

# **Sociolinguistic Survey Report of the Argobba Language of Ethiopia**

**Written by: Zelealem Leyew and Ralph Siebert**

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## **1. Argobba, the People and the Language**

Zealelem Leyew

### **1.1. The People**

The Argobba people are Moslems, and they inhabit the fragmented areas along Rift Valley in settlements such as Yimlawo, Gusa, Shonke, Berket, Keramba, Mellajillo, Metehara. According to Leslau (1959:251), there also were Argobba people around Harar, but their language had already shifted to Oromo at the time his article was written. As far as the recent census is concerned the Argobba people numbered around 40,000. By occupation, most of the Argobba people are traders; some of them are farmers.

### **1.2. The Language**

According to Bender (1976:29), Argobba is a dialect of Amharic. Other linguists, however, such as Leslau, have considered it the closest relative of Amharic, not a dialect. So, one area of concern for linguists would obviously be to determine the status of Argobba in relation to Amharic. Argobba has been considered “dead”—and as a result, linguistic research on Argobba as a separate “language” has been very scarce, compared with the amount of research on other Semitic languages of Ethiopia.

In early November 1994, a survey team, including Dr. M. Brenzinger, R. Siebert, and myself, visited a town called Shewa-Robit where Argobba people were said to live in large numbers. And in fact we found that hundreds of Argobba people live in Shewa-Robit and the surrounding small rural villages. Some of them say they speak Argobba very well; others say they only speak a little; others say that they do not speak any Argobba at all. In general, we found that the majority of the Argobba citizens of this area do not actually speak Argobba.

They speak Amharic instead, and this is their native language. So in Shewa-Robit and the surrounding area, Amharic is predominant over Argobba, while we were told that in the area of Shonke, Oromo predominates over Argobba.

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<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this report was published as Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia (S.L.L.E.) Report 22, November/December 1994. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Summer Institute of Linguistics.

When I listened to Argobba people of Shewa-Robit and the surrounding villages as they spoke their own “language”, it seemed to me that they spoke Amharic—but in a different fashion.

In other words, a person who knows Amharic will understand what Argobba people are speaking about—i.e., the two languages are “mutually intelligible”.

Argobba people of Shewa-Robit and the surrounding areas speak Amharic as their L1, and some of the younger people acquire a “broken” Argobba from the elderly people. The elderly people themselves are not very confident about their proficiency in Argobba. Some of them remarked that they very often “mix” Argobba and Amharic. They also said that Amharic predominates over Argobba and that, as a result, they were not able to fully use and maintain Argobba.

Argobba people of Shewa-Robit and the surrounding villages use their language, even though it may not be “pure”, whenever they are together in groups, and when they intend to identify themselves as distinct from the rest. In all other situations, they use Amharic, even among family members. It is also worth mentioning here that people of the Shewa-Robit area are not usually aware of a language called “Argobba” which is supposed to be different from Amharic. They are aware of the fact that there are Moslems called “Argobba”—but they hardly regard Argobba as a distinct language. On the other hand, every person of this area is aware of Amharic, Oromo, and Afar as languages spoken in and around Shewa-Robit.

As far as the knowledge of other languages is concerned, during our short survey to this area, we only found very few Argobba individuals who spoke Afar, and there seems to be no tendency for Argobba people to shift to Afar (even though such a shift might be expected, given the similar religious background). The reason is, perhaps, that the number of Afar people in the Shewa-Robit area is not very high, and contacts between these two groups are infrequent, given the fact that they differ not only linguistically, but also culturally. As a language for an Argobba to “shift to”, Afar is not as important as Amharic or Oromo.

As I mentioned, earlier, all Argobba people of Shewa-Robit and the surrounding rural villages always recommend Shonke, a settlement nearly 150 kms NW from Shewa-Robit (60 or 70 kms by car, the rest on foot). Shonke in southern Wollo is said to be inhabited by “original” Argobbas who speak a

“pure” Argobba. On the other hand, we have also heard that in Shonke there is close language contact between Argobba and Oromo. As a result, there is a situation where “language shift” occurs from Argobba to Oromo.

We did not visit Shonke on this survey trip, but we were successful in finding three people from Shonke who now have moved to Shewa-Robit and a small village about 5 kms outside Shewa-Robit.

The oldest of these three people (a man of about seventy years of age) is a speaker of Amharic and Argobba, and he is equally perfect in Oromo. His nephew (about forty-five years) and his daughter (about thirty) only speak Amharic and Argobba. These two have moved to this area about ten years ago, but they have maintained contacts with their relatives in Shonke, and there are frequent visits both ways.

### **1.2.1. Questions to be addressed**

In this paper, I shall raise three linguistically important issues, and I shall attempt to add some recent insights to the information which has been provided in previous publications. The questions are:

- Is Argobba a “dead” language?
- How similar is Argobba to Amharic?
- Is Argobba a dialect of Amharic or an independent language?

In order to answer the third question, I think one first has to raise another theoretical issue:

- How do we determine the status of a “dialect” vs. a “language”?

or, in other words:

- How can we make a clear cut distinction between the dialect of a certain language and a separate language?

According to Hudson (1980:35), if speakers of two languages can understand each other, then the varieties concerned are instances of the same language; otherwise they are not.

However, this will raise another question, i.e.:

- How do we determine “mutual intelligibility”? Does “mutual intelligibility” mean that the general concepts of the other speaker are understood? Or does it mean *everything* the other speaker says is understood?

Another problem with the criterion of “mutual intelligibility” is, according to Crystal (1987:25), that dialects of the same language are not always “mutually intelligible” in their spoken form. Hudson (quoting Matthews, 1980:37) even says that no real distinction can be drawn between a “language” and a “dialect”. We shall return to this issue after the data have been presented.

### 1.2.2. Phonology

The Argobba consonant phonemes are more or less the same as those of Amharic except for the velar fricative *x* which is common in the former, but not in the latter.

#### 1.2.2.1. Consonants

	t		k	ʔ
b	d		g	
	tʼ		kʼ	
f	s	ʃ	<u>x</u>	h
	z	ʒ		
		tʃ		
		dʒ		
		tʃʼ		
m	n	ɲ		
	l			
	r			
w		j		

### 1.2.2.2. Vowels

Argobba, like Amharic, has the following seven vowel phonemes:

i	ɪ	u
e	ä	o
	a	

### 1.2.3. Lexical Comparisons: A Word List

The following word list, in addition to the usual survey word list, was taken from informants at Shewa-Robit. Note: In the transcription of geminated consonants, the entire symbol is written twice (e.g., ʃ / ʃʃ or tʃ / tʃtʃ or tʃ' / tʃ'tʃ').

