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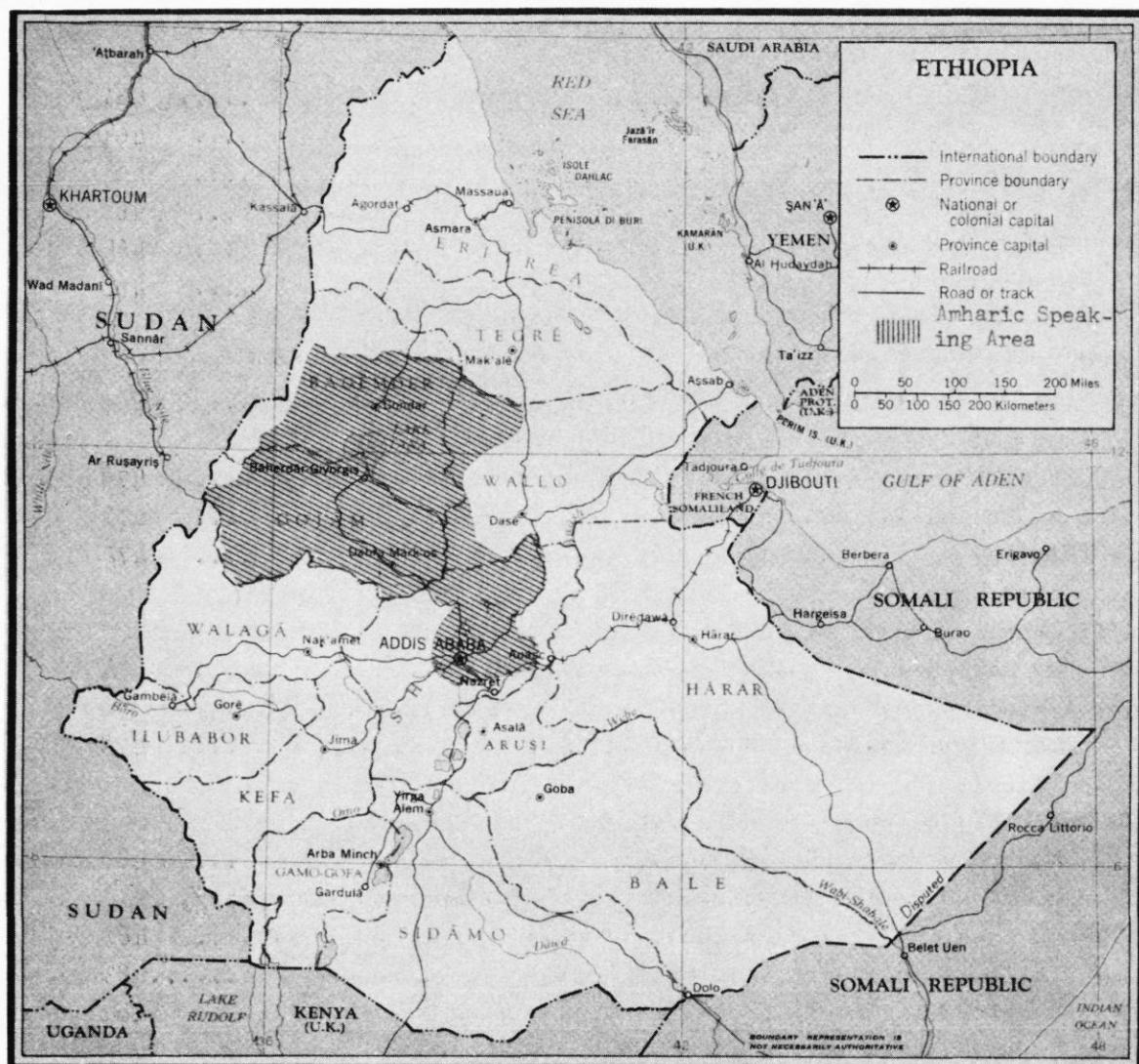
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INTRODUCTION

The Amharic Language

Amharic is the official language of the Ethiopian Empire used in government, in business, in all instruction in government schools and in most newspapers. It is, however, not the only language spoken in Ethiopia. As can be seen from the map on page xv the area where Amharic is spoken as a native tongue is about one sixth of the whole territory of Ethiopia.

