

Chapter 23

Passive Form of the Verb

This Chapter explains how Passive Verbs (*Vabo ya Kutendewa*) are formed in Swahili using verbs of Bantu origin, verbs of Arabic origin and Monosyllabic verbs. It should be pointed out from the outset that the object of an active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence. Also, in passive verbs, actions done by animates are followed by the conjunction *na* meaning “by” while actions done by inanimates are followed by conjunction *kwa* meaning “with” and conveys the idea of using a tool.

Section A: Verbs of Bantu Origin

Verbs of Bantu origin are made passive by the insertion of the infix *-w-* before the final vowel *-a* if the verb ends with a single vowel. Examples:

Active Form

lima – cultivate

Shangazi yangu alilima shamba. – My aunt cultivated the farm.

Passive Form

limwa – be cultivated

Shamba lililimwa na shangazi yangu. – The farm was cultivated by my aunt.

Active Form

soma – read

Gavana alisoma hotuba Bungeni. – The Governor read the speech in Parliament.

Passive Form

somwa – be read

Hotuba ilisomwa Bungeni na Gavana. – The speech was read in Parliament by the Governor.

Bantu verbs which end with double vowels *-aa,- ia* or *-ua* have *-liw-* inserted between the two vowels. Examples:

Active Form

kaa – sit

Mike alikaa juu ya kochi. – Mike sat on the couch.

Passive Form

kaliwa – be sat on

Kochi lilikaliwa na Mike. – The couch was sat on by Mike.

Active Form

tia – put

Mimi nilitia pilipili katika mboga. – I put pepper on the vegetables.

Passive Form

tiliwa – put on

Pilipili ilitiliwa katika mboga na mimi. – The pepper was put on the vegetables by me.

Active Form

pakua – unload

Wafanyakazi walipakua mizigo. – The workers unloaded the luggage.

Passive Form

pakuliwa – unloaded

Mizigo ilipakuliwa na wafanyakazi. – The luggage was unloaded by the workers.

Bantu verbs which end with double vowel *-ea* or *-oa* have *-lew-* inserted between the two vowels. Examples:

Active Form

lea – bring up or raise

Bibi yule alilea mtoto wangu. – That lady raised my child.

Passive Form

lelewa – be raised

Mtoto wangu alilelewa na bibi yule. – My child was raised by that lady.

Active Form

toa – remove

Mohamed alittoa takataka. – Mohamed removed the garbage.

Passive Form

tolewa – be removed

Takataka zilitolewa na Mohamed. – The garbage was removed by Mohamed.

Bantu verbs ending with *-wa* are made passive by inserting the infix *-iw-* between the original *w* and the final *a*.

Active Form

nawa – wash

Tulinawa maji. – We washed (with) water.

Passive Form

nawiwa – washed with

Maji yalinawiwa na sisi. – The water was used for washing by us.

Active Form

gawa – distribute

Magaidi waligawa silaha. – The terrorists distributed weapons.

Passive Form

gawiwa – be distributed

Silaha ziligawiwa na magaidi. – The weapons were distributed by terrorists.

Note in the example above, the active verb ends with *-wa*. In other words, not all verbs ending with the suffix *-wa* are automatically passive verbs.

The verb *ua* (kill) has the irregular passive form *uawa* (be killed).

Active Form

Wanakijiji walimwua simba. – The villagers killed the lion.

Passive Form

Simba aliuawa na wanakijiji. – The lion was killed by the villagers.

Practice Exercise A

Change the following sentences into Passive.

1. *Mkulima alikata miti kwa shoka.*
2. *Seremala alitengeneza mlango mkubwa sana.*
3. *Vijana walileta maji ya kunywa.*
4. *Opereta wa simu alikaa katika kiti.*
5. *Kaka yangu alilipa deni.*
6. *Wezi walichukua kila kitu.*
7. *John alimwoa msichana mzuri sana.*
8. *Wazimamoto waliwaokoa akina mama na watoto.*
9. *Walilea watoto wetu.*
10. *Kabla ya kwenda shuleni watoto walinawa maji.*

Section B: Verbs of Arabic Origin

Verbs of Arabic origin which end with the vowel *-i* or *-u* are made passive by changing the final vowel to *-iwa*. Examples:

Active Form

jadili – discuss

Wazee walijadili jambo hili. – The elders discussed this matter.

