Namibian Sign Language to English and Oshiwambo

Ruth Morgan
Gallaudet University

Scott Liddell
Gallaudet University

Marius M.N. Haikali
Gallaudet University

Sackeus P. Ashipala
Gallaudet University

Polo Daniel
Gallaudet University

See next page for additional authors

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Namibian Sign Language to English and Oshiwambo

By

Ruth Morgan
Scott Liddell
Marius M.N. Haikali
Sackeus P. Ashipala
Polo Daniel
Hilifilua E.T. Haiduwah
Rauna Ndeshihafela Hashiyana
Nangolo Jeremia Israel,
Festus Tshikuku Linus
Henock Hango Niilenge
Paul Setzer

January 10, 1991
MEMBERS OF THE DICTIONARY PROJECT TEAM

We are a group of six Deaf Black Namibians who came to Gallaudet University with our two hearing teachers for fifteen months to make this dictionary. We worked with two linguists Ruth Morgan and Scott Liddell to do so. Ruth Morgan trained us to record and analyze our language. Scott Liddell was responsible for supervising the linguistic analysis and the organization of this dictionary, especially when it came to problematic signs. We were all involved in the process of providing the sign meanings and their uses in different contexts. Two of us, Sackeus Ashipala and Festus Linus were trained by Paul Setzer from the Gallaudet Art Department to illustrate the signs. Ruth Morgan coordinated the production of this dictionary and was also responsible for translating the signs into English. Ndeshihafela Hashiyana and Hilifilua Haiduwah translated the signs into Oshiwambo. Marius Haikali verified the sign translations. The team members are listed below:

Ruth Morgan: Co-compiler, sign language analysis & sign organization, English text, English index & editor

Scott Liddell: Consultant: sign language analysis, sign organization & introduction

Marius M.N. Haikali: Co-compiler, sign meanings & Namibian sign language editor

Sackeus P. Ashipala: Co-compiler, photography, sign illustrations, artwork & sign meanings

Polo Daniel: Co-compiler & sign meanings

Hilifilua E.T. Haiduwah: Co-compiler, Oshiwambo translations & index

Rauna Ndeshihafela Hashlyana: Co-compiler, Oshiwambo translations

Nangolo Jeremia Israel: Co-compiler & sign meanings

Festus Tshikuku Linus: Co-compiler, photography, sign illustrations, artwork & sign meanings

Henock Hango Nillenge: Co-compiler & sign meanings

Paul Setzer: Supervision and training for photography & sign illustrations

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Requests for publication should be addressed to Eli Savanick at the above address, or call (202) 651-5585.
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This dictionary is the culmination of a fifteen month intensive training program at Gallaudet University for a group of Deaf Namibians and their teachers. The program focused on equipping the Deaf trainees with the skills necessary for establishing appropriate services for the Deaf Community in Independent Namibia. The trainees requested training in the following areas: research of their natural sign language, sign language teaching, leadership, interpreting and written English. This dictionary reflects the sign language research training they received.

We would like to extend a special thank you to Dr Libertine Amathila, who at that time was Deputy Secretary of Health and Social Welfare of the South West African People's Organization. Dr Amathila proposed and found the support for the research program that this dictionary is based on. The United Nation's Council for Namibia generously funded this project which was administered by the Office of the United Nation's Commission for Namibia.

We are grateful to the following people at Gallaudet University who were involved in the dictionary portion of this project:

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June Zimmer, Trainer: Interpreting

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Nancy Creighton, made the interactive computer network available to the group on a daily basis and Kavita Pipalia assisted the students in their use of the network
MAP OF NAMIBIA
FOREWORD

One day, approximately three years ago, a dynamic, vivacious woman walked into my office and introduced herself as Dr. Libertine Amathila. She told me she had been traveling in Europe and heard about events surrounding the appointment of a deaf president at Gallaudet University and wanted to know more about our programs. After a pleasant conversation she shared with me a vision. The vision was to provide training for a small group of promising deaf young people and their teachers who were currently living in a refugee camp in Angola in order to provide them with leadership skills, hopefully to be used in an independent Namibia. Being impressed by the boldness and power of this vision, I agreed to marshal Gallaudet University resources in such a way as to make the vision a reality. Several months later, six deaf and two hearing people arrived with Dr. Amathila to begin a fifteen month training program at Gallaudet University.

As I reflect upon these fifteen months, I must say that Namibia could not have sent better ambassadors. The experience of working with these eight trainees leaves me feeling I have received more than I have given. It has been fun. It has been educational. Most of all it has been a personally and professionally rewarding time. Speaking for each member of the staff, we are better people for this and will miss our friends. We also stand in awe of the challenges that await them as they return to the process of nation-building and the development of a strong Deaf Community in an independent Namibia.

Eli Savanick
Project Director and
Director, International Center on
Deafness
Gallaudet University
BACKGROUND

NOTE: The following paper was presented by the group of Deaf Namibians at the Deaf Way Conference, July 1989, organized by Gallaudet University. At that time the dictionary was in progress and Namibia was still waiting for independence. It has been included in its original form as it provides the context from which this dictionary has emerged. We have used the convention of capitalizing "D" for Deaf to refer to Deaf Culture in the same way that a capital letter is used to refer to the Namibians or French or to any other culture, a small "d" is used when deaf is used in other contexts.

We will begin this paper by explaining who we are and by giving some background information which is necessary for you to fully understand our reasons for working on this particular dictionary of Namibian Sign Language. Secondly we will discuss why we decided to make a dictionary of Namibian Sign Language and how we will use it to educate people in our country about Deafness. Thirdly we will explain our procedure for making this dictionary. We will conclude by outlining where we go from here.

We are a group of six deaf and two hearing Namibians. We have come to Gallaudet University for fifteen months. The United Nations Commission on Namibia is funding our program. The aim of this program is to learn how to analyze our own sign language, to improve our English and to get leadership training. In this paper we will be discussing how and why we are analyzing our sign language. We are working with two linguists at Gallaudet, Ruth Morgan and Scott Liddell to do this.

The situation we come from is unique and complex. We therefore need to first give you some background information before we discuss how we are making a dictionary of our sign language. We need to explain the situation we come from so you will understand how this has influenced our Deaf culture and the development of our sign language.

We were living in Northern Namibia until the late 70's and early 80's. We left our country because we felt we could not receive the education we wanted. Our education system was under the South African government which has controlled
Namibia since 1915. We went to live in Angola where we stayed until we came to Gallaudet University in the USA in 1988. We expect Namibia to be independent by December. When our country is independent we will go home and begin to improve deaf education there. We will first describe our life in Namibia and then describe our life in Angola.

Our life in Namibia

Our families are all hearing and live in traditional villages where they farm. Namibia is a country which has many different cultural groups. Thus many different languages are used in our country. We are all Ovawambo’s which is the largest cultural group in Northern Namibia. Our families all speak Oshiwambo which is one of many Bantu languages spoken in Namibia. Oshiwambo has many different dialects. Some of the other languages spoken by different cultural groups there are Nama, Herero, Damara, English, Afrikaans, Oshikwangali and Oshirozi. Most hearing Namibians know several languages. Communication among different groups is common.

Even though Namibia is home to many different hearing cultural groups who speak many different languages, we don’t know what the situation is for most deaf people in Namibia. The sign language situation in Namibia has never been researched before. There may be many sign languages in Namibia or there may be only one sign language. We will know this after we do our own work in Namibia.

The South African government’s apartheid policy has influenced our sign language situation eg. we do not know the sign language used by white Deaf Namibians, or by San Deaf Namibians. We grew up in a country where apartheid forced members of these different groups (whether hearing or deaf) to live separately from each other. In Namibia there are separate living areas and schools for blacks and whites. Schools for the deaf have been segregated as well. When we were in Namibia there were two schools for black deaf students, white deaf students could not go to these schools. In the same way that the black and white hearing people lead separate lives, so do black and white deaf people.

