

English 540

# Amharic

Phonetic Fieldwork Assignment

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1. Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia. It is a Semitic language of the Afro-Asiatic language family (Lewis et al. 2014).
2. The consultant was Helen M., an Ethiopian woman in her early thirties. She attended school in Addis Ababa, where she lived as a child. She began her studies of English in the seventh grade and relocated to the United States when she was sixteen years old. Helen speaks Amharic and English.
3.

‘hand/arm/wrist’	[ɪdʒ]
‘finger’	[tʻat]
‘ear’	[dʒɔ ro]
‘thigh’	[aɪn]
‘foot/leg’	[ɪ gə]
‘elbow/forearm’	[kʻɛrn]
‘teeth’	[tʻɛrs]
‘mouth’	[af]
‘nose’	[aʻ fɪn dʒə]
‘cheek’	[ɡuntʃ]
‘hip’	[da le]
‘skin’	[kʻo də]
‘back’	[dʒɛr bə]
‘nail’	[tʻɛ fə]
‘hair’	[tʻa gur]
‘ankle’	[kɔɾ tʃʻəmʻ tʃɛm it]
‘knee’	[gul bət]
‘lip’	[kan fə]
‘neck’	[an gət]
‘chin’	[a gətʃ]

## 4. Pulmonic Consonants

	<b>Bilabial</b>	<b>Labiodental</b>	<b>Alveolar</b>	<b>Alveopalatal</b>	<b>Velar</b>
<b>Oral stop</b>	b		t d		k g
<b>Affricate</b>				tʃ dʒ	
<b>Nasal stop</b>	m		n		
<b>Trill</b>			r		
<b>Fricative</b>		f	s		
<b>Central Approximant</b>	w				
<b>Lateral Approximant</b>			l		

## Non-pulmonic consonants

	<b>Bilabial</b>	<b>Alveolar</b>	<b>Alveopalatal</b>	<b>Velar</b>
<b>Ejective Oral stop</b>	p'	t'		k'
<b>Ejective Affricate</b>		tʃ'	tʃ'	

## Vowels

		<b>Front</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Back</b>
<b>High</b>	Tense			u
	Lax	ɪ	ɨ	
<b>Mid</b>	Tense	e		o
	Lax	ɛ	ə	ɔ
<b>Low</b>	Lax		a	

(Genetti 2014)

5. The only sounds in the collected data not found in English were the voiced alveolar trill [r] and the non-pulmonic consonants, specifically ejective consonants (Crystal 1987).

[p'] voiceless bilabial ejective oral stop

[t'] voiceless alveolar ejective oral stop

[k'] voiceless velar ejective oral stop

[tʃ'] voiceless alveopalatal ejective affricate

[tʂ'] voiceless alveolar ejective affricate

6. Amharic shows a tendency toward penultimate stress in words with two or more syllables.

$\sigma \rightarrow [+stress] / \text{ \_\_\_\_ } (\sigma) ]_{\text{word}}$

There is not sufficient data to state conclusively whether this is phonemic/free stress or predictable/fixed stress (Hayes 2009).

7. The most challenging aspect of this assignment was adhering to the guidelines. The consultant provided the same word in Amharic for multiple English words for the appendages. For this reason, I asked her a few words related to kinship, to bring the number to twenty. (I later asked her additional body part words.) In the kinship words, there were sounds that were not found in the original data, such as geminated consonants, in 'mother' [ɪn: at] and 'father' [ab: at]. Also, 'brother' [wɛn dɐ lɔɕɕ] seems to show antepenultimate stress, however the second syllable could be a schwa epenthesis between the voiced alveolar oral stop and the voiced lateral approximant. The consultant's pronunciation of how she would say 'Amharic' [a mɐ' rɛɲ a], contains a sound not included in the consonant chart, [ɲ] the voiced palatal nasal. Another difficulty was distinguishing between [ɪ] and [ɛ], the high front lax vowel and the mid front lax vowel. It was made more difficult by having only one consultant and not being able to compare among data from multiple speakers. Upon repetition, the consultant was not completely consistent in the pronunciation of these vowels.

## REFERENCES

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Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2014. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 17th edn. Dallas, TX: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com>. (17 September, 2014.)