Gloss	Amharic	Argobba
<i>acacia</i>	gɪrar	ant'erfa
<i>accused</i>	kässäsä	käsäsäj
<i>animal</i>	ɪnsɪsa	duda
<i>antelope</i>	dɪkula	dɪkula
<i>ape</i>	t'ot'a	t'ot'ɪʃa
<i>ate</i>	bälla	ɪɭʔa
<i>aunt</i>	akɪst	awoʒaʒe
<i>back</i>	dʒerβa	gɪdʒo
<i>bad</i>	mät'fo	xosa
<i>bald</i>	mälat'a	lämat'a
<i>bamboo</i>	k'ɪrk'ɪha	k'ɪrk'ɪa
<i>banana</i>	muz	muz
<i>bark</i>	lɪt'	lɪxɪt'
<i>barley</i> (sorghum)	maʃɪlla	maʃɪla
<i>beans</i>	bak'ela	bäk'ela
<i>beard</i>	t'im	t'im
<i>beautiful</i>	t'ɪru	t'ɪru
<i>bed</i>	alga	alga
<i>been</i>	nɪβ	nɪw
<i>belly</i>	hod [kärs]	xärs



<i>between</i>	mähal	guft
<i>big</i>	tıllık'	laxim
<i>big bird</i>	amora	amora
<i>bird</i>	wäf	of
<i>black</i>	t'ıkur	t'äk'wara
<i>blade</i>	mılatʃ'	fälʔa
<i>blanket</i>	bırdlıʃs	bırdlıʃs
<i>blind</i>	ajnä sıwır	ajnä bäsir
<i>blood</i>	däm	däm
<i>bone</i>	at'ınt	xat'ım
<i>bottle</i>	t'ärmus	t'ärmus
<i>bought</i>	gäzza	ʃirraj
<i>box</i>	sat'ın	sat'ın
<i>branch</i>	k'ırıntʃ'af	fint'e
<i>bread</i>	dabbo	dabo
<i>breast</i>	t'ut	t'ıw
<i>brother</i>	wändım	ıxije
<i>brought</i>	amät't'a	amät'aj
<i>brown</i>	buni	bun
<i>bullet</i>	t'ıjt	t'ıjt
<i>buttocks</i>	k'it'	fägara
<i>cabbage</i>	gommän	gomän
<i>carrot</i>	karot	sır
<i>cat</i>	dımmät	adure (Or.)
<i>chair</i>	wämbär	ombär
<i>chameleon</i>	ısıst	garära
<i>changed</i>	läwwot'ä	leʔewot'
<i>cheek</i>	guntʃ'	guntʃ'e
<i>chief</i>	ʃum	ʃum
<i>cliff</i>	gädäl	gäʃäla
<i>cloth</i>	lıʃs	säro
<i>coffee</i>	bunna	bunn
<i>cough</i>	t'ıdʒdʒa	t'aŋgi
<i>counted</i>	k'ot't'ärä	k'ot'äräj
<i>cousin</i>	jakıst-lıdʒ	jewaʒaʒe

<i>(of A)</i>		lɪdʒ
<i>cousin</i>	jagot-lɪdʒ	jeamuʒaʒe
<i>(of U)</i>		lɪdʒ
<i>cow</i>	lam	lam
<i>crocodile</i>	azo	azo
<i>dark</i>	tʃ'älläma	tʃ'eläma
<i>date</i>	k'än	k'enɪʔ
<i>deaf</i>	däŋk'oro	däŋk'oro
<i>dish</i>	sahın	saxın
<i>dog</i>	wɪʃʃa	wɛʃʔa
<i>donkey</i>	ahıjja	xansiʔa
<i>door</i>	mäzgıja	mäsara
<i>dove</i>	ırgıʃ [wänäse]	wänäse
<i>drank</i>	t'ät't'a	ʃetʃ
<i>dress</i>	k'ämis	k'emis
<i>ear</i>	dʒoro	ızın
<i>earth</i>	mıdır	mıdır
<i>eucalyptus</i>	bahır zaf	baxır zaf
<i>tree</i>		
<i>eye</i>	ajın	ʔjin
<i>face</i>	fit	fıtıje
<i>far</i>	ruk'	gärr
<i>farm</i>	ırʃa	xars
<i>fat</i>	wäfram	amud
<i>father</i>	abbat	aba
<i>fell</i>	wäddäk'ä	ıddäk'
<i>female</i>	set	mıʃtʃa
<i>fence</i>	at'ır	xat'ır
<i>finger</i>	t'at	t'awt
<i>fire</i>	ısat	ısat
<i>fish</i>	asa	asa
<i>flood</i>	gorf	gorf
<i>flower</i>	aʃäʃa	aʃäʃa
<i>foolish</i>	moŋɲ	moŋɲ
<i>foot</i>	ıgır	äʃgır

<i>forehead</i>	gɪmbar	gɪmbar
<i>forest</i>	dänn	xätäf
<i>found</i>	agäɲä	raxäw
<i>fox</i>	k'äßäro	ɪndʒedelo
<i>fruit</i>	fɪre	fɪre
<i>generous</i>	tʃ[g]är	gär
<i>ginger</i>	zɪndʒibɪl	dʒɪndʒibɪl
<i>goat</i>	fɪjjäl	t'aj
<i>gold</i>	wärk'	wärk'
<i>grand m(f)</i>	ajät	mɪxat
<i>grand s(d)</i>	jälɪdʒɪdʒ	asuma
<i>grass</i>	sar	sɪʔɪr
<i>greedy</i>	sɪssɪtam	säsätu
<i>green</i>	arängwa-de	arängwa-de
<i>guinea fowl</i>	dʒɪgra	dʒɪgra
<i>gun</i>	t'ämändʒa	t'ämändʒa
<i>hair</i>	s'ägur	dänana
<i>harvest</i>	atʃ'tʃ'edä	adädäj
<i>heart</i>	lɪbb	lɪb
<i>hen</i>	doro	doro
<i>honey</i>	mar	dus
<i>horn</i>	k'änd	k'ɪrara
<i>horse</i>	färäs	färäs
<i>house</i>	bet	bet
<i>husband</i>	bal	bɪʔɪl
<i>hut</i>	godʒdʒo	godʒdʒo
<i>hyena</i>	dʒɪß	dʒɪw
<i>ice</i>	bärädo	bärädo
<i>injera</i>	ɪndʒera	gandʒɪr
<i>insulted</i>	säddäßä	sädäwäj
<i>iron</i>	bɪrät	bɪrät
<i>jumped</i>	zällälä	zäläl
<i>knee</i>	gulßät	gulot
<i>leaf</i>	kɪt'äl	xɪt'al
<i>learned</i>	tämarä	tämar

<i>left</i>	g[ɪ]ra	guraʔa
<i>lemon</i>	lomi	lemone
<i>light (vs. dark)</i>	bɪrhan	zaɲ
<i>lion</i>	ambäsa	xambäsa
<i>lip</i>	känfär	mɪntʃ'ɪr
<i>long</i>	gɪnd	gind
<i>lung</i>	samba	xäfa
<i>m(f)-in-law</i>	amatʃ'	xamatʃ
<i>male</i>	wond	wärʃa
<i>man</i>	säw	säw
<i>married</i>	agäbba	aʔat
<i>mattress</i>	fɪraʃ	fɪraʃ
<i>meat</i>	sɪga	dʒaw
<i>monkey</i>	dʒɪndʒero [zɪndʒero]	dʒandʒero
<i>mother</i>	ɪnnat	tatte
<i>mountain</i>	tärara [gora]	gora
<i>mouth</i>	af	af
<i>mule</i>	bäk'lo	bäk'lo
<i>nail</i>	t'ɪfɪr	tʃ'ɪfur
<i>narrow</i>	t'äbaʃ	t'abaw
<i>near</i>	k'ɪrʃ	k'urʃa
<i>neck</i>	aɲgät	xaɲgät
<i>nephew (of B)</i>	jäwondɪm-lɪdʒ	jexɪje lɪdʒ
<i>nephew (of S)</i>	jähɪt-lɪdʒ	?xɪtɪje lɪdʒ
<i>new</i>	addis	hagɪs
<i>night</i>	let	jet
<i>nose</i>	afɪntʃ'a	tɪnɪt
<i>oak</i>	warka	k'iltu
<i>old (ps.)</i>	ʃɪmagille	mɪʃura
<i>onion</i>	ʃɪnkurt	ʃɪnkurt
<i>orange</i>	bɪrtukan	bɪrtukan
<i>ox</i>	bäre	bäʔra
<i>paper</i>	bärbäre	bärbäre
<i>peas</i>	atär	atär

