



Peace Corps South Africa
An Introduction to Zulu Language:

The language isiZulu is widely spoken in all over South Africa. It is one of the Nguni languages, related to Xhosa, SiSwati and Ndebele. The Nguni language structure is based on a system of noun classes and a system of concords. In order to help those who are willing to learn Nguni language, lessons have been prepared; and the following lessons are specifically based on Zulu language. In Zulu all words end in a vowel {**a, e, i, o, u**} and a word written or spoken as e.g. *umfaan* is incorrect it should be *umfana*.

LESSON 1: A GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION:

Zulu employs European alphabets. Some of the sounds of Zulu, however, cannot be catered for by alphabet, and another unusual feature is the use of clicks of which there are three in Zulu. Whereas in English some letters may have differing pronunciations, e.g. the letter 'a' in the words: man, may, mar the Zulu pronunciations, which are itemized below, are generally constant.

Vowels

- A** as in 'far' Examples: vala {shut} lala {sleep} umfana {boy}
E as in 'wet' Examples: geza {wash} sebenza {work} yebo {yes}
I as in 'inn' Examples: biza {call} siza {help} ngi {I, me} fika {arrive}
O as in 'ore' {never as in 'hope' as often mistakenly pronounced by White}
Examples: bona {see} izolo {yesterday} into {thing}
U as in 'full' Examples: vula {open} funa {want} umuntu {person}

Semi-vowels

y is pronounced as in English word “yeast” e.g. uyise {his/her father}

w is pronounced as in the English word “well” e.g. amawele {twins}

Consonants

b this is soft “**b**” sound pronounced with bilabial implosion, e.g. ubaba {my / our father}; bala {count}

bh this is hard “**b**” sound pronounced as in the English word “bed”. This is bilabial explosive sound e.g. bhala {write}; ibhala {a barrow}.

c this is a click sound. it is a sound sometimes made in English to express exasperation . The sound is made by pressing the tip of the tongue against the forepart of the upper mouth, and then withdrawing it, e.g. cela {ask} ceba {to inform against}.

ch this is the “**e**” sound aspirated, e.g. chela {sprinkle with water}; ichibi {pond}

d this is pronounced as in the English “dark,” e.g. idada {duck}; deka {lay the table}.

dl this is a fully voiced sound. It is a merging of the normal English “d” and “l” sounds, e.g. dlala {play}.

f is pronounced as in the English word “fair,” e.g. faka {put in}. funa {want}

g is pronounced as in the English words “golf” “gather”. It is never given the “**g**” sound as in the word “gentle,” e.g. goba {bend}; igama {name/word}.

gc this is a voiced combination of the “**g**” and “**c**” sounds, e.g. gcaba {vaccinate}.

gq this is voiced combination of the “**g**” sound and the click sound “**q**” e.g. gqiba {bury}

gx this is voiced combination of the “**g**” sound and the click sound “**x**” e.g. gxagxaza {leak very much}

h in some words this is pronounced as in English word “hand” and in others as in the Afrikaans word “hand”. {The double “**h**” for the second “**h**” sound is no longer used}, e.g. hamba {go}; ihhashi {horse}.

hl it has no equivalent in English e.g. hlaba {stab}, hlala {sit}

j this is pronounced as in the English word “jig,” e.g. jika {make a turn }

k this is pronounced as in the English word “scheme” e.g. ikati {cat}.

In many Zulu words “**k**” represents softer sound than this, something between a “**k**” and a “**g**”, e.g. ukuma {to stand} uThukela {Thukela river}.

kh this is an aspirated sound. It is pronounced rather like the “**c**” in the English word “comb,” e.g. ukhezo {spoon}.

kl this is often found to be the more difficult sound to pronounce. It is the type of tearing sound made towards the back of the throat, klaya {cut into strips}

l is pronounced as in the English word “land” e.g. lamba {be hungry}.

