

## Resources for Teaching Somali English Language Learners in Higher Education

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## Annotated Bibliography

Fennelly, K., & Palasz, N. (2003). English language proficiency of immigrants and refugees in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. *International Migration*, 41(5), 93-125. Retrieved from <http://ebSCOhost.com>

This journal article from *International Migration* highlights a study conducted in 1999-2000 of four immigrant populations in the Minneapolis metropolitan area. *International Migration* is a peer-reviewed, academic journal published since 1961. While this study reported on four distinct ethnic groups, of particular interest are the data on Somali refugees and immigrants, whose population in Minnesota is the largest concentration in the United States. The study is also useful as it focuses on the return to higher education as a strong predictor of English competency and performance. The study provides relevant background data for an instructor of Somali students at the college level, particularly in a city like Columbus, with a comparable Somali student population. While Fennelly and Palasz's study is now almost 20 years old, there have been few similar longitudinal studies focusing on Somali students since this one, so this data can still be valuable. Particularly, the study's findings regarding higher education as a strong predictor of linguistic aptitude also serves as an argument for increased support of Somali students and the development of much-needed resources to enhance their success and retention in higher education.

Hassan, M.S. (2001). *Qaamuuska Magacyada Soomaaliyeed: A Dictionary of Somali Names*. Stockholm, Sweden: Scansom.

This tertiary resource, written by Mohammed Hassan, a native speaker of Somali and a heritage language teacher at the Stockholm Board of Education, is a comprehensive list of Somali given names and names of flora, fauna, and natural phenomena relevant to Somali culture. Such a book could be very useful for a Somali immigrant student learning English, as many Somali-English dictionaries are lexicographically limited in scope. This text could provide an excellent supplement to such a dictionary by providing names of people, animals, plants, or even diseases unique to Somalia, linking Somali immigrant students to their linguistic and cultural heritage. Additionally, such a resource could be useful for a teacher or tutor of Somali English language learners, providing proper spelling and usage of Somali names.

Orwin, M. (1995). *Colloquial Somali*. New York, NY: Routledge.

This language course consists of a 292-page print book, which is supplemented by accompanying compact discs. It represents an in-depth resource for the self-study of the Somali language, focusing on conversational and colloquial features. The course includes specific sections on the phonology and pronunciation of Somali, its tonal aspects, and tables with verb conjugations, lists of pronouns, affixes, and other grammatical topics. The course is written by Martin Orwin, a Senior Lecturer in Somali and Amharic at SOAS University of London. Orwin also has many academic publications on Cushitic languages and is clearly an expert in this field. While useful to any reader attempting to learn Somali, this course could be especially relevant to teachers and tutors of Somali students, as Orwin's text highlights everyday conversation and dialogue, enhancing the ability to

communicate with Somali students. Also, the text could be a useful reference source for Somali students learning English, as most phrases and exercises are reprinted in both Somali and English.

Qoorsheel, M.J. (2007). *English-Somali, Somali-English Dictionary/Ingirisi Soomaali, Soomaali Ingirisi Qaamuus*. London, UK: Simon Wallenberg Press.

Of the few Somali-English/English-Somali dictionaries currently published, this is one of the most comprehensive, at over 430 pages. It also includes a brief introduction to the history, phonology, and grammar of the Somali language. While the lexicon contained in this dictionary is wide-ranging, the format is also somewhat limited; it is merely a list of words and phrases with the corresponding English or Somali equivalent. This tertiary source does not indicate parts of speech, linguistic origin, or pronunciation, so its use is somewhat limited to a Somali learner of English. Also, the size of the dictionary is too large for easy portability. A Somali learner of English would likely opt for a more portable reference source and/or one with more detailed content. However, this dictionary could be a useful reference source in a college writing center or ESL classroom with a significant Somali population.

Saeed, J.I. (1993). *Somali Reference Grammar* (2nd revised ed.). Kensington, MD: Dunwoody Press.

This seminal print text is a comprehensive reference grammar of the Somali language, concentrating particularly on morphology and syntax. It focuses primarily on sentence-level grammar and sentence construction in Somali. While

targeting English speakers attempting to learn Somali, the text also represents an authoritative reference source for Somali students themselves. Given that Somali was an oral language with no written standardization until 1972, when the language acquired an official orthography, print reference sources like this one are both limited and invaluable. Students learning and adapting to the syntax, morphology, and semantics of English need a more-than-passing familiarity and understanding of their native Somali grammar in written form for comparative purposes. Furthermore, the text provides detailed support for native English-speaking instructors or tutors learning the basics of Somali, and thus is relevant to both populations.

Shepard, R. (2008). *Cultural Adaptation of Somali Refugee Youth*. New York, NY: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

This academic, secondary print source is an in-depth study of the cultural transitions of Somali immigrant high schoolers and adults and includes detailed interviews with twelve case studies. The book is written by Raynel Shepard, a teacher with over 30 years' experience working with African immigrant students, and is based on her field work in the Boston area. While the book nominally focuses on cultural adaptation and assimilation, Shepard also explicitly addresses each student's linguistic acquisition of English. Therefore, this study could be very useful to writing teachers and tutors of Somali students in higher education, as it presents real-life examples of English language acquisition. An instructor or tutor of Somali students at the college level will likely encounter

students with similar backgrounds, linguistic issues, and cultural difficulties to the ones outlined in Shepard's case studies.