



Manzini and Mhlambanyatsi Project Language Pack

SiSwati



SiSwati

SiSwati /Swati is very similar to Zulu, differing only in the pronunciation of some sounds. SiSwati is the first language of most Swazis.

“The more you know the more fun it is and if you can pull out the odd word then the kids particularly will love it (they’ll turn to each other and say something like “How! Yena khulumi siSwati!”) and are less likely to talk about you in it while you’re there. You can always refer to this in the class if you’re in trouble.”

South Africa Volunteer 2005

“Just check words you aren’t sure on with a teacher (they may have a different/easier to say one) it’s a good icebreaker – I spent pretty much every free lunch time trying to get new siSwati phrases of teachers and they loved it too.”

South Africa Volunteer, 2005

You will find it very easy to pick up SiSwati during your time in Swaziland once you have the basics. Tenteleni volunteers have always found that the communication barrier can be overcome to build strong relationships inside and outside of the classroom. I can’t stress enough how important it is to make an effort with SiSwati, it is easy to get away without speaking any in Manzini in particular, but using it goes a very long way as people will develop a lot of respect for you and you will also find that you won’t be taken for a fool as a wandering tourist!

Pronunciation guide

siSwati/Swati is a tone language where changes of pitch within words determine their meanings. There are also some clicks to contend with.

a - as **a** in tar

b – voiced implosive

bh – as **p + b** in upbraid

c – click consonant (dental + velar) (rather like you’re tutting at someone)

d – as **t + d** in out-dated

dl – breathy-voiced (imagine putting a d in front of llangollen)

dv – as **d + brief v**

dz – as **d + brief z**

e – as **e** in bed

f – as **f** in far

g – as **k + g** in back-gate

gc – breathy voiced click

h – as **h** in hat

hh - breathy voiced vocal

hl – as welsh **ll** in llangollen

i – as **ee** in see

j – as **j** in jam; but breathy-voiced

k – as **g** in ago

kh – as **c** in cap

l – as **l** in lid

m – as **m** in mat

mb – **m + implosive b** (a bit like saying comb with a cold)

mf, mp, mph, mv – these combinations occur

n – as **n** in not

nc – nasal **c** click

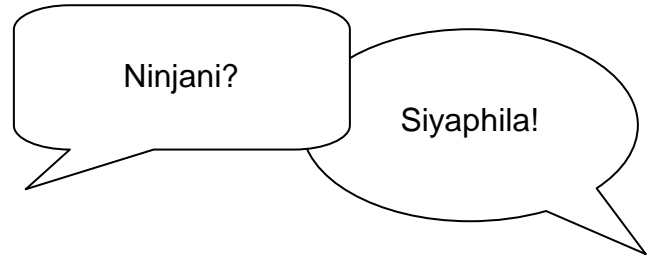
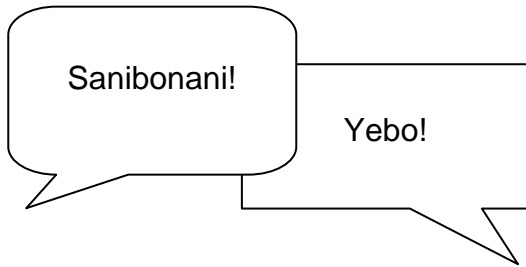


nch – pre-nasalized **ch** click
ng – as **ng** in singer
o – as **o** in for
p – voiceless bilabial ejective (!)
ph – as **p** in pay
q – click at the side of the tongue (the sound people make when they want a horse to speed up)
(r) – found in loan words from English and other languages
s – as **s** in say
sh – as **sh** in show
t – voiceless alveolar ejective
tf – somewhat like the **t + f** in tit for tat
th – as **t** in toe
tj – almost like **ch** in church
ts – voiceless alveolar affricate (!)
u – as **oo** in too
v – as **v** in view, but breathy voiced
w – as **w** in we
x – deep hollow click behind the teeth (like a stone falling into a pond)
y – as **y** in you
z – as **z** in zoo
zh – as **s** in measure



Greetings

Greetings are extremely important in African culture.



Hello
Hello (more than one)

Sawubona
Sanibonani (often shortened when spoken to sanbonan)

How are you?
How are you? (with respect/more than one)
Reply (lit. I'm alive!)
Reply (We're alive!)

Unjani? (or Kunjani)
Ninjani? (or Nijani)
Ngiyaphila
Siyaphila

(This may be seen as a little bit flippant by some traditionalists so you could say ngikhona – I'm fine or sikhona – we're fine)

And you?

Unjani wena? (or wena kunjani?)

Good morning
Good morning (with respect)
Reply
Good afternoon
Good afternoon (with respect)
Reply

Sawubona
Sanibonani
Yebo
Sawubona emini
Sanibonani emini
Yebo

To get attention when going into someone's house

Nco! Nco! Nco!