m is pronounced as in the English word “man,” e.g. umama {my/our mother}

n is pronounced as in the English word “nine” e.g. nuka {smell}

nc this is a nasalized sound. It is a combination of the “**n**” sound and the “**c**” click sound e.g. ncika {lean against}

ng this is pronounced as in the English word “linger,” e.g. amanga {falsehood}
ngc this is a voiced nasal sound, e.g. ingcindezi {hardship}
ngq this is a voiced nasal sound, e.g. ungqi {full stop}
ngx this is also a voiced nasal sound, ngxama {be angry}
nq this is a nasalized form of the “q” click sound, inqama {ram}.
nx this is a nasalized form of the “x” click sound, inxeba {wound}
p this is pronounced as in the English word “speech”, e.g. ipiki {a pick}.
ph this is the aspirated form the “p” sound. It is never pronounced as in the English word “phone,” e.g. phaka {dish out food}.
q this is a click sound. In order to sound this press the front part of the tongue against the upper part of the mouth, and then release the tongue sharply, e.g. qamba {make up}.
qh this represents the aspirated form of this click, e.g. qhamuka {appear}.
r the “r” as pronounced in English words does not occur in Zulu. It is now found in a number of imported words, e.g. irayisi {rice}.
s this is pronounced as in the English word “silk”. It is never given the “z” sound as in “hose”, e.g. sika {cut}.
sh this is pronounced as in English word “should”, e.g. shuka {rub together}.
t is pronounced as in the English word “tort”, e.g. totoba {walk with a halting gait}.
th this is an aspirated form of the “t” sound. It is never pronounced as in the word “this”, e.g. thoba {foment}.
tsh this is pronounced as in the English word “cheek”, although the Zulu sound is more ejective; e.g. tshinga {throw away}.
v is pronounced as in the English word “valour”, e.g. vala {close}.
x this is the sound sometimes made to indicate exasperation, or to urge a horse on to greater speed, e.g. ixoxo {frog}.
xh this is the aspirated form of the “x” click sound e.g. xhuma {join together}.
z this is pronounced as in the English word “zink”, e.g. ziba {pretend}.

LESSON 2: GREETINGS:

Pl.= plural	sing. = singular
Good morning / day / evening sir.	Pl.=Sanibonani / sing=sawubona
Good morning / day / evening madam.	Sanibonani / Sawubona mama.
How are you? singular	Unjani?
I am fine and how are you?	Ngiyaphila, wena unjani?
I am well.	Ngiyaphila
Good day ladies and gentlemen.	Sanibonani madoda namakhosikazi
Good day madam.	Sanibonani / sawubona nkosikazi
How are you? (plural).	Ninjani ?
We are well and how are you?	Sisaphila nina ninjani?
I am well.	Ngiyaphila
Thank you.	Ngiyabonga
Good day sir.	Sawubona mnumzane noma baba
Good day madam.	Sawubona nkosikazi noma mama
How are you?	Ninjani?
I am fine and how are you?	Ngiyaphila wena unjani?

I am fine.	Ngiyaphila.
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N.B: (**“Sawubona” is not specific to any time of the day and men are expected to take off their hats or caps when greeting elders”**).

LESSON 3: INTRODUCING SELF OR SOMEONE:

My name is Sanele.	Igama lami nginguSanele.
My last name is Ntuli.	Isibongo nguNtuli/ngingowakwaNtuli
What is your name?	Ungubani igama lakho?
I am from Botswana.	Ngibuya eBotswana.
Where are you from?	Ubuyaphi?/wena ubuyaphi?
His name is Thabo.	Igama lakhe nguThabo.
His last name is Thuto.	Isibongo sakhe nguThuto.
Are you from America?	Ubuya eMelika? Uqhamuka e-Melika?
I am a volunteer.	Ngilivolontiya.

LESSON 4: LEAVE-TAKING EXPRESSION:

Good-bye.	Sala kahle (salani kahle).
See you.	Ngizokubona / Sizobonana.
Have a good day.	Ube nelanga elimnandi.
Good night.	Ulale kahle.
See you tomorrow.	Ngizokubona kusasa.
See you later.	Ngizokubona emuva kwesikhathi.

LESSON 5: VOCABULARY 1 (VERBS).