Our sign language comes from that used by the students outside the classroom in the Black schools for the deaf in Northern Namibia. We therefore need to give you some details about the history of these schools for the deaf: There were two schools for black deaf students while we were living in Namibia called Engela and Eluwa. Engela was the first school for the Deaf. It was started by the Evangelican Lutheran Church in Namibia around 1970. This church was originally founded by Finnish missionaries in the late 1800’s and later given over to the Namibian people themselves.
At Engela, Simultaneous Communication was used by teachers in which signs were produced following Oshiwambo word order. One of the Deaf members of our group attended Engela as a student from 1972 to 1974. He told us that the first two teachers in this school were black Namibians who had been sent to South Africa for training. The sign system used in some of the schools for black deaf children in South Africa at that time was the Paget-Gorman system. This system was created in England to teach English to deaf children. It is not a natural sign language. It was originally invented by a hearing person. This system was used in South African black schools from the 1960’s. He reported that at Engela the children used the same sign vocabulary as these teachers but that the children did not follow Oshiwambo word order.

The student who attended Engela told us that he also spent a lot of time with a group of Deaf adults who worked at Engela. He often sat and watched them tell stories. They too used the same sign vocabulary as was used in the school. However they did not sign Oshiwambo. We think that the sign language used by these adults was the true beginning of Namibian Sign Language.

In 1975 the South African government started a second school for deaf students called Eluwa. All twelve students under seventeen together with their teachers were moved to this new school, leaving behind about five Deaf adults who continued to work at Engela. The student who had been to Engela was the only member of our group who had learnt the sign language used by the adult Deaf people at Engela. These students who were moved were able to take the adult sign language with them. Three other members of our group started attending this new school between 1975 and 1978. All four of us left Namibia and went into exile in 1980.

Our years in Angola

Before we came to the U.S.A in 1988, we had been living in Southern Angola for the past nine years. Due to the fact that there were thousands of Namibians living there, the different Namibian cultures could be maintained. We are all Deaf Ovawambo’s. We did not meet Deaf people from other cultural groups.

How a Deaf culture was formed in Southern Angola

When we arrived in Angola the deaf people were not organized into any real community. They did not live near to each other and there was no school for the deaf. We were not influenced a lot by the Angolan Deaf Culture. We did not come
into contact with many Deaf Angolans. The few Deaf Angolans we later met used different signs and we taught them our sign language. Of the students from Eluwa, only one was mainstreamed while the other three did not go to school as there was no available school for the deaf.

The three of us who were not mainstreamed during our first year in Angola got together after we arrived. We continued to use our old sign language which we had learned at Eluwa School in Namibia. We were joined by the fourth member of our group. He had never been to school in Namibia. He used home signs only. We taught him our signs. We used to spend most of our time together. We played soccer and then volleyball with the hearing people everyday. The four of us would practice art everyday as we were not in school and did not have work. After some hearing people saw our art work we were then employed as illustrators. We could not read the English texts of the books we were illustrating. We wanted to learn how to read English so we decided we needed a school for deaf students and requested one.

Two of us were mainstreamed in separate schools at first. We did not have much contact with each other apart from the occasional visit. We socialized mainly with hearing people. We only knew of a few other deaf people who were mainstreamed and whom we saw occasionally. The mainstreamed students used different signs and gestures except for one of us who had been to a school for the deaf in Namibia, and therefore knew Eluwa signs. We picked up his Namibian signs.

Our sign language which originated at the schools for the deaf inside Namibia in the early seventies and which we have used in exile for the past ten years will be referred to as Namibian Sign Language (NSL) for the purposes of this dictionary. The label NSL is a convenient way to refer to our sign language although we know that there are probably other varieties of NSL or other sign languages in Namibia.

In 1982 a school for deaf students was started in exile. All the deaf students in the area started to go to the same school. The students who had not been attending school were joined by the students who had been mainstreamed. The start of our deaf school was important as it gave us a place to meet the other deaf people in the area everyday. The sign language we continued to use was the variety we had brought with us from Namibia which we taught to the other four pupils. There were nine students in our school when it started.

An important thing happened that influenced the Deaf people in our school. In 1980 three Namibian deaf people who had never attended a deaf school before were sent to Sweden to further their education. When they came back from Sweden in 1983 they taught in our school. They taught us Swedish Sign Language as well as the
history of Deaf people in Sweden. They also taught us math and English. This was the first time we learnt about the theory of Deaf culture. The three teachers did not know our sign language because our school had not been set up before they left for Sweden. We taught them our sign language and they stopped using their Swedish signs. Only a few Swedish signs remain in our NSL eg: Thank you and the names of some countries: Africa, Russia and Finland.

Deaf people used to socialize together after school. They played volleyball, performed plays and in the afternoons and evenings when the moon shone, they frequently told stories under a big tree in the evenings.

In summary a Deaf culture was initially formed in Namibia at the first school for black deaf students at Engela. This was carried to Eluwa in 1974 and then brought into Angola when we left Namibia. Once the school for deaf students was formed in Angola, there was a place where many deaf people could become aculturated to the Deaf community in exile.

By 1988 there were about thirty deaf students in this school. At this time the present group was selected to go to Gallaudet to receive further training so that they would be better prepared to set up future services for deaf Namibians in Angola and in Namibia itself after independence.

Why we decided to make a dictionary of NSL

We are developing this NSL dictionary because we want to have a sign language book of our own natural sign language used by Namibian deaf people in Southern Angola. We want people to know that NSL is a real language like Oshiwambo or English. We want Deaf Namibians to be proud of their Deaf culture and sign language. We want hearing people to respect our culture and our sign language. We want people to know the history of our sign language, that it was developed in Namibia in the school for the deaf and taken with us to Angola where others started to learn it. We want people to know that NSL has its own vocabulary and structure.

We also wanted to learn how to make a sign language dictionary so that when Namibia is independent we can go home and compare the sign languages used by the different cultural groups still in Namibia to our sign language variety. We will need to do a lot more research in the future to see if other Ovawambo Deaf people who stayed inside the country have the same sign language as us or if it is different. It may be that there is not one but many different Deaf cultures and sign languages inside Namibia. With independence there will be an end to separate schools for each racial group and we want to research what happens to NSL when Deaf people
from different groups are brought together in a single school for the deaf and a single adult Deaf culture.

It is obvious that we will have a lot to do when we go home. First we will need to do more sign language research. We will use our dictionary to compare our vocabulary and sign language structure to that used by deaf people from different cultural groups who remained inside the country. We will then have to create a second dictionary with our findings. After that we will be able to teach NSL to teachers and interpreters who work with deaf people as well as to the parents of deaf children.
How the NSL dictionary will be used for public education about NSL as a real language

Hearing people in Namibia and in Angola do not know that Deaf Namibians have their own sign language NSL and their own Deaf culture. We want to go back and teach Hearing people in independent Namibia about our sign language NSL and about our culture. We want to take our NSL dictionary back to Namibia to show people that Deaf Namibians have their own language and culture.

The dictionary will contain information about the vocabulary and grammar of NSL. It is important for people to understand that NSL has its own vocabulary which is different from the vocabulary of sign languages in other countries.

Our dictionary will also contain information about how our Deaf culture was formed. We will explain what we know about the history of our Deaf culture: how it was formed when the first school for the Deaf was started in Namibia and how it was moved to Eluwa and then to Angola where we became part of a free society. We will educate others about our Deaf culture, so that they understand that we have our own cultural identity and our own language NSL.

Making this NSL Dictionary

1. Collecting the signs

The signs in this dictionary were taken from videotapes of NSL. Each person in the group was videotaped the same week that they arrived in the United States. Each person told their life story on the videotape. After that the artists in the group drew many pictures of everyday life in Namibia e.g. village scenes, people ploughing their fields with oxen, planting seeds, growing vegetables and harvesting them, killing animals for food, storing grain, eating, etc. (See the illustrations for sign illication on page xvi.) The group was videotaped as they discussed these pictures and told stories about their life in Namibia before they went into exile. Each person was videotaped.

2. Transcribing the signs

After making these videotapes, we started to transcribe them. We used a slow motion playback control to slow down the videotape. We discussed each sign in depth before writing down its meaning in English. We also wrote down information
about the sign’s structure, eg: its hand shape, location, orientation, segmental structure, and non-manual signals or facial expressions. We discussed whether there were other signs that could be used to mean the same thing. If there were differences in the production of a sign, we discussed these and wrote them down, eg: different hand shapes or movements. We decided which sign was used by most people, and which signs were accepted as variants by most people. We are still busy transcribing the signs. By August we will have collected between five hundred and one thousand signs for our dictionary.

