AfriGIS Languages Initiative

Episode 2
Greetings in Setswana
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Good day, and welcome to the AfriGIS languages course. My name is Caster Seakamela and I am Eugene van Deventer and we will be presenting the AfriGIS languages course. The AfriGIS languages course is a social responsibility and cultural integration initiative by AfriGIS. Please visit us at www.afrigis.co.za/languages for more information and learning material.

Coming up today is episode two of the formal course which consists of twenty-six episodes published on a bi-weekly basis. Today we will spend around five minutes on formal greetings in Setswana.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to use the correct greeting terminology, as well as making your greetings more specific to gender and different age groups. Dumelang, the word dumelang may sound familiar as it is commonly used across all Sotho languages in South Africa, for example in Setswana, Northern Sotho and South Sotho. Dumela is a verb which means “agree”. The literal meaning is hello, or good morning or even good afternoon.

Dumela is used to greet one person. To change the verb to the plural from, we add -ng at the end of the verb. In this case, the plural form of dumela will be dumelang.

The plural form is used when greeting more than one person, or greeting someone of higher authority and even some one older than you. It is used as a form of respect to the other party.

Listen to the following examples:

When you find a group of people standing at a coffee station, you will greet them collectively. The correct phrase to use is “Dumelang”.

The response from the group members would be: “Ahee”, or “ashee”, or even “dumela” may be used to acknowledge the greetings.

The follow up phrase would be: “Le kae” which means “how are you?”

The response from the audience may come back in plural form as well: “Re teng, lena le kae.” meaning “We are fine and how are you?”

It is common practice to ask the other person as to how they are doing.

The phrase “O kae” means “How are you?

The direct translation would be “Where are you?”

“Ke teng, wena o kae?” this means “I am fine and how are you?”

“Le nna ke teng” this means “I am fine too.”

This was an example of general greetings in Setswana.

In English, greetings are made specific according to the different times of day; Good morning, good afternoon and so on. The same happens in Setswana, in a different way though.
Now listen to the examples that follow:

In the morning:

Dumela - Good morning

O tsogile jang? – This phrase can only be used in the morning. The meaning is how are you this morning? Literally meaning, how did you wake up?

Ke tsogile sentle, wena o tsogile jang? I am fine, and how are you?

In the afternoon

Assuming that you will be greeting a female person:

Dumela mme - Good afternoon Ma'am

O tlhotse jang? - How did you spend your day?

Ke tlhotse sentle, wena o tlhotse jang? - My day was well and how was yours?

The person leaving the room or the meeting would say “sala sentle” which means stay well and the one staying behind would respond by “tsamaya sentle”, meaning go well.

Please remember the following words:

Dumela Hello, Good day, Good morning
Re Sir or Father
Mme Ma'am, Mother
Tsogile Woke up
Tlholtse Spent the day
Sala Stay behind
Tsamaya Go
Sentle Well
Wena You
Nna Me
Jang? How?

This concludes the lesson for today. The next episode will be on Phrases for Daily Use. Please visit us at www.afrigis.co.za/languages for more topics of interest. Sala sentle.