers. Despite these commendable efforts and a certain degree of mobility and exchange between researchers, teachers, and students of the Amharic language, there is only rudimentary inter-university cooperation between the Amharic-teaching units in European universities. Furthermore, it should be noted that the respective teaching materials vary in terms of socio-cultural content, grammar content, vocabulary, and they also transmit different levels of ability in achieving the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). In recent years, this issue has become particularly evident when students have encountered significant difficulties during study-abroad and Erasmus programs at partner institutions. Moreover, the challenge for students and teachers became evident during the inaugural International Summer School of the Amharic Language and Ethiopian Cultures (Bahir Dar University, September 13–27, 2022), which saw the participation of Amharic students from France, Germany, Israel, and Italy. Among the international teaching staff, there was a general consensus that there is an urgent need to develop a common comparable scale and course content for evaluating students' language competences according to the already established Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) with its six levels from A1 to C2.

Objectives

The main objective of the intended workshop is to facilitate a broad discussion about the possibility of developing a common scale for measuring the Amharic competences of learners. This includes the development of common topics and themes, the leveling of language skills/competencies (listening, speaking, reading, writing) at the five levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) according to the CEFR guidelines, as well as the allocation of study time for courses, i.e., how many ECTS should be obtained at first, second-, and third-year Amharic courses.



Furthermore, the workshop will also address the following related issues:

- Developing common course syllabi and teaching-learning materials for all levels
- Exploring possible collaboration between language teachers/researchers and IT specialists, including the organization of an Amharic Summer School on a regular basis
- Gathering ideas for preparing innovative teaching materials and formats, including specialized workbooks, vocabulary lists, learners' dictionaries, learners' grammars, digital learning resources and platforms, etc.
- Making recommendations on the role and function of the Amharic writing system and standardizing the Amharic orthography (including the transcription system)
- Establishing a network of Amharic teachers and researchers with the aim of facilitating mobility and exchange programs, including the preparation of a common scale for the examination and evaluation of Amharic students, the creation of an annual conference format for the organization of teaching Amharic for at least 2025–2030
- Proposing the establishment of an Amharic Language Academy, preferably at our partner institution, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia, and possible cooperation with Amharic-teaching universities in America, China, and Russia

We cordially invite all Amharic teachers who are interested in actively participating in the workshop and sharing their ideas and experiences on salient issues pertaining to the teaching of Amharic as a foreign language at European universities.

Please send your abstract to following email addresses:

- Dr. Getie Gelaye: getie.gelaye@uni-hamburg.de
- Dr. Ronny Meyer: ronny.meyer@inalco.fr

Important Dates

Submission of paper titles and abstracts (one page)
Information on the acceptance of the abstract
Workshop program (available online)

15 October 2024
30 October 2024
15 November 2024