



SOMALI

A PROFILE

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SOMALI PROFILE

BACKGROUND

Except for a few communities along the southern Somali coast where Swahili (a Bantu language), and Arabic dialects are spoken, Somali nationals speak one of several Somali dialects. Somali belongs to a set of languages called lowland eastern Cushitic spoken by people living in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Eastern Cushitic is one section of the Cushitic language family, which in turn is part of the great Afro-Asiatic stock. It is the fourth main language spoken in Africa.

The most widely used dialect of Somali is Common Somali, a term applied to several suddialects, the speakers of which can understand each other easily. Common Somali is spoken in most of Somalia and in adjacent territories (Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti). Coastal Somali is spoken on the Banaadir Coast. Central Somali is spoken in the interriverine area, chiefly by members of the Rahanwayn clan family.

Facility with language is highly valued in Somali society; the capability of a suitor, a warrior, or a political or religious leader is judged in part by his verbal adroitness.

Somali is a tonal language with four tones which are not usually marked in writing. The tone shave grammatical uses: they indicate number, gender and case.

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ORIGIN OF SOMALI CULTURE

The origin of Somali culture is from Islamic tradition and from their ancestors. If the culture is coming from the Islamic tradition is unchangeable especially when it is related to the faith. The tradition, however, is changeable if it is harmful to the life of person.

PHONOLOGY

Somali uses all but three letters (p,v and z) of the English alphabet. Of the thirty-three sounds, fifteen (b,d,f,g,h,j,k,l,m,n,s,sh,t,w, and y) are very much like their English counterparts.

Somali has seven consonants (c, dh, kh, q, r, x, and glottal stop) that do not match anything in English. The English sounds most likely to present difficulties for Somalis are those represented by the letters c, q, r, and x, since these letters are pronounced quite differently in Somali.

In Somali, the consonants *b, d, dh, g, l, m, n,* and *r* can be doubled to indicate a sound which is pronounced with much more force than its single counterpart. Thus, Somalis often pronounce the doubled consonants in English words such as "bigger," "middle," "merry," "simmer," and "nibble" with more strength than they would be pronounced by a native speaker of English.

Somali has 22 consonant phonemes including at least one at every place of articulations on the IPA chart. It has 20 pure vowel phonemes and 20 diphthongs. They occur in front and back, and long and short pairs

Somali consonant phonemes

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Labio dental</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palato alveolar</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Uvular</u>	<u>Pharyngeal</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	b		t d			ɖ		k g	q		ʔ
<u>Nasal</u>	m			n							
<u>Fricative</u>		f		s	ʃ				x	ħ ʕ	h
<u>Affricate</u>					tʃ						
<u>Trill</u>				r							
<u>Approximant</u>	w						j				
<u>Lateral approximant</u>				l							

/d/ is a voiced retroflex plosive. Some phoneticians say that it has an implosive quality for some speakers. It is sometimes realised as the flap [ɾ] between vowels.

The voiceless stops /t/ and /k/ are always realised as [tʰ], an aspirated dental stop, and [kʰ], an aspirated velar stop, respectively.

The uvular fricative /χ/ is often pronounced as [x], ie a voiceless velar fricative. All words with this phoneme are borrowings from Arabic. They may be "Somalized" by replacing with the stop /g/.

/ʁ/, the voiced pharyngeal fricative, may have creaky voice.

/r/ is often pronounced with breathy voice and may be partially devoiced. Between vowels it may be a single tap.

VOWELS

Somali has 20 pure vowel sounds. There are 5 basic distinctions which all occur in front and back versions. These 10 all occur in long and short pairs, giving 20 in total. There is little change in vowel quality when the vowel is lengthened.

There are 5 diphthongs which also occur in front and back, long and short versions, except for /gi/ which does not appear to occur in the back series.