To-	Uku-
Able to, be	ukwazi (depending on the context)
Advise, remind	ukweluleka /ukukhumbuza
Afraid of, be	ukusaba i... / ukusaba
Answer	Ukuphendula
Arrive	Ukufika
Ask	Ukubuza
Ask for (polite way)	ukucela
Away, go, travel	Ukuhamba
Be, become	ukuba

Begin	Ukuqala
Believe, agree	ukukholwa / ukuvuma
Boil	Ukubilisa
Borrow	Ukuboleka
Bring	Ukuletha
Burn	Ukushisa
Bury	ukugqiba / ukungwaba
Buy	Ukuthenga
Call another person	ukubiza omunye umuntu
Carry	Ukuthwala
Climb	Ukugibela
Close	Ukuvala
Come	Ukuza
Come in	Ukungena
Come out (emerge)	Ukuphuma
Cook	Ukupheka
Cry	Ukukhala
Dance	ukugida / ukusina / ukugiya / ukudansa
Delay	Ukulibazisa
Destroy	ukuchitha / ukushabalalisa
Do	Ukwenza
Drink	Ukuphuza
Early, to be	Ekuseni / ukufika ekuseni
Eat	Ukudla
Enter	Ukungena
Explain	Ukuchaza
Feel, Hear, Taste	ukuzwa / ukunambitha
Finish	Ukuqeda
Find	Ukuthola
Fix, prepare	Ukulungisa
Forgive	Ukuxolela
To see	Ukubona
Get up / Wake up	Ukuvuka
Give	Ukunika
Go	ukuya / ukuhamba
Happy, be	Ukujabula
Help	Ukusiza
Hold	Ukubamba
Injure	Ukulimaza
Keep	ukugcina / ukulonda
Kind, be	Ukubanomusa
Know	Ukwazi
Laugh	Ukuhleka
Learn, study	Ukufunda
Listen	Ukulalela

Like, love	Ukuthanda
Live	Ukuhlala
Need	Ukudinga
Open	Ukuvula
Pass	Ukudlula
Pay	ukukhokha
Pick up	Ukucosha
Place, put	Ukubeka
Refuse	Ukwala
Return	Ukubuya
Say	Ukusho
Sell	ukuthengisa
Sick, to be	Ukugula
Sit down	ukuhlala phansi
Sleep	Ukulala
Smoke; pull	ukubhema
Speak	ukukhuluma
Spend the night	Ukuchitha ubusuku.
Stay behind	Ukusala
Take	ukuthatha
Teach	ukufundisa
Tell	Ukutshela
Tired, become	ukukhathala
Try	Ukuzama
Understand	ukuzwisisa / ukuqondisisa
Use	ukusebenzisa
Visit	ukuvakasha
Want	Ukufuna
Wash (clothes)	ukuwasha
Bathe	Ukugeza
Watch	Ukubuka
Work	ukusebenza
Write	Ukubhula

LESSON 6: SOME USEFUL EXPRESSIONS:

I am tired	Ngikhathele.
I am sleepy	Ngiyozela./ ngiyazela
I am hungry	Ngilambile.
I am not hungry	Angilambile.
Where are you going?	Uyaphi?
When are you coming?	Uza nini?
Where is your home?	Ikhaya lakho likuphi? / kuphi ekhaya kini?

Where is Andrew?	Uphi uAndrew? Ulaphi uAndrew?
Edward is going to the post office	U-Edward uya eposini.
I do not go to the shop	Angiyi esitolo.
I am learning Zulu; I study Zulu	Ngifunda isiZulu.
I don't take coffee	Angiphuzi ikhofi.
I need some rest	Ngidinga ukuphumula.
I eat; I am eating	Ngiyadla.
He / She is not eating; He / She doesn't eat	Akadli.
She does not study	Akafundi.
I bathe in the morning	Ngigeza ekuseni.
I wake up very early	Ngivuka ekuseni kakhulu.
It's becoming late (nightfall)	Kuba sebusuku. Sekuyahlwa
It's time up	Isikhathi siphelile / isikhathi sihambile.
I am thirsty	Ngomile.
I do not understand	Angiqondi / angizwa / angizwisisi.
Speak slowly	Khuluma kancani.
Excuse me	Uxolo.
Speak quickly	Khuluma ngokushesha.
Do you have a problem(s)?	Unenkinga na? Unenkinga yini?
Yes, I have a problem	Yebo ngingenkinga.
No, I don't have a problem	Cha, anginankinga.
Do you have any questions?	Unombuzo?
Ask	Buza.
Greet	Bulisa / Bingelela.
Please	Ngiyacela.
Thank you	Ngiyabonga.
Again	Futhi

LESSON 7: VOCABULARY 2 (NOUNS):

Table	Itafula.
Chair	Isitulo / isihlalo
Plate	Ipuleti
Cup	Inkomishi.
Spoon	Isipuni.
Knife	Ummese.
Broom	Umshanelo.
Bed	Umbede.
Blanket	Ingubo.
Clothes	Izingubo.
Pants	Ibhulukwe.

