

AN INTRODUCTION TO SURVIVAL LUGANDA

This survival Luganda language learning production is prepared by the United States Peace Corps for use by its volunteers who live and work in Uganda.

Welcome to this program of learning survival Luganda, to teach you easy and simple phrases to help you get by in Uganda.

In this program you will practice phrases in Luganda as used in various situations and conversations.

Luganda is predominantly spoken in central Uganda. It is spoken by people called Baganda.

It is also spoken and understood by other Bantu language speaking people in other regions of Uganda.

Luganda is a tonal language.

Lesson 1: The Alphabet

In the alphabet of Luganda, there is no letter **Q** or **X**, but have **ŋ** and **ny**. **ŋ** as in singing and **ny** as in lasagna. Syllable **Ki** is pronounced 'chi'.

Luganda has 5 vowels. These are: a, e, i, o, u. They may be pronounced as short or long sounds.

Listen carefully to the differences:

Short a :	oku-saba , oku-saba	-	to pray
Long aa :	oku-saaba, oku-saaba	-	to smear
Short e :	oku-sera, oku-sera	-	to night dance
Long ee :	oku-seera, oku-seera	-	to overcharge
Short i :	oku-sika, oku-sika	-	to pull
Long ii :	oku-siika, oku-siika	-	to fry
Short o :	oku-kola, oku-kola	-	to do
Long oo :	oku-koola, oku-koola	-	to weed
Short u :	oku-kula, oku-kula	-	to grow
Long uu :	oku-kuula, oku-kuula	-	to uproot.

Luganda also uses stress to differentiate meanings. You have to listen carefully and try to put the stress on the correct syllable to avoid miscommunication.

Now listen carefully:

Amazzi, amazzi	-	water
Amazi, amazi	-	faeces
Oku-ta, oku-tta	-	to kill
Okuta, oku-ta	-	to release

Now repeat the word for water: ----- amazzi, amazzi.

Lesson 2: Formal Greetings

Greetings are very important in Luganda. They are used often to begin a conversation with someone. In a formal setting, it is important to use titles of address. To a man, you say ‘**ssebo**’ and to woman you say ‘**nnyabo.**’

Now listen to the formal morning greetings as Herbert greets Ven.

Herbert:	Wasuze otyanno nnyabo?	How did you spend the night madam?
Ven:	<i>Bulungi ssebo .</i>	<i>Fine sir.</i>
Herbert:	Hmm.	Hmm.
Ven:	<i>Wasuze otyanno ssebo?</i>	<i>How did you spend the night sir?</i>
Herbert:	Bulungi nnyabo.	Fine madam.
Ven:	<i>Hmm.</i>	<i>Hmm.</i>
Herbert:	Hmm.	Hmm.

Now listen to the flow of the same greetings in normal conversation.

Afternoon greeting:

When you meet someone in the afternoon you may want to greet him. Listen carefully as Ven greets Herbert.

Ven:	Osiibye otyanno ssebo?	How have you spent the day sir?
Herbert:	<i>Bulungi nnyabo.</i>	<i>Fine madam.</i>
Ven:	Hmm.	
Herbert:	<i>Osiibye otyanno nnyabo?</i>	<i>How have you spent the day madam?</i>
Ven:	Bulungi ssebo.	Fine sir.
Herbert:	<i>Hmm.</i>	
Ven:	Hmm.	

Now listen to the flow of the same greeting in a normal conversation.

Now say the word for “sir”. **ssebo**
And say the word for “madam”. **nnyabo**

Lesson 3: Informal Greetings

These are commonly used among peers and acquaintances.

Listen carefully as Ven greets her friend Herbert:

Ven: Oli otya, Herbert? How are you, Herbert?

Herbert: *Gyendi Ven.* I am fine Ven.

Ven: Hmm. Hmm.

Herbert: *Ate ggwe?* How about you?

Ven: Gyendi. I am fine.

Herbert: *Hmm.* Hmm.

As part of any greeting it is common to thank someone for the general work they do:

Ven: Gyebaleko. Thank you for your work.

Herbert: *Kale naawe gyebale.* Ok, thank you too.

Now listen to the natural flow of the whole informal greeting:

Ven: Oli otya, Herbert?

Herbert: *Gyendi Ven.*

Ven: Hmm.

Herbert: *Ate ggwe?*

Ven: Gyendi.

Herbert: *Hmm.*

Ven: Hmm.

Listen and repeat after short pauses:

Oli otya? Oli otya?

Gyendi, gyendi

Gyebaleko, gyebaleko.

