

Chapter 27

Reciprocal Form of the Verb

Reciprocal verbs in Swahili convey the meaning of “doing something to, with or against each other.” A reciprocal verb can take either a singular or plural Subject Prefix. When a singular Subject Prefix is used it is implied that the object of the sentence is also reciprocating the action. This category of verbs ends with the suffix *-na*. The three main categories of Reciprocal verbs are:

1. Reciprocal verbs formed from verb stems ending with *-a*
2. Prepositional-Reciprocal verbs
3. Reciprocal verbs which acquire different meanings from original verbs

Section A: Reciprocal verbs formed from verbs stems ending with *-a*

Most Bantu verbs ending with *-a* are made reciprocal by attaching the suffix *-na* to the verb stem as shown in the examples below:

oa – marry = *oana* – marry each other

Christina na Mohamed walioana leo. – Christina and Mohamed married each other today.

penda – love = *pendana* – love one another

Rafiki wale wanapendana sana. – Those friends love each other a lot.

Note that Bantu verbs which are prepositional in their basic form are also made reciprocal by attaching the suffix *-na* to the verb stem.

tafuta – look for = *tafutana* – search for one another
Mabaharia walitafutana jana. – The sailors searched for each other yesterday.

Practice Exercise A

Translate into Swahili.

1. We knew each other since December.
2. The Swahili people greeted each other yesterday.
3. The workers divided the company's shares.
4. The residents called each other in times of emergency.
5. Those children like to pull each other's ears.
6. It is not good to argue with one another if you have anger.
7. Athletes competed with each other during the games.
8. They did not seek each other to go to the movie.
9. They met in North America.
10. During the soccer game, spectators pushed one another to get into the stadium.

Section B: Prepositional-Reciprocal verbs

Arabic verbs and some Bantu verbs must be changed into Prepositional form (See Chapter 26) before they are made reciprocal. However, if the Bantu verbs in this category are not changed into prepositional form first, but are directly made reciprocal, they have a negative meaning.

1. Bantu verbs:

andika – *andikia* – *andikiana*

write – write with or to – write to each other

Raia na wanajeshi wanaandikiana. – Citizens and soldiers are writing to each other.

andika – *andikana*

write – report each other

Raia na wanajeshi wanaandikana. – Citizens and soldiers are reporting each other.

soma – somea – someana

read – study for – read to each other

Tulisomeana katika shule ya sekondari. – We read to each other in secondary school.

soma – somana

read – spy on each other

Tulisomana katika shule ya sekondari. – We spied on each other in secondary school.

2. Arabic verbs:

samehe – samehea – sameheana

forgive – forgive for – forgive each other.

Wale ndugu hawakusameheana makosa yao.

Those relatives did not forgive each other their mistakes.

rudi – rudia – rudiana

return – return for – return to each other

Mke na mume wamerudiana.

The husband and wife have returned to each other.

bjibu – jibia – jibiana

answer – answer for or with – answer each other

Mwendesha mashtaka na wakili mtetezi walijibiana mahakamani.

The prosecutor and the defence counsel answered each other in court.

Practice Exercises B

Translate into English.

11. *Tumefahamiana tangu mwaka wa elfu mbili na mbili.*
12. *Waliandikiana kuhusu mauaji ya Rwanda.*
13. *Wakati wa shida, watu waliliteana vifaa vya tiba.*
14. *Ndugu walikutana na kukimbiliana.*
15. *Kwa sababu ya ukosefu wa nafasi walilaliana wakati wa safari.*
16. *Wanakwaya walishirikiana vizuri sana wakati wa kuimba.*
17. *Walikimbiana kwa sababu si rafiki tena.*
18. *Tutafikiriana kila siku.*
19. *Watapikiana kwa sababu wanapendana sana.*
20. *Walifurahiana sana baada ya kuonana.*

21. *Kuimbiana ni kitu kizuri sana.*
22. *Miaka mingi imepita na hawajasameheana makosa yao.*
23. *Je, walipatiana anwani zao?*
24. *Menejimenti na wafanyakazi walikubaliana kuhusu kutokuwa na migomo kazini.*
25. *Hawakungojeana baada ya kuangalia sinema.*

Section C: Reciprocal verbs which acquire different meanings than the original verbs

Some verbs acquire different meanings when changed into reciprocal verbs as shown below:

- ona* – see = *onana* – meet each other
Hawataonana wakati wa mwezi wa Ramadhani. – They will not meet one another during the month of Ramadan.
- kosa* – miss, fail = *kosana* – quarrelling and not wanting to see each other again
Si vizuri kwa rafiki kukosana. – It is not good for friends to quarrel and not want to see one another.