This method of getting NSL data for the dictionary takes a long time but it is the only way to really understand the structure of the language. We want to explain the structure of NSL in our dictionary as well as the vocabulary. We want to understand how verbs work in NSL, how negatives and questions are formed, how facial expression and space are used in the grammar of NSL. We need this information before we can teach others NSL.

3. Drawing the signs

We then need to draw each sign in the most accurate and clear way for people to learn them. Two of us will be trained in the latest technical methods of sign language drawing in August. From August to December we will organize the signs for our dictionary. Each sign will be glossed in English onto an index card. We will group signs that have the same hand shape together.

4. Explaining the signs

In the dictionary each sign will be illustrated using line drawings and arrows to indicate movement. The meaning of the sign will then be explained in both Oshiwambo and English. We will not use single word glosses. Notes on each sign will explain its meaning, structural information will also be included, eg: simple sign structure or complex sign structure (see Organization of this dictionary for detailed explanation).

Our goals for the future

When we go back to independent Namibia we want to do more research comparing our own variety of NSL which we have used in Angola to the NSL used by the other Deaf ethnic groups who remained within the country. Once schools for the deaf become integrated for all cultures, it will be necessary to research what happens to NSL. We also want to start teaching deaf students using NSL when we go back home. We will also use our dictionary and future research to teach NSL to hearing people.
THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS DICTIONARY — Scott Liddell

It is only in the past two decades that natural sign languages have been properly recognized as legitimate languages which are as suitable for expressing one's thoughts as are spoken languages. Before that recognition took place, people the world over mistakenly thought that sign languages were primitive and very limited - hardly suitable for real communication. Now, however, sign languages all over the world have been properly recognized as full-fledged, legitimate languages. The signs in this dictionary come from just such a sign language - that used by a small group of Deaf Namibians who have been in exile in Angola for the past ten years.

Sign languages are not related to the spoken languages used in the same country or geographical area. In the case of Namibian Sign Language, the sign language is unrelated to any of the spoken languages used in Namibia, including Oshiwambo or English. When people sign they are not attempting to use any of the spoken languages, but are simply using their own language, which happens to be signed rather than spoken.

This book is a record of the natural sign language used by the Namibian deaf community in exile. This sign language has its roots in the school sign language used in Namibia. Many of the school signs were originally taken from the artificially developed Paget-Gorman system, which the teachers in Namibia used. The deaf students changed many of these artificial signs to fit into the grammar and structure of their natural sign language, combining them with their own naturally developed signs.

The signs in this dictionary are grouped according to handshape. Within each group of handshapes, signs are further divided into four categories:

- Simple Signs
- Indicating Verbs
- Locative Verbs
- Classifier Verbs

We have divided signs into these four categories because signs in each category have their own specific types of meaning and usage. Knowing how to use them properly will make it much easier to learn how to sign correctly.

Understanding how a sign language works can be difficult for a person unaccustomed to a visual language. Many people believe that to learn a sign language all that is needed is to continue learning signs until one has learnt them all. It is important to learn the signs, of course, but simply learning signs will not lead to mastery of the sign language. In addition, one has to learn how to produce and understand sentences. One has to be able to use signs in a way which expresses just those meanings which
the signer wishes to express, and does so in a grammatically correct way.

We can illustrate the importance of learning how to express things in a grammatically correct way with a few examples from Oshiwambo. Suppose that a foreigner were to learn some words from Oshiwambo. He might have learnt the word ell (English: this), the word etanga (English: ball), and olakula (English: big). This person might have also learnt to say:

Etanga ell olakula
ball this big
"This ball is big"

Now suppose this person next learns the word omunhu (English: person). He might next say:

Omunhu ell olakula.
Each word in this short sentence is a real word of Oshiwambo but the sentence is badly formed. The word ell cannot be used in this sentence when talking about a person (omunhu). Instead, the word ou (English: this) must be used. If we make that change in the sentence the result is still unsatisfactory.

Omunhu ou olakula

Part of the problem has been solved. The words omunhu and ou go together, but olakula (English: big) is still a problem. It cannot be used in this sentence to describe a person. Instead, okwakula is correct.

Omunhu ou okwakula
person this big
"This person is big"

Merely using words of a language does not guarantee that the sentences will be properly formed. In order to make proper sentences one must know both the words or signs of a language and also know the proper ways to use them in producing sentences.

The Four Types of Signs

The major division concerns the difference between simple and complex signs. Simple signs are signs which cannot be divided into parts. To follow this analogy in Oshiwambo, etanga would be a simple word. If we take anything away from this word it no longer means "ball." It is a complete word and it cannot be divided into smaller parts, each of which gives us part of the meaning of the word. In contrast, olakula is a complex word. It is composed of two parts: ola and kula. Kula means "big" but begins with ola when describing a big ball. If we are describing a big person, we would say okwakula (okwa + kula).

Simple Signs

Simple signs, like simple words in spoken languages, cannot be divided into meaningful parts. The usual result
is that simple words appear the same way again and again as they are used. If we are talking about a big ball or a small ball, or my ball or a blue ball, we will say etanga each time. Similarly with simple signs the same form of the sign will be used over and over again because there is no grammatical reason to change the form of the sign. The sign meaning "zebra" (ongolo yoshinamwenyo) is a simple sign. No matter what type of zebra is being described, this sign will look like it does in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](zebra_ongolo_yoshinamwenyo.png)

Figure 1  zebra  ongolo yoshinamwenyo

The sign meaning "zebra" will refer to a tall zebra, a short zebra, a sick zebra, or any kind of zebra. The sign does not change depending on the kind of zebra. In contrast to simple signs, complex signs do appear in different forms depending on the meaning to be conveyed.

COMPLEX SIGNS

Indicating Verbs

The first complex signs we will describe are those that indicate who is doing things or to whom they are doing them. These signs point or move in specific directions to indicate or show who is involved and what role they play. For example, the indicating verb meaning "argue" (okutanguna) includes information about who is doing the arguing. If the signer is talking about arguing with one other person, then he could produce the sign in Figure 2.

![Figure 2](argue_okutanguna.png)

Figure 2  argue  okutanguna

In the picture the fingers of the right hand indicate (point to) the person being argued with. The fingers of the left hand indicate the signer, showing that the other person is arguing with him. In this single sign we can see what happened (arguing), and who was involved (the signer and one other person).

It is not necessary for the person the signer was arguing with to be present in order to produce the sign meaning
"argue." The signer simply proceeds as if the other person was present. In this case the signer signs as if the other person was ahead of him and to his left.

Compare this with the next sign which means "people argue with me from all sides," (okutanguninwa wahangakenwa), in Figure 3.

This sign also contains the meaning of "argue" but the people doing the arguing are different. Now, people on both sides of the signer ("on all sides") are arguing with him. This is shown by the placement of the two hands and the direction the fingers are pointing. If the people arguing with him were both ahead of him, then both hands would be ahead of the signer with the fingertips pointing inward toward his head. This illustrates that the placement of the hands and the direction the fingers point provides information about who was doing the arguing.

In another example (Figure 4) only one person is arguing with the signer, but that person is doing it in a way that translates as "picking on me" (okutanguninwa).

By looking at the sign we know that there was arguing, that someone was arguing with the signer, and that they were doing the arguing and the signer was receiving the arguing.

In the next example (Figure 5) we see a case where two of us are arguing with one or more people (okutanguna novanhu vedulife puvavali).

We know that the signer is describing himself and at least one other person.
arguing with others because both hands face away from him. We also know that the person (or people) arguing with them are to the left because the fingers are pointing to the left. The final example (Figure 6) of the use of the sign meaning "argue" describes two people arguing with each other (ovanhu vavali tavatanguna).

Figure 6 two people argue ovanhu vavali tavatanguna

In this example, the two hands face each other from the right and the left. This tells us that the signer is not one of the people doing the arguing. The hands show us that one of the people doing the arguing is on the left and the other is on the right.

