

# Chapter 6

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## Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses and Their Negations

In this chapter, we will learn how to make simple sentences using verbs in the simple past tense and past perfect tense. In Swahili, a particular tense marker denotes each tense. The simple past tense marker is *-li-* and the past perfect tense marker is *-me-*. The hyphens (-) before and after the tense marker indicate that something has to be added before and after the tense marker. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Personal Subject Prefix comes before the first hyphen and the verb comes after the second hyphen (STV rule). We will now learn how simple sentences using tense markers are constructed.

### Section A: The Simple Past Tense

The simple past tense is used to show an action that took place in the past. As mentioned previously, the simple past tense is expressed by the tense marker *-li-*. Sentences using simple past tense markers are constructed in the following manner.

Personal Subject Prefix + Simple Past Tense Marker + Verb

If we want to make a simple sentence such as “I played,” we do it as follows. We take the Personal Subject Prefix for “I” which is *ni-*. We then attach this to the simple past tense marker *-li-* and we get *nili-*. Finally, we attach this to the verb “play” which is *cheza* and we get *Nilicheza* which means “I played.”

Using the same method of construction with other Personal Subject Prefixes and Bantu verbs, we get:

- U-li-soma.* – You (sing.) read.  
*A-li-andika.* – He/She wrote.  
*Tu-li-kimbia.* – We ran.  
*M-li-chekeka.* – You (pl.) laughed.  
*Wa-li-nunua.* – They bought.

The important thing to notice here is that in all these sentences, *-li-* is the simple past tense marker and it does not change.

In the simple past tense, verbs of Bantu origin and Arabic verbs follow the same rules in affirmative sentences. Below are some examples of verbs of Arabic origin.

- Ni-li-kubali.* – I accepted.  
*U-li-fikiri.* – You (sing.) thought.  
*A-li-rudi.* – He/She returned.

Monosyllabic verbs retain their infinitive marker *ku-* in sentences using simple past tense markers.

- Ni-li-kula.* – I ate.  
*U-li-kunywa.* – You (sing.) drank.  
*A-li-kuja.* – He/She came.

## Practice Exercise A

Translate the following sentences into English.

1. *Mlisoma barua.*
2. *Walipanda mazao.*
3. *Alisikitika sana.*
4. *Tuliruka.*
5. *Alipenda zawadi.*
6. *Uliishi Ujerumani.*
7. *Watu walikuja katika duka.*
8. *Mgonjwa alipona.*
9. *Alinunua baiskeli.*
10. *Mama alipika samaki.*

## Section B: Simple Past Tense Negation

It is also fairly easy to negate simple past tense sentences. In simple past tense sentences, the Personal Subject Prefix is always negated by substituting it with a Negative Personal Subject Prefix. The simple past tense marker is always negated by substituting it with the negative simple past tense marker which is *-ku-*. Bantu and Arabic verbs remain unchanged in their negated form; however, the infinitive marker *ku-* is dropped in negated Monosyllabic verbs. This is illustrated below:

Negative Personal Subject Prefix +  
Negated Simple Past Tense Marker + Verb

If we want to negate a simple past tense sentence containing a Bantu verb, such as, *Nilicheza* “I played,” we do it as follows. We substitute the Personal Subject Prefix for “I” which is *ni-* with the Negative Personal Subject Prefix which is *si-*. We then attach it to the negative simple past tense marker *-ku-* to get *siku-*. We finally attach this to the verb “play” which is *cheza* and the complete negation of *Nilicheza* “I played” would be *Sikucheza* “I did not play.”

Here are more examples of negation of simple past tense sentences containing verbs of Bantu origin.

*Nilipika.* – I cooked.  
*Sikupika.* – I did not cook.  
*Ulisoma.* – You (sing.) read.  
*Hukusoma.* – You (sing.) did not read.

Here are examples of negation of simple past tense sentences containing verbs of Arabic origin.

*Walikubali.* – They accepted.  
*Hawakukubali.* – They did not accept.  
*Mlifahamu.* – You (pl.) understood.  
*Hamkufahamu.* – You (pl.) did not understand.

