Tigrinya
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1. Language description

Tigrinya belongs to the family of modern Semitic languages (Voigt, 2009). These languages form the northeastern sub-family of the Afro-Asian languages. Tigrinya is spoken in Eritrea, in the Ethiopian region of Tigray, and in Israel by members of Beta Israel.

In addition to Tigrinya, many other languages and dialects are spoken in Eritrea. Arabic and Tigre are the most common in addition to Tigrinya. However, these are not official languages. In elementary education, the school language is Tigrinya, while secondary schools and universities are taught in English (Pharos, 2017). Because Eritrea was a colony of Italy, words borrowed from Italian appear in Tigrinya. For instance, 'pisa', which comes from the Italian 'pizza'.

A total of about 90 different languages are spoken in Ethiopia. The official language of Ethiopia is Amharic. Tigrinya in Ethiopia therefore has words borrowed from Amharic.

Table 1

Tigrinya consonant system, based on Roos, 2016 and Hetzron, 1997

| | Coronal | | | | | Dorsal | | | |
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Labio velar	Velar	Pharyngeal	Glottal
plosives	p¹ b		t d			kʷ gʷ	k³ g		ʔ
nasal	m		n		ɲ				
trill			r						
fricatives		f (v)²	s z	ʃ ʒ		(xʷ)	(x)	ħ ʕ	h
affricates				tʃ dʒ					
ejectives			t' ts'	tʃ'		kʷ' (xʷ')	k' (x')		
liquid			l						
Semi vowels					j	w			

Notes: The consonants in brackets are allophones.

¹occurs only in words borrowed from Italian.

²occurs only in words borrowed from Italian. Is seen as an allophone of /b/.

³/k/ can be expressed as a fricative /x/ after a vowel. (Roos, 2016) The words to which this is done differ by dialect. (Hetzron, 1997)

Tigrinya has several dialects that differ phonetically, lexically and grammatically. These are roughly divided into Northern (Southern Eritrea and Ethiopia) and Southern (Northern Ethiopia, Tigray province) dialects. UCLA identifies two dialects: Asmara, spoken in Eritrea, and Tigray, spoken in Ethiopia. According to Fitsgerald (2006), Voigt (2009) and Kifle (2011), the differences do not impede mutual understanding. The Speakaboo 'Tigrinya' glossary is based on the dialect spoken in Eritrea.

Syllable structure
Tigrinya has a strict syllable structure of CV and CVC (Buckley, 1994) and has no consonant clusters (Leslau, 1941 & Hetzron, 1997). The minimal word in Tigrinya has the structure CVC or CV-CV (Roos, 2016). In speech, consonant clusters are possible at the beginning, for example in the word /təmali/ ("yesterday"), pronounced as [tmali].

Roos (2016) also mentions that consonants in Tigrinya play a more important role than do vowels. This is in contrast to Dutch, in which vowels are more important and meaning-discriminating within a given word.

Stress

Stress is not determinant for meaning in Tigrinya, and it is often placed on the last syllable (Ullendorff, 1955). Pitch accent is important within Tigrinya but is also irregular and dependent on the context of the sentence. Pitch accent is the emphasis of sounds by pronouncing them in a higher tone. Sentence intonation and rhythm are more important than the stress within individual words (Roos, 2016).

End-sound sharpening
In Tigrinya, the /b/, /d/, and /g/ undergo end-sound sharpening. These sounds are pronounced respectively as [p], [t], and [k].

2. Age of Acquisition of consonants

No information available yet.

3. Common phonological processes

No literature has been found about phonological processes in children. However, phonological variation has been found in interviews with adult subjects. It is important to take this variation into account during the research. If in doubt, ask whether the child's parent/guardian wants to pronounce the target word. By comparing the production of the child with that of the parent, it becomes clear whether it is a phonological process or a variant that belongs to a dialect. Experience shows that interpreters are not always aware of all possible variants.

The transcriptions in the score sheet and the app correspond with the pronunciation of the words in the video. In the first column, we have used brackets to indicate which variation we have found. The consonants in the words remain the same, but vowels can be added to the word. This changes the syllabic structure of the words and so also the position of some consonants. This concerns the following items:

22. w e r (ə) ħ i (moon)

23. ʤ a k e t (i) (jacket)

29. k' e l e b e t (i)

31. b i ʃ k o t (i) (cookie)

32. ħ e r (ə) m a s (elephant)

36. ʔ ə n ḵʷ r o ʕ o b (ə) (frog)

4. Lexical variation

Item 14 (apple) is not only named with /tufaħ/ but also with /mela/, the Italian word for apple.

5. Performance of typically developing children

To date, no research has been done with Tigrinya words in typically developing toddlers from Eritrea.

6. Sources

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