It should now be clear that when the sign meaning "argue" (okutanguna) is used, it means more than "argue." It also tells you who is arguing. All the signs which have this ability to express who is performing the action or who is receiving the action will be in the sections called "Indicating Verbs."

Locative Verbs
The signs which we have labeled as "locative verbs" also use space in meaningful ways. Locative verbs have a basic meaning and the location at which it is produced adds to that meaning. The first locative verb we will look at is related to the simple sign which means "meat" (ombalela). This sign is made in the space ahead of the trunk with the same handshape used in the names of many animals, including "zebra" (ongolo yoshinamwenyo). It is not really a coincidence that the same handshape appears in both signs and in signs which name many other animals. This handshape can be thought of as a significant symbol which appears in signs related to animals, meat, and fatness. This handshape will be seen many times throughout in the dictionary.

The first locative verb means "person with big chest and stomach" (omunhu ena edimo lakula nonhulo yakula/inene).

Figure 7
person with big chest and stomach omunhu ena edimo lakula nonhulo yakula/inene
This sign (Figure 7) contacts locations on the chest and stomach and those locations show the location of the heaviness. Had the signer placed the hands in different locations it would have a different meaning. If this sign is placed on the buttocks, it means "person with big buttocks" (omunhu munene kolkalo yaye / omunhu ena omatako makula).

It is not uncommon for locative verbs made at a particular place to take on a special meaning of their own. This has occurred with the next sign (Figure 8).

**Figure 8**  
fat, strong man/boy  
*omukulunhu omulunenhule okanona ena olutu lapama nawa/oshipombolutu*

This sign looks like it should mean "person with big arms" (omunhu ena omaoko manene), but it means "fat, strong man / boy" (omukulunhu omulumenhu ile okanona ena olutu lapama nawa / oshipombolutu). Once the sign has taken on a specialized meaning like this one and can no longer be made in different places, we place such a sign in the "simple" category.

The result is that we have signs which look very much alike being placed in two different categories:
locative verb:
- person with big chest and stomach
  omunhu ena edimo lakula nonhulo yakula/inene

simple sign:
- fat, strong man / boy"
  omukulunhu omulumenhu lie okanona ena olutu lapama nawa
  / oshlpombolutu

For the signs which we have placed in the "simple" category, the meaning cannot be worked out the same way that a meaning of a locative sign can be worked out. The meaning must be learnt. For a locative sign, however, if one knows the basic meaning of the handshape and the movement (i.e., that it contacts the body to show a place which is big or fat) then wherever the sign is made it is possible to work out the meaning.

Classifier Verbs
The signs which we describe as "classifier verbs" are very much like locative verbs. The most significant difference is that classifier verbs have handshapes which represent people, animals, tools, surfaces, and other things.

Suppose we wished to talk about two cows walking along together (Figure 9). We would use the "animal" handshape to represent the cows. The hands show what the animals do by the way that they move and places that they go. Since the two hands move side by side at the same speed, the sign means "two cows walk along together" (eengobe mbali tadi ende pwamwe).

Figure 9
two cows walk along together
eengobe mbali tadi ende pwamwe

If the two cows were passing each other (eengobe tadi pingafana) we would describe that with the next sign (Figure 10).
The meaning is clear because the two hands pass each other, thus showing that the two animals pass each other. If the two cows were approaching one another (Figure 11) we would make the two handshapes approach one another as in the following example.

A different handshape is used to represent a bird. The next example (Figure 12) shows how we would describe a bird flying and landing on a cow's back. This ability to show where things are, whether they are moving or still, and even how two things are interacting is the characteristic which is common to classifier verbs.
Learning Namibian Sign Language

No matter what a person wants to learn from a teacher, it is essential that the teacher be a master of what is being taught. The masters of Namibian Sign Language are the deaf people who use it day in and day out as their own language. Because they are the masters of Namibian Sign Language they will make the best teachers of the language.

Learning Namibian Sign Language is a challenge equal to learning any spoken language. Books can be a useful guide in the learning process and we hope that this dictionary will assist many people in the process of learning and understanding Namibian Sign Language. Carefully working through this book can be of assistance in the learning process, but it is not possible to carry on a conversation with a book. Learning Namibian Sign Language well will necessitate having deaf teachers. This can happen formally in a classroom or less formally in social interaction with deaf people.
HOW TO USE THIS DICTIONARY

1. TO FIND THE WRITTEN TRANSLATION OF A SIGN

USE THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

If you know Namibian Sign Language and you want to find the English or Oshiwambo translation of the sign, start with the table of contents. Look for the handshape of the sign you want to look up and then go to the page number that appears next to it. (See page XXX.)

GO TO THE HANDSHAPE SECTION

You will find all the signs with this handshape in this section. Signs are also grouped according to meaning eg: all the "cow" classifier signs are grouped together.

Signs which involve a change in handshape are grouped at the end of the section according to the first handshape.

There are some exceptions where signs are classified according to the second handshape eg: beautiful. Beautiful belongs to a set of signs which all include the handshape meaning good. Thus beautiful is signed as FACE GOOD and is included with the other signs in this set which all include the GOOD handshape: delicious, lucky, unlucky, clever, sick, stupid, healthy and clean. All these signs have different initial handshapes.

Look for the sign you want in all the sign categories for the handshape. The sign you want might be found under Simple Signs, Indicating Verbs, Locative Verbs or Classifier Verbs. The English and Oshiwambo translations of the sign appear next to the illustration.

2. TO FIND THE SIGNED TRANSLATION OF AN ENGLISH/OSHIWAMBO WORD OR PHRASE, LOOK IN THE ENGLISH OR OSHIWAMBO/KWANYAMA INDEX

If you know the English or the Oshiwambo/Kwanyama word and you want to know the sign translation of that word, use the English or Oshiwambo/Kwanyama index. Look up the word in the index and next to it you will find the page number for the sign. Go to the page and you will find the English or Oshiwambo/Kwanyama word that you are looking for with an illustration of the sign next to it.
3. COMPARE WITH OTHER SIGNS

All the signs with the same handshape are in the same section of the book. Look at the other signs in the handshape section with similar meanings to the sign you are interested in. Look at the differences in movement between signs with the same handshape and similar meanings. Compare signs from different categories in the same handshape section eg: simple signs, indicating verbs, locative verbs and classifier verbs.

Also look in the index to find other signs with the same meaning which have different handshapes and are found in other sections of the dictionary.
NAMIBIAN SIGN to ENGLISH and OSHIWAMBO
child

Okanona/okaana

children

Ounona/uunona

Mother/woman/wife

Mene/omukulukadi/omukulukadi omuhombolwa

Simple Signs
father/man/husband

tate/omulumenhu/omulumenhu a hombola

parents

oonakudala/oonakuvala

grandfather

tate kulu a dala tate ile meme

Simple Signs
grandmother

meekulu a dala meme ile tate

blackboard duster

oshidimo shokoshapelende

cane

omweenge

Simple Signs
drink brewed from millet flour

oshikundu/suurdeug

to drink

okunwa/nwa

Russia/USSR

Russia/USSR/Lusia/Lwæha

Simple Signs
ball

*etanga lokudanauka*

soap

*ofewa yokulikosha/othewa yokwilyoga*

to eat a coconut

*okulya ondunga*
land/ground

oshilongo/edu

to scream

okuyeyaana/okukuwa

big

shakula/shinene

Simple Signs
boss/director/employer

omuhona/omuwiliki/omnyandji woilonga

power

eenghono/oonkondo

what

oshike

Simple Signs
motorbike

truck for transporting goods

donkey cart

volkswagen beetle

Simple Signs
casspir (army vehicle with open roof)

ekasipeli

horror (army vehicle)

ehuulala (otuwa yovekwaita)

car

oshihauto/otuwa

Simple Signs
car accident

okulidenga mumwe koitukutuku (oituwa)/shiponga shoshihawto

cupboard (two-door)

osikopa yomiveloi mbali

to tie a knot

okumanga/okuditika edita
to box (fight)

