

Communicating in Bambara

Bambara is the most common language spoken in Mali.



When you say good morning to a man in Bambara, he responds “n ba,” which means “my mother,” to thank his mother for being born.



When you say good morning to a woman, she says “n’séy,” which means “my power.”



When you ask for directions, the word for right is “kini bolo,” which means “rice hand,” and the word for left is “numan bolo,” which means “nose hand.” So turning right means going in the direction of the hand you eat rice with; left is the direction of the hand that you wipe your nose with!



And here’s a fun Bambara word: Bele bele ba (pronounced: BILLY BILLY BA), which means “big”! Elephants live in the desert in Mali. They’re bele bele ba!