



An Introduction to Survival Acholi



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This survival Acholi 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 Acholi, to teach you easy and simple phrases to help you get by in Uganda.

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

Acholi is predominantly spoken in Northern Uganda. It is spoken by people called Acholi.

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

Acholi is a tonal language.

Lesson 1: The Alphabet

In the alphabet of Acholi, the following letters of the English alphabet do not exist although their sounds occur. Those letters are **F, H, Q, S, V, X** and **Z**. Their sounds are pronounced using combination of certain consonants and/or vowels.

Vowel sounds

Acholi language has 5 cardinal vowels. These are: **a, e, i, o, u**.

Listen carefully to the following words as you notice how vowels are pronounced:

Vowel a as in:	gang, gang	-	home
Vowel e as in:	dek, dek	-	sauce
Vowel i as in:	bin, bin	-	come
Vowel o as in:	bong, bong	-	beehive
Vowel u as in:	cuk, cuk	-	market.

Consonants

Acholi language has 14 consonant sounds and they are pronounced as below:

Consonant b as in:	bolo, bolo	-	throw
Consonant c as in:	cam, cam	-	food
Consonant d as in:	dek, dek	-	sauce
Consonant g as in:	gang, gang	-	home
Consonant j as in:	jang, jang	-	branch
Consonant k as in:	kodi, kodi	-	seed
Consonant l as in:	lak, lak	-	tooth
Consonant m as in:	mon, mon	-	woman
Consonant n as in:	nam, nam	-	lake
Consonant p as in:	pala, pala	-	knife
Consonant r as in:	rac, rac	-	bad
Consonant t as in:	tara, tara	-	lamp
Consonant w as in:	war, war	-	shoes
Consonant y as in:	yamo, yamo	-	wind.

Combination of consonants

Acholi language has the following consonant combinations represented by the following sounds:

Consonant combination ng as in:	ngom, ngom	-	land
Consonant combination ny as in:	nyanya, nyanya	-	tomatoes.

Lesson 2: Formal greetings

Greetings are very important in Acholi. They are used often to begin a conversation with someone. In Acholi, titles are not expressly used; as greetings are polite enough.

Now listen to the formal morning greetings as Moses greets Grace.

Moses:	Ibutu nining?	How did you spend the night?
Grace:	<i>Abutu maber. In kono Ibutu nining?</i>	<i>Fine. How did you spend the night?</i>
Moses:	Abutu maber.	Very fine.
Grace:	<i>Itye nining?</i>	<i>How are you?</i>
Moses:	Atye maber	I am fine.

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

Moses:	Ibutu nining?
Grace:	<i>Maber. Ibutu nining?</i>
Moses:	Maber.
Grace:	<i>Itye nining?</i>
Moses:	Maber.

Afternoon greeting:

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

Grace:	Ninoni obedo nining?	Did you spend the day well?
Moses:	<i>Obedo maber. Megi kono obedo nining?</i>	<i>Fine. Did you spend the day well?</i>
Grace:	Maber.	Fine.
Moses:	<i>Itye nining?</i>	<i>How are you?</i>
Grace:	Atye maber.	I am fine.

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

Grace:	Ninoni obedo nining?
Moses:	<i>Obedo maber. Megi kono obedo nining?</i>
Grace:	Maber.
Moses:	<i>Itye nining?</i>
Grace:	Atye maber.

Lesson 3: Informal greetings.

These are commonly used among peers and acquaintances.

Listen carefully as Grace greets her friend Moses:

Grace:	Itye nining, Moses?	How are you, Moses?
Moses:	Atye maber, Grace.	I am fine Grace.
Grace:	Ngo manyen?	Any news?
Moses:	Lok maber keken, in kono?	Good news only, how about you?
Grace:	Atye marom.	I am fine.

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

Grace:	Itye nining, Moses?
Moses:	Atye maber, Grace.
Grace:	Ngo manyen?
Moses:	Lok maber keken. In kono?
Grace:	Atye marom.

Listen and repeat after short pauses:

Ningo?	ningo?
Mo pe,	mo pe.

Now try it out yourself:

Say hello to Grace:	Ningo Grace?
Say hello to Moses:	Ningo Moses?
Say I am fine:	Atye marom.

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 – **An nyinga:** plus your name.

Moses meets Grace for the first time:

Moses:	An nyinga <u>Moses</u> . In kono?	I am <u>Moses</u> . Who are you?
Grace:	An nyinga Grace.	I am Grace.

Now listen to Grace introducing herself to Moses:

Grace: An nyinga Grace. In kono? I am Grace. Who are you?

Moses: An nyinga Moses. I am Moses.

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

Listen: A aa ki A aa ki I come from

Grace: A aa ki i Chicago i Amerika. I come from Chicago in America.
In iaa ki kwene? Where are you from?

Moses: A aa ki i Boston i Amerika. I come from Boston in America.

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

Grace: Iya yom me neni. I am glad to see you.

Moses: An bene. Me too.

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

Moses: An nyinga Moses. In kono?

Grace: An nyinga Grace. A aa ki i Chicago i Amerika. In iaa ki kwene?

Moses: A aa ki i Boston i Amerika.

Grace: Iya yom me neni.

Moses: An bene.

Lesson 5: Polite Expressions and Handy Phrases

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

These are:

Apwoyo Thank you.

Apwoyo matek Thank you very much.

Apwoyo bino Thank you for coming.

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

Cwinya yom me neni I am happy to see you.

If you want to thank somebody for cooking you say:

Apwoyo tedo Thank you for cooking.