omaudano e่งonyo/okulidenny
neengkapyo/okubokisha

to fight

okulwa/okulidenga

to wrestle

okukondja/okulinwapo eendjubu

Simple Signs
to cook (stir normally)

okuteleka (okupilula nawa)

hard/tough/difficult

shikuku/shidjuu

strong

sha pama/shi na eengho

Simple Signs
grass

omwiidi

to start/begin

okuhovela/okutameka

to try

okukendabala/okukambadhala

Simple Signs
to treat problem using traditional medicine

ouhaku wopashiwana

traditional doctoring by the person who gives medicine

ongangaloundudu

official stamp

oshihako shopambelewa
to hit/serve a volleyball

okuumba/okudenga etanga lokeenyala

stone

emanya

pillow

oshiwilo
desk

okasikopa

desk

osikopa

berries from red milkwood tree

eenyandi
thing

oshinima

have

okukela u na

to indicate age [note: "have twelve" means that a person is twelve years old]

tashi u/ike eedula domunhu ngashi: eedula omulongo nambali

Simple Signs
orange (fruit)

elalandje

Oshakati

Oshakati

born

edalo/okudala

Simple Signs
born

edalo/okucala
to move to another place

okutembukila/okulundulukila
children in a line

ounona ve li momukweyo

children in a circle

ounona ve li mongongs

to scoop traditional drink out of container with calabash

okupinda oikunwa nomhindo

Classifier Verbs
to pour out

okutila ile okutilashi/pima

to carry bucket by handle

okwiingida eemele

to ride a bicycle quickly

okulonda okafangufangu/ombasikela to shingiliile

Classifier Verbs
to ride a bicycle slowly

okushinga ombasikela kashona nakashona

to cook (stir vigorously)

okuteleka (pilula neenghono)

to pound millet into grain

okuxwa

Classifier Verbs
to dig with a spade
okuta nosihupulo

to pick up heavy object
okutumba oshinima shidjuu

to carry on shoulder
humbata kepepe
to carry long thin object across shoulders

*okuliindikila*

---

to shake fruit off branch

*okushikaashika oyiimati koshitai/okunyema oyiimati koshitai*

---

to squeeze marula fruit by piercing with a sharp implement

*okukola*
to strain juice from marula fruit

okudinda oshinwa

to give/move something

okulundulula ile okuyandja oshinima ngaashi otuwa, ile oikwatefwa
to switch light on/off

okupakumifa eelamba

with

pamwe/na

kind of beer made from a grain, the beer is ladled using a calabash

okupinda otombo nomhindo

Simple Signs
millet

oshiya

lemon

elamuna

money

cimalive/eembongo

Simple Signs
to sell

okulandifa
person pays me, the sign is directed towards the person who is paid

fute nge

I pay you, the sign is directed towards the person who is paid

mu futa/va futa
to hit spade with stick

okupomhola koshihupulo/okuta oudilamepya

to knock fruit off tree using stick

okushopola oyimati

to water plants using hosepipe

okutekela nomunino
to throw something

okukupulashi sha

to throw something at a coconut (to knock it down from a tree)

okukupula eendunga

to hoe

okulima

Classifier Verbs
to knock with a hammer

*okupamhala no hamala*

to split dried marula kernel open with an axe

*okutenda eengongo*
delicious
oshinima shinverye/shi wa
lucky
elao
unlucky
omupya

Simple Signs
37.

**cluever**

**aendunge/oineya**

**stupid**

**oulaai/uugoya**

**sick**

**okuvela/okwehema**

**Simple Signs**
healthy

oulinawa/oukolele

to clean

okuwapaleka/okuyeleka

beautiful

ouwa wokoshipala/ouwa woshinima
beautiful

ouwa

to go behind/to the back of a person

okushuna monima/okuhondjaunina

rude/behave badly

okulunduka
to breast-feed

okononata naka nyamu/okunyamifa okaana

pity

onghenda

great pity

onghendu inene/ohenda onene

Simple Signs
which

shilipipo/shinipo

alcohol

omalodu malula

alcohol (strong)

omalodu madjuuu/mapunga keelela/omatatula mutima

Simple Signe
alcohol that can make one drunk

oikowifa

alcohol in a bottle

ekende lomalodu maiula

alcohol in a big bottle-like urn

ekende lokee ngudi

Simple Signs
stamp

ositombe yonhumwafo/ositambe yombapila

to milk a cow

okukanda ongobe
Namibia

Nigeria

Simple Signs
Mozambique

*Mozambique*/*Mosambikwe*

*Simple Signs*
big

shakula/shinene

Luanda

oLuanda/ombala ya Angola

1. church 2. Sunday

1. ongeleka 2. osoondaha

Simple Signs
Monday

omaandaha

to say/speak

okutya/okupopya

hearing person

omunamatwi

Simple Signs
to hear

\textit{okuudako kwomatwi/okuuvako kwomatsi}

to whistle

\textit{okushika omwilwa/okuhika omwilwa}

English

\textit{oshiingilisa}

Simple Signs
man

omusamane

to lose a game

okunyika mowela/moukalata ile okufindwa momaudano

to see

okumona

Simple Signs
future

onakujwa/komesho

drunk

okuko'wa

never

nande nande

Simple Signs
person runs fast/person disappears into the distance

meendelelo okwa kana po

but

ndele/ashike

others

vamwe vali

Simple Signs
hot sun

omutenya wa pupyala/mupyu/omutenya wa twa

hot fire

omundilo upyu

hot water

omeva mapyu unene

Simple Signs
feverish

oupuyu womuveli/oshidu/olwiidhi

very eg: very hard/difficult

shikukutu unene/shidjuu unene okuninga

to meet

okushakena/okutsakanena

Simple Signs
cupboard

osikopa

eland antelope

ongalangombe

carry items at the ends of a stick which is placed over the shoulder

omutengi

Simple Signs
government
epangelo
to laugh
okuyola
to pass a grade/be highly skilled/beat another
okupita nonghatu/onghulungu

Simple Signs
to pass a grade/be highly skilled/beat another

okupita nonghatu yopombada

to be evenly matched/equal skill

okuhelifiyapo mefiyanepo/outlike pamwe mefiyanepo

time

efimbo

Simple Signs
time eg: the time is twelve 'o clock

efimbo: otundi onhimulongo nambali

now

paife/ngashingeyi

always

alushe
until

ofiyo

quick/fast

eendelelo ile onhepo

quickly

meendelelo

Simple Signs
fast

onhapo/eendelelo

after

konima

tin

okandooha

Simple Signs
international

shaaveshe ngaashi: omahangano oillongo yililile nokulilile elimumwe/shopaiwana

electricity

olusheno

drink brewed from grain flour

omalodu oilya

Simple Signs
nut fruit of marula tree

ongongo yokukola

palm "apples", fruit of fan palm

eendunga

healthy

oukolele/okuveluka/okuuda nawa

Simple Signs
helicopter

edakadaka

Simple Signs
person tells me, the sign is directed towards the person who is told

lombweleenge

I tell you, the sign is directed towards the person who is told

ame ohandi ku lombwele
the downward movement of the hands indicates the outline of parallel ropes going straight down from the ox's shoulder [note: this handshape can trace out different arrangements of ropes]

ondjoko yeengobe/oishilopap yokondjoko

people walk around

tava pingafana/ovanhu tava pingafana ile endaenda

air force plane flies fast in a configuration

odila yopakwai ta tuka meendelelo
helicopter flies in a straight line

edakadaka tali tuka

1. four-wheel drive goes fast 2. dog goes 3. children roll

1. ofoowila tai endelele/ofoowila tai shingiliwa 2. ombwa tailotoka tayii olumebela 3. ounona tava alangata

car goes past

oshihauto sha enda po/ she pita po

Classifier Verbs
cars travel toward each other

One car passes another car

One car is able to go faster than another car [note: the lower hand indicates the faster car]

Classifier Verbs
one student passed another and went into the next grade [note: the upper hand indicates the more advanced child]