<i>physician</i>	hakim	xakim
<i>pig</i>	asama	bodʒeme
<i>pigeon</i>	k'ok'	k'ok'ha
<i>pillow</i>	tıras	māntıre-ʔeʃa
<i>plant</i>	tākıl	tākal
<i>ploughed</i>	arräsä	haräs
<i>poor</i>	dıha	dıxa
<i>pot</i>	tofa	tofa
<i>potato</i>	dınnıtʃ	dınnıtʃ
<i>pulled</i>	gottätä	gotätaj
<i>punish</i>	k'ät't'a	k'ät'aj
<i>pushed</i>	gäffa	gäfaʔj
<i>rabbit</i>	t'ıntʃel	hilu
<i>radish</i>	k'äjj sır	k'äjix sır
<i>rain</i>	zınaʃ	zinawıtʃ
<i>read (he)</i>	anäbbäʃä	anäbaʃäj
<i>red</i>	k'äjj	k'äj
<i>rich</i>	habtam	dämam
<i>right</i>	k'äɲɲ	k'eɲ
<i>river</i>	wänz	zär
<i>road</i>	mänggäd	xıjıma
<i>roof</i>	t'ara	t'ara
<i>root</i>	sır	sır
<i>ran</i>	rot'ä	ırawät'
<i>sack</i>	keʃa	keʃa
<i>sand</i>	aʃewa	aʃewa
<i>sat</i>	täk'ämmät'ä	ık'emät
<i>saw</i>	ajjä	xaje
<i>school</i>	tımırbet	atımırtbet
<i>sea</i>	bahır	bıxır
<i>seed</i>	zär	zär
<i>seedling</i>	fıl	fıl
<i>servant</i>	aʃkär	aʃkär
<i>sew</i>	zärıra	zärʔaj
<i>sheep</i>	bäg	xara

<i>shoe</i>	ʈʂ'amma	ʈʂ'amma
<i>short</i>	atʂ'tʂ'ɪr	hatʂ'ɪr
<i>sickle</i>	matʂ'id	mäk'äd
<i>sickness</i>	hɪmäm	mɪt't'
<i>silver</i>	bɪrr	burɪʈʂi
<i>sister</i>	ɪhɪt	hɪtɪje
<i>skin</i>	k'oda	oda
<i>slave</i>	barja	ɪzäbo
<i>small</i>	tinnɪʂ	aŋgulu
<i>smell</i>	ʂɪtta	ʂɪtta
<i>snake</i>	ɪʂaʂ	wärrö
<i>soil</i>	afär	afär
<i>sold</i>	ʂet'ä	asʔamaj
<i>soldier</i>	wätaddär	wätadär
<i>son</i>	lɪdʒ	lɪdʒ
<i>(daughter)</i>		
<i>sorghum</i>	gäʂs	gäws
<i>spear</i>	t'or	xärʂ
<i>step-</i>	ɪndzera-	ɪndzera
<i>father</i>	abbat	abaw
<i>step-</i>	ɪndzera-	ɪndzera
<i>mother</i>	ɪnnat	tatew
<i>step-S(D)</i>	ɪndzera-	ɪndzera lɪdʒ
	lɪdʒ	
<i>stick</i>	bɪtɪr	bart
<i>stone</i>	dɪŋgaj	gɪndʒela
<i>student</i>	tämari	tämari
<i>sugar</i>	ʂɪŋkor	ʂɪkwar
<i>cane</i>	agäda	ageda
<i>tall</i>	rädʒdʒim	gɪdär
<i>taught</i>	astämarä	astämaraj
<i>teacher</i>	astämari	astämari
<i>teff</i>	t'ef	t'ef
<i>thief</i>	leʂa	leʂa
<i>thin</i>	k'ätʂ'tʂ'ɪn	k'etʂ'in
<i>tin</i>	k'ork'oro	k'ork'oro

<i>tomato</i>	timatim	tɪmatɪm
<i>tongue</i>	mɪlas	arat
<i>tooth</i>	t'ɪrs	sɪn
<i>towel</i>	fot'a	mɪxɪdare
<i>trader</i>	näggade	nägade
<i>tree</i>	zaf	zaf
<i>trousers</i>	surri	suri
<i>ugly</i>	ask'äjjami	ask'äjami
<i>uncle</i>	aggot	ammo
<i>wall</i>	gɪdgɪdda	gɪdgɪda
<i>washed</i>	at't'äßä	xät'äw
<i>water</i>	wɪha	ɪxwa
<i>wedding</i>	särg	dɪxɪr
<i>went</i>	hedä	xäjd
<i>white</i>	natʃ'tʃ'	zaxi
<i>wide</i>	säffi	raxi
<i>wife</i>	mist	mɪʃt
<i>wing</i>	kɪŋf	kɪŋf
<i>wise</i>	awak'i	xawaki
<i>wood</i>	ɪntʃ'et	xɪntʃ'ɪt
<i>wore</i>	läbbäsä	läwäs
<i>worked</i>	särä	gaʔaraj
<i>worm</i>	tɪl	buk'eta
<i>wrote</i>	s'afä	t'aʔaf
<i>yellow</i>	bitʃ'a	bɪtʃ'a
<i>young</i>	wät't'at	wät't'at

### 1.2.3.1. Conclusions from the Word List

There are 250 words in the above word list. Among these words, 188 are cognates. If this word list is considered representative, Argobba and Amharic have about 75 percent of their vocabulary in common.

### 1.2.4. Morphology and Syntax

#### 1.2.4.1. Nominal Morphology

##### 1.2.4.1.1. Pronouns

The Argobba independent personal pronouns can be presented as follows.

	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
1	an	inna
2m	ank	ankum
f	antʃ	-
3m	iwwat	illäβ
f	ijjat	

The 1s., 1pl., 2ms., and 2fs. seem to be very similar with Amharic, even though there are minor differences such as the following:

	<b>Argobba</b>	<b>Amharic</b>
1	an	ine
2m	ank	antä
2f	antʃ	antʃ'i
1p	inna	ijpa

On the other hand, the 2pl., 3ms., 3fs., and 3pl. are different from Amharic. A historical and comparative investigation of other Semitic languages would be needed to explain the divergence.

##### 1.2.4.1.2. Possessive pronouns

The possessive pronouns of Argobba are shown as follows:

	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
1	ijo	inna
2m	iwwat	axum
2f	aʃ	-
3m	iwat	illäβ
3f	ijjat	



Compare the above Argobba pronouns with the following Amharic data.

	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
1	jene	jeɲɲa
2m	jeantä	jennantä
2f	jeantʃi	-
3m	jersu	jennärsu
3f	jerswa	

Except for the 1pl. form, all other possessive pronouns are strikingly different. This would deserve a study.

#### 1.2.4.1.3. Person markers

The person marker inflections of Argobba follow. (The verb ʃätʃtʃ ‘drink’, perfect, serves as example.)

	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
1	ʃetʃtʃ-exu	ʃetʃtʃ-ena
2m	ʃetʃtʃ-ex	ʃetʃtʃ-exum
2f	ietʃtʃ-eʃ	-
3m	ʃetʃtʃ-	ʃetʃtʃ-ej
3f	ʃetʃtʃ-etʃtʃ	-

Compare this with the Amharic person and aspect inflections which are presented as follows:

	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
1	-ahu	-an
2m	-ah	-atʃtʃihu
2f	-aʃ	-
3m	-a	-u
3f	-atʃtʃ	-

Except for the plural forms of the second and third person, others are quite similar.