Now try it out yourself:

Say hello to Ven:	(pause)	Oli otya Ven?
Say hello to Herbert:	(pause)	Oli otya Herbert?
Thank Herbert for his work:	(pause)	Gyebaleko
Say I am fine:	(pause)	Gyendi.

Lesson 4: Introducing Self

When you meet new people you may want to know who they are. You need to introduce yourself first by simply saying: I am- Nze: plus your name.

Herbert meets Ven for the first time:

Herbert: Nze Herbert. Ggwe ani, nnyabo? I am Herbert. Who are you, madam?
Ven: Nze Ven. I am Ven.

Now listen to Ven introducing herself to Herbert:

Ven: Nze Ven. Ggwe ani, ssebo? I am Ven. Who are you sir?
Herbert: Nze Herbert. I am Herbert.

It is common for people to tell and ask others where they are from:

Listen: Nva, nva I come from
Ven: Nva Chicago mu Amerika. I come from Chicago in Amerika.
Ova wa? Where are you from?
Herbert: Nva Boston mu Amerika. I come from Boston in Amerika.

It is polite to express your happiness when you meet a new person as in:

Ven: Nsanyuse okukulaba, ssebo. I am glad to see you, sir.
Herbert: Nange. Me too.

Now listen to the whole introduction conversation in a natural language flow:

Herbert: Nze Herbert. Ggwe ani, nnyabo?
Ven: Nze Ven. Nva Chicago mu Amerika. Ova wa, ssebo?
Herbert: Nva Boston mu Amerika.
Ven: Nsanyuse okukulaba, ssebo.
Herbert: Nange nnyabo.

Lesson 5: Polite Expressions and Handy Phrases

There are polite expressions which you need to learn right away.

These are:

Weebale thank you
Weebale ssebo thank you sir
Weebale nnyabo thank you madam

Weebale okujja thank you for coming.

If you are happy to see someone or to welcome someone you say:

Nsanyuse okukulaba I am happy to see you.

If you want to thank somebody for cooking you say:

Weebale okufumba thank you for cooking.

Other handy phrases are:

Yee	yes
Nedda	no
Yogera mpola mpola	speak slowly
Genda mpola	go slowly
Saagala	I don't want
Njagala	I want
Sitegedde	I have not understood
Sitegeera	I don't understand
Simanyi	I don't know
Ssente mmeka?	How much money?
Mpa biilu yange	Give me my bill
Mpa lisiiti yange	Give me my receipt
Sirina ssente	I have no money
Ddamu	repeat
Kituufu	it is true
Si kituufu	it is not true
Si kye kyo?	Not so?
Kye kyo	that's it!
Tompa	don't give me
Webale, naye nzikuse	thank you, but I am full.

Lesson 6: Ordering a Meal

A typical meal in a Ugandan restaurant basically includes a starch food and a protein sauce.

Listen carefully as someone orders a meal:

- Herbert: Nsanyuse okukulaba, nnyabo. I am glad to see you, madam.
Ven: *Nange* Me too.
Herbert: Nkuweyo ki, nnyabo? What can I give you, madam?
Ven: *Olinayo mmere ki?* What starchy foods do you have?
Herbert: Nninayo amatooke n'omuceere. I have matooke and rice.
Ven: *Ate enva?* How about sauce?
Herbert: Nninayo ennyama, enkoko I have meat, chicken and peanut sauce.
n'ebinyeebwa.
Ven: *Ate eky'okunywa olinayo ki?* How about drinks, what do you have?
Herbert: Nninayo sooda, obutunda I have soda, passion fruit juice and water.
n'amazzi.
Ven: *Ndeteera omuceere, enkoko* Bring me rice, chicken and passion fruit
n'obutunda. juice.
Herbert: Kale. Okay.
Ven: *Nsasula sente mmeka?* How much do I pay?

Now listen to the same conversation in a natural language flow:

- Herbert: Nsanyuse okukulaba, nnyabo.
Ven: *Kale.*
Herbert: Nkuweyo ki, nnyabo?
Ven: *Olinayo ki?*
Herbert: Nninayo amatooke n'omuceere.
Ven: *Ate enva?*
Herbert: Nninayo ennyama, enkoko n'ebinyeebwa.
Ven: *Ate eky'okunywa olinayo ki?*
Herbert: Nninayo sooda, obutunda n'amazzi.
Ven: *Ndeteera omuceere, enkoko n'obutunda.*
Herbert: Kale.