Passive Form

jadiliwa – be discussed

Jambo hili lilijadiliwa na wazee. – This matter was discussed by the elders.

Active Form*jibu* – answer*Jaji alijibu swali lake.* – The judge answered his/her question.**Passive Form***jibiwa* – be answered*Swali lake lilijibiwa na jaji.* – His/her question was answered by the judge.

Arabic verbs ending with the vowel *-e* are made passive by changing the final vowel to *-ewa*. Example:

Active Form*samehe* – forgive*Mama alimsamehe mtoto.* – The mother forgave her child.**Passive Form***samehewa* – be forgiven*Mtoto alisamehewa na mama.* – The child was forgiven by his/her mother.

Arabic verbs ending with the vowels *-au* are made passive by the addition of the suffix *-liwa*. Example:

Active Form*dharau* – despise*Mke atamdharau mume wake.* – The wife will despise her husband.**Passive Form***dharauliwa* – be despised*Mume atadharauliwa na mke wake.* – The husband will be despised by his wife.

Practice Exercise B

Change the following Passive sentences into Active.

11. *Mtihani ulirudiwa kuandikwa na wanafunzi.*
12. *Wafungwa wote walisamehewa makosa yao na Waziri Mkuu.*
13. *Maswali yetu yote yalijibiwa na viongozi.*
14. *Jambo hili lilifikiriwa na mimi kwa muda mrefu sana.*
15. *Vijana wale walihitajiwa mahakamani na polisi.*
16. *Maombi yetu hayakukubaliwa na Chuo Kikuu cha Minesota, Marekani.*
17. *Kazi ile ngumu haikujaribiwa na wafanyakazi.*
18. *Serikali ilishukuriwa na wananchi kwa msaada wake.*
19. *Baridi kutoka dirishani ilihisiwa na mgonjwa.*
20. *Vyombo vilisahauliwa kuoshwa na mimi.*

Section C: Monosyllabic Verbs

Each Monosyllabic verb has its own passive form as shown below. Examples:

Active Form

la – eat

Wanamuziki wamekula chakula chote. – Musicians have eaten all the food.

Passive Form

liwa – be eaten

Chakula chote kimeliwa na wanamuziki. – All the food has been eaten by musicians.

Active Form

nywa – drink

Mgonjwa alikunywa maji mengi sana. – The sick person drank a lot of water.

Passive Form

nywewa – be drunk

Maji mengi sana yalinywewa na mgonjwa. – A lot of water was drunk by the sick person.

Active Form*ja* – come*Watalii walikuja Serengeti.* – The tourists came to Serengeti.**Passive Form***jiwa* – come for*Serengeti ilijiwa na watalii.* – Serengeti was visited by the tourists.**Active Form***pa* – give*Nilimpa mtoto pesa.* – I gave the child some money.**Passive Form***pewa* – be given*Mtoto alipewa pesa na mimi.* – The child was given some money by me.**Active Form***fa* – die*Mke wa jirani yetu alikufa.* – The wife of our neighbour died.**Passive Form***fiwa* – be bereaved*Jirani yetu alifiwa na mke wake.* – Our neighbour lost his wife.
(i.e. she has died)

Note that the passive verb *fiwa* can only be used when a person has lost his/her friends or family.

Practice Exercise C

Translate into English.

21. *Watu wote walipewa fidia na serikali.*
22. *Tulijiwa na wageni usiku wa manane.*
23. *Matunda mengi yaliliwa na wagonjwa.*
24. *Maji yote yalinywewa.*
25. *Rafiki yangu alifiwa na binamu yake.*

Practice Exercise D

Translate the following sentences into Swahili.

