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Mother Tongue

isiZulu Language Course

Data Friendly Version



Intro to
learning
isiZulu

Lesson One

History for the language

Origins of language – The isiZulu language forms part of the greater Nguni group; this is one of the most spoken languages in South Africa. Similar to the isiXhosa language, both fall under the same Nguni ancestral group.

Within Kwa-Zulu natal, the Zulu kingdom was formed and holds the largest group of isiZulu speaking people.

Culture – The Zulu culture has a strong connection to ancestral spirits and traditional beliefs. A role of a traditional healer is common practice, often facilitating the communication with ancestors.

Traditions and folklore are passed down through proverbs and storytelling, the belief of “Share what you have” is a philosophy known as Ubuntu.

Pronunciation

C

(Tongue against back of top teeth – Push and drop quickly)

Try with “Cha” – isiZulu word for No.

X

(Tongue against back of teeth on one side – Squeeze in air)

Try with “uXolo” – isiZulu for Pardon me.

Q

(Tongue against top of your mouth, just above teeth – Pop down hard)

Try with “iqhanda” – isiZulu word for Egg.

Greetings

Hello (One person)

Sawubona

How are you (One person)

Unjani

I am good

Ngiyaphila

See you soon

Siyobonana masinyane

Excuse me / Pardon me

Uxolo

Hello (People)

Sanibonani

How are you (People)

Ninjani

Goodbye

Hamba Kahle

Thank you

Ngiyabonga

You are welcome

Kubonga mina

Lesson Two

Date

Monday –
uMsombuluko

Tuesday –
uLwesibili

Wednesday –
uLwesithathu

Thursday –
ULwesine

Friday –
uLwesihlanu

Saturday –
uMgqibelo

Sunday –
iSonto

Today –
Namuhla

Tomorrow –
Kusasa

What is the day today? –
Zingaki namuhla?

Common things

One hundred Rand –
Amarandi ayikhulu

Robot –
Irobhothi

Corner –
Ikhona

Bus –
Ibhasi

Match –
Umdlalo

Building –
Ibhilidi

Street –
Isitaladi

Hair –
Izinwele

Head –
Ikhanda

Chest –
Isifuba

Heart –
Inhliziyo

Stomach –
Isisu

Fingers –
Iminwe

Feet –
Izinyawo

Eyes –
Amehlo

Mouth –
Umlomo

Nose –
Ikhala

Hands –
Izandla

Value

One –
Kunye

Two –
Kubili

Three –
Kuthathu

Four –
Kune

Five –
Kuhlano

Six –
Yisithupha

Seven –
Yisikhombisa

Eight –
Yisishiyagalombili

Nine –
Yisishiyagalolunye

Ten –
Yishumi

Last –
Ekugcineni

First –
Lokuqala

Short phrases

Yes –
Yebo

No –
Cha

Please –
Ngicela

You are welcome –
Kubonga mina

Excuse me, what did you say? –
Uxolo, utheni?

Please repeat –
Ngicela uphinde

I don't understand –
Angiqondi

I understand a little –
Ngiqonda kancane

Do you speak English? –
Uyasikhuluma isiNgisi?

Come in –
Ngena

Who –
Ngubani?

What –
Yini?

Why –
Kungani?

When –
Nini?

Where –
Kuphi?

How –
Kanjani?

Too little –
Kancane kanje

Enough –
Okwanele

Lesson Three

Common questions

How much is it? –
Kubiza malini?

What time is it? –
Sikhathi sini?

When does it begin? –
Uqala nini?

What is the weather like today? –
Lizoba njani izulu namhlanje?

Are you free? –
Unesikhathi na?

What is your name? –
Ngubani igama lakho?

Do you take credit cards? –
Uyawamukela amakhadi okuthenga na?

Where do I sign? –
Ngisayina Kuphi?

Could you please stop here? –
Ngicela ume lapha?

How far is it? –
Kuyibanga elingakanani?

Where do you live? –
Uhlalaphi?

Where are you going? –
Uyaphi?

Where is the toilet? –
Likuphi ithoyilethe?

What is the matter? –
Kwenzenjani?

Ask for Help

Can you help me please? –
Ngicela ungisize?

Will you please write it down? –
Ngicela ukubhale phansi

Please hurry –
Ngicela usheshe

Thanks for your help –
Ngibonga usizo lwakho

I am lost –
Ngilahlekile

What is wrong with you? –
Uphethwe yini?

Where is the nearest garage? –
Likuphi igalaji eliseduze?

Where is the nearest shop? –
Sikuphi isitolo esiseduze?

Where do I pay? –
Ngikhokha kuphi?

Where can I buy a ticket? –
Ngingalithenga kuphi ithikithi?

Instructions

Please take me to the airport –
Ngicela ungimukise

Taxi please –
Ngicela itekisi

I would like some coffee please –
Ngicela ikhofi

I want to withdraw money –
Ngifuna ukukhipha imali

Turn left –
Jikela ngakwesokunxele

Turn right –
Jikela ngakwesokudla

Straight ahead –
Qhubeka uye phambili

It is too expensive –
Kubiza kakhulu

This is too big –
Lokhu kukhulu kakhulu

This is too small –
Lokhu kuncane kakhulu

I want to see a doctor –
Ngifuna ukubona udokotela

I am sick –
Ngiyagula

I am tired –
Ngikhathele

I am hungry –
Ngilambile

I am thirsty –
Ngomile

I am happy –
Ngijabulile

Continued learning

Online dictionary – <https://isizulu.net/>

Use the above link for an online isiZulu to English dictionary. If you are stuck with a word, then look it up and grow your ability to converse and communicate.

The best way to continue practicing any new language is to make relationships. Find someone at work, in your community or through online channels that speak isiZulu. Form a relationship that allows you to practice and grow your confidence in speaking isiZulu conversationally. You might just make some new friends along the way!