Amharic belongs to the Southern Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic (formerly called Hamito-Semitic) family of languages. The number of native speakers of Amharic together with the speakers of the other Semitic languages spoken in Ethiopia (such as Tigrinya, Tigre, Harari, Gurage and others) is less than one half the total population of the Empire. The greatest part of Ethiopia is inhabited by speakers of Cushitic languages (another branch of the Afro-Asiatic family) such as Galla, Agaw, Somali and many others. Since no census has ever been taken in Ethiopia the number of Ethiopians can only be estimated. According to the official data of the Ethiopian government the number of inhabitants of Ethiopia is between 20 and 22 million. It is also difficult to give a reliable estimate of the number of Amharic speakers; it is probably between 5 and 7 million. There is little doubt, however, that due to the constantly growing development of communications systems and the spreading of education Amharic is gaining ground throughout the whole country. It is now the language of greatest prestige and anyone who has had any education is able to speak it, even if it is not his mother tongue. Still others learn it informally as a second language.

This Course:

The following parts may be found in a unit:

Basic Sentences
Classroom Expressions
Structure Sentences
Useful Words
Grammatical Notes

Drills: Substitution
Correlation
Transformation
Model-Transform drills
Questions and Answers
Narrative

Basic Sentences and Questions and Answers are found in each unit. The Narratives begin with the unit 5. The occurrence of other parts may vary.

The Course is divided into two volumes. Volume I - contains units 1 through 50 in transcription. Volume II - units 51-60 in transcription, Introduction to the Amharic Writing System, The Reader (Units 1-60 in Amharic script) and a Glossary (in transcription).

The Reader includes:

- Basic Sentences
- Questions and Answers
- Narratives

Use of This Course

1. 'Basic Sentences', 'Structure Sentences', 'Useful Words'.

The instructor reads the Amharic item by item, repeating each item (a build-up or a sentence) twice for each student. Each member of the class repeats the item immediately after the instructor trying to imitate his (or her) pronunciation.

If in the instructor's opinion the item is mispronounced by the student, the instructor repeats it at normal speed with the student repeating after him (or her) as many times as necessary. After the class hours each student goes over the Basic Sentences by listening to the tape and repeating, doing this until he knows the dialogue by heart.

After the Basic Sentences have been thoroughly memorized the students take part and act out the dialogues. The instructor may take one of the parts the first time or two. This drill is to be continued until any student can take part and go through the dialogue like an actor.

2. Substitution, Correlation and Transformation Drills are to be used in accordance with the instructions given at the beginning of each drill.

3. Model Transform Drills should be drilled in the same way as other Transformation Drills.

4. Questions and Answers.

The questions and answers are to be drilled as specified below, but they should not be considered complete. Any question which is within the limits of the students' grammar and vocabulary can be asked.

Some questions require informational answers some others simply 'yes' or 'no' answers.

Questions requiring informational answers are to be drilled as follows:

The instructor asks each student a question. The student repeats the question and gives an answer. Any answer given by the student is considered correct if it is good Amharic. The answer is corrected by the instructor, if necessary. The student repeats the corrected answer. The instructor then gives the student the answer which is written in the book and the student repeats it as a further drill.

Questions requiring 'yes' or 'no' answers should be drilled in the same way, i.e. the student repeats the question after the instructor and gives him either an affirmative or a negative answer (or both if so requested by the instructor).

5. Narrative

The instructor goes through the sentences (if any) illustrating new vocabulary items, in the same way as he did for Basic Sentences. After the students have thus familiarized themselves with the new words the instructor reads through the whole Narrative at a natural speed. The students listen for comprehension, books closed. The students summarise in English as much as they understood of the Narrative. The instructor reads each sentence again for each student, each of whom repeats after him. Each student translates the sentence he repeated. This drill is continued until the students are thoroughly familiar with the material. The instructor then asks questions listed at the end of each Narrative and the students answer them as completely as possible using words contained in the Narrative. In addition to the questions listed in the book the instructor may ask any question pertinent to the Narrative within the limits of the students' grammar and vocabulary. The students memorize the Narrative by listening to the tape and relate the story to the instructor the next day.