## 1.2.4.1.4. Object

Like the Subject, the Direct Object (DO) is also marked in the verb, in a pattern similar to that of Amharic.

an iwwaton irädexw - aj  
*I him helped - obj (3ms)*  
*I helped him.*

an ijaton irädexw - aja  
*I her helped - obj (3fs)*  
*I helped her.*

an aʃin irädexu - ʃ  
*I you(f) helped - obj (2fs)*  
*I helped you.*

an axon irädexu - x  
*I you(m) helped - obj (2ms)*  
*I helped you.*

an illämin irädexw - ajim  
*I them helped - obj (3pl)*  
*I helped them.*

an axumin irädeku - xum  
*I you(pl) helped - obj (2pl)*  
*I helped you.*

## 1.2.4.1.5. Number

Plural is marked by the morpheme -atʃtʃ and -tʃtʃ, which is very similar to the Amharic -otʃtʃ -wotʃtʃ.

<b>Gloss</b>	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
<i>gun</i>	sira	sirä-tʃtʃ
<i>goat</i>	taji	taji-tʃtʃ
<i>ox</i>	bara	bara-tʃtʃ
<i>house</i>	bet	bet-atʃtʃ
<i>man</i>	säw	säw-atʃtʃ
<i>woman</i>	niʃtʃa	niʃtʃa-tʃtʃ

#### 1.2.4.1.6. Gender

Gender is either marked by the independent words wärbär ‘male’ and näʃtʃa ‘female’ or by the post-positional inflections of verbs. Compare the Argobba -itʃtʃi and -iti with the Amharic -u and -itu or -wa that stand for definiteness of masculine and feminine genders.

wärbär adur-itʃtʃi zälläl-[zero]  
*male cat-def.(m) jump-3ms*  
*The male cat jumped.*

niʃtʃa adur - iti zälläl - ätʃtʃ  
*female cat-def.(f.) jump - 3fs*  
*The female cat jumped.*

lidʒ - itʃtʃi itʃʼawat - [zero]  
*child-def.(m) play - 3ms*  
*The boy played.*

lidʒ - iti itʃʼawot - ätʃtʃ  
*child-def.(f) play - 3fs*  
*The girl played.*

säw - itʃtʃi mätʼtʼ - [zero]  
*man-def.(m) come - 3ms*  
*The man came.*

niʃtʃ - iti mätʼtʼ - ätʃtʃ  
*woman-def.(f) come - 3fs*  
*The woman came.*

The masculine and feminine gender is not only marked in the N (in line with definite marker morphemes) but also in verbs. In verbs (perfect aspect), the Argobba empty morpheme [zero] and -ätʃtʃ stand for the masculine and feminine gender, whereas in Amharic this is -ä and -ätʃtʃ.

#### 1.2.4.2. Verbal Morphology

##### 1.2.4.2.1. Passive

In Argobba, passivization is marked by the morpheme /i-/ preceding the verb stem and then by geminating the first root consonant of the verb.

iwwat hentʃ	<i>he caught</i>
iwwat ihhentʃ	<i>he was caught</i>
iwwat amäsagen	<i>he praised</i>
iwwat ammäsagen	<i>he was praised</i>
iwwat gäddäl	<i>he killed</i>
iwwat iggedäl	<i>he was killed</i>
iwwat märrät'	<i>he elected</i>
iwwat immerät'	<i>he was elected</i>
iwwat särräk'	<i>he stole</i>
iwwat isseräk'	<i>he was stolen</i>

##### 1.2.4.2.2 Causative

Like in Amharic, the Argobba causative marker is **as-** which is prefixed to the verb stem.

an t'äraxexwaj	<i>I called</i>
an as-t'äraxexwaj	<i>I caused to call</i>
an as-t'äraxebiläw	<i>I will cause to call</i>
an gäddβlexu	<i>I killed</i>
an as-gäddälexu	<i>I caused to kill</i>
an as-gäddälexubiläw	<i>I will cause to kill</i>

##### 1.2.4.2.3. Case: Accusative

The accusative marker in Argobba is **-n** like in Amharic.

an iwwat-on irädexwaj  
*I he-acc. helped*  
*I helped him.*

an ijat-on irädexwaja  
*I she-acc. helped*  
*I helped her.*

an illam-in irädexwajim  
*I they-acc. helped*  
*I helped them.*

an af-in irädexwuf  
*I you(f)-acc. helped*  
*I helped you.*

an ax-on irädexux  
*I you(m)-acc. helped*  
*I helped you.*

an ankum-in irädekuxum  
*I you(pl.)-acc. helped*  
*I helped you.*

#### 1.2.4.2.4. Conditional

The conditional clause marker in Argobba is the morpheme **inti-**, a morpheme whose form differs from the Amharic **kä-**.

inti - sämejexu	<i>If I hear</i>
inti - sämejeſ	<i>If you(f) hear</i>
inti - sämejeh	<i>If you(m) hear</i>
inti - säma	<i>If he hears</i>
inti - sämatſtſ	<i>If she hears</i>
inti - sämena	<i>If we hear</i>
inti - säma'aj	<i>If they hear</i>

## 1.2.4.2.5. Gerundive

In Argobba, gerundive is shown as follows. Compare it with the Amharic data.

Argobba	Amharic	Gloss
bäj-ʔe	bälli-tʃe	<i>I having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔeʃ	bäl-täʃ	<i>You(f) having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔex	bäl-täh	<i>You(m) having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔo	bäl-to	<i>He having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔa	bäl-ta	<i>She having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔanä	bäl-tän	<i>We having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔäxum	bäl-tatʃtʃihu	<i>You(pl) having eaten</i>
bäj-ʔam	bäl-täw	<i>They having eaten</i>

## 1.2.4.2.6. Jussive

The Jussive has a pattern which is similar to that of Amharic, as illustrated in the following lists.

Argobba	Amharic	Gloss
li-xid	li-hid	<i>Let me go!</i>
inni-xid	inni-hid	<i>Let us go!</i>
ji-xid	ji-hid	<i>Let him go!</i>
ti-xid	ti-hid	<i>Let her go!</i>
ji-xid-u	ji-hid-u	<i>Let them go!</i>

## 1.2.4.2.7. Imperative

As we can see in the following data, the Argobba imperative form is similar to that of Amharic.

Argobba	Amharic	Gloss
tä-k'ämätʃtʃ	tä-k'mätʃ'tʃ'	<i>You(f) sit!</i>
tä-k'ämat'	tä-k'ämmät'	<i>You(m) sit!</i>
tä-k'ämät'u	t'ä-k'ämmät'u	<i>You(pl) sit!</i>

#### 1.2.4.2.8. Reciprocity

Reciprocity in Argobba is marked by reduplication of the penultimate radical of the verb root (which is similar to Amharic), and by prefixation of **i-** along with gemination of the first radical of the verb root (which is exactly the same as the passive construction).

**illäm i-mmet-et- aj**  
*They res-hit-res- 3pl*  
*They hit each other.*

**innam i-mmet-et- ajna**  
*We res-hit-res- 1pl*  
*We hit each other.*

**ankum i-mmit-et- ajhum**  
*You res-hit-res- 2pl*  
*You hit each other.*

#### 1.2.5.2.9. Infinitive

The morpheme **mä-** is the infinitive marker both in Argobba and in Amharic, as shown in the following data.

Gloss	Infinitive
to eat	m-lä?
to drink	mä-ʃtʃit
to gallop	ma-baläʃ
to come	mäpnäit
to sleep	mäpnä'it
to cut	mä-k'umät'

#### 1.2.4.2.10. Negation

The discontinuous morpheme **a-m** indicates negation in Argobba. Compare this with Amharic **al-m**.