*omunhu apita mongudu omo eli tayi kongudu
tayilandula*

monkey winds tail around a tree branch

*munghina ta dingile omushila moshitai*
priest

omufita weonga/a

ruler (for measuring)

okatendifo

blackboard

oshipelende

Simple Signs
thin

ounini woluto

small dates

eembe
injection in the buttock

okuvendwa metako

injection in the upper arm

okuvendwa mepepe

object with the thickness indicated by the distance between the thumb and finger e.g.: a tabletop

nghee tomete ounene woshinima

Classifier Verbs
elephant waves trunk

ondjaba tai nipi onvukati
to remember

dimbulukwa

boring/lousy

okufya ounye

bird

okadila

Simple Signs
chalk

omya

to write

nyola

pencil

opena yekala

Simple Signs
electric light
ouyelele wolusheno

cane
omweenge

traditional brandy
ombike/owaleride

Simple Signs
radio

okakola keanghundana
grain plants grow taller [note: the level that the hands reach indicates the height of the grain]

* oliya tai kulu *

to take out inside of marula nut with an implement

* okutongona onongo *

to plant a seed

* okukuna *
to stir with small/medium size spoon

okupilulifa onguto
me

here

apa

here

apa

Simple Signs
girl

okakadono

boy

okamati

sister

omumwememekadona

Simple Signs
brother

omumwameme mati

brother and sister

omumwameme omumati nokakadona

village

omukunda

Simple Signs
country
oshilongo
shop
ofitola
to sell
okulandifa

Simple Signs
there

kwinya

Simple Signs
snake (small)

okayokä

name

edina

Finland

Finland/Ofinlanda

Simple Signs
to dig with a pick

*okufa nombike*

---

to dig with a pick with difficulty

*okufa nombike noudjuu*

---

person/animal follows a person/animal

*okushikula, okulandula*
little/small

shishona/shinini

banana

ombabanana

TV/television

oradio yomudimidbe

Simple Signs
to whistle

okwiifana nomwilwa/okushika omwilwa

to gossip

okuhokola

hospital

oshihakulilo/shipengelo

Simple Signs
plate

okayasha
object with the shape indicated by the shape of the movement eg: a car

*oule wotuwa, ha omutamo wotuwa*

object with a square shape eg: a box, the shape of the movement describes the shape of the object

*omutamo woshipakete, ha oule washo*
wife (formal sign)

omukulukadi a hombolwa

husband (formal sign)

omusamane a hombola
1. Kwanza-sul 2. satan

1. okwanza-sul 2. sastana
I dislike/reject/hate you, you are bad, this sign is directed towards the person who I dislike/reject/hate.

Okutalako omunhu nayi

I dislike/reject/hate all of you, you are all bad, the repetitions show that I dislike all of you.

Okutalako ovanhu aveshe vayi moilonga yavo

Person dislikes/rejects/hates me, person thinks that I am bad, this sign is directed towards the person who is disliked/rejected/hated.

Outondwe/okuhehole/omunhu e tonde nge

Indicating Verbs
aeroplane flies in an upward direction

*odila tai tuka shambadaulu*

bird flies

*okadila taka tuka*

aeroplane lands, to land

*okuwila kwodilia, okunambela kwodile*

**Classifier Verbs**
aeroplane takes off, to take off

okutukapo, ngaashi odila
to say no to someone

okwaanya/okutinda

pregnant (early:late)

oufimba/eetelelo (okapunda kanini/okupitwa:okukulifa)
I tell you, the sign is directed towards the person who I tell

*okulombwela/handi ku lombwele*

you tell me, the sign is directed towards the person who is told

*ove lombwele nge*

this person and I are discussing/meeting, the sign is directed towards the people who are discussing

*okukundafana/hatu kundafana*
person falls from tree

*omunhu ta u komuti*

monkey jumps from branch to branch

*munghima ta koloka noitai*

to stir with a small/medium sized spoon eg: with a teaspoon/teaspoon

*okupilua nonguto yokulife, yinini, yopokati ile yakula*

**Classifier Verbs**
Angola

Angola

Simple Signs
Tuesday

etivali

to look for an object

okukonga sha

truck with open back/lorry

otuwa yakangwa konima

Simple Signs
break time

okafudo

vacation/holiday

efudo

dig with a kind of hoe

okufa netemo

Simple Signs
electric plug

opulaka yolusheno

to come

ila

to dance (traditional)

okudana omaudano wapashiwana ngaashi:
eenghama/omupembe n.sh.t.

Simple Signs
two people argue, the sign is directed towards the person being argued with

`ovanhu vavali tava tanguna`

we argue with one or more people, the sign is directed towards the people being argued with

`hatu tanguna nomunhu umwe ile ve dulife po`

people argue with me from all sides, people pick on me, the sign is directed towards me (the person being argued with)

`okutanguninwa nda hangakenwa`
person argues with me, person picks on me, the sign is directed towards me (the person being argued with)

*okutombolwa (mokati kovanhu)*

to spread rumours/tell many people, the sign is directed towards the people who are told the rumours

*okutandavelifa omutoto*

to see something, the sign is directed towards whatever is seen

*okumona she*

*Indicating Verbs*
two fruit fall from tree

oyiimati ivali tayuu komuti

person treads water

omunhu ta yoo okayumbu

person swims downwards

omunhu tayoo hauka mokule mokati komeva/ta ningine

Classifier Verbs
person swims

okuyowa wakaema kombada yomeva/okukaama

person swims backstroke

omunhu tayoo eli ongali

person swims around

omunhu ta yoo ta dingonoka
person/animal walks (informal sign)

omunhu ta ende oshinamwenyo tashi Ende

cow walks

ongobe tayi ende

Classifier Verbs
people walk past each other

*ovanh tava pingafana*

people/animals walk around

*ovanh tava endaenda, oinamwenyo tai endaenda*

person/animal climbs down tree

*omunhu/oshinamwenyo ta (shi) londoloka komuti*
person/animal climbs up tree

*omunhu/oshinamwenyo ta (shi) londo komuti*

monkey swings from one tree to another

*munghima ta nuka komuti ndele ta nukile komuti mukwao*

person straddles branch

*omunhu te li shiki konghabe yoshiti*
person swings from branch

omunhu te li shiki koshitayi

wooden stakes on yoke

outi vondjoko/oishikei
berries from red milkwood tree

eenyandi

who

olyleye

duck

ombaka

Simple Signs
dandy/natty

oufuuli

person who gossips

omunhu haambe/omunhu ha hokola ovanhu
rich

ouyamba

teacher

omuhongi/omulongi

to teach (one person)

okulonga omunhu umwe

Simple Signs
to teach (more than one person)

okulanga ovanhu vedulife puwumwe

school

ofikola
priest

omufita weongala

Kenya

Kenya

again

natango

Simple Signs
person swims by kicking legs

okuyowa to fangula omeva nomaulu

person swims up towards surface

omunhu tadjuuka momeva
person sits

*omunhu eli omutumba*

audience sits facing me

*ovapwilikini veli omutumba va taaela nge*

animal sits

*oinamwenyo ili omutyonghe*
why

molwashike
many people sit down (crowd)

*ovanhu vahapu veli omutumba mongudu*

people sit around the table

*ovanhu veli omutumba va dingilila oshitaafula*

three people sit in a line

*ovanhu vatatu veli omutumba momukwenyo*
person swings

*omunhu te lishiki*

hoe

*lima*

to dig with a hoe

*okufa netemo*
person looks at me carefully, the sign is directed towards the person who is looked at