Other ways of ordering food:

- You can say Olinayo.....? Do you have.....?
Olinayo ku mmere? Do you have some food, please?
Olinayo ku mazzi ag'okunywa? Do you have some drinking water?

Or you can say Nsabayo

Nsabayo ku mugaati

Nsabayo ku magi

I request for some

I request for some bread

I request for some eggs

Or you can say Mpaayo

Mpaayo ku caayi

Mpaayo ku kaawa

Give me some

Give me some tea, please

Give me some coffee, please.

Listen to these phrases and repeat after the pause:

Oyagalayo ki?

Olinaayo ki?

Olina mmere ki?

Nkuweeyo ki?

What would you like?

What do you have?

What food do you have?

What can I get you?

Lesson 7: Asking for Directions

To ask for directions you use the word wa? (Where?). Note that it is important to first greet the person before asking for directions.

Shirley ali wa?

Ofiisi ziri wa?

Paaka ya takisi eri wa?

Paaka ya bbaasi eri wa?

Posita eri wa?

Banka eri wa?

Nkyusiza wa ssende?

Akatale kali wa?

Tooyi eri wa?

Where is Shirley?

Where are the offices?

Where is the taxi park?

Where is the bus park?

Where is the post office?

Where is the bank?

From where can I exchange money?

Where is the market?

Where is the latrine?

Lesson 8: Booking Accommodation

To request for directions and to get a good room, here are some useful phrases to use:

Wooteeri ya Sheraton eri wa?

Ekubbo erigenda ku wooteeri ya Sheraton liri wa?

Mukyalinayo ku bisenge?

Mulina amazzi agookya mu binaabiro?

Mulina obutimba bw'ensiri mu bisenge?

Osobola okumpa ekisenge ky'omuntu omu?

Where is Sheraton hotel?

Where is the way to Sheraton hotel?

Do you still have some rooms?

Do you have hot water in the bathroom?

Do you have mosquito nets in the rooms?

Can you give me a single room?

Lesson 9: Apologizing and Sympathizing

There is no particular word for sorry; but depending on the situation you are in, there are various ways to apologize or sympathize.

Nsonyiwa.	Forgive me.
Tofaayo.	Don't mind.
Ng'olabye!	I am sorry for what has happened to you!
Nga kitalo!	What a horrible thing! (This is only used for condolence).

Lesson 10: Useful Phrases

For information gathering, different interrogatives can be used.

Wa?	Where?
Ogenda wa?	Where are you going?
Ova wa? from?	Where are you coming from? or Where are you from?
Ki?	What?
Kiki?	What is it?
Okola ki?	What are you doing? or What do you do?
Oseka ki?	What are you laughing at?
Kino kiki?	What is this?
Obadde oyagala ki?	What do you want, please?
Ddi?	When?
Ogenda ddi?	When are you going?
Ojja ddi?	When are you coming?
Lwaki?	Why?
Lwaki oseka?	Why are you laughing?
Lwaki okaaba?	Why are you crying?

Lesson 11: Saying Good Bye

There are many ways to say good bye depending on the situation. Here are some of the phrases and their responses:

A: Weeraba!	(Goodbye!)
B: Kale, naawe weeraba	(Okay, good bye to you too!)
A: Ka ngende!	(I beg to leave!)
B: Kale, tambula bulungi	(Okay, travel safely)

A: Sula bulungi!	(Goodnight!)
B: Kale, naawe sula bulungi	(Okay, you too have a good night)
A: Siiba bulungi!	(Spend the day well!)
B: Kale, naawe siiba bulungi	(Okay, you too have a good day)
A: Beera bulungi!	(Stay well!)
B: Kale, naawe genda bulungi	(Okay, you too go well)
A: Tunaalabagana!	(We will see each other!)
B: Kale	(Okay)
A: Tambula bulungi!	(Travel well!)
B: Weebale	(Thank you).

Lesson 12: Travel

When traveling, you may need to tell the driver where to stop.

Awo, ssebo.	There, sir.
Mu maaso awo.	In front there; or ahead there.
Ku siteegi.	At the stage.

If the driver is over speeding, you may need to tell him:

Genda mpola mpola!	Go slowly!
Vuga mpola mpola!	Drive slowly!
Kendeeza ku sipiidi.	Reduce on the speed.

Other words for travel:

Takisi ezigenda e Masaka ziri wa?	Where are the taxis to Masaka?
Baasi etuuka saawa emmeke?	What time does the bus arrive?

These 12 lessons are meant to teach you survival Luganda. You will find them very useful. We encourage you to continue learning and using them with other Luganda speakers. Weeraba (Good bye).

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