Reply
Welcome to the house
Come inside
(with respect/ to more than one)

Yebo
Nemu kelekile
Ngena
Ngenani

Sleep well
(with respect/ to more than one)
Good night

Lala kahle
Lalani kahle
Butfongo lobuhle

Good bye (stay well – when you are leaving)
(more than one)

Sala kahle
Salani kahle

Good bye (go well – when they are leaving)
(more than one)

Hamba kahle
Nihambe kahle

See you tomorrow

Ngitoku Kusasa

See you tomorrow (more than one)

Sitawubonana Kusasa (I could never say this)

Pronouns

I	Mine
You	Wena
He/ she	Yena
We	Tsine
They	Bona



General Phrases

This loku
 Here loko
 There lokwa

Yes yebo
 No cha
 OK kulungile

Exclamation How! (If you use this say it in the deepest voice possible and widen your eyes)
 Exclamation² Eeeesh!

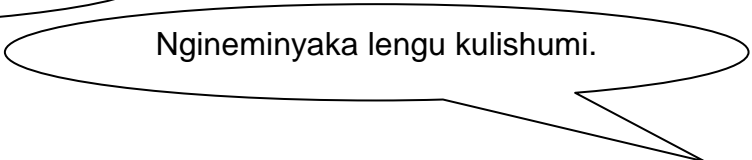
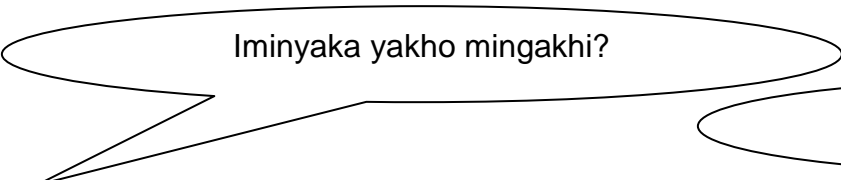
If people want to emphasise something they will often repeat a word several times. For example, when I was playing football with my Grade 11s one said to me “Eeeesh! You can kick, kick, kick!”.

Please	tsine (or ngiya cela)	How do you say it in English?	Kutsiwa yini loku ngesingisi?
Thank you	ngiyabonga	How do you say it in siSwati?	Kutsiwa yini loku ngesiswati?
We thank you	siyabonga	I don't understand	Angi-understand/Angicondzisisi
You're welcomewamukelekile		I don't speak siSwati	Angikhulumi siSwati
Excuse me/sorry	ncesi	White person	umlungu
I'm sorry	ncesi	White people	labamhlophe
English	singisi		

Help me (one person/friend) Ngisite tsine
 (more then one/with respect) Sisite tsine

Making friends

What is your name?	Libito? / Ungubani libito lakho? (or Ngubani ligama lakho?)
My name is ...	Ngingu ... (or Ligama lami ngu...)
How old are you?	Iminyaka yakho mingakhi? (or Unangaki minyaka?)
I am ... years old	Ngineminyaka lengu ...
I like ...	Ngitsandza
I don't like	Angitsandzi
I don't want...	Angifuni...
I love you	Ngiyaku tsandza (this is also taken to mean I like you)
I hate you	Ngiyakuzonda (they sound quite similar don't they?)
What are you doing?	Wentani?
Where are you going?	Uya kuphi? (or Uyaphi?)
Where are you from?	Ubuyaphi?
Where do you live?	Ulalaphi? Uhlala kuphi?
I come from England	Ngibuya eNgilandi
You are lying!	Unemanga (Kids will absolutely crease if you say this as a joke)
I am lying!	Nginemanga
You are joking.	Unemahlaya
I am joking	Nginemahlaya
I'm crazy	Ngiyahlanya
I will visit you	Ngito kuvakashela
No problem	Akunankinga
It's hot	Kuyashisa
I am hot	Ngiva kushisa
I'm tired	ngidziniwe





In the classroom

You may come across a communication barrier in the classroom and in your work with young people. Don't worry- this can be turned into a fantastic learning experience! The key with second or additional language learning is to make bridges between the languages as much as possible. When you come across a new word or phrase describe it, and then ask them to tell you how they would say that in SiSwati (this will probably involve lots of animated discussion and debating, followed by some kind of consensus). If you are explaining something like a game, ask one of the children to translate. They will love to do this! Obviously you need to pick someone who you feel will understand you enough have a fair go at doing it, but try to rotate the translator as much as possible. Try reading or telling a story with lots of different actions and voices. Children will enjoy this even if they don't catch all the English. You can also ask someone to translate for you as you go, which is a great language modelling opportunity for everyone – including you! Try to use this vocabulary as much as possible