Shoes	Izicathulo.
Pencil	Ipansele.
Book	Incwadi.
Bag	Isikhwama.
Pen	Ipeni.
Window	Ifasitela.
Door	Umnyango.

LESSON 8: PRONOUNS:

I	Mina
You (singular)	Wena
He / She	Yena
We / Us	Thina
You (plural)	Nina
Them	Bona

LESSON 9: CONNECTING WORDS:

And	Na-
But	Kodwa
Or	Noma
As / Like	Njenga
Therefore	Ngakho / ngakhoke
Because	Ngoba

LESSON 10: NEGATION:

	I	You (sing)	She / He	We	You (plu)	They
Present	Ngiyafuna.	Uyafuna.	Uyafuna.	Siyafuna.	Niyafuna.	Bayafuna.
	I want.	You want.	She / He wants.	We want.	You want.	They want.
Negative Present	Angifuni.	Awufuni.	Akafuni.	Asifuni.	Anifuni.	Abafuni.
	I do not want.	You do not want.	She / He does not want.	We do not want.	You do not want.	They do not want.

Past	Bengifuna / ngifunile.	Bewufuna / ufunile.	Bekafuna / ufunile.	Besifuna / sifunile.	Benifuna / nifunile.	Bebafuna / bafunile.
	I did want / I wanted.	You did want.	She / He did want.	We did want.	You did want.	They did want.
Negative Past	Bengingafuni /angifunanga	Bewungafuni /awufunanga	Bekangafuni /akafunanga	Besingafuni /asifunanga	Beningafuni /anifunanga	Bebangafuni /abafunanga
	I did not want.	You did not want.	She / He did not want.	We did not want.	You did not want.	They did not want.
Negative Future	Angizufuna.	Awuzufuna.	Akazufuna.	Asizufuna.	Anizufuna.	Abazufuna.
	I will not want.	You will not want.	She / He will not want.	We will not want.	You will not want.	They will not want.
Future	Ngizofuna.	Uzofuna.	Uzofuna.	Sizofuna.	Nizofuna.	Bazofuna.
	I will want.	You will want.	She / He will want.	We will want.	You will want.	They will want.

N.B: When you add the negative indicator “a” in the present statement the last letter in the verb (which is usually “a”), changes to “i(applicable in negative present tense).

LESSON 11: THE VERB “to be” AND “to have”.

I am reading.	Ngiyafunda.
You (singular) are reading.	Uyafunda.
You (plural) are reading.	Niyafunda.
She / He is reading.	Uyafunda.
They are reading.	Bayafunda.
We are reading.	Siyafunda.
	<i>N.B: The “ya is applicable in all pronouns and it represents “is”, “am” and “are”.</i>
The verb “to have” (na-)	
I have a book.	Nginencwadi
You (sin) have a book.	Unencwadi
You (plu) have a book.	Ninencwadi
She / He has a book.	Unencwadi
They have a book.	Banencwadi
We have a book.	Sinencwadi

LESSON 12 : QUESTIONS AND COMMANDS :

What is it ?	Yini?
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When did you come?	Uze nini?
Where are you from?	Ubuyaphi/uqhamukaphi?
How are you?	Unjani?
Who are you?	Ungubani?
Which one?	Yini? Siphi? Liphi?
Which ones?	Ziphi? Baphi?
Why?	Ngobani?
<i>Commanding Expressions:</i>	
Open the door.	Vula umnyango.
Close the door.	Vala umnyango.
Stand and talk.	Sukuma ukhulume.
Stand.	Sukuma.
Get inside.	Ngena phakathi.
Come here.	Woza la /lapha.
Keep quiet / Listen.	Thula / lalela.
Go back.	Buyela /Iya emuva.
Come to the front.	Woza phambili.
Sit down.	Hlala phansi.

