

Chapter 10

Swahili Noun Classes: PA- and KU- and Noun Class Agreement

This chapter will focus on two more noun classes in the Swahili noun class system namely the PA- Class and KU- class. In addition, the subject prefix agreement for all Swahili noun classes will be taught.

Section A: The PA- (Mahali Class)

Although this noun class contains only one noun i.e. *mahali* which means “location(s),” it is by far the most complicated of all noun classes as far as its agreements are concerned. Location in Swahili takes three types of agreements depending on the type of location.

The letter “P” denotes definite location;

The letter “K” denotes indefinite location or area; and

The letter “M” denotes inside location.

The agreements for the PA- Class will be taught in Section C. In Swahili, it is very simple to translate phrases containing information about a location. You simply add the locative suffix *-ni* at the end of the noun. This can be used to translate the prepositions “in,” “on” or “at,” depending on the context in English. Below are some examples:

kabati – cupboard

kabatini – in the cupboard

nyumba – house

nyumbani – in/at the house

njia – road

njiani – on/in the road

shule – school

shuleni – in/at school

Also, the locative suffix *-ni* can be replaced with the preposition *katika* placed in front of the noun, when translating the prepositions “in” or “at.” For example:

kabatini – in the cupboard

katika kabati – in the cupboard

There are some instances where the locative suffix *-ni* cannot be used to replace the preposition *katika*. *Katika* must be used with compound nouns which contain a noun and an adjective as well as nouns constructed using the *-a* of Association as shown below:

chuo kikuu – university

katika chuo kikuu – in/at the university

shirika la uma – public institution

katika shirika la uma – in/at the public institution

Practice Exercise A

Translate the following into Swahili.

1. at work
2. on the bed
3. in the bag
4. at the petrol station
5. in the Indian Ocean
6. in the world
7. on the river bank
8. on the tower
9. at the shop
10. in university

Section B: KU- Class

In Swahili, the KU- Class is only used with verbs and is used to form infinitives or gerunds. In English, an infinitive is the preposition “to” plus the verb (i.e. to go, to eat, to work etc). An infinitive can be used as a verb complement in a sentence (verbal infinitive) or as the subject of a sentence (verbal noun). A gerund is a verb form that ends in -ing. A gerund carries the same meaning as a present tense participle or can be used as the subject of a sentence (verbal noun). Below are some examples:

Infinitive - Verbal Infinitive

Ninapenda kusoma. – I like to read.

Gerund - Present tense participle

Ninapenda kusoma. – I like reading

Infinitive - Verbal Noun

Kusoma ni kuzuri. – To read is good.

Gerund - Verbal Noun

Kusoma ni kuzuri. – Reading is good.

Verbal nouns are nouns in the KU- Class and take agreements according to this class. This will be taught in the following section.

Although the negation of the KU- Class is rarely used, infinitives or gerunds in the KU- Class are negated by inserting the infix *-to-* between the infinitive *ku-* marker and the verb. Below are some examples for Bantu and Arabic verbs:

kusoma – read/reading

kutosoma – not to read/not reading

kulala – to sleep/sleeping

kutolala – not to sleep/not sleeping

kudharau – to ignore/ignoring

kutodharau – not to ignore/not ignoring

Below are some examples for Monosyllabic verbs. Please note that Monosyllabic verbs retain their *ku-* infinitive marker when negated.

kula – to eat/eating

kutokula – not to eat/not eating

kupa – to give/giving

kutokupa – not to give/not giving

Practice Exercise B

Change the following verbs into their infinitives and then negate them.

11. *panda*

12. *amka*

13. *ruka*

14. *imba*

15. *iba*

Translate the following sentences into Swahili.

16. You (sing.) want to sleep.

17. He/She does not like to cultivate.

18. We finished swimming.

19. Cheating is not good.

20. They want not to bargain

Section C: Subject Prefix Agreement

In this section, we will learn how the noun classes taught previously are used in a sentence. In Swahili, the noun dominates the sentence and when used with a verb, the Subject Prefix has to agree with the noun. Subject prefixes for the M-/WA- Class (Personal Subject Prefixes and their negations) were taught in Chapter 3. We will be focusing on the remaining noun classes in this section.