*omunhu ia tale nge*/*omunhu o tongolola nge*
animals

oinamwenyo

giraffe

onduli

cow

ongobe yodidi

Simple Signs
many cows walk

aedidi dihupu tadi ende epambango

calf

okatana

cow moo's

ongobe tai komo ile tai lili

Simple Signs
yoke

*ondjoko yeengobe*

horse

*onghambe*

camel

*ongamelo*

**Simple Signs**
sheep

odi yoshimura

goat

oshikombo

monkey

lunghima/ondjima/munghima

Simple Signs
cat

okambishi

elephant

ondjaba

rhino

omhanda

Simple Signs
Simple Signs

zebra
ongolo yoshinamwenyo

zebra
ongolo yoshinamwenyo

rabbit
okandiba/okalimba
dog

ombwa

lion

onghoshi

lion catches animal

onghoshi tai kwata oshinamwenyo

Simple Signs
leopard

etotongwe

tiger

ongwe

meat

ombe/ela

Simple Signs
fat, strong man/boy

omukulunhu omumemenhu ile okanona e na ojutu lwa pama nawa/oshipombolutu

many fat, strong women/girls

omukulukadi ile oukadona ve na omalutu a pama/cipombolutu

Simple Signs
person with big chest and stomach

*omunhu e na onhulo nedimo iakula*

person with big buttocks

*omunhu munene koikalo ye*/omunhu e na omatako makula*
cow eating

ongobe tai li

two cows pass each other

eengobe mbali tadi pingafana

two cows walk along together

eengobe mbali tadi ende pwamwe

Classifier Verbs
cows walk towards each other

)eengobe tadi shakene

baby animal suckles from mother

)okanimwena taka nyamu

baby animals suckle from mother while she's lying on her side

)ounimwena tava nyamu manga ina a nangala kolupati
animals fight by interlocking horns

oinamwenyo tai lidenge/tai litu

to cut open animal butcher animal

okudutula oshinamwenyo/okudipaa oshinamwenyo

to kill a cow with a spear

okutoma odidi neonga

Classifier Verbs
bird lands on cow's back

okadila taka nambele kombuda yongobe (yodidi)

elephant waves trunk

ondjaba tai nipi omukati
Wednesday

etilatu
to dig with a fork

*okufa nolukoolo*

to pick up grass with a fork

*okufindula omwiidi nolukoolo*
Namibia/map of Namibia

Namibia/okaalita kaNamibia
naughty

cupote/oufifiti

1. man 2. Ovamboland 3. snuff

1. omusamane 2. Ovamboland 3. ofenya

tea

otee

Simple Signs
herbal tea

oimbodi yotee

to drink tea

nwa otee

to stir tea with a teaspoon

piula otee nokanguto kashona/nokanguto kotee

Simple Signs
stick

oshiti/okati
hello

okupopita/haloo

to look for

konga

later

komesho/konale

Simple Signs
to report/inform on someone

okushitongako/okulopota/okulyako omunhu mukwao

brother/sister

omumwameme-muti ile omumwameme-ka-dona

chairperson

omuneshipundi
chair

oshipundi

noon

pokati komutenya/etango lili pokati komutwe

South America

South America/Amelika yokouninginino

Simple Signs
South Africa (of the African National Congress)

South Africa

South Africa (of the Afrikaners/Boers)

South Africa

house

eumbo

Simple Signs
traditional home

eumbo lomiti

book

embo

finish [note: used to mark the completion of a major idea]

sha pwa/ofilu/okupwa/okumana

Simple Signs
finish [note: used to mark the completion of a major idea]

ofilu/upwa/mana

happy

okuuda nawa kwokomwenyo/okuhafa

unhappy

okuhena ehafa/okuuda nai kwokomweny
come/come from

okuuya/okudja/ila

to pack

longela oinima

_to enter

okuyamo/ilamo

Simple Signs
wall

ekuma

floor

olukolongo

to stay

kala

Simple Signs
to run away because of being afraid to fight

okufadukapo wa tiwa oloomojiwa tewa kumukweni

open

uyuuluka/egulula

close

lidila/tuvika

Simple Signs
before (in relation to someone or something)

fimbo/manga

before/long ago

malenale/tetetete

Botswana

Botswana/Oshwana

Simple Signs
to send greetings to another person, the sign is directed towards the person who is greeted

*okulombwela omunhu e mu popife/popifilepo*

*Indicating Verbs*
fish swims
osti tai yoo

to chop with a machete
okuka nekatana/ka nekatana

to dig with a spade
okufa nosihupulo/fula noshixupulo
spade picks up ground from heap and lifts it onto truck

*okuxupila edu moshihauto*
deaf

ombolo

when

onainilunake

where

openi

Simple Signs
Zambia

Zambia/Ozambia

movie/film

okino

sort of/more or less

shilingoo ngaho/hasho naana
full/satisfied

okuyada/okukuta

SWAPO

ehangano la Namibia/OSWAPO

to forget

dhimbwa

Simple Signs
you (plural)/all of you

amushe/ne amuhe

to like

okuhokwa/ohokwe

to love

ohole/okuhola

Simple Signs
leader/commander

wovakwa'la/omuwiliki omukulunhu

to want

okuha'a

hungry

okufyondjala

Simple Signs
to wait

teelelela

to wait for a while/a long time

teelela manga/teelela efimbo iле

to wait for a short time

teelela efimbo lixupi
how

ngahelipi/ngiini

extended family/relatives

edimo ile epata

organization

ehangano
Angola

Angola/Oangola

shelf

eelaye

volleyball

etanga lokeenyala

Simple Signs
finish [note: used to mark the completion of a major idea]

sha pwa/ofulu/mana

free

manguluka/mangulula

a lot/very

shihapu/ unene

Simple Signs
very loud noise

eweelelo lihapu unene/ la pitilila

job

oiionga

traditional doctor who diagnoses problem

onganga/omunyanekeli

Simple Signs
you can't beat that

ito piti/ito dulu oku shi ninga

someone ran away

okutya sha kwaa u a tadukapo (okufindwa ngaashi)

pages

omopandja

Simple Signs
same

shelifa/laafana

also

oshoyo/ngaashiyo

example

oshiholelwa/oshihopalelwa

Simple Signs
to help

ekwefo

door

omuvelo

to close a door

idila omuvelo/edhila omweelo

Simple Signs
to open a door

yuulula omuvelo/egulula omweelo

pawpaw
epapaye

vaseline

ovaseline omaadi okuvava

Simple Signs
new

shipe

old

kulupa

elder

omukulunhu kedaio (melandulafano)

Simple Signs
young

okanona kadalo/omunyasha

selfish

okulihola ove mwene/ouluva

Europe

Europe

Simple Signs
thank you

iyaloo

to sleep

okukofa/eemofi

Simple Signs
sofa

etyofa/oshipundi shipu shokuyaamena

paper

ombapila

exercise book

eshifo shokunyolwa

Simple Signs
through, the sign indicates the direction in which the object/person is moving through something

okupitila

through, the sign indicates the direction in which the object/person is moving through something

okupitila

I teach you, the sign is directed towards the person who is taught

okuhonga ofikola ile keshe tuu

Indicating Verbs
animal grows taller [note: the height of the hand indicates the height of the animal]

*okukula kwoshinamwenyo omufika tau i pombada*

to carry large container on head

*okuhumbata oshinima shakula komutwe*

to carry small container on head

*okuhumbata sha shinini komutwe*
to pick up and put curved container on head eg: clay pot or basket

*okuhumbeta komutwe evela/oshi too nosho tuu*

fish swims

*oshi tayi ende momeva/oshi tai yoo*

bird flies

*okadila taka tuka*
many birds fly

oudila vehepu tava tuka

to rain heavily

odula tayi diinine

person walks

omunhu ta ende

Classifier Verbs
to peel a pawpaw

okuyuuna epapaye
1. to make/create 2. to do

1. okuninga kwoshilongal 2. okushita

Simple Signs
what are you doing?

oto ningi shike?