Somali monophthongs				
	Short front series	Long front series	Short back series	Long back series
Close front unrounded / Near-close near-front unrounded	i	iː	ɪ	ɪː
Close-mid front unrounded / Open-mid front unrounded	e	eː	ɛ	ɛː
Near-open front unrounded / Open back unrounded	æ	æː	a	aː
Open-mid central rounded / Open-mid back rounded	ɔ	ɔː	ɔ	ɔː
Close central rounded / Close back rounded	ʊ	ʊː	u	uː
Somali diphthongs				
First element is short front series	First element is long front series	First element is short back series	First element is long back series	
æi	æːi	aɪ	aɪː	

æt	æi	au	aiu
ei	eai	ɛi	ɛai
gi	gai	ɔi	ɔai
gt	gait	ɔu	

Long vowels (*aa, ee, ii, oo, uu*) are used in Somali and pronounced about twice as long as a single counterpart.

English vowels will present some difficulty to Somalis, since English lacks Somali's one-to-one correspondence between vowel letters and sounds; in English, each letter has more than one sound, and each sound has more than one spelling. Typically, Somalis will pronounce English words the way they would pronounce them in Somali. Thus, *boat* might be pronounced "bow-at" with two syllables, and the word *may* might be pronounced "my."

Somalis may draw out English double vowels, as in *noon* or *been*, giving them the long sound that doubled vowel letters represent in Somali.

www.wikipedia.org

TONES

When needed, the conventions for marking tone on written Somali are as follows:

- acute accent - high tone
- grave accent - low tone
- circumflex - falling tone

Tones on long vowels are marked on the first vowel symbol.

In Somali, the tone system distinguishes grammatical not lexical differences. Differences include singular and plural, masculine and feminine. One example is ínan ("boy") and ínán ("girl"). Although this appears in English to be a lexical difference, in fact it is part of a masculine-feminine pattern which also differentiates words such as daméer ("male donkey") and dameér ("female donkey").

The question of tonality in Somali has been debated for decades. The modern consensus is as follows:

In Somali, the tone-bearing unit is the mora rather than the vowel of the syllable. A long vowel or a diphthong consists of 2 moras and can bear 2 tones. Each mora is defined as being of high or low tone. Only one high tone occurs per word and this must be on the final or penultimate mora. Particles do not have a high tone. (These include prepositions, clitic pronouns for subject and object, impersonal subject pronouns and focus markers.) There are therefore 3 possible "accentual patterns" in word roots.

Phonetically there are 3 tones: high, low and falling. Rules:

1. On a long vowel or diphthong, a sequence of high-low is realised as a falling tone.
2. On a long vowel or diphthong, a sequence of low-high is realised as high-high. (Occasionally it is a rising tone.)

This use of tone may be characterized as pitch accent. It is similar to that in Oromo.

Stress is connected with tone. The high tone has strong stress; the falling tone has less stress and the low tone has no stress.

Tone occurs in Somali, but it is not as complex as in Chinese, in which every word has a special tone pattern. In Somali, tone rarely marks a difference in word meaning. This aspect of Somali is not likely to create a problem for Somalis learning English.

Intonation does not carry grammatical information although it may convey the speaker's attitude or emotion.

THE GRAMMATICAL SYSTEM

Articles-Somali and English are quite different when it comes to *the* and *a*. The definite article in Somali has gender suffixes; like French, the Somali definite article has a masculine and feminine form.

Somalis can have difficulty mastering the English indefinite article (*a/an*) because their own language has no equivalent. In Somali, the concept of indefiniteness is expressed by the noun alone.

Nouns-Somali nouns are more highly inflected than are nouns in English. In English, nouns are inflected only for number that is, they have different forms for singular and plural. In Somali, not only does each noun have number, with eight kinds of plural forms; a noun is also inflected for gender (masculine or feminine) and case (nominative, genitive, absolutive, and vocative).

In Somali, differences in gender, number, or case are marked by grammatical tone:

ínan	'boy'	inán	'girl'	[gender]
díbi	'ox'	dibí	'oxen'	[number]
Múuse	'Moses'	Mu'use	'Hey, Moses'	[vocative case]

The system of case marking is so different between the two languages that mistakes are unavoidable. Typically, a Somali will drop the apostrophe-s possessive in favor of a tone change, e.g., "Mary book", with a rising intonation on the first syllable of "Mary".

Adjectives-In Somali, most adjectives are formed by adding *-an* or *-san* to a verb or noun. Thus, *gaab* 'shortness' becomes *gaaban* 'short', and *qurux* 'beauty' becomes *quruxsan* 'beautiful'. Somalis may coin some interesting English adjectives by a similar process.