TABLE 10.1
Chart for Subject Prefixes and their Negations

| Noun Class | | Affirmative Subject Prefix | Negative Subject Prefix |
|------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Singular | M - 1 st person singular | <i>ni-</i> | <i>si-</i> |
| | 2 nd person singular | <i>u-</i> | <i>hu-</i> |
| | 3 rd person singular | <i>a-</i> | <i>ha-</i> |
| Plural | WA - 1 st person plural | <i>tu-</i> | <i>hatu-</i> |
| | 2 nd person singular | <i>m-</i> | <i>ham-</i> |
| | 3 rd person singular | <i>wa-</i> | <i>hawa-</i> |
| Singular | M- | <i>u-</i> | <i>hau-</i> |
| Plural | MI- | <i>i-</i> | <i>hai-</i> |
| Singular | JI- | <i>li-</i> | <i>hali-</i> |
| Plural | MA- | <i>ya-</i> | <i>haya-</i> |
| Singular | KI- | <i>ki-</i> | <i>haki-</i> |
| Plural | VI- | <i>vi-</i> | <i>havi-</i> |
| Singular | N- | <i>i-</i> | <i>hai-</i> |
| Plural | N- | <i>zi-</i> | <i>hazi-</i> |
| Singular | U- | <i>u-</i> | <i>hau-</i> |
| Plural | U- | <i>zi-</i> | <i>hazi-</i> |
| | PA- | <i>pa-</i> | <i>hapa</i> |
| | KU- | <i>ku-</i> | <i>haku-</i> |
| | M- | <i>m-</i> | <i>ham-</i> |
| | KU- | <i>ku-</i> | <i>kuto-</i> |

Below are examples of Subject Prefix Agreements for all noun classes except Personal Subject Prefix Agreements which were covered in Chapter 3.

- Mti ulianguka.* – The tree fell down.
Miti ilianguka. – The trees fell down.
Yai halinuki. – The egg does not smell bad.
Mayai hayanuki. – The eggs do not smell bad.
Kitabu kimeanguka. – The book has fallen down.
Vitabu vimeanguka. – The books have fallen down.
Pete inameremeta. – The ring is shining.
Pete zinameremeta. – The rings are shining.
Ukuta hautasimama. – The wall will not stand.
Kuta hazitasimama. – The walls will not stand.
Mahali pananuka. – The place smells bad (definite location).
Mahali pananuka. – The places smell bad (definite location).
Mahali kunanuka. – The place smells bad (indefinite location).
Mahali kunanuka. – The places smell bad (indefinite location).
Mahali mnanuka. – The place smells bad (inside location).
Mahali mnanuka. – The places smell bad (inside location).
Kuandika kuzuri. – The writing is good.
Kuandika kuzuri. – The writings are good.

As you can see from Table 10.1 and the examples, the PA- and KU-Class keep the same subject prefixes when changing from singular to plural. Also, several noun classes share their affirmative and/or negative subject prefixes as shown in Table 10.2

TABLE 10.2
Shared Affirmative and Negative Subject Prefixes

| | Noun Class | Affirmative Subject Prefix | Negative Subject Prefix |
|----------|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Singular | M-/MI- | <i>u-</i> | <i>hau-</i> |
| Singular | U- | <i>u-</i> | <i>hau-</i> |
| Singular | M-/WA- 2 nd person sing. | <i>u-</i> | <i>hu-</i> |
| Plural | M-/MI- | <i>i-</i> | <i>hai-</i> |
| Singular | N- | <i>i-</i> | <i>hai-</i> |
| Plural | N- | <i>zi-</i> | <i>hazi-</i> |
| Plural | U- | <i>zi-</i> | <i>hazi-</i> |

It is also important to note that although nouns referring to humans, animals and insects may exist in other noun classes, they still take agreement with the M-/WA- Class. Exceptions to this rule will be taught in Chapter 38.

