

Swahili I (A005297)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	Dutch, English	Gent	practical independent work seminar
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Shayo, Gundelinda	LW21	staff member
Bostoën, Koen	LW21	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in African Languages and Cultures	5	A
Micro-credential Swahili	5	A
Exchange Programme African Languages and Cultures	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in African Studies	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in African Studies	5	A
Elective Set African Studies	5	A

Teaching languages

English, Dutch

Keywords

Swahili, Bantu, East-Africa

Position of the course

This introductory course situates both the present-day role of Swahili as a lingua franca in East-Africa and its historical status as language of the classical Swahili culture. The students acquire elementary Swahili vocabulary as well as basic insights in the grammar of Swahili as a Bantu language with special focus on phonology, morphology and the interaction between the two domains. In this way students learn how to translate basic sentences from Swahili to Dutch and the other way around. Moreover, they learn how to make grammatical analyses of Swahili. The course also offers them the basic competences to understand spoken and written Swahili and to speak and write it themselves.

Contents

By means of short dialogues and written texts pertaining to the daily life in and the cultures of East-Africa the students acquire and exercise basic Swahili vocabulary and the elementary structures of Swahili grammar. They also learn how to use this vocabulary and grammar both orally and in written form (read, write, listen, speak). They learn how to present themselves and others in Swahili and to have a basic conversation with regard to daily activities, such as greeting, shopping, travelling, etc.

Initial competences

Preliminary knowledge of Swahili is not needed.

Final competences

1 The objectives of this course correspond to the following general objectives of the Bachelor in African languages and cultures:
B.1.1. Acquire insights into African linguistics.

B.1.2. Command the grammatical structure of Swahili and Lingála and develop an elementary oral fluency in both languages as a generative basis to acquire active competence in those and other Bantu languages.

2 In terms of language acquisition, reaching level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The student can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. He/she can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. He/she can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

3 As for linguistics, acquiring a scientific understanding of the basic structures of Swahili grammar, particularly with respect to phonology, morphology and the interaction between the two domains.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Practical, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Weekly seminar by the titular; weekly practicals by the language teacher; accompanied self study (weekly exercises at home); 2 intermediary tests. Facilities are provided to students who do not speak Dutch. Students who miss more than 20% of the practicals without legitimate justification can no longer participate in the examination.

If the classes mentioned above cannot take place on campus due to COVID-19 restrictions, online alternatives will be offered.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Swahili: A Comprehensive Grammar (forthcoming)

Indicative price: € 60

Optional: no

Author : Koen Bostoen, Mary Charwi & Maud Devos

Oldest Usable Edition : 2026

Online Available : Yes

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : intensive

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : intensive

Type: Handbook

Name: McGrath, D. and L. Marten. 2003. Colloquial Swahili: the complete course for beginners. London: Routledge.

Indicative price: € 35

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : D. McGrath & L. Marten.

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : Yes

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : intensive

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

References

- ASHTON, E.O. 1947 Swahili Grammar. London : Longmans (reedited until '70)
- DE SCHRUYVER, G-M. et al. Online Swahili-English Dictionary: <http://www.goswahili.org/dictionary/>
- JOHNSON, F. 1939. A Standard English-Swahili dictionary. London: Geoffrey Cumberledge.

- JOHNSON, F. 1950. A Standard Swahili-English dictionary. Oxford: OUP.
- MDEE J.S & MASSAMBA D.P.B et al. 1996. Tuki English-Swahili Dictionary. Dar es Salaam: Institute of Kiswahili Research.
- PERROT, D.V. 1951. Teach yourself Swahili. London: English University Press
- RACINE-ISSA, Odile. 2003. Le swahili sans peine. Paris: Assimil (met audiomateriaal) – SACLEUX C. 1939-1941. Dictionnaire swahili-français, 2 vols. Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie
- TUKI/UNESCO/SIDA. 1990. Kamusi sanifu ya isimu na lugha. Dar es Salam: Tuki/Unesco/Sida.
- ZAWAWI, Sharifa M. 1998. Jifunze Kiswahili Chetu, Vol. 2: Learn Our Kiswahili. Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Africa World Press.
- ZAWAWI, S.M. 2001. Kiswahili Kwa Kitendo: An Introductory-Intermediate Course. Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Africa World Press. Accompanying audio files: <http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu/swahili/index.html>

Course content-related study coaching

Interactive counselling through e-mail or by (electronic) appointment (office, MS Teams, Skype, etc.).

Assessment moments

end-of-term assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment, Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment, Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

The written and oral exam take place succesively. The students first pass the written exam simultaneously and then individually the oral exam. Students who miss more than 20% of the practicals without legitimate justification can no longer participate in the examination.

Calculation of the examination mark

100% periodic evaluation: written exam (75%) and oral exam (25%). Students who do not participate in (one of the parts of) the assessment, or have a score lower than 10/20 for one of the parts, automatically fail the entire course. End scores higher than 10/20 will, in this case, be reduced to the highest non-passing score.

Facilities for Working Students

1. Recordings of the grammar classes can be made available
2. Attending language practice classes is normally compulsory, but exceptions for working students can be considered
3. Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
4. Feedback can be given by email, telephone or during an appointment during or after office hours

Extra information:

It needs to be pointed out that acquiring a new language without attending the course is not obvious. This is especially so for the practice sessions.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy and/or check <https://www.ugent.be/lw/en/degree/fsa/workingandstudying.htm>.