



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

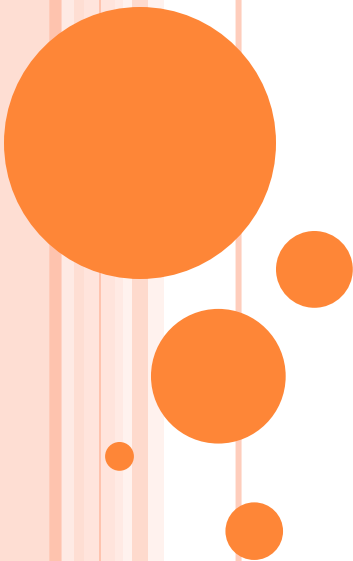
M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

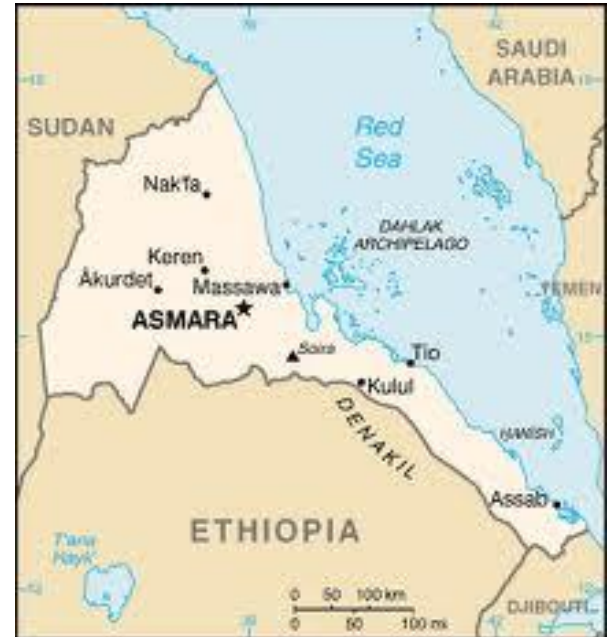
Language Group: Kunama
Author: Patricia Liguori

Program Contact Person: Nancy Cloud (ncloud@ric.edu)

KUNAMA



Patricia Liguori
TESL 539
Spring 2011



KUNAMA PEOPLE



- Estimated population 60,000 – 100,000 <http://www.bartamaha.com/?p=3601>
- Live in Eritrea, near Ethiopia border
- 1994 Eritrea gains independence from Ethiopia
 - Fighting over Kunama land has led many of them to become refugees, not welcome in either country
- Roughly 40% of children attend school, most are done by 3rd grade
- 20% of the population is literate in Kunama



KUNAMA LANGUAGE

- Only 100,000 speakers
- First written down by Swedish Missionaries in the late 19th century.
 - Roman-alphabet based
- Converted to Tigrigna symbols in the mid 20th century.
- No single agreed upon way to write the language
- Few non-Kunama speak this language



PHONOLOGY

Kunama Vowels : a e i o u

Kunama Consonants : b d f g h j k l m n r

*r – only in middle of word, never beginning

Kunama Combined Consonants :

ch, gn, ng, ngk, nn, sh

English Consonants not found in Kunama:

p, v, s, z

c – replaced with k

w – replaced with u

y – replaced with i



LEARNERS MAY HAVE TROUBLE WITH...

- Spelling

- Our alphabet contains letters theirs does not, however a majority of the same sounds. This may lead a learner into a struggle with incorporating letters into words he/she already knows.



ACCENTUATION/INTONATION

Words and phrases can vary in meaning depending on the accent and intonation being used.

The previously described accents are newly adapted forms of writing Kunama

As most of the population is non-literate, these symbols are not universally used.

Intonation combines with accent in order to determine the meaning of words/phrases.