Aff. vs. Neg.  
**an iläjäw** vs. **an a-bilexu-m**  
*I ate* vs. *I didn't eat*

iwwat illa vs. iwwat a-bildä?a-m  
*He ate vs. He didn't eat*

ijjat la?atʃtʃ vs. ijjat abilä?ätʃtʃ-im  
*She ate vs. She didn't eat*

illäm ilä?ajj vs. illäm ablä?aj-im  
*They ate vs. They didn't eat*

### 1.2.4.3. Word Order

Argobba, like Amharic, has an S-O-V word order.

illäm kasan käsäsaj  
*they Kasa accused*  
*They accused Kasa.*

iwwat ixutʃtʃim ko?aj  
*he water pour*  
*He poured water.*

For more morphological and syntactic information, also cf. the following Argobba sentences.

a - kasa bü?ar -itʃtʃ i - geɲɲ  
*of - kasa ox - pl passive-found*  
*Kassa's ox is found.*

äwwat-ina iwwat mist mät't'-aj  
*he-and his wife came-3pl*  
*He and his wife came.*

iwwat bä-mäkina mät't'  
*he by-car came*  
*He came by car.*

iwwat bä-mäkina timaje mät't'  
*he by-car yesterday came*  
*He came by car yesterday.*



In the first sentence, the prefix **a-** stands for possessive genitive like the **jä-** in Amharic.

In the second sentence, we find **-ina** as a conjunction, which is identical to the Amharic morpheme. The preposition **bä-** in Argobba is the same as in Amharic both in form and position as shown in the third and fourth sentences. In the fourth sentence, we also see that the Argobba time adverbials occur before the verb, which is also true for Amharic.

Cf. also the following Argobba data.

an ä-tʔät' säräw intä-gäßja ʃeräxew  
*I of-cotton cloth from-market bought*  
*I bought a cotton cloth from the market.*

an dimma ä-t'it' säräw intä-gäßja serixew  
*I good of-cotton cloth from-market bought*  
*I bought a good cotton cloth from the market.*

anxand dimma ä-t'it' säräw intä-gäßja ʃerixew  
*I one good of-cotton cloth from-market bought*  
*I bought one good cotton cloth from the market.*

In the first sentence the “source” genitive marker is **ä-** as in **ä-t'it'** ‘of cotton’ which modifies the N, **säräw** ‘cloth’.

In the second sentence, the adjective **dimma** ‘good’ appears before the modified NP, **ä-t'it' säräw** ‘of cotton cloth’.

In the third sentence, the quantifier **and** ‘one’ occurs before the NP, **dimma ä-t'it' säräw** ‘good cotton cloth’.

In both configurations or structures, Argobba and Amharic are very similar.

At last, the question words of Argobba shall be considered

maxtʃ'itʃtʃ-in ma käfät-äj  
*door-acc. who opened-obj*  
*Who opened the door?*

maxtʃʼitiʃtʃ-in tet näj  
*door-acc. where is*  
*Where is the door?*

maxtʃʼitiʃtʃ etga i-kefät  
*door when passive-opened*  
*When was the door opened?*

amanäj maxtʃʼita i-kefät  
*whose door passive-opened*  
*Whose door was opened?*

It is obvious from the above representative examples that Argobba question words are similar to those of Amharic, both in form and distribution.

### 1.3. Conclusions

The data which were presented above are of limited scope, and this short presentation does not allow for strong conclusions. However, while keeping in mind that the survey data may be representative of only a limited area (they were gathered in one of the seven villages of the southern Argobba area), I should like to forward the following answers to the three questions I raised in the introductory part.

Argobba is very closely related to Amharic. The phonological similarity is about 95%. Their lexical similarity is about 75% (Leslau even gives the figure of 84%, 1970:13). And, above all: the two languages are about 85% similar in their morphology which is believed to be more resistant to change than their phonology or lexicon. Syntactically, too, the two languages were seen to be more or less identical.

For this reason, I suggest that Argobba and Amharic are dialects of one another, not independent languages.

If, however, Argobba is regarded as a language, then it is a language whose present status neither is “dead” nor healthily “alive”—but a “language” on the verge of extinction.

As a final point, I recommend that further data should be elicited in addition to the data collected on the present survey. Such data should be collected on trips to different “Argobba” speaking areas, especially Shonke, so that on the

basis of fresh comprehensive data the actual status of Argobba can be identified with more confidence. Is Argobba in fact a “dialect”, and is it on the way to “extinction”?

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## **2. Argobba, Sociolinguistic Information and a Word List**

Ralph Siebert

### **2.1. Sociolinguistic Information**

This S.L.L.E. report presents findings from a short survey trip (November 7–8, 1994) to the area of Shewa-Robit in the Northern Shewa Administrative Region. The trip was undertaken by Dr. Matthias Brenzinger from Cologne University, Zelealem Leyew from the Institute of Language Studies (I.L.S.) at Addis Ababa University, and Ralph Siebert from the I.E.S. at S.A.U.

The main aim of the trip was to evaluate the language use of the Argobba people.

Our working hypothesis was this: The Argobba people slowly but surely abandon their mother tongue (or “dialect”) in favor of Amharic which is the closest linguistic relative. In other words: we assumed that a shift of “dialects” had already taken place, and that only fractions of the Argobba society still spoke Argobba regularly.

Our instruments of research were: (a) sociolinguistic questionnaires, (b) oral communication, and (c) a 320-item word list.

In addition, Zelealem Leyew was also interested in collecting grammatical and morphological data, some of which are included with this report.

We were mainly looking for informants from the Shewa-Robit area, since this is said to be the main area of the Argobba people. After we had followed a track not far from Goze (a village very close to Shewa-Robit), and as we were taking a road to the north, we met a group of Argobba men who were harvesting maize. Two of them were willing to act as informants.

Zelealem Leyew started to take an Argobba word list, but after having transcribed approximately thirty words he broke off, because he had the impression that he was only given Amharic words (but with affixes such as **-ni**). Zelealem’s interpretation was that his informant, aware of only supplying Amharic words, artificially attempted to maintain something like a “specific Argobba feature” by shaping the words in this particular way.

The respondent then informed us that a different variety of Argobba was spoken in Shonke. He said the Shonke variety of Argobba was so “pure” that Argobba people in Shewa-Robit were not able to comprehend it.

Shonke is located in the Kemise Woreda District, near the river Bork’anna. Kemise is a different administrative region. Since we had no supporting letters for this area, and there was no opportunity to supply these, we were not able to visit there.

We then found another informant in Meriye (a village approximately 5 kms east of Shewa-Robit), a man who was born in Shonke but had moved to Shewa-Robit fifteen years ago. While I took the Shonke word list, other Argobba people sat close by, and as they listened to us they commented that they did not understand the Argobba speaker who was supplying the word list (cf. the S.L.L.E. 320-item word list, attached at the end of this report).

In the same environment, I also administered a sociolinguistic questionnaire, and the following paragraphs summarize the answers which were given.

The respondent’s first language is Shonke Argobba, but he says he also speaks Amharic and Oromo. His wife speaks a little Afar besides Shewa-Robit Argobba. His children and children living close by also speak fluent Ahewa-Robit Argobba although they develop this only after they have learned Amharic. So Amharic is the language they learn first, even before they start to go to school. The informant says he knows how to read Amharic (“especially when written with a typewriter”), and he says he also writes Arabic.

In his family (parents, wife, siblings, and children) the respondent says he uses Shewa-Robit Argobba. But with his friends, with the administrators of the village or the district, at work, or in the clinic—in all of these situations he uses Amharic. On the local or big market he uses Oromo in addition to Amharic. The respondent says he uses Shewa-Robit Argobba when dreaming, counting, or being angry. But his prayers at home he says in Shonke Argobba, while those who know Arabic use Arabic for their private prayers. In the mosque of Shonke, only Shonke Argobba is used, while in the mosque of Shewa-Robit Amharic is spoken.