Students must keep in mind that there is no one correct way of speaking Amharic. Due to the poor system of communications in Ethiopia Amharic has developed various local dialects. There is an especially marked difference in pronunciation, in vocabulary, and even in grammar between the northern Gojjami and the southern Showa dialects. The purpose of this Course is to teach the language as it is spoken in the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

Addis Ababa Amharic contains elements of a variety of dialects. The student should have this in mind and should always follow the manner of speech of his instructor even if his (or her) speech varies somewhat from what is indicated in this book.

Symbols Used in This Course

On the English side, parentheses and quotation marks are used together ('....') when a more literal translation is given in addition to the ordinary English equivalent.

Brackets [] are used to indicate words in the English equivalent which do not have an equivalent in the Amharic.

Parentheses () indicate words which are in the Amharic but not in a normal English equivalent. The English side is not necessarily a literal translation but what is ordinarily said in this situation. The use of parentheses and brackets as explained above should make the situation clear in each case.

On the Amharic side, parentheses are used to indicate sounds which are sometimes omitted. Brackets are used to indicate a more formal pronunciation to be used in more deliberate speech or while reading texts written in Amharic characters. Alternate pronunciations of the same word or alternate words are given after a slant line: /.

The accent mark used is / ' /. This indicates the loudest syllable in a word or phrase. Secondary stresses are not marked.

As Amharic has an almost even distribution of stress on each syllable, it is sometimes extremely difficult to detect where the principal stress of a particular word lies. In this Course phrase stress will be marked in the Basic Sentences, but words in the buildups will be left unmarked unless the stress is clearly distinctive.

An arrow / ↑ / is used to indicate sharply rising pitch.

A period / • / is used to indicate the end of a phrase accompanied by falling pitch. It may or may not correspond to an English period.

A comma / , / indicates that the preceding tone is carried on evenly to the comma and that a new pitch contour begins following the comma. The syllables immediately before / , / are slightly lengthened. There may or may not be a break or pause after / , /.

In the Notes slant lines are used to set off Amharic sounds or words within an English text. English letters and words are underlined when used as examples.

Unit 1

Basic Sentences

health	Tena
let him give for me	yisTilliñ
Hello. <u>or</u> Goodbye. (general greeting)	TenáyisTilliñ.
how	indemin
you (polite) spent the night	addero
Good morning. How are you? ('how did you spend the night?').	TenáyisTilliñ, indemin addero.
good, very well	dəhná
God	igziyabher
he may be praised	yımmesgen
thank you ('may God be praised!')	igziyabher yımmesgen
Very well, thank you. How are you?	dəhná, igziyabher yımmesgen, indemin addero.
Amharic	amarinña
you (polite) know	yawKallu
Do you know Amharic?	amarinña yawKallu ↑
yes	áwo/áwon
I know	awKallehu
Yes, I do ('know').	áwo, awKallehu.
no; there is not	yelləm
I don't know	alawKim
No, I don't (know).	yellém, alawKim.
little, small, a little	tinniš
I know a little.	tinniš awKallehu.
what	min
you (polite) said	alu
What did you say?	minalu ↑
nothing	minimm

I did not say alalhum
 I didn't say anything. minimmalalhu. /minimm alahum .

Classroom Expressions

Again! indegəna.
 Repeat it! yidgəmut.
 correct, exact likk
 (he, it) is new
 It's correct. likk new.
 it is not aydəlləm
 It's not correct. likk aydəlləm.
 very, very much bəTəm
 good meʒəc Tiru/Tru
 It's very good. bəTəm Tiru new.
 Let's have a break ('let us rest'). innirəf.

Grammatical NotesNote 1.1 Transcription Used in This Course

This transcription is an attempt to put down systematically on paper the sounds that the instructor will say, or that will be heard on the tapes.

The transcription is based directly on spoken Amharic and is not a transliteration of ordinary Amharic spelling. It is not, strictly speaking, a 'phonetic' transcription. For example, the letter /b/ stands for one sound at the beginning of a phrase or if doubled, and for another sound elsewhere. Since the pronunciation is predictable on the basis of where it occurs, a single letter may be used for both sounds.