26. The cloth was stitched by mom with a needle and thread.
27. All the juice was drunk by the children.
28. The work was not done properly.
29. The rope was cut into two pieces.
30. The seeds were planted in November.
31. The vegetables were cooked by my brother.
32. Our project did not start because the director did not return.
33. Salaries were increased by ten percent.
34. Our house was rented by embassy officials.
35. The Bill was read in Parliament.
36. He was remembered by his children.
37. The floor was cleaned by the nanny.
38. If she is married, I will be happy.
39. Elephants are hunted every day.
40. Guests were forbidden to smoke in my parent's house.
41. The water was drunk by the nomads.
42. All the food was not eaten.
43. The best worker was given a car by the company.
44. Mt. Kilimanjaro is climbed by people of many nationalities.

Provide the correct passive form of the verb in bracket as shown in the example below using the simple past tense. Example:

Kitoto (tafuta). – Kilitafutwa.

45. *Redio kubwa zile mbili (funga).*
46. *Vinanda vyake vyote saba (nunua).*
47. *Barua zetu (chukua).*
48. *Aina hii ya vyakula (la) sana na watu kutoka Mexico.*
49. *Wanasemina (fundisha) jinsi ya kutumia teknolojia ya kisasa.*
50. *Amanda (fikiri) kupandishwa cheo.*
51. *Mameneja wote wa Ushuru wa Forodha (fukuza) kazi.*
52. *Je, nyumba yake (uza)?*
53. *Lango la jumba lile (fungua).*
54. *Vijiko vyote (safisha) baada ya kutumiwa.*
55. *Kijiti (kata) kwa kisu leo asubuhi.*

56. *Kiswahili (fundisha) katika Chuo Kikuu cha Toronto.*
57. *Zawadi (pl.) (pokea) na wote.*
58. *Wazee (amkia) kwa heshima.*
59. *Ukuta mchafu ule (paka) rangi nyeupe.*
60. *Barua pepe (sing.) (andika) kwenda kwa kila mwananchi.*
61. *Roketi (pl.) (rusha) kwenda kwenye sayari ya Mars.*
62. *Magari (endesha) ovyo barabarani na kusababisha ajali nyingi sana.*

New Vocabulary

- afisa/ma-*: officer(s), official(s)
ajali: accident(s)
akina mama: women folk
amkia: greet
bunge/ma-: parliament(s)
deni/ma-: debt(s)
fidia: compensation(s)
fukuza: chase, terminate (from work)
furahi: be happy
gaidi/ma-: terrorist(s)
gavana/ma-: governor(s)
gawa: distribute, divide
heshima: honour(s), respect(s)
hisi: feel
jadili: discuss
jaji/ma-: judge(s)
jaribu: try
jinsi: the way that, how
juisi: juice(s)
jumba/ma-: mansion(s)
kataza: forbid, prohibit
kijiti/vi-: twig(s), stick(s), small tree(s)
kinanda/vi-: piano(s)
kiongozi/vi-: guide(s), leader(s)
kitoto/vi-: infant(s)
kochi/ma-: couch(es)
kodi: hire, rent
kosa/ma-: mistake(s), fault(s), offence(s)

kumbuka: remember
lango/ma-: gate(s)
lea: raise, bring up
leta: bring
mbegu: seed(s)
mfungwa/wa-: prisoner(s)
mhamahamaji/wa-: nomad(s)
mkurugenzi/wa-: director(s)
msaada/mi-: assistance
mshahara/mi-: salary(ies)
mtalii/wa-: tourist(s)
mume/waume: husband(s)
mwanamuziki/wa-: musician(s)
mwananchi/wa-: citizen(s)
mwanasemina/wa-: seminar participant(s)
mzazi/wa-: parent(s)
nawa: wash
okoa: rescue
ombi/ma-: request(s), application(s)
ongeza: increase
opereta/ma-: operator(s)
osha: wash
ovyoy: carelessly
paka rangi: apply colour(s) (paint)
pakua: serve, unload
pandisha: promote
pilipili: pepper(s)
radio: radio(s)
roketi: rocket(s)
rusha: fly
sababisha: cause
safisha: clean
sahau: forget
sakafu: floor(s)
sayari: planet(s)
shoka: axe(s)
shona: stitch, sew
silaha: weapon(s)

sindano: needle(s)
tafuta: look for, search
taifa/ma-: nation(s)
teknolojia: technology(ies)
tia: put
ubalozi: embassy(ies)
Ushuru wa Forodha: Duties and Customs Department
vuta: pull, smoke
waziri/ma- mkuu/wa-: prime minister(s)
winda: hunt