LESSON 13: EXPRESSING NEEDS:

What do you want?	Ufunani?
I want a candle.	Ngifuna ikhandlela.
What do you need?	Udingani?
I need money.	Ngidinga imali.
Where do you want to go?	Ufuna ukuyaphi / ufuna ukuya kuphi?
I want to go home.	Ngifuna ukuya ekhaya.
What do you want to do now?	Ufuna ukwenzani manje?
I do not know.	Angazi.
How do you feel?	Uzizwa kanjani.
My head still aches.	Ikhanda lami lisebuhlungu.
Why does she need a lot of money?	Kungani adinge imali eningi?
She needs to buy food and clothes.	Udinga ukuthenga ukudla nezingubo.
Do you like coffee?	Uyalithanda ikhofi?
No, I do not like coffee.	Cha, angilithandi ikhofi.
Where are you going tomorrow?	Uyaphi kusasa?
I want to go to the shops in the morning.	Ngifuna ukuya ezitolo ekuseni.

LESSON 14: FOOD ITEMS:

Food.	Ukudla.
Sorghum.	Amabele.

Mealie-meal.	Impuphu.
Sugar.	Ushukela.
Salt.	Usawoti.
Water.	Amanzi.
Milk.	Ubisi.
Tomatoes.	Utamatisi
Potatoes.	Amazambane.
Eggs.	Amaqanda.
Bread.	Isinkwa.
Coffee.	Ikhofi.
Tea.	Itiye.
Soft porridge (made from sorghum / mealie-meal)	Umdokwe.
Onions.	u-anyanyisi.
Orange.	i –olitshi.
Apple.	i-apula.
Peanuts.	Amakinati.
Beans.	Ubhotshisi.

LESSON 15: FAMILY:

Grandfather.	Umkhulu.
Grandmother.	Ugogo.
Father.	Ubaba.
Mother.	Umama.
Sister; Brother.	Udadewethu (usisi); umfowethu {ubhuti}.
(My) Older sibling.	Umfowethu omdala
(My) Younger sibling.	Umfowethu omncani
Uncle (paternal).	Ubaba omkhulu.
Uncle (maternal).	Umalume.
Aunt (paternal).	u-anti.
Aunt (maternal).	Umalumekazi.
Cousin.	Umzala.
Parents.	Abazali.
Child / children.	Umntwana /abantwana. {ingane /izingane }
Family.	Umndeni.

LESSON 16: ADVERBS OF TIME:

Today.	Nam'hlanje.
Yesterday.	Izolo.

Tomorrow.	Kusasa
The day before yesterday.	Ngaphambi kwayizolo./ kuthangi
Few weeks ago.	Amasonto ambalwa edlule.
This week.	Kulelisonto/kuleliviki.
Last week.	Isondo elidlule.
Next week.	Isondo elizayo.
This year.	Kulonyaka.
Last year.	Ngonyaka odlule.
Next year.	Ngonyaka ozayo.
This month.	Kulenyanga.
At the moment.	Okwamanje.
Later on; earlier on (depending on context).	Emva kweskhathi /ngaphambi kweskhathi.
At night.	Ebusuku.
In the morning.	Ekuseni.
At noon (till sunset).	Ntambama/ekushoneni kwelanga.
Around sunset.	ntambama.

LESSON 17: DAYS OF THE WEEK:

Monday.	UMsombuluko.
Tuesday.	ULwesibili.
Wednesday.	ULwesithathu.
Thursday.	ULwesine.
Friday.	ULwesihlanu.
Saturday.	UMgqibelo
Sunday.	I Sonto.

LESSON 18: NUMBERS:

1	Kunye.
2	Kubili.
3	Kuthathu.
4	Kune.
5	Kuhlanu.
6	Isithupha.
7	Isikhombisa.
8	Isishiyagalombili.
9	Isishiyagalolunye.
10	Ishumi.
11	Ishumi nanye.
12	Ishumi nambili.

13	Ishumi nantathu.
14	Ishumi nane
15	Ishumi nanhlanu.
16	Ishumi nesithupha
17	Ishumi nesikhombisa.
18	Ishumi nesishiyagalombili.
19	Ishumi nesishiyagalolunye.
20	Amashumi amabili.
21	Amashumi amabili nanye.
22	Amashumi amabili nambili.
23	Amashumi amabili nantathu.
24	Amashumi amabili nane.
25	Amashumi amabili nanhlanu.
26	Amashumi amabili nesithupha.
27	Amashumi amabili nesikhombisa.
28	Amashumi amabili nesishiyagalombili.
29	Amashumi amabili nisishiyagalolunye.
30	Amashumi amathathu.

