

Tigrinya- Spoken by people from Eritrea and Ethiopia

Notes on the language and tips for teaching ELL students.

1. The following sounds of English are missing in Tigrinya:

[ŋ]: This is the final sound in sing. It is a nasal sound that is made in the back of the throat. It's a common sound in English, and it is usually easy for new speakers to learn and make.

[θ]: This is the unvoiced th sound, the sound in think and thin.

[ð]: This is the voiced th sound, the sound in the and that.

[ɹ]: This is the English r sound. Tigrinya has a trilled r sound. To make the English r, the tongue needs to be a little lower.

[v]: The v sound.

See separate documents on making the th, r, and v sounds.

2. English vowels missing in Tigrinya:

ɪ: This is the short i, the sound in bit and kid.

æ: This is the short a, the sound in bat and cad.

ʊ: This is the sound in put and could.

ɔ: This is the sound in bought and caught.

When helping a student learn a new vowel sound, model the sound and note two things: how far open the mouth is and the shape of the lips. For some vowels, like ʊ, the lips are rounded. To make the ɪ sound (bit), the student can make the e (late) and then bring the jaw closer together until the ɪ is heard. For the æ sound, make the e (late) sound and then open the jaw up a bit farther. For all vowel practice, take some time doing listening activities to help the student hear the difference between vowels.

3. In Tigrinya, vowels are added to consonant clusters (two or three consonants next to each other in a syllable), so a speaker might do the following:

Add an ee sound on the end of a word that ends in a consonant cluster.

Add an uh sound between consonants in a consonant cluster.

4. In English, negation is usually shown with the word “not” placed before the verb. In Tigrinya, negation is shown by attaching a prefix (ay-) and a suffix (-n) to the verb. Some speakers will add the nasal [n] sound after an English verb and not even realize they are doing it.

Kinyarwanda-English translator app (Rwanda, Congo)

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