The informant says he would not object if young Argobba people from Shewa-Robit would marry non-Argobba people, which happens often anyway. In Shonke, however, this kind of marriage would be impossible. An

Argobba man who would take a non-Argobba wife to Shonke might face rejection there.

To teach Arabic as a subject at school would be preferred in Shonke and in Shewa-Robit.

Villages in the Shonke area where Shewa-Robit Argobba is spoken are the following: Abdelager, Akiager, Goze, Hudad, Kilegirma, K'imbibit, Lench'u-ager, Meriye, T'eyo, T'ak'war, Ts'akolu, and Zehonka.

There is only one more village in the Shonke area where Shonke Argobba is spoken: T'olaha. About sixty to seventy families live in T'olaha, while about 120 families live in Shonke itself. A person who wants to learn Shonke Argobba should live in Shonke, and a person who wants to learn Shewa-Robit Argobba should live in Goze.

The informant was convinced that Shonke Argobba would continue to be spoken in the future despite the fact that children now learn other languages. The Argobba variety spoken in and around Shewa-Robit, so our informant claimed, would be extinct in the future, and one reason for this was that there was no Shewa-Robit Argobba program on the radio.

The best language for producing books and newspapers for the Shonke area would be Arabic, or else Amharic. These two languages were thought to be the best languages for this purpose. Nevertheless, the informant said he would be interested in attending literacy classes, if there were such classes, and that he would also send his children there. He said he would appreciate seeing something published in Shewa-Robit Argobba, and would be willing to pay more than 3 Ethiopian Birr (approx. 0.50 US\$) to buy books written in Shewa-Robit Argobba.

The informant (whose personal interests include farming, agriculture, and development of water supplies) told us that in the past he had made some attempts to write his own language (Shewa-Robit Argobba), using the Arabic script.

Concerning the Shonke Argobba variety, he told us that the same variety of Argobba was also spoken in Hararghe. He said that the people of Shonke were pastoralists, and that they had their own style of building houses. One particularly interesting piece of information was that the Shonke people do not like to send their children to school. The reason is that they want to prevent them

from being influenced by the non-Moslem world. We were told that for the same reason they do not go to court.

The Shonke Argobba people generally feel that their group is a prestigious group. It is said that this is the reason why they tend to look down on non-Shonke Argobba people.

## 2.2. S.L.L.E. 320-Item Word List

Date: November 8, 1994 Place: Shewa-Robit

English Gloss	Amharic	Argobba
<i>all</i>	hul:um	'mulum
<i>and</i>	-n:a	'na:ʔa
<i>animal</i>	ɪnsɪsa	du'da:
<i>ant</i>	gundan	gun'dan
<i>arrow</i>	k'äst	k'est
<i>ashes</i>	amäd	'haməd
<i>ask</i>	t'äj:äk'ä	t'ɛ'jek'ɛ
<i>at</i>	bä-, wädä	be'təm:a
<i>axe</i>	mät'räbija	
<i>back N</i>	dʒärba	ʔu'jo:
<i>bad</i>	mät'fo	'mɛt'fo
<i>banana</i>	muz	mu:z
<i>bark V</i>	tʃ'ohä	'kɛl:ah
<i>bark N</i>	k'ɪrfit	k'ɪr'fit
<i>basket</i>	k'ɪrtʃ'at	'k'ɪrtʃ'a:t
<i>bat</i>	jälelit wäf	aja'tɔʔuf
<i>bathe</i>	tat':äbä	tə'hətau
<i>bear V</i>	wäl:ädätʃ	'ʔɪl:ɛdɛtʃ
<i>beard</i>	t'im	t'i:m
<i>beehive</i>	k'äfo	k'e'fo
<i>belly</i>	hod	xars
<i>big</i>	tɪl:ɪk'	la'hɪam
<i>bird</i>	wäf	ʔo:'f
<i>bite V</i>	näk:äsä	'nekes

<i>black</i>	t'ik'ur	t'a'k <sup>w</sup> a:ra
<i>blood</i>	däm	däm
<i>blow V</i>	näfa	'nef:ε
<i>bone</i>	at'int	?a't'int
<i>bow N</i>	k'äst	k'est
<i>breast</i>	t'ut	t'ə <sup>u</sup>
<i>bridge</i>	dɪldɪ	'dildɪ
<i>brother</i>	wəndɪm	?ə:h
<i>brown</i>	bun:am:a	'bun:a
<i>buffalo</i>	goʃ	go:ʃ
<i>burn</i>	tək'at':ələ	tə'k'at'el
<i>bush</i>	k'ut':k <sup>w</sup> at'o	k'ut'k <sup>w</sup> a:t'o
<i>buttocks</i>	k'it'	k'i:t'
<i>buy</i>	gəz:a	'ʃer:a
<i>canoe</i>	dʒəlba	
<i>cat</i>	dɪm:ət	?a'dur:e
<i>chicken</i>	doro	'do:ro
<i>chief</i>	ʃum, alək'a	ʃum
<i>child</i>	lɪdʒ	lɪdʒ
<i>chin</i>	agətʃ'	'?agetʃ
<i>claw</i>	t'ɪfɪr	tʃ'u'fər
<i>clay</i>	ʃək'la	'ʃexla
<i>clothing</i>	lɪbs	lɪbs
<i>cloud</i>	dəm:əna	'dona
<i>cold A</i>	k'əzk'az:a	k'ez'k'aza
<i>cold N</i>	bɪrd	'?atʃeh
<i>come</i>	mət':a	met'
<i>cook</i>	abəs:ələ	?a'βesələtʃ
<i>cough V</i>	salə	?ə'hələbal
<i>count</i>	k <sup>w</sup> ot':ərə	'k <sup>w</sup> ot'er
<i>cow</i>	lam	lam
<i>crocodile</i>	azo	'?a:zo
<i>crooked</i>	t'əmama	t'ε'ma:ma
<i>cup</i>	kub:aj:a	ku'b:aja
<i>cut</i>	k'or:ət'ə	'gɔm:etε



<i>dance V</i>	tʃʰəf:əɾə	ʰtʃʰɛf:ɛɾɛ
<i>dew</i>	tʰeza	ʰtʰɛɾɛb
<i>die</i>	motə	ʰmote
<i>dig</i>	kʷʷof:ɔɾə	kʷʷof:ɛɾɛ
<i>dirty</i>	kʰoʃaʃa	kʰoʰʃa:ʃa
<i>dog</i>	wɨʃ:a	ʰwəʃa
<i>donkey</i>	ahɨj:a	haʰsija
<i>door</i>	bər:	ʰtar:a
<i>down</i>	wədə tatʃ	ʰwɛɾɛda
<i>drink V</i>	tʰətʰ:a	ʃɛ:tʃ
<i>drum N</i>	kʰəbɛɾo	ʰkɛbɛɾo
<i>dry A</i>	dɨrkʰ	ʰdɛɾɛkʰ
<i>dull</i>	dɔnəz	demʰdam:a
<i>dust</i>	aw:ara	ʔaʰw:ara
<i>ear</i>	dʒoro	ʰɪze
<i>earth</i>	mɔɾet	ʰmədɨr
<i>eat</i>	bəl:a	ʰɛl:a
<i>egg</i>	ɨnkʰulal	kəʰlaləfu
<i>eight</i>	sɨm:ɨnt	səʰmɨnt
<i>elbow</i>	kɨrn	
<i>empty</i>	bado	ʔɨmʰbɨrtu
<i>enter</i>	gəb:a	we:
<i>exit V</i>	wətʰ:a	ʔə:t
<i>eye</i>	aʰn	ʔɛ:n
<i>eyebrow</i>	ʃɨfaʃɨft	ʃɨʰfa:n
<i>fall V</i>	wəd:əkʰə	ʔəʰdɛk
<i>farm N</i>	ɨrʃa	ʰha:rs
<i>fat N</i>	mora	ʰhəb:au
<i>father</i>	ab:at	ʔau
<i>fear N</i>	fɨrhat	ʰfɨrhat
<i>feather</i>	laba	ʰlaba
<i>fence</i>	atʰɨr	ʰhatʰɨr
<i>few</i>	tʰkʰit	ʰɔŋgɨl:a
<i>fight V</i>	tɔwag:a	tɔʰha:g
<i>fingernail</i>	tʰɨfɨr	tʰɨʰfɨr