The letters and other symbols used are:

Vowels	e u i a e ə o	
Consonants	<u>paired</u> <u>unpaired</u>	
Voiceless	p t k s ſ c	f h '
Glottalized	P T K S C	
Voiced	b d g z ſ j	r l m n ŋ y w

Stress:	Weak (unmarked) Strong
Pitch:	Indicated as contours in conjunction with phrase final juncture: Falling / / Rising / ↑ / Change of Pitch / , /
Juncture:	Close: (no space)
	Open: Space between words
Phrase final:	/ , / / ↑ / / · /

These letters should not be confused with those used for writing English or any other language. Every language has a unique sound system and symbols used to write a language must be defined in terms of that language. However, where the Amharic and English sounds are similar, the same letter is usually used in the transcription as is used in English. This does not mean that these sounds are identical. / l /, for example, is different in English and Amharic, even though the same symbol is used.

The following notes are rough hints on the pronunciation of Amharic. English sounds are given for comparison, or more accurately for contrast, since they are different sounds. Only careful listening and practice can give the student the Amharic sounds. It is also very important to realize the possible diversity of sounds covered by a single symbol, the actual sound being determined by the context.

The Amharic writing system is syllabic: that is to say, each 'letter' represents a consonant followed by a vowel. Since there are seven vowels in Amharic, it follows that there are seven different ways of writing a given consonant, depending on what vowel accompanies it. The writing system will be introduced at a later stage in the course.

In the notes below, the vowel sounds are discussed in the order in which they come in the Amharic syllabary (but the letters are our transcription; they are not letters of the Amharic syllabary).

Note 1.2 Vowels

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Nearest English Sound, Description</u>	<u>Examples</u>
/e/	represents several sounds; the major variants are: 1) usually like <u>a</u> in <u>formula</u> .	bérr 'doorway' féllegé 'he wanted'
	Technically: a lower-mid central unrounded vowel [é]	

- 2) approximately the sound of e
in bet under the following
conditions:

<u>Always</u> after /y/	yé̄t	'where'
	yelləm	'no'
	yəlijlij	'grandchild'
<u>usually</u> after /z/	žəmmərə	'he started'
/ñ/	ageññə	'he found'
/š/	šəmeggələ	'he became old'
/j/	abéjjə	'he performed'
/c/	təməccə	'it became com- fortable'
/č/	laCCə	'he shaved'

Technically: a low-mid front
unrounded vowel [ɛ]

- /u/ a high u sound something like the
oo of boot but without the w glide
found in English and with the lips
rounded from the beginning.

dur	'forest'
bunna	'coffee'

Technically: a high back rounded
vowel [u]

- /i/ something like the ee of beet but
without the /y/ glide of English.

fit	'face'
səmi	'listener'
páris	'Paris'

Technically: a high front un-
rounded vowel [i]

- /a/ like in a in father

abbat	'father'
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Technically: a low central un-
rounded vowel [a]

- /e/ approximately like the English
sound of the first part of the
ai in bait but without the /y/
glide of English.

bet	'house'
məhéd	'to go'
set	'female'
ine	'I'
wəndimme	'my brother'

In making /e/ the center of the tongue is raised almost to the roof of the mouth.

Consonants immediately preceding this vowel may be slightly palatalized, that is, the tongue is close to the position it takes for y, so that the consonants have a slight y off-glide: b_y, s_y, h_y, etc.

Technically: a higher-mid front unrounded vowel [e]

- /i/ may best be compared with a regular pronunciation of the u of just in just a minute.

birr	'dollar'
dibb	'bear'
sim	'name'

Technically: a lower-high central unrounded vowel [ɛ]

In initial position (at the beginning of an utterance) this vowel is voiceless and may be heard as a breathed glide to the following sound.

ibakkiwo	'please'
izziya	'there'
izzih	'here'

- /o/ something like the o of note but short, rounded from the beginning and without the w glide of English after the vowel.

Consonants preceding /o/ are usually labialized, that is, are pronounced with rounded lips, resulting in a slight w off-glide: b_w, p_w, k_w, etc.

mənor	'to live'
ingōcca	'bread'
doro	'chicken'

Technically: a mean-mid back unrounded vowel [ɔ̄]

Vowels in Amharic are generally short. When final or followed by only one consonant they may be longer than when followed by two consonants, or by a long (double) consonant.

Note that after /w/ the following vowel, if normally unrounded, is initially rounded. This is particularly noticeable with /ə/ and /ɪ/.