Listen	Lalela	Teacher	umfundzisi/ tischela
Be quiet	thulani	Children	bantfwama
(you can just say thula to one person or thulani to a group)		My friend	mngani wami
Shut up	Bindza	My friends	bangani bami
You are making noise	Nibanga umsindo	Peers	bontsanga
Are you writing with your mouth?	Ubhala ngemlomo?	Go Home	Hamba uye ekhaya
Come here	wota lapha (or buya lapha)	Look at me	Ngibuke
Well done	wente kahle	Repeat	Phindza futsi/ kuluma futsi
Sit down	hlala phansi (or just hlala)	Write again	bhala futsi
Stand up	su'kuma	Pencil	ipeniseli
Stop	yima (or yekela)	Louder	Kakhulu
Go	hamba	Now	Nyalo
Hurry	phangisa	Share	Boleka
I'm in a hurry	Ngijahile	Write	Bhala
I don't hear you	Angiva	Count	Bala
I don't understand	Angivisisi	(I never heard any difference in these two)	
Understand?	Uyeva or Niyeva (multiples)	Draw	dvweba
Small	ncane	Ask	cela
Personification	Kumuntfutisa	Walk	Kuhamba
(try explaining it instead if you like...)		Run	Gijima

Gangster siSwati (use this if you want to be über cool/down with the hood)

General Greeting to a guy Yebo spali! Kanjan?
 Literal translation Yes my brother in law, how you doin'?

General greeting to a girl Yebo sconi! Kanjan?
 Sconi is a sister in law

Cool Kulungile

If you can combine this with a cool handshake you will instantly promote yourself to legend status with the older kids.

Names

Everyone will want to tell you what their name means (and even give you your own) but if you can get in there first it'll be really funny. Here's a few:

Scamba – Thorny Tree (the name Bheki gave me for arguing with him)

Sibusiso – Blessed or Blessing (the slightly girly name Nonhle gave me, I prefer Scamba)

Bhekitemba – Trustworthy

Nonhle – Beautiful Girl

Sifiso – Desire (boys name)

Thulani – Be quiet

Nonhlanhla – Fortunate (girls name)



Mzikayise – My father’s house (boy’s name)
 Enough (dela I think) – traditional name for the last girl in a family
 Mtimba – Bones (nickname for a thin person)
 Mafutha – (nickname for a fat person)
 Being fat is generally seen as a good thing, a status symbol, but probably best not to use this one unprompted.
 Lindiwe – waiting for
 Phumzile – relax
 Zanele – Enough
 Simangele – Surprise
 Fikile - Coming

There were also lots of English words used as names so try not to laugh when you get kids like Innocent, who couldn’t ever be described as this, even by his Gran.

The rest is a lot to learn and might not really use it unless you are in the lower grades (below 6) in which case the kids may not always know all the numbers, days of the week etc.

Numbers			
1 kunye	6 kusitfupha	11 lishumi nakunye	20 emashumi lamabili
2 kubili	7 kusikhombisa	12 lishumi nakubili	21 emashumi lamabili nakubili
3 kusatfu	8 kusiphohlongo	13 lishumi nakutsatfu	50 emashumi lasihlanu
4 kune	9 kuyimfica	14 lishumi nakune	100 likhulu
5 sihlanu	10 kulishumi	15 lishumi nesihlanu	1000 inkhulungwane

Food	
I’m hungry	sengilambile, nkhosi (or I said Ngilambile)
I’m full	Ngisuthi
Eat	Kudla
Let’s go eat (more than one/ with respect)	Asiyokudla
What is it?	Ini le?
Bread	Isikwa
Water	Amanzi/emanti
Milk	Ubisi
Rice	Irayisi
Vegetables	Imifino
Fruit/s	Isithelo/titselo
Maize	Umbila (or Mbela)
Beans	Amabhontjisi
Pumpkin/s	Amathanga
Fish	Ifishi
Chicken	Inkhukhu
Meat	Inyama
Sugar cane	Umoba
Fire	Umlilo

Days of the Week	
Monday	umsombuluko
Tuesday	lesibili
Wednesday	lesitsatfu
Thursday	lesine
Friday	lesihlanu
Saturday	umgcibelo
Sunday	lisontfo

Directions	
Where is/are ?	kuphi/kukuphi ...? (or ikuphi...?)
To the right	ngesekudla
To the left	ngesaneele
Straight on	chubeka njalo
I am lost	ngilahlekile
Round the corner	ngale kwelijika
Traffic lights	ema robothi
Round about	kekelizi
Minibus taxi	imotohasi lencane
The bus is here	Ibhasi ifikile!

Times	
Yesterday	itolo
Today	lamuhla
Tomorrow	kusasa
Now	nyalo
Later	later
Morning	ekuseni
Afternoon	entsambana
Evening	kusihlwa
Night	ebusuku
What’s the time?	Ngicela sikhatsi?



Health I'm sick I need a doctor Where is a hospital? I think I have malaria Malaria Asthma	 Ngiyagula Ngidzinga dokodela Singakuphi sibhedlela Ngicabanga sengatsi ngina malaleveva malaleveva isifo sofuba	 s? Malini? / Kubita malini loku? Ngicela ... Ngifuna Angifuni Ungawavumi (emakhadi etikweledi/ emasheke etivakashi)?
	I want ... I don't want Do you accept (credit cards/ traveller's cheques)?	

The following publications are available from www.amazon.co.uk:
Concise siSwati-English Dictionary – Pharos, 1985
Essential Siswati, A Phrasebook, D.K. Rycroft, 1981