<i>fire</i>	ɪsat	ʔɪ'sat
<i>fish</i>	asa	'ʔa:sa
<i>fishnet</i>	jəasa mərəb	ʔasa- 'gu:mo
<i>five</i>	am:ɪst	ha'mɪst
<i>flower</i>	aβəβa	'ʔaβɛβa
<i>fly N</i>	zɪmb	
<i>fly N</i>	bər:a	'bɛr:ɛr
<i>fool</i>	mɔɲ:	mɔɲ
<i>foot</i>	ɪgɪr	'ʔɛgɪr
<i>forearm</i>	kɪnd	tʃɔgə'le:
<i>forehead</i>	gɪmbar	'gɪmbar
<i>four</i>	arat:	har'ʔɛt
<i>frog</i>	ɪnk'urarit	ʔɪŋkwa- ku'rit
<i>fruit</i>	fre	fə're:
<i>full</i>	mulu	'mulɪ
<i>fur</i>	jəawre s'əgɪr	ʔabnesade' na:na
<i>garbage</i>	k'oʃaʃa	k'o'ʃaʃa mɛt''ha:ja
<i>gate</i>	bər:	'kɛr:a
<i>give</i>	sət':ə	'hawai
<i>go</i>	hedə	'xɛxl
<i>goat</i>	fɪj:əl	t'a'ʔi:
<i>God</i>	ɪgzi'abher	ʔa'wa:
<i>gold</i>	wɛrk'	wɛrk'
<i>good</i>	t'ɪru	'dɪm:a
<i>gourd</i>	k'ɪl	kə'lə
<i>grass</i>	sar	sə'ʔɛr
<i>grave</i>	ɪnək'abɪr	'k'ɛbɪr
<i>green</i>	arəŋ-g <sup>w</sup> ade	ʔaraŋ-'g <sup>w</sup> a:de
<i>guts</i>	jəhod ɪk'a	xɛrsɪ'sɪra
<i>hair</i>	s'əgɪr -	dɪ'na
<i>hand</i>	ɪdʒ:	'ʔɪndʒɛ
<i>hard</i>	t'ənkar:a	t'ɛŋ'kar:a

<i>harvest N</i>	məhər	mɛ'xɛr
<i>he</i>	ɪrsu	ʔu'wa:t
<i>head</i>	ras	dɪ'na
<i>hear</i>	səm:a	'sɪm:ə
<i>heart</i>	lɪb:	lɪb
<i>heavy</i>	kəb:ad	'xɛbid
<i>here</i>	ɪz:ɪh, ɪz:ix	tə'ʔe:n
<i>hide V</i>	dəb:ək'ə	'ʃe:ʃeg
<i>hit</i>	mət:a	'mɛt:a
<i>hoe</i>	doma	'doma
<i>hold</i>	jazə	'hēz
<i>honey</i>	mar	'duɪs
<i>honeybee</i>	nɪb	
<i>horn</i>	k'ənd	k'e'rara
<i>hot</i>	muk'	hɛn'tsajə
<i>house</i>	bet	bet
<i>how?</i>	ɪndet, ɪnde	'ʔa:met
<i>hundred</i>	mɔto	bɛ'k'ɪl
<i>hungry</i>	rabəw	ra'hawai
<i>hunt V</i>	ad:ənə	'hedɛn
<i>hunter</i>	adaɲ	'ʔadaɲ
<i>hyena</i>	dʒɪb	dʒəu
<i>I</i>	ɪne	ʔa:n
<i>jump</i>	zəl:ələ	'zɛl:ɛl
<i>kill</i>	gəd:ələ	'gɛd:ɛl
<i>knee</i>	gulbət	
<i>knife</i>	bil:awa	bi'la:wa
<i>know</i>	aw:ək'ə	huk
<i>lake</i>	ha'k', kure	ha'ru:je
<i>laugh</i>	sak'ə	sa'hak
<i>leaf</i>	k'ɪt'əl	hɛ't'a:l
<i>left A</i>	gra	ʔa'gura
<i>leopard</i>	nəbɪr	'nɛʃur
<i>lie V</i>	təgad:əmə	'gad:ɛm
<i>light A</i>	k'əl:al	'k'ɛl:al

<i>lightning</i>	məbrək'	'raʔa:d
<i>lip</i>	kɔnfər	'mentʃɪr
<i>listen</i>	səm:a	'sem:a
<i>liver</i>	gub:ət	xa'fa:
<i>long</i>	rədʒ:im	'gu:dər
<i>louse</i>	k'ɪmal	k'u'mal
<i>machete</i>	matʃ'əd	mɛkɛ'ʔe:t
<i>maize</i>	bək':ol:ɔ	bar'maʃila
<i>make</i>	sər:a	ɡɔ'ʔa:r
<i>man</i>	sə <sup>w</sup>	sɛ <sup>w</sup>
<i>many</i>	bɪzu	'ɛndɪɡ
<i>market</i>	ɡɔbɔja	'ɡɛbɔja
<i>marry</i>	agɔb:a	ʔa'ʔa:t
<i>meat</i>	sɪɡa	dʃɛ <sup>o</sup>
<i>money</i>	ɡənzəb	ɡə'zi
<i>monkey</i>	zɪndʒəro	'zɑnzəro
<i>moon</i>	tʃ'ərək'a	'tʃ'ɛrɛk'a
<i>mother</i>	ɪn:at	dɛ'pe:
<i>mountain</i>	tɔrara	'ɡɔra
<i>mouth</i>	af	a:f
<i>mud</i>	tʃ'ɪk'a	tʃɪ'ka
<i>name</i>	sɪm	sɪm
<i>narrow</i>	t'ɔb:ab	't'ɛbau
<i>navel</i>	ɪmbɪrt	'hɛmbɪrt
<i>neck</i>	angət	'hɑŋɡɛt
<i>nest</i>	jəwəf	ʔaəf
	ɡɔdʒ:ɔ	'ɡɔ:nʒɔ
<i>new</i>	ad:is	'hɑɡɪs
<i>night</i>	mata	ha'da:ra
<i>nine</i>	zət'ɛn:	jəhə't'ɛn
<i>no</i>	a'dəl:əm,	ha'ku:nam
	jəl:əm	
<i>none</i>	andɪm,	'handəm
	jəl:əm	jat
<i>nose</i>	afɪntʃ'a	'tɪnɪt
<i>old</i>	aroge	mə'ʃu:ra