Here are examples of negation of simple past tense sentences containing Monosyllabic verbs. Please note that the infinitive *ku-* is deleted, the *-ku-*

that appears in the sentences below is the negative simple past tense marker.

*Nilikula.* – I ate.

*Sikula.* – I did not eat

*Ulikunywa.* – You (sing.) drank.

*Hukunywa.* – You (sing.) did not drink.

## Practice Exercise B

Translate the following into English.

11. *Hatukufahamu.*

12. *Watoto hawakunywa.*

13. *Hakukubali.*

14. *Hawakula.*

15. *Daktari hakuja.*

16. *Hukununua.*

17. *Mama hakurudi leo.*

18. *Mtoto hakufikiri.*

19. *Thomas hakula nyama.*

20. *Sikusoma katika Chuo Kikuu cha Washington.*

## Section C: The Past Perfect Tense

The past perfect tense is used to show an action that took place in the past and the resulting state of that action still exists, or a simple present action which is complete.

The past perfect tense is expressed by the tense marker *-me-*. Sentences using past perfect tense markers are constructed in the following manner.

Personal Subject Prefix + Past Perfect Tense Marker + Verb

If we want to make a simple sentence such as “I had played,” we do it as follows. We take the Personal Subject Prefix for “I” which is *ni-*. We then attach this to the past perfect tense marker *-me-* and we get *nime-*. Finally, we attach this to the verb “play” which is *cheza* and we get *Nimecheza* which means “I have played.”

Using the same method of construction with other Personal Subject Prefixes and Bantu verbs, we get:

- U-me-soma.* – You (sing.) have read.  
*A-me-fariki.* – He/She is dead.  
*Tu-me-kimbia.* – We have run.  
*M-me-cheka.* – You (pl.) have laughed.  
*Wa-me-nunua.* – They have bought.

The important thing to notice here is that in all these sentences, *-me-* is the past perfect tense marker and it does not change.

In the past perfect tense, verbs of Bantu origin and Arabic verbs follow the same rules in affirmative sentences. Below are some examples of verbs of Arabic origin.

- Ni-me-kubali.* – I have accepted.  
*U-me-fikiri.* – You (sing.) have thought.  
*A-me-rudi.* – He/She has returned.

Monosyllabic verbs retain their infinitive marker *ku-* in sentences using past perfect tense markers.

- Ni-me-kula.* – I have eaten.  
*U-me-kunywa.* – You (sing.) have drunk.  
*A-me-kuja.* – He/She has come.

## Practice Exercise C

Translate the following sentences into English.

21. *Wahariri wamemaliza kazi.*
22. *Wamepanda nyanya.*
23. *Amepeza chai.*
24. *Mwalimu amechanganya kemikali.*
25. *Amelala.*
26. *Umeishi Marekani.*
27. *Watu wamekuja katika kiwanja cha michezo.*
28. *Mgonjwa amekunywa dawa.*
29. *Amenunua kompyuta.*
30. *Bibi amepika mayai.*

## Section D: Past Perfect Tense Negation

There are two different ways of negating past perfect tense sentences. In past perfect tense sentences, the Personal Subject Prefix is always negated by substituting it with a Negative Personal Subject Prefix. The past perfect tense marker is negated by substituting it with either the negative past perfect tense marker which is *-ja-* if the action could still take place, or the negative simple past tense marker *-ku-* if there is no possibility that the action could still take place. Bantu and Arabic verbs remain unchanged in their negated form; however, the infinitive marker *ku-* is dropped in negated Monosyllabic verbs.

Negative Personal Subject Prefix + Negated Past Perfect Tense  
Marker/Negated Simple Past Tense Marker + Verb

If we want to negate a past perfect tense sentence containing a Bantu verb, such as, *Nimecheza* “I have played,” we do it as follows. We substitute the Personal Subject Prefix for “I” which is *ni-* with the Negative Personal Subject Prefix which is *si-*. We then attach either the negative past perfect tense marker *-ja-* to get *sija-* OR the negative simple past tense marker *-ku-* to get *siku-*. We finally attach this to the verb “play” which is *cheza* and the complete negation of *Nimecheza* “I have played” would be *Sijacheza* “I have not played yet” OR *Sikucheza* “I did not play.”