ceiling

onhala

near

popepi

Simple Signs
far

kokule

money

oimaliwa

wooden pounding block/mortar for stamping corn/millet

oshini

Simple Signs
office
ombelewa
to hide
holama/hondama

Simple Signs
the location of the hands indicates the location of one place in relation to another eg: one person lives here and another lives over there

okupukulula omunhu onhele
to chop with an axe

okuka nekva/keka nekuya

vehicle with a short bonnet, if the hands moved out further before moving vertically down, it would show a vehicle with a longer bonnet

nghene to ulike omutamo, oule nolumbubu lwoshihauto

to take the cooking oil from the wooden pounding block where kernels of marula fruit are ground into oil

okutapa odjove koshini

Classifier Verbs
Saturday

olomakaya

to know

okushivasha

don't know

okuhashivasha/okwaatseyashi

Simple Signs
nothing

kapenasha

to eat

okulya

natural fruit from indigenous tree

eenghwiyu

Simple Signs
fruit

oshiyimati/oshiimati

fruit

oshiyimati/oshiimati

to put

okutula/tula

Simple Signs
to take/subtract

kulapo/kulamo

poor

oluhepo/okuhepa
you teach me, the sign is directed towards me (the person who is taught)

okuhongwa/longa ndje

you don't know anything, the sign is directed towards you (the person who doesn't know anything)

ove kushiisha/no tseyasha

I don't know anything, the sign is directed towards me (the person who doesn't know anything)

ame kandidisha/inandi tseyasha

Indicating Verbs
she/he doesn't know anything, the sign is directed towards the person who doesn't know anything

ye keshiisha

I have nothing, the sign is directed towards me, the person who has nothing

ame nghinasha/kandinasha

Indicating Verbs
I don't know any sign, (note: could also mean "doesn't know how to write")

ame kandishishi edidiliko lasha
child grows up

okanona taka koko/okaana taka kulu

many children grow up

ounona tava kulu/aanona taa koko

young grain plants grow [note: the height of the hands indicates the height of the grain and the distance between the hands indicates the length of the row]

oilya tai kulu/iilya tayi koko
row of plants grow taller [note: the height of the hands indicates the medium height of the plants and the distance between the hands indicates the length of the row]

oilya tai kulu nawa

millet grows

oilya tai kulu

Classifier Verbs
bad

owii/uuwinayi

history/story

ondjokonona/ehokololo

cooking oil made from kernels of marula fruit

odjove

Simple Signs
to scoop marula oil from wooden pounding block/mortar with clay cup

*okupinda ondjo'və koshini*

cooking fat/butter

*omaadi okulya*

to arrive

*okufika*
late at night/a dark night

kwatoka/oufiku kwalaula

night

cufiku/uusiku
elephant waves trunk

ondjaba tai nipi omukati

to collect millet, use hand to sweep into container

okwoongela, okuyukila ile okukombelela oila moshikwatelwa
month

ohanil/omwedi

year

odula/omuvo

to stay eg: stay for years

okukala: okukala eedula

Simple Signs
friend

*kaume/kuume*

to catch a person

*okuwata omunhu*
clay pot, object with a rounded surface

*omutungilo ngaashi oshitowo/olumbubu lwoshitoo*

gourd for storing traditional beer/milk, object with a rounded surface

*nghee toudike omutungilo u li ongonga ngaashi oxupa, oshikola ile oshitoo*

to pick up round container and drink from it

*okunwa omukongho/okuyandja ile okutumba oshikwatelwa shinasha ngaashi oshikola ile oshitoo*
to drink from a cup

okunwa mokakopi

to move/take cup

kufapo okakopi/ekopi

yoke, object with a rounded, broad surface [note: the distance between the thumb and the fingers indicates that it is of medium width]

ounene/wondjoko

Classifier Verbs
person climbs tree

*omunhu ta londo komuti*

to pound with stick

*okutwa nomushi*

to carry curved object on shoulder

*okuhumbata kepepe*
to pour edible grain from curved container into large grain storage basket

okutila/okutula ile okututila olya mokaanda

elephant uses trunk to pick up scent of quarry

ondjaba tai timbula nomukati wayo

to peel lime/orange/lemon

okuyuuna onongo, elamuna ile elalandje

Classifier Verbs
year

*omudo/odula/omvula*

morning (informal sign)

*ongula*

light is on

*okutema olamba, otoshe/olusheno*
many

shihapu/oshindji

Simple Signs
I give a present to you, the sign is directed towards the person who is given a present

*chandi kupe omuano*

---

you give a present to me, the sign is directed towards me (I am given a present)

*owa pa nge omuano/owa pendje omagano*

---

you give something to me, the sign is directed towards me (I am given something) [note: later I return it]

*ove owapange sha/ okuyandja sha*

---

**Indicating Verbs**
he/she gives something to me, the sign is directed towards me (I am given something) [note: later I return it]

ye okwapange sha

I give something to them, the sign is directed in an arc towards them (they are given something) [note: later they return it]

okuyandja oshinima konima ve shi aulue
Thursday

etine

lousy

shiiitashihokwiiia

Simple Signs
four fruit fall from tree

oyiimati ine tai u komuti

Classifier Verbs
Friday

etitano

week

oshivike/oshiwike

tree

omuti

Simple Signs
to rain

odula/omvula

to rain

odula/omvula

angry

okuhanduka/okugeya

Simple Signs
fingerspelling

*okushanga kokesnyala/eshango lomomhepo*

kind of buck (branched antlers)

*oludi lweenyati*

clothes

*oikutu*
border

onhuala

finish [note: used to mark the completion of a major idea]

shapwa

sign language/to sign

okuudika kwokeenyala

Simple Signs
traditional house/home

eumbo lomiti

farm

epya/ofaalama

big farm

epya ile ofaalama yakula
work/to work

okulonga/oilonga

what work are you doing?

oholongo shike?/oilonga yoye oyashike?

to run away

okufadukapo

Simple Signs
light is off

okudima/ouyelele wa dima

to put/add

tulapo/wedamo

to put/add

tulapo/wedamo

Simple Signs
to work (plural) eg: many people work in different places

okulonga olonga lili nokulili

people gather in one place

okwoongala ponhele imwe
to rain lightly

*odula tai nyanyangele*

insect climbs up tree

*okapuka taka londo*

fruit falls from tree

*oyimati tai u komuti*
fruit falls from marula tree

eengongo ta di u komwoongo/amwoongo tau umbu

to put curved container on head

okutumbila sha komutwe noku shi humbata

to pick up very large curved container and place on head

okutumbila sha shinene komutwe

Classifier Verbs
ground [note: the flat handshape indicates the broadness of the surface, the straight movement indicates that it is flat]

edataalakana

animals walk

oinamwenyo tai ende

herder brings cattle to a stop

omafitangobe a fikameka/kanghameka eengobe
people walk in a line

*ovanhu tava ende veli momukweyo*

animals walk in line

*oinamwenyo ya twa omhola*

convoy of trucks/many trucks

*okanivoi/olweendo loituwa ihapu la longekidwa owina*
cow path/road, the movement of the hands describes the width and shape of the path/road

*oluvanda ile/oshinghoti sheedidi*

waves in the water

*omakufikufi*

wind blows through grass

*omwiidi tau pepwa komhepo*
all students progress at same rate [note: the height of both hands are the same, indicating the same rate of progress]

aveshe va pita nonghatu imwe

to catch a person

okukwata omunhu

to catch a person

okukwata omunhu

Classifier Verbs
bird lands in tree and flies away

okitila ka wila komuti ndele taka tuka ko
berries from red milkwood tree

eenyandi

to make something from clay

okuma sha nedu/monhata

leader/queen/king

omuleli/ohamba yomukainhu/ohamba yomulumenhu
president

omulele woshi longo

to learn

iihonga/lilonga

Sweden

Sweden/Oswedeni

Simple Signs
flour/warehouse

oufila/elimba lokubwikila

to become deaf

okuninga ombolo
two people talk to each other, the sign is directed to the people who are spoken to

ovanhu vavali tava popi
rich

ouyamba

rake

oshihalaka/olukoolo

Simple Signs
row of flowers grow [note: the height of the hand indicates the height of the flowers and the number of repetitions of the sign indicates the length of the row]

*omukweyo mule weenga/a*

to rake

*okuhalaka/okukoola*

to rake with difficulty

*okuhalaka neenghono/okukoola noudjuu*
to rake carefully

\textit{okuhalaka noukeka/koola nawa-nawa}

many people rake together in a long line

\textit{ovanhu vahapu ta vahalaka ve li epala londjaba}

cat's paws move (pounce/climb/run)

\textit{omakasha okambishi (taa nuka/londo/tondoka)}
to shake basket so waste from millet blows away on wind

okuyela oiliya

to drink from a tall container eg: carton

okunwa mokalahasha

to make oil from kernels of marula fruit using carved wooden implement which is held by both hands and twisted

okuyenga odjove

Classifier Verbs
tree laden with fruit

omuti wa ima nawa/nene
watermelon

ekanuwa/enuwa

snake slithers along

eyoka tali lipweda
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