ACCENTUATION / INTONATION EXAMPLES

Kunama:

ta

/ ta

- ta

/ ta

^ ta

' ta

^ ta

English:

death/to

the death ..

dog

the dog

food

the dog

to put in/into



ACCENTUATION/INTONATION CONT.

oina	oina	let me pull
oina	-oina	after / because of that
oina	oi ^ na	alive / live
oina	oi ' na	that
oina	' oina	that one there

-, ', and ^ imply different levels of pitch

Note how the level of pitch combines with the accented syllable to determine the meaning



LEARNERS MAY HAVE TROUBLE WITH...

○ Vocabulary Development

- Learners may feel that the level of English vocabulary needed for communication is daunting. Though it is most likely the same amount, it may seem like an overabundance of words and leave the learner feeling weary before they begin.

○ Pragmatics

- Much of the English language comes from our verbal delivery. Kunama's may have a hard time with things like sarcasm and subtle hints in the English language, as their inflections are used to change the vocabulary of the sentence, not the subtle hint being implied by it.



GRAMMAR

- Verbs – instead of pronouns, verbs are conjugated through the use of prefixes
 - Kosa = to be/exist
 - ‘nakoske I am
 - ‘nakoske you are
 - ‘koske he/she/it is
 - ‘kakoske we two are
- Simple present and past tense are the same
- Infinitive verbs always end in “a”
- “ke” is considered the normal suffix for all verbs
- Due to the lack of personal pronouns, Kunama uses inclusive and exclusive verbs



LEARNERS MAY HAVE TROUBLE WITH...

○ Articles and Pronouns

- These are often not independently expressed in Kunama. Incorporating this new pattern and habit of speech may prove difficult for the Kunama

○ Noun/Verb Agreement

- The structure of English noun/verb agreement is something not found in Kunama. This will take very explicit instruction and constant attention before learners will develop this habit.



NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Information given from my Kunama Student:
 - Kunama use their hands constantly while communicating
 - Pointing and use of the thumb, index, and middle finger is frequent
 - Personal space is a bit closer than that of American's, but not what we would consider “uncomfortable”



NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Research indicates that:
 - Customary greeting is a right-handed handshake, perhaps hugs or kisses between good friends
 - Conversations begin with questions about family, health, and work before getting to the direct point.
 - Religion, politics, and war should not be discussed unless among good friends.
 - Comfortable Distance = less than arms length
 - Contact while talking is acceptable between people of the same gender, but not cross gender.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Internet Sites:

- Bender, L. M. (1996). Kunama. *Languages of the world*, pp. 27-30. Retrieved from [http://www.kwedekind.de/Eingang1/PdfFiles/1996_Kunama - Review of Bender.pdf](http://www.kwedekind.de/Eingang1/PdfFiles/1996_Kunama_-_Review_of_Bender.pdf)
- COR Center Refugee Backgrounder (April 2007). Cultural Orientation Resource Center. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/co/pdf/files/backgrounder_kunama.pdf
- Kunama-Agara. (June 2009). Retrieved from <http://kunama-agara.com>.
- Kunama, B. (2010). The grammar of the Kunama language. Retrieved from: <http://www.baden-kunama.com/language-THE%20GRAMMAR%20OF%20THE%20KUNAMA%20LANGUAGE.html>
- Landers, M., & Grossman, L. (n.d.) Kunama. *Culture Crossing: A community built guide to cross-cultural etiquette and understanding*. Retrieved from http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=9&CID=64

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Images:

Somali breaking news and video community. (2012). Eritrea flag [Image], Retrieved March 18, 2011, from: <http://www.bartamaha.com/?p=3601>

Maps:

Luventicus Academy of Sciences. (2012). Map of Eritrea – Asmara, Africa [Map], Retrieved from: <http://www.luventicus.org/maps/africa/eritrea.html>

US Department of State (2011). Geographic map [Map], Retrieved from: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm>



M.Ed. in TESL Program
Nancy Cloud, Director
Educational Studies Department
Rhode Island College, HBS 206 #5
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
Phone (401) 456-8789
Fax (401) 456-8284
ncloud@ric.edu

The M.Ed. in TESL Program at Rhode Island College
is Nationally Recognized by TESOL and NCATE



REACH
INSPIRE
CONNECT