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. *Miti ilikatwa na mkulima kwa shoka.*
2. *Mlango mkubwa sana ulitengenezwa na seremala.*
3. *Maji ya kunywa yaliletwa na vijana.*
4. *Kiti kilikaliwa na opereta wa simu.*
5. *Deni lililipwa na kaka yangu.*
6. *Kila kitu kilichukuliwa na wezi.*
7. *Msichana mzuri sana aliolewa na John.*
8. *Akina mama na watoto waliokolewa na wazimamoto.*
9. *Watoto wetu walilelewa na wao.*
10. *Maji yalinawiwa na watoto kabla ya kwenda shuleni.*

Answers to Practice Exercise B

11. *Wanafunzi walirudia kuandika mihani.*
12. *Waziri Mkuu aliwasamehe wafungwa wote makosa yao.*
13. *Viongozi walijibu maswali yetu yote.*
14. *Mimi nililifikiria jambo hili kwa muda mrefu sana.*
15. *Polisi waliwahitaji vijana wale mahakamani.*
16. *Chuo Kikuu cha Minesota, Marekani hakikuyakubali maombi yetu.*
17. *Wafanyakazi hawakuijaribu kazi ile ngumu.*
18. *Wananchi waliishukuru serekali kwa msaada wake.*
19. *Mgonjwa alihisi baridi kutoka dirishani.*
20. *Mimi nilisahau kuosha vyombo.*

Answers to Practice Exercise C

21. All the people were given compensation by the government.
22. We were visited by guests late in the night.
23. Many fruits were eaten by the sick people.
24. All the water was drunk.
25. My friend lost his/her cousin (the cousin has died).

Answers to Practice Exercise D

26. *Nguo ilishonwa na mama kwa sindano na uzi.*
27. *Juisi yote ilinywewa na watoto.*
28. *Kazi haikufanywa vizuri.*
29. *Kamba ilikatwa vipande viwili.*
30. *Mbegu zilipandwa mwezi wa Novemba.*
31. *Mboga zilipikwa na kaka yangu.*
32. *Mradi wetu haukuanzwa kwa sababu mkurugenzi hakurudi.*
33. *Mishahara iliongezwa kwa asilimia kumi.*
34. *Nyumba yetu ilikodiwa na maafisa wa ubalozi.*
35. *Mswada ulisomwa Bungeni.*
36. *Alikumbukwa na watoto wake.*
37. *Sakafu ilisafishwa na yaya.*
38. *Akiolewa nitafurahi.*
39. *Tembo wanawindwa kila siku.*
40. *Wageni walikatazwa kuvuta sigara katika nyumba ya wazazi wangu.*
41. *Maji yalinywewa na wahamamaji.*
42. *Chakula chote hakikuliwa.*
43. *Mfanyakazi bora alipewa gari na kampuni.*
44. *Mlima wa Kilimanjaro unapandwa na watu kutoka mataifa mbalimbali.*
45. *zilifungwa*
46. *vilinunuliwa*
47. *zilichukuliwa*
48. *vililiwa*
49. *walifundishwa*
50. *alifikiriwa*
51. *walifukuzwa*
52. *iliuzwa*

53. *lilifunguliwa.*
54. *vilisafishwa*
55. *kilikatwa*
56. *kilifundishwa*
57. *zilipokelewa*
58. *waliamkiwa*
59. *ulipakwa*
60. *iliandikwa*
61. *zilirushwa*
62. *yaliendeshwa*

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