LESSON 19: COLOURS:

White.	-mhlophe.
Black.	-mnyama.
Purple.	-nsomi
Green.	-hlaza
Yellow.	-phuzi
Red.	-bomvu
Pink.	-phinki

LESSON 20: DAYS ACTIVITIES:

I wake up at 6 am.	Ngivuka ngo 6 {six} ekuseni. Ngivuka ngehora lesithupha ekuseni.
I bathe.	Ngiyageza.
And then, I eat.	Bese,ngiyadla.
I go to school.	Ngiya esikoleni.
I spent the day at school.	Ngichithe ilanga lonke esikoleni
We were doing a lot of things today.	Besenza izinto eziningi namhlanje.
There were visitors from the police.	Bekukhona izivakashi ezivela emaphoyiseni.
I was excited today.	Bengijabule namhlanje.
When I come back from school, I rest.	Uma ngibuya esikoleni ngiyaphumula.

LESSON 21: VOCABULARY 3 (NAMES OF PLACES):

<i>Places:</i>	<i>Izindawo.</i>
House.	Indlu.
Classroom.	Ikilasi./indlu yokufundela.
Toilet.	Ithoyilethi/indlu yangasese.
Kitchen.	Ikhishi.
School.	Isikole.
Hospital.	Isibhedlela.
Clinic.	Umtholampilo.
Shop.	Isitolo.
Post Office.	Iposi
River.	Umfula.
Field.	Insimu.
Church.	Isonto.
Bank.	Ibhangе.
Customary court.	Isigcawu senkantolo.

LESSON 22: SOME WORDS WITH SIMILAR OR ALMOST SIMILAR SPELLINGS BUT DIFFERENT MEANINGS:

Sorghum.	Amabele.
Human breasts.	Amabele.
Pumpkins	Amathanga.
Human thighs	Amathanga.
Moon.	Inyanga.
Traditional healer	Inyanga.
Month.	Inyanga.
To feel	Ukuzwa
To hear	Ukuzwa.
To bury	Ukufihla.
To hide something.	Ukufihla
Church	isonto,
Sunday	iSonto.

LESSON 23: ASKING FOR PRICES:

How much is a bag of oranges?	Malini isaka lamawolintshi?
How much is it?	Malini?
It is R4.50.	Ingu R4.50(depending on what one is talking about)
How much is each orange?	Malini iwolintshi elilodwa /linye?
They are 75cents each.	Angu 75senti lilinye
What is the total price?	Malini kukonke
The total price is R17.50.	Kukonke ngu R17.50

LESSON 24: WEATHER AND SEASONS:

Today, it is cold.	Namuhla kuyabanda
Today, it is hot.	Namuhla kuyashisa
It is warm.	Kufudumele.
It is sunny.	Kunelanga.
It is windy.	Kunomoya (<i>N.B: It depends on context</i>).
Today, it is better.	Namuhla kuncono.
Summer.	Ihlobo
Winter.	Ubusika
Autumn.	Ikwindla
Spring.	Intwasahlobo

LESSON 25: HEALTH EXPRESSIONS:

I am not well.	Angizizwakahle/ngiyagula.
I have a headache.	Ngiphethwe yikhanda / ikhanda lami libuhlungu.
My tummy hurts.	Ngiphethwe yisisu / isisu sami sibuhlungu
His eyes are sore.	Amehlo akhe abuhlungu
Sanele is going to the clinic.	uSanele uya emtholampilo
She / He went to see a doctor.	Uyobona udokotela.
Her leg is swollen.	Unyawo lwakhe luvuvukele
Sizwe ate something bad.	uSizwe udle into engalungile/embi.
They want to go to the clinic.	Bafuna ukuya emtholampilo

LESSON 26: SAFETY EXPRESSIONS:

Help me.	Ngisize
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I need help.	Ngidinga usizo.
I have been attacked; I am being attacked.	Ngihlaselwe/ ngiyahlaselwa
My house has been broken into.	Indlu yami iphuliwe/igqekeziwe
There has been theft in my house.	Ngigqekezelwe endlini yami /kubekubugebengu endlini yami.
I have been robbed.	Ngibanjwe inkunzi.