- Daktari atafika.* – The doctor will arrive.
Madaktari watafika. – The doctors will arrive.
Simba hajalala. – The lion has not yet slept.
Simba hawajalala. – The lions have not yet slept.
Kipofu atakula. – The blind person will eat.
Vipofu watakula. – The blind people will eat.

Also, note that all countries take agreement with the singular N-class even though some of them exist in the U- Class. As you can see in the example below the Subject Prefix is *i-* which is for the singular N-class, even though the word *Urusi* belongs in the U- class.

Urusi imeendelea. – Russia has progressed.

Lastly, if the inanimate noun(s) being referred to is/are unknown, the sentence will take agreement with the N- Class. For example:

- Itanukia.* – It will smell good.
Zitanukia. – They will smell good.

Practice Exercise C

Change the following singular sentences into plural when applicable.

21. *Ndoo imejaa maji.*
22. *Mti unanukia.*
23. *Gari halitasimama.*
24. *Ndege anaruka.*
25. *Mahali pameanguka.*
26. *Unywele uling"aa.*
27. *Kipofu anajenga nyumba.*
28. *Kitanda kimesimama.*
29. *Kucheka ni kubaya.*
30. *Mwanafunzi alimwaga mafuta.*

Translate the following sentences into English.

31. *Ndoo zimejaa maji.*
32. *Miti inanukia.*
33. *Magari hayatasimama.*
34. *Ndege wanaruka.*
35. *Mahali pameanguka.*
36. *Nywele ziling"aa.*
37. *Vipofu wanajenga nyumba.*
38. *Vitanda vimesimama.*
39. *Kucheka ni kubaya.*
40. *Wanafunzi walimwaga mafuta.*

New Vocabulary

amka: wake up

anguka: fall

Bahari ya Hindi: Indian Ocean

-baya: bad

danganya: cheat

dharau: ignore, despise

dunia: world(s), the Earth

iba: steal

imba: sing

jaa: fill

jenga: build

kabati/ma-: cupboard(s), locker(s)

mahali: place(s)

meremeta: shine, glitter

mfuko/mi-: bag(s), pocket(s), sack(s)

mnara/mi-: tower(s)

mwaga: spill, pour

ndoo: bucket(s)

ng"aa: shine

njia: way(s), method(s), road(s), path(s)

nuka: smell bad, stink

nukia: smell good, scent

ogelea: swim, wash

patina: haggle, bargain

pete: ring(s)

petroli: petrol, gasoline
shirika/ma- la/ya uma: public institution(s)
si: is not/are not
simama: stand
ukingo/kingo: riverbank(s)
-zuri: good, beautiful

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. *kazini*
2. *kitandani*
3. *mfukoni*
4. *katika kituo cha petroli*
5. *katika Bahari ya Hindi*
6. *duniani*
7. *ukingoni*
8. *mnarani*
9. *dukani*
10. *katika chuo kikuu*

Answers to Practice Exercise B

11. *kupanda – kutopanda*
12. *kuamka – kutoamka*
13. *kuruka – kutoruka*
14. *kuimba – kutoimba*
15. *kuiba – kutoiba*
16. *Unataka kulala.*
17. *Hapendi kulima.*
18. *Tulimaliza kuogelea.*
19. *Kudanganya si kuzuri.*
20. *Wanataka kutopatana.*

Answers to Practice Exercise C

21. *Ndoo zimejaa maji.*
22. *Miti inanukia.*
23. *Magari hayatasimama.*

24. *Ndege wanaruka.*
25. *Mahali pameanguka.*
26. *Nywele ziling"aa.*
27. *Vipofu wanajenga nyumba.*
28. *Vitanda vimesimama.*
29. *Kucheka ni kubaya.*
30. *Wanafunzi walimwaga mafuta.*
31. The buckets have been filled with water.
32. The trees smell good.
33. The vehicles will not stop.
34. The birds are flying.
35. The place (definite) has fallen down.
36. The hairs were shining.
37. The blind people are building the house(s).
38. The beds have stood upright.
39. To laugh is bad/ Laughing is bad.
40. The students spilled oil.