Somali adjectives often occur with a short form of the verb *to be* suffixed to them. For example, *yar* 'small' becomes *yaraa* 'he was small'. As a result, Somali speakers of English tend to add *aa* to adjectives. Thus, instead of saying "small", they might say something that sounds like "small-ah". This may cause confusion, particularly among British speakers of English, who may think the speaker is saying "smaller".

Prepositions -English prepositions can cause great difficulty for Somalis. Whereas English has a great variety of prepositions, Somali has only four, and they come before the verb rather than before the noun. Because they are so few, Somali prepositions have a wide range of meanings:

<i>ka</i>	'from, away from, out of' and 'about, concerning'
<i>ku</i>	'in, into, on, at' and 'with, by means of, using'
<i>la</i>	'with, together with, in the company of'
<i>u</i>	'to, towards' and 'for, on behalf of'

For example:

<i>Isaga u sheeg.</i>	Tell it to him.
<i>Isaga ka sheeg.</i>	Tell about him.

<i>Isaga ku sheeg.</i>	Call him (a name).
<i>Qori ka samee!</i>	Make it of wood!
<i>Guriga ku samee!</i>	Do it at home!
<i>Isaga la samee!</i>	Do it with him!

Verbs-Verbs usually come last in Somali sentences. As a result, Somali speakers of English may tend to put the verb at the end of a sentence.

Somali lacks a passive voice. Instead of the passive, Somali uses the indefinite pronoun *la* 'someone', as in *Goormaa la dhisey?* "When was it built?" (literally, "When someone built?"). Using English passives correctly can be a major challenge for Somali students of English.

Somali has a present habitual and a present progressive tense, but they are not used in the same contexts in which these tenses are used in English. Somali uses the present progressive tense where the simple present tense would be used in English, and this feature of Somali may carry over into the English speech of Somalis. Somali speakers of English often make use of the present progressive tense ("I am going to work every day") where English speakers would use the simple present ("I go to work every day").

The Importance of Proverbs

Somali has a rich tradition of proverbs, passed on from previous generations and embellished by individual speakers. Proverbs play a very important role in everyday speech.

Aqoon la'aani waa iftiin la'aan.
Being without knowledge is to be without light.

Ilko wada jir bey wax ku gooyaan.
Unity is power. (literally, "Together the teeth can cut.")

Intaadan falin ka fiirso.
Look before you leap. (literally, "Think before you do.")

Nabar doogi ma haro.
An old wound will not go away.

This is one area where Somalis find English impoverished. Some will go to great effort to learn English sayings and use them far too frequently; others may translate literally from the Somali and hope for the best

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DRESS IN SOMALI TRADITION

In Islamic tradition, the form of dress is important for Somali women and men. For example, Women should wear HIJAB which is a dress that covers the body except for the hands and face. Men should also wear clothes that cover the body between waist and knees according to the tradition. They should both start dressing this way when they are between seven and nine years old. Somali parents teach their kids how to dress before they reach the age of maturity or puberty. With these traditions in mind, Somali families have the following expectations from schools:

- a) That the schools should separate the girls from the boys when they have mixed or body-touching activities such as swimming class.
- b) That the schools should allow the Somali girls to dress in uniforms that reflect their culture if the school has uniforms.
- c) That the schools should give options to the students, especially girls, about any activity related to dress, for example, going to the school gym with sports dress. This should not be obligatory for the girls who do not want to participate.
- d) That the schools should consult with students' parents should any conflict related to dress come up.

Men can wear two lengths of white cotton wrapped around them as a skirt and shawl or they wear 'macaawiiis, a brightly coloured cloth, similar to an Indonesian sarong. With this they wear a western style shirt or shawl and may cover their heads with 'benadiry kufia', a Somali cap.

FOOD IN SOMALI TRADITION

Like the dress, food is important in Somali culture and religion. Because of the Islamic tradition, it is prohibited to eat any food related to pork and alcohol.

For Somalis locations and livelihood influence diet, but on the whole, the Somali diet is low in calorie intake and high in protein consumption. Milk, ghee (clarified butter), and meat all must be slaughtered in a special way so that it is halaal clean and pure. In England kosher foods met Muslims dietary requirements. Other food such as sorghum, corn rice, tea, sugar, vegetables, and dates are consumed.