Here are more examples of negation of past perfect tense sentences containing verbs of Bantu origin.

- Nimepika.* – I have cooked.
- Sijapika.* – I have not yet cooked OR
- Sikupika.* – I did not cook.
- Umesoma.* – You (sing.) have read.
- Hujasoma.* – You (sing.) have not yet read OR
- Hukusoma.* – You (sing.) did not read.

Here are examples of negation of past perfect tense sentences containing verbs of Arabic origin.

*Wamekubali.* – They have accepted.

*Hawajakubali.* – They have not yet accepted OR

*Hawakukubali.* – They did not accept.

*Mmefahamu.* – You (pl.) have understood.

*Hamjafahamu.* – You (pl.) have not yet understood OR

*Hamkufahamu.* – You (pl.) did not understand.

Here are examples of negation of past perfect tense sentences containing Monosyllabic verbs. Please note that the infinitive *ku-* is deleted.

*Nimekula.* – I have eaten.

*Sijala.* – I have not yet eaten OR

*Sikula.* – I did not eat.

*Umekunywa.* – You (sing.) have drunk.

*Hujanywa.* – You (sing.) have not yet drunk OR

*Hukunywa.* – You (sing.) did not drink.

## Practice Exercise D

Translate the following into English.

31. *Hawajafahamu.*

32. *Watoto hawakula.*

33. *Hajakubali.*

34. *Hakulima.*

35. *Balozi hajaja.*

36. *Hujamaliza mtihani.*

37. *Mama hajapika.*

38. *Rafiki hajafika.*

39. *Tatu hakula kuku.*

40. *Sijasoma katika Chuo Kikuu cha Toronto.*

## New Vocabulary

*baiskeli*: bicycle(s)

*balozi/ma-*: ambassador(s)

*chai*: tea

*changanya*: mix

*fariki*: die

*fika*: arrive

*kemikali*: chemical(s)  
*kiwanja/vi- cha/vya michezo*: stadium(s)  
*kompyuta*: computer(s)  
*kuku*: chicken(s)  
*lima*: cultivate  
*maliza*: complete, finish  
*Marekani*: The United States of America  
*mhariri/wa-*: editor(s)  
*mtihani/mi-*: examination(s)  
*nyama*: meat  
*nyanya*: tomato(es), grandmother(s)  
*panda*: climb, plant  
*pona*: cure, heal  
*poza*: cool off  
*sikitika*: regret  
*Ujerumani*: Germany  
*zao/ma-*: crop(s)

## Key to Exercises

### Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. You (pl.) read a letter.
2. They planted crops.
3. He/She regretted very much.
4. We flew.
5. He/She loved the gift(s).
6. You (sing.) lived in Germany.
7. People came in the shop.
8. The patient was cured.
9. He/She bought bicycle(s).
10. Mother cooked fish.

### Answers to Practice Exercise B

11. We did not understand.
12. The children did not drink.
13. He/She did not agree.
14. They did not eat.
15. The doctor did not come.



16. You (sing.) did not buy.
17. Mother did not return today.
18. The child did not think.
19. Thomas did not eat meat.
20. I did not study at University of Washington.

### **Answers to Practice Exercise C**

21. The editors have completed the work.
22. They have planted tomatoes.
23. He/She has cooled off the tea.
24. The teacher has mixed the chemical(s).
25. He/She has slept.
26. You (sing.) have lived in America.
27. People have come to the stadium.
28. The patient has drunk (taken) the medicine.
29. He/She has bought a computer(s).
30. Grandmother has cooked eggs.

### **Answers to Practice Exercise D**

31. They have not yet understood.
32. The children did not eat.
33. He/She has not yet agreed.
34. He/She did not cultivate.
35. The ambassador has not yet come.
36. You (sing.) have not yet completed the exam.
37. Mother has not yet cooked.
38. The friend has not yet arrived.
39. Tatu did not eat chicken.
40. I have not yet studied at University of Toronto.