Practice Exercise C

Translate the following sentences containing reciprocal verbs and provide the meanings of the original verb stems.

26. *Alipatana na mama yake wa kambo.*
27. *Mabondia kutoka Brazili na Bangladeshi watapigana kesho.*
28. *Wapenzi wa miaka mingi wamekimbiana.*
29. *Timu mbili za mpira wa miguu zitachekana.*
30. *Mjukuu na bibi walichekeana.*

Note that the Reciprocal verb of the Monosyllabic verb *pa* (give) is *peana* (give to each other). Also when a Reciprocal verb is used in a sentence with an object, the preposition *na* must be used. For example: *Walifukuzana na mwizi* (They chased after the thief).

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate Reciprocal verb and Subject Prefixes using the simple past tense only.

31. *Wageni na mwenyeji wao _____ (salimu).*
32. *Nilisikia kelele kwa sababu vijana _____ (piga).*
33. *Mimi na wewe _____ (ona) mwaka jana.*
34. *Wapokezi wa simu _____ (fuata) na meneja wao kwenda Ujerumani.*
35. *Timu mbili za wachezaji ngoma _____ (shinda) katika mashindano ya mkoa.*
36. *Wabunge _____ (kubali) kuhusu uchaguzi mkuu.*
37. *Wakimbizi _____ (sukuma) kupata chakula.*
38. *Je, wauguzi hawa _____ (shiriki) vizuri mwaka juzi?*
39. *Polisi (pl.) _____ (fukuza) na wezi.*
40. *Kaka wawili _____ (gomba) kwa sababu pesa zao ziliibiwa.*
41. *Chris _____ (ona) na yeye kabla ya miaka kumi.*
42. *Baada ya kukutana dada na shangazi _____ (andama) kwenda kuona mchezo wa kikapu.*
43. *Peter _____ (oa) na Mariam Jumamosi.*
44. *Mwanamuziki _____ (ahidi) na watazamaji kwamba atawatumbuiza.*
45. *Watu wengi nchini Rwanda _____ (ua) wenyewe kwa wenyewe.*

New Vocabulary

- ahidi*: promise
Amerika: America
andama: follow
andikana: report each other
anwani: address(es)
Bangladeshi: Bangladesh
bisha: argue
Brazili: Brazil
chekeana: smile at each other
dharura: emergency(ies)
fuata: follow
gomba: quarrel
Kaskazini: North
kelele/ma-: noise(s)

kosana: quarrel, disagree
mama wa kambo: stepmother(s)
mauaji: massacre(s)
mbunge/wa-: member(s) of Parliament
mchezo/mi- wa kikapu: basketball
menejimenti: management
mgomo/mi-: strike(s)
mjukuu/wa-: grandchild(ren)
mkazi/wa-: resident(s)
mkoa/mi-: region(s)
mpira wa miguu: soccer
Mswahili/wa-: Swahili person(s)
mtazamaji/wa-: spectator(s), viewer(s)
mwanakwaya/wa-: choir member(s)
mwendesha/wa- mashtaka: prosecutor(s)
mwuguzi/wa-: nurse(s)
ngoma: dance(s), drum(s)
onana: meet/see each other
raia: citizen(s)
Ramadhani: Ramadan
Rwanda: Rwanda
salimu: greet
shindana: compete
shindano/ma-: competition(s)
shiriki: share, participate
shirikiana: co-operate
somana: spy on each other
tiba: treatment(s), cure(s), medicine(s)
tumbuiza: entertain
uchaguzi mkuu: general election(s)
wakili/ma- mtetezi/wa-: defence counsellor(s)
wenyewe kwa wenyewe: each other

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. *Tulijuana tangu mwezi wa Desemba.*
2. *Waswahili waliamkiana jana.*
3. *Wafanyakazi waligawana hisa za kampuni.*
4. *Wakazi waliitana nyakati za dharura.*
5. *Watoto wale wanapenda kuvutana masikio.*
6. *Si vizuri kubishana kama una hasira.*
7. *Wanamichezo walishindana wakati wa michezo.*
8. *Hawakutafutana kwenda sinema.*
9. *Walikutana Amerika ya Kaskazini.*
10. *Wakati wa mchezo wa mpira wa miguu, watazamaji walisukumana kuingia uwanjani.*

Answers to Practice Exercises B

11. We have known each other since 2002.
12. They wrote each other about the Rwandan massacres.
13. During hardships, the people brought each other medical supplies.
14. The relatives met and ran towards each other.
15. Due to the lack of space, they slept on top of each other during the trip.
16. Choir members co-operated very well with each other while singing.
17. They ran away from each other because they are no longer friends.
18. We will think about each other every day.