PRAYERS

Like other Muslims, Somalis pray five times every day wherever they are. Back home, all schools have a place for prayer in order to help the students continue their education without interruption of their daily school program. Most Somali students and their parents have questions about where their children can pray and how the schools can meet the needs of their students related to the prayer. In terms of the prayer, the following are the expectations of the Somali families:

- a) Their children should be allowed to go to the Friday prayer or will have group—Friday prayer in schools.
- b) The schools should have resources or basic information about prayer in Islam, school-year prayer schedule and how it is different from other faith's prayers.
- c) The schools should take seriously any advice about the prayer coming from students and their

parents. Because of the culture clash about the time of the prayer and the place, students will not concentrate on their studies. Instead, they think about solving the problems of the new culture.

The students should make ablution before they pray. Ablution is to wash the face, arms, and legs in the bathroom. The student may take offense when a Somali student uses the sink to wash his face and legs. The Solution is that Somali students should have their ablution at home, before they come to the school. If the ablution is invalidated during the school hours, the school should give a place for ablution to Somali students or explain to the other students why Somalis are doing this. In addition to that, students should clean their private part with water before they go to the process of the ablution. It is the student's responsibilities to clean up the bathroom floor before and after the ablution. Finally, the schools and families should have agreements and guidelines about the prayer issues. Then, the agreed guidelines will help reduce the cultural clashes in the school site.

RAMADAN IS SOMALI TRADITION

Ramadan is the most important month of Muslim people around the world. It is the month that was revealed Holy Quran. Therefore, all Muslims fast a whole month to follow the guidance of the Quran. In the second chapter of the Quran, Allah (God) prescribed fasting for Ramadan to all Muslims. Ramadan is the ninth month of Islamic calendar based on the lunar system. This month is observed as sacred with fasting practiced daily from dawn to sunset. No eating and drinking during those hours. Muslims fast twenty nine or thirty days depends on the moon sight. Like all Muslims, Somali people fast and celebrate this holy month full of inspiration. Somalis prepare many things before this month starts. For example, they beautify their homes with flowers and different lights. They also buy different foods such as dates for breakfast. Not only adults but also children who have reached puberty practice fasting in this month. Unlike the adults, the children who have not reached puberty can fast half day if they can't finish their full day. However, once puberty starts the young adult should fast all month same as adults do from dawn to sun set. 'Afur' is Somali term for breakfast and it is an important time that all family members sit and eat together to break the fast. This happens at sunset every day of Ramadan. Children are very happy because they eat with their family and play around with other kids. Kids like to play outside with other kids while their families are breaking the fast. Somalis eat special food at breakfast time such as date, Bur and Sambusi, which is Somali food. After the breakfast, people go to the mosque or prayer place for 'Tarawih'. Tarawih is the prayer that takes place every night of Ramadan after the breakfast. The Tarawih prayer contains at least eleven rakat (bowing down for worship) which also could be physical exercise after the big feast. Tarawih prayer isn't obligatory but it is recommended. All family members can participate this Tarawih gathering regardless of their ages, genders. There is also Suhur food, which is the food that Muslims eat between midnight and close to dawn. Suhur is another important time to eat food in order to fast next morning. Back home, in Somalia, there is a system helps Somalis wake up and eat their Suhur. This Islamic announcement system called Adan, which is the same like calling for prayer. In addition to that, In Somalia, Somalis use drum to wake up people. Volunteers of the village do all those announcements. In the England, however, Somalis use alarm clock for Suhur time. Some families call each other by telephone for Suhur time. Then, all members of the family wake up and eat together again. At Suhur time, they usually eat big meal such as rice or corn. Suhur may take one to two hours to finish eating and cleaning up. Suhur is also important for kids in order to keep them strong while they are in -school during the day. Therefore, the school system, especially food service department should know all this in order to know how much food they serve to their students during the month of Ramadan. This fasting will not affect the student's daily activities except the first two days. In Somalia, all Somali students were going to schools while they were fasting and they were doing fine.