Examples:

wede	'to	wil	'agreement'
wer	'month'	wiha	'water'
wegen	'sext'	wisT	'inside'

Note 1.3 Consonants

All consonants in Amharic occur short (indicated by a single symbol: r, l, m, etc.) and long (indicated by doubling the symbol: rr, ll, mm, etc.).

The distinction between short (single) and long (doubled) consonants is very important, as it may distinguish otherwise identical words, e.g. /ale/ 'he said', /alle/ 'there is'.

Amharic has twenty-seven consonants which we write with the following symbols:

Plain:	b c d f g h j k l m n ñ p r s š t w y z ž'
Glottalized:	C K P S T

Note 1.3.1.

Most of the plain consonants have near equivalents either in English or in other familiar languages such as French, Italian or Spanish. Hints on pronunciation are given as necessary:

/b/ has two pronunciations: at the beginning of a word, when doubled, or when immediately following /m/ or /n/ it is like English b in bet. Between vowels or finally the air is not completely stopped, so that a fricative sound results, rather than a stop. This is a bilabial spirant (or fricative), comparable to the b in Spanish Habana. Technically [β].

Examples:

bet	'house'	mənber	'pulpit'
abbat	'father'	abəba	'flower'
wember	'chair'	gib	'goal'

/c/ represents a sound like that of ch in church.

/g/ like g in gun.

/h/ has three pronunciations which sound somewhat different to a speaker of English:

- 1) at the beginning or in the middle of the word it approximates the h to him.

- 2) at the end of the word it sounds almost like German ch in nach. Technically a velar spirant [χ].
- 3) at the end of the word followed by the vowel /u/ this sound is like a sharp puff of breath with the lips rounded.

Examples:

hedə	'he went'	hedhu	'I went'
hedh	'you went'	hedaccihu	'you (pl.) went'

/l/ is formed farther forward in the mouth than English l and is very much like French l in elle or Italian l in lingua. The middle of the tongue is closer to the roof of the mouth than it is for English l.

Examples:

alə	'he said'	alle	'there is'
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/ñ/ is like ny sound in English canyon. Technically a palatalized n [ñ] or [ny].

/r/ is rolled or flapped - the tip of the tongue striking one or more times on the gum ridge behind the upper teeth. It is very much like Italian r in caro.

Examples:

nəggərə	'he told'	roman	'pomegranate'
bərrədə	'it was cold'	birr	'dollar'

/š/ approximates the sh sound in English harsh rather than in she. It is close to the French ch in chat.

/t/ is made against the teeth rather than against the ridge back of the teeth as in English. It is otherwise very much like English t except in final position where it is more aspirated (released with a short puff of breath).

/ž/ is like the French l in jour or somewhat like the English s in pleasure.

// is a glottal stop [?], a stoppage of breath which can be heard before each of the words: in English if these words are pronounced slowly and deliberately.

/y/ like y in yes, yeast, etc. Between vowels /y/ is just a kind of trough in between the vowel peaks. Both vowels are said distinctly, e.g. /keyet/ 'where from' /getaye/ 'sir', etc.

/w/ like w in west. Between vowels /w/ is a slight w-glide, e.g. /baKlowoc/ 'mules'. Where the second vowel is an /o/, /w/ stands for the same kind of trough as described above in the case of /y/. The /w/ trough or glide is rounded. Compare the /w/ glide in /awo/ 'yes', /səwoc/ 'people' with the /y/ glide in /mayet/ 'to see' and /iyut/ 'look at it'.

The voiced consonants /b, d, g, z, ū/ are generally devoiced in final position and sound very much like their voiceless counterparts /p, t, k, s, ū/. They are, however, more 'lenis', i.e. pronounced with more relaxed muscles of the mouth.

Note 1.3.2

The glottalized consonant sounds /C K P S T/ are not like anything in English or any other language in Europe. These sounds are formed almost like /c k p s t/ as far as the tongue (or lips in case of /p/) are concerned. But they are 'exploded' not with air from the lungs but rather with the air imprisoned between the vocal cords (which are completely closed) and the tongue (or lips in case of /P/).

