



# Why Study Swahili?

Swahili (or Kiswahili as it is called when one is speaking the language) is the most important and widely studied African language. It is the national and official language of Kenya and Tanzania. It is the official language of Uganda and Rwanda. It is also the lingua franca of East and Central Africa, and the working language of the African Union.

It is aired in radio broadcasts such as British Broadcast Corporation, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle. It is heard in songs of famous singers such as Miriam Makeba and in popular films like *Lion King*. African Americans refer to their annual cultural festival as Kwanzaa, which is derived from the Swahili word, kwanza ('first' in English).

Swahili is taught in academic institutions from Japan in the east to the United States and Mexico in the west, and in various countries in the African continent. The study of the language provides interesting platforms for discussing sociocultural, linguistic, political, and economic issues of the region. There are many benefits of knowing the Swahili language, including the fact that it serves as a good vehicle to accessing Swahili culture and other African cultures in the region. Whatever the area of research one is in such as linguistics, anthropology, geography, archaeology, or even sociology, knowledge of Swahili and its many varieties is essential if one is working in East and Central Africa. Knowing the language enhances the credibility of researchers interested in the region. Most importantly, Swahili is a critical language in promoting development in the lives of the people of eastern and central Africa.

# Learn these everyday Phrases!

- Hello!: **Jambo!**
- **Shikamoo!** (greeting to an elderly person)
- Welcome: **Karibu**
- How are you?: **Habari gani?**
- Fine or Peace: **Nzuri** or **Salama**
- What is your name?:  
**Jina lako ni nani?**
- My name is \_\_\_\_\_.  
**Jina langu ni \_\_\_\_\_.**
- Goodbye: **Kwaheri**
- Morning greeting: **Habari ya asubuhi**
- Afternoon greeting: **Habari ya mchana**
- Evening greeting: **Habari ya jioni**
- Good luck: **Kila la kheri**
- Travel safely: **Safiri salama**
- Excuse me: **Samahani**
- Sorry!: **Pole!**
- No worries: **Hakuna matata**



Swahili Language Map



A wedding ceremony in Zanzibar



Tourists on a Mombasa beach



A fish market in Zanzibar



Kilimanjaro in Tanzania is the highest mountain in Africa

Studying Swahili in the United States:

Please check the "Language Inventory" menu on NALRC website.