SOMALI MAIN TRADITIONAL HOLIDAYS

At the end of Ramadan, Somalis celebrate the first holiday. They come together at a big place where they can hold a prayer and big festival. This normally happens the next morning after the last day of Ramadan. This big holiday is expected on 29th or 30th of January. It depends on the moon sight again. It is one of the biggest holidays for Muslims. Somalis take a day off from their jobs and schools for Id celebration. It is for three days of eating and drinking all types of traditional foods. These days, every member of the families should wear new and beautiful cloth and feel happy for their completion of Ramadan. Families and friends bring different types of gifts and visit each other. They say to each other " Id Mubarak " which means have a happy and blessing holiday. Parents bring their kids to children's place and buy toys for them. During these days, even poor people will be happy and wear new and beautiful cloth. During the month of Ramadan each family member should pay Fitri which is an amount of £5 to the poor families. So, poor families can also have happy holiday after Ramadan

The second holiday is 10th day of the last month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Somalis have a big feast in these holidays. The Somali students do not go to schools these days because they are special days for them. School should be aware of these days in order to help Somali students have happy holidays.

The festival of fire falls on July 27 or 28 and marks the beginning of the Somali solar year. Although Somalis, like all Muslims, follow the lunar year, they use the solar year for the timing of crop production and livestock husbandry. At the festival of fire, people build bonfires, splash water, and, in some communities perform stick fights and dances. This festival, called *Neeroosh* or *Dab-shid*, is probably a remnant of fire and sun worship dating back to Persian influences. Another popular festival is the *Robdoon*. Among the Raxanweyn, religious leaders read from Islamic texts, sprinkle holy water, and call for rain while young people may dance

TRADITIONAL GREETINGS

Every culture has its own way of greeting. Like other Muslims who practice Islam, men don't shake a woman's hand for greeting except if they are spouses. The Somali women don't shake men's hands either. Therefore, some students and their parents may have difficulties when they meet English who don't know this tradition. They can't explain this matter because of language barriers. Therefore, they prefer not to come to school meetings.

Again, this culture clash could be avoided if each cultural group educate other group in order to have platform that can meet both cultures in positive way.

PETS & SOMALIS

In Islamic tradition, Muslims are prohibited to touch the Saliva of dog. Once the person's hand touches the saliva of dog, he or she should wash her/his hand seven times before they pray. Although one can touch the body of dog, Somalis do not even like to be close to dogs as custom. Somali people may escape from dogs in order to protect their ablution for prayer otherwise it is invalidated. They avoid dogs as much as possible.

It is also important that Somali's are not expose to pig as this animal is considered dirty.

<http://ww2.saturn.stpaul.k12.mn.us>

BASIC SOMALI VOCABULARY

airplane	<i>dayuurad</i>	meat	<i>hibil</i>
automobile	<i>baabuur</i>	medicine	<i>daawo</i>
cold	<i>qabow</i>	milk	<i>caano</i>
danger	<i>khatar,</i> <i>halis</i>	month	<i>bil</i>
daughter [also: girl]	<i>gabar,</i> <i>inan</i>	mother	<i>hooyo</i>
day	<i>maalin</i>	road, street	<i>addo</i>
drink	<i>cab</i>	ship	<i>markab</i>
eat	<i>cun</i>	son [also: boy]	<i>wiil, inan</i>
father	<i>aabbe</i>	vegetables	<i>khudaar</i>
food	<i>cunto</i>	water	<i>biyo</i>
friend	<i>saaxiib</i>	when?	<i>goorma?</i>
fruit	<i>miro</i>	where?	<i>xaggee?</i>
fuel	<i>shidaal</i>	why?	<i>maxaa?</i>
hot	<i>kulul</i>		

BASIC SOMALI EXPRESSIONS

<i>Ma nabad baa?</i>	Hello. [literally, "Is it peace?" standard greeting]
<i>Waa nabad.</i>	Hello. [literally, "It is peace." in response]
<i>Subax wanaagsan.</i>	Good morning.
<i>Maalin wanaagsan.</i>	Good day.
<i>Galab wanaagsan.</i>	Good afternoon
<i>Habeen wanaagsan.</i>	Good evening.
<i>Iska warran?</i>	How are you? [literally, "Tell about yourself."]
<i>Magacaa?</i>	What is your name?
<i>Yuusuf baa la i yiraahdaa.</i>	My name is Joseph

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