Examples:

/C/	Cammere	'he added'
	wiCC	'outside'
/K/	Keyy	'red'
	ruK	'far'
/P/	ityoPiya	'Ethiopia'
	PaPas	'bishop'
/S/	Sehay	'sun'
	gəSS	'page'
/T/	Tiru	'good'
	wist	'inside'

Pronunciation Drills

/ə/

məblat	'to eat'	mayət	'to see'
məsmat	'to listen, hear'	mənəzzərə	'he changed'
məhed	'to go'	aməsəggəne	'he thanked'
bella	'he ate'	asgəddədə	'he forced'
səmma	'he listened'	mōkkərə	'he tried'
ássebə	'he thought'	gəmmətə	'he guessed'
áddərə	'he spent the night'	səbbəkə	'he preached'
masseb	'to think'	məkkərə	'he advised'
madər	'to spend the night'	berr	'doorway'
fərəs	'horse'	wəyzərə	'Mrs.'
hede	'he went'	wəyzərit	'Miss'

mədrəs	'to arrive'	kéddənə	'he covered'
dérreṣe	'he arrived'	wəssədə	'he took'
áyyə	'he saw'	féllege	'he wanted'
wéddədə	'he liked'	néggərə	'he told'
məwdəd	'to like'	áddəgə	'he grew'
təwə	'he left'	laCCə	'he shaved'
lijagərəd	'girl'	Cérreṣe	'he finished'

/u/

ugaden	(place name)	mulu	'full'
u'uta	'a cry for help'	féllegu	'they wanted'
bunna	'coffee'	zuriya	'circle'
búllal	'dove'	gum	'mist'
dúlla	'club, mace'	muširra	'bride'
hulétt	'two'	múkkəra	'trial'
duldum	'dull'	kurat	'pride'
dur	'forest'	dulət	'council of elders'
nuro	'life'	gulbət	'knee'
nug	'black seed'	šukka	'fork'
šum	'official'	šumət	'rank'
lul	'pearl'	šurrab	'sweater'
béllu	'they ate'	dúbba	'pumpkin'
wéssədu	'they took'	yasáyyuñ	'let them show me'
hédu	'they went'	alu	'they said'

/i/

immint	'insignificant'	hid	'go'
ityoPiya	'Ethiopia'	fit	'face'
iyyəsəs	'Jesus'	ingliz	'English'
imam	'Imam'	áddis	'new'
itAliya	'Italy'	weyzerit	'Miss'
isáyyas	'Isaiah'	imbita	'refusal'
íssi	'all right'	səmi	'listener'
anbabi	'reader'	amerikawi	'American'
adragi	'doer'	fəllagi	'one who wants'

/e/

məhed	'to go'	iné	'I'
leba	'thief'	rəse	'myself'
let	'night'	sime	'my name'
metir	'meter'	bi'ire	'my pen'

meda	'field'	birre	'my dollar'
geta	'master'	idme	'age'
bergewoc	'oxen'	igre	'my foot'
idmewoc	'ages'	bete	'my house'
neggadewoc	'merchants'	fite	'my face'
indet	'how'		

/i/

ı̄ssu	'he'	iwinət	'truth'
ı̄sswa	'she'	tinniš	'small'
ınnə̄ssu	'they'	likk	'correct'
innante	'you'	yıldresu	'let them arrive'
ırsas	'pencil'	tiféllig	'let her look for'
izzih	'here'	tiyy	'let her see'
izziya	'there'	yihun	'let it be'
ınnə̄zzih	'these'	dingay	'stone'
yanbibu	'read'	bi'ir	'pen'
iyut	'look'	birr	'dollar'
idme	'age'	iskezziya	'meanwhile'
ımməbet	'lady'	sim	'name'
ımmeyte	'ma'am'	sint	'how much'
ıssi	'O.K.'	dibb	'bear'
icilalləhu	'I can'	dinnic	'potato'
ırswa	'she'	birtukan	'orange'

/o/

mənor	'to live'	ankuwakto	'he, having knocked'
ingocca	'bread'	ayto	'he, having seen'
mangoca	'bakery'	gezto	'he, having bought'
weyzero	'Mrs.'	gebto	'he, having entered'
wəddo	'he, having liked'	šeññito	'he, having accompanied'
belto	'he, having eaten'	dabbo	'bread'
hedo	'he, having gone'	doro	'chicken'