<i>one</i>	and	hand
<i>other</i>	lela	'le:la
<i>path</i>	jəɣɪr mɔŋgəd	ʔigɪr 'he:ma
<i>pig</i>	asama	
<i>plant V</i>	tək:ələ	'te:kəl
<i>pot</i>	ɪnsɪra	zə'xa:ma
<i>pour</i>	k'ə:da	'k'əd:a
<i>pull</i>	sabə	'sehau
<i>push</i>	gəf:a	'gefa
<i>rain N</i>	zɪnab	'zəna <sup>u</sup>
<i>rainbow</i>	k'əstə dɔm:əna	ʔaju- ʃe'bəta
<i>rat</i>	aɪt'	hət
<i>red</i>	k'əj:	'k'ei:jəh
<i>rest V</i>	ar:əfə	'ʔarəf
<i>right</i>	k'əɲ:	ʔa'ken:a
<i>ripe</i>	jəbəs:ələ	jə'βəsəl
<i>river</i>	wənz	zər
<i>road</i>	məŋgəd	'he:ma
<i>root</i>	sɪr	ʃəri:t
<i>rope</i>	gəməd	ge'məd
<i>rotten</i>	jəbəsəb:əsə	jəβi'səb:əs
<i>run</i>	rot'ə	ro:t'
<i>saliva</i>	mɪrak'	mu'ratʃe
<i>salt</i>	tʃ'əw	tʃ'ɛ <sup>w</sup>
<i>sand</i>	afəwa	'hafəwa
<i>sandals</i>	jənt'əla tʃ'am:a	'tʃ'am:a
<i>say</i>	alə	ʔa:l
<i>scorpion</i>	gint'	gint'
<i>scratch</i>	ak:əkə	'hakek
<i>see</i>	aj:ə	re:
<i>seed</i>	zər	zər
<i>sell</i>	ʃət':ə	ʔas'ʔam
<i>seven</i>	səbat:	sə'ʔant

<i>sew</i>	səf:a	sɛf
<i>sharp</i>	sɪlət	'wei:jɛh
<i>shield</i>	məkələkəja, gaʃa	'ga:ʃa
<i>short</i>	atʃ':ir	'ha:tʃɪr
<i>shoulder</i>	tɪkəʃ:a	ta'xa:ʃa
<i>sick</i>	tam:əmə	si'an
<i>silver</i>	bɪr:	bur:
<i>sing</i>	zəm:ərə	'zɛm:ɛrɛ
<i>sister</i>	ɪhɪt	'ʔihɪt
<i>sit</i>	tək'əm:ət'ə	tək'e:mət'
<i>six</i>	sɪd:ɪst	sɪ'dɪst
<i>skin</i>	k'oda	k'o'da
<i>sky</i>	səma <sup>i</sup>	su'maj
<i>sleep V</i>	tɔp:a	'ʔɪpɛ
<i>small</i>	tɪn:ɪʃ	ʔɪŋ'gil:a
<i>smell V</i>	afɔt:ətə	'ʔafuntʃ
<i>smoke N</i>	tʃ'is	tan
<i>smooth</i>	lɔslas:a	les'la:sa
<i>snake</i>	ɪbab	'wɛr:o
<i>sneeze</i>	anət':əsə	tɪfo'al
<i>soft</i>	lɔslas:a	les'la:sa
<i>spear</i>	t'or	harb
<i>spider</i>	ʃɔrɔrit	
<i>spit</i>	təf:a	'tɛf:a
<i>stand V</i>	k'omə	'ʔo:m
<i>star</i>	kokəb	ʃuxo
<i>steal</i>	sər:ək'ə	'sɛrɛk'ɛ
<i>stick N</i>	bɔt:ɪr	bart
<i>stone</i>	dɪŋga <sup>i</sup>	ɡɪn'ʒɛla
<i>stool</i>	bartʃ'um:a	bɔr'tʃ'um:a
<i>straight</i>	bək'ɔt':ɪta	'k'ɛt'ɛta
<i>sun</i>	s'əha <sup>i</sup> , t'əha <sup>i</sup>	ʃə'he:s
<i>sweat N</i>	lab	'wɛzja
<i>sweep</i>	t'ər:əɡə	't'ɛr:ɛɡ
<i>swim</i>	waj:ə	'wa:jɛ

<i>tail</i>	dʒɪrat	
<i>take</i>	wəs:ədə	ʔa'xe:d
<i>teach</i>	astəmarə	
<i>tear N</i>	ɪnba, ɪmba	'hembə
<i>ten</i>	as:ɪr	ʔa'sɪr
<i>termite</i>	mɪst'	
<i>termite hill</i>	jəmɪst' bet	
<i>that</i>	ja	ʔo'mɪs:i
<i>they</i>	ɪn:ərsu	ʔə'lɛm
<i>thick</i>	wəfram	'ʔa:mud
<i>thigh</i>	tʃ'ɪn, tafa	tʃ'ɪn
<i>thin</i>	k'ətʃ':ɪn	'k'ɛtʃɪn
<i>think</i>	as:əbə	'has:u
<i>this</i>	jɪh, jix	'ʔɪ:ni
<i>thorn</i>	ʃok, ʃoh	
<i>thread</i>	kɪr:	fə'tɪl
<i>three</i>	sost	'səʔo:st
<i>throw</i>	wərəw:ərə	wɛ'rew:ɛr
<i>thunder</i>	nəg <sup>w</sup> odg <sup>w</sup> ad	gur'mumta
<i>tie</i>	tas:ərə	'te:sər
<i>tobacco</i>	tɪmbaho	tɪm'baho
<i>tongue</i>	mɪlas	'ʔarat
<i>tooth</i>	t'ɪrs	sɪ:n
<i>tree</i>	zaf	
<i>twenty</i>	haja	haj'ʔa:
<i>two</i>	hulət:	'xəʔe:t
<i>up</i>	wədə la <sup>i</sup>	'laʔala
<i>vomit</i>	astaw:əkə	ʔa'ste:fa
<i>walk</i>	bəɪgɪr hedə	beɪgɪr 'hed
<i>want</i>	fəl:əgə	'fɛlɛgɛ
<i>war</i>	t'orɪn:ət	harb
<i>warm</i>	muk'	'ʔamo
<i>water</i>	wɪha, wɔha	ʔo'fa
<i>we</i>	ɪp:a	ʔɪ'na:
<i>wedding</i>	sərg	bə'her

<i>weed</i>	arəm	ha'ram
<i>weep</i>	alək':əsə	'ʔalək'əs
<i>well N</i>	mɪntʃ'	fɛ'la:k
<i>wet</i>	ɪr:t'ɪb	'irt'u
<i>what?</i>	mɪn	ʔim- ba'la:nə
<i>when?</i>	mətʃe	mɛ'tʃe:nə
<i>where?</i>	jet	'te:tenei
<i>whistle</i>	afʷatʃ'ə	ʔa'fotʃ
<i>white</i>	nətʃ':	'za:hi
<i>who?</i>	man	'man:ə
<i>whose?</i>	jəman	ʔa'man:ə
<i>why?</i>	ləmɪn	'bimba
<i>wide</i>	səfi	'rehi:
<i>wife</i>	mɪst	mɪst
<i>wind N</i>	nɪfas	nɪ'fas
<i>wing</i>	kɪnf	'kɪnf
<i>woman</i>	set	nɪʃ'tʃa:
<i>worm</i>	tɪl	
<i>yawn</i>	az:ag:a	ʔa'xa:fɛt
<i>yellow</i>	bɪtʃ'a	'bɪtʃ'a
<i>yes</i>	awo, awon	ʔo:
<i>yesterday</i>	tɪnant, tɪnantɪn:a	tɪma'je:nə
<i>you, pl</i>	ɪn:antə	'ʔaŋkum
<i>you, sg, m</i>	antə	ʔaŋk

Distribution of major languages in the Argobba areas  
(based on *Ethnologue*, draft map for the 1996 edition)