Other handy phrases are:

Eyo	yes
Ku / pe	no
Lok mot mot	speak slowly
Cit mot mot	go slowly
Pe amito	I don't want
Amito	I want
Pe aniang	I have not understood
Pe aniang	I don't understand
Pe angeyo	I don't know
Ciling adii?	How much money?
Miya cul ma omyero acul	Give me my bill
Miya ricita	Give me my receipt
Cente na pe	I have no money
Nwo	repeat
Ada	it is true
Pe ada	it is not true
Pe kumeno?	Not so?
En eno	that's it!
Pe i miya	don't give me
Apwoyo, ento iya opong (ayeng)	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:

Moses:	Cwinya yom me neni.	I am glad to see you.
Grace:	<i>An bene.</i>	<i>Me too.</i>
Moses:	Amini ngo?	What can I give you?
Grace:	<i>Kwon ango ma tye?</i>	<i>What starchy foods do you have?</i>
Moses:	Atye ki kwon kal ki mucele.	I have millet bread and rice.
Grace:	<i>Dek kono?</i>	<i>How about sauce?</i>
Moses:	Atye ki ringo, gweno ki munyewa.	I have meat, chicken and peanut sauce.
Grace:	<i>Gin amata, kono ngo matye?</i>	<i>How about drinks, what do you have?</i>
Moses:	Atye ki soda, matunda ki pii.	I have soda, passion fruit juice and water.
Grace:	<i>Kela mucele, ringo gweno ki matunda.</i>	<i>Bring me rice, chicken and passion fruit</i>

Moses:	Aya	juice.
Grace:	Aculi ciling adii?	Okay.
		How much do I pay?

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

Other ways of ordering food:

You can say:

I tye	Do you have.....?
<i>Example:</i> I tye ki cam mo?	Do you have some food, please?
I tye ki pii amata?	Do you have some drinking water?

Or you can say:

Konya ki	I request for some
<i>Examples:</i> Konya ki mugati	I request for some bread
Konya ki tong gweno	I request for some eggs

Or you can say:

Mina	Give me some
<i>Examples:</i> Mina cai	Give me some tea, please
Mina kawa	Give me some coffee, please.

Listen to these phrases and repeat after the pause:

Imito angó?	What would you like?
Itye ki ngo?	What do you have?
Cam angó ma itye kwede?	What food do you have?
Akeli ngo?	What can I get you?

Lesson 7: Asking for directions

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

Shirley tye kwene?	Where is Shirley?
Opici tye kwene?	Where are the offices?
Ka ito tekci tye kwene?	Where is the taxi park?
Ka ito bac tye kwene?	Where is the bus park?
Posta tye kwene?	Where is the post office?
Beng tye kwene?	Where is the bank?
Atwero loko cente kwene?	From where can I exchange money?
Cuk tye kwene?	Where is the market?
Ot coron tye kwene?	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:

Otel <u>Sheraton</u> tye kwene?	Where is <u>Sheraton</u> hotel?
Yoo otel <u>Sheraton</u> tye kwene?	Where is the way to <u>Sheraton</u> hotel?
Kabutu pud tye?	Do you still have some rooms?
Pii malyet tye i ot lwok?	Do you have hot water in the bathroom?
Net tye i odi wu?	Do you have mosquito nets in the rooms?
Itwero miya rum pi ngat acel?	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.

Tima kica	Forgive me.
Pe i par	Don't mind.
Gum ma rac dok do!	I am sorry for what has happened to you!
Ayaa! Lit kumeno!	Oh! So painful! (This is only used for condolence).

Lesson 10: Useful phrases

For information gathering, different interrogatives can be used.

Kwene?	Where?
I cito kwene?	Where are you going?
I aa ki kwene?	Where are you from?
I aa ki ka kwene?	Where are you coming from?
Ngo?	What?
Gin ango?	What is it?
I tye ka timo ngo?	What are you doing?
I timo ngo?	What do you do?
I nyero ngo?	What are you laughing at?
Man ngo?	What is this?
I mito ngo, ce?	What do you want, please?
Awene?	When?
I cito awene?	When are you going?
I bino awene?	When are you coming?
Pingo?	Why?

Pingo i tye ka nyero?

Why are you laughing?

Pingo i tye ka koko?

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: I wot maber!

(Goodbye!)

B: Aya, wot maber bene.

(Okay, good bye to you too!)

A: Wuwek aciti!

(I beg to leave!)

B: Aya, wot maber.

(Okay, travel safely)

A: But maber!

(Goodnight!)

B: Aya, in bene i but maber.

(Okay, you too have a good night)

A: Bed maber!

(Spend the day well!)

B: Aya, in bene i bed maber.

(Okay, you too have a good day)

A: Dong maber!

(Stay well!)

B: Aya, in bene i wot maber.

(Okay, you too go well)

A: Pud wanen.

(We will see each other!)

B: Aya!

(Okay)

A: Wot maber!

(Travel well!)

B: Apwoyo.

(Thank you).

Lesson 12: Travel

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

Kwica.

There.

Anyim kwica

In front there or ahead there.

I citej

At the stage.

Ka cung pa / Citej pa

At the stage of

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

Cit mot mot!

Go slowly!

Ngwec mot mot!

Drive slowly!

Kwe ngwec.

Reduce on the speed.

Other words for travel:

Tekci ma cito Gulu tye kwene?

Where are the taxis to Gulu?

Bac oo cawa adii?

What time does the bus arrive?

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

Acknowledgements:

This production is made possible by the following:

Script writers: Shirley Byakutaga, Training Manager
Henry Kabayo, Language Coordinator.

Language Instructors:

Adonga Moses Opiyo
Sr. Grace Aciro Otto.

Directed by:

McGrath Jean Thomas, Country Director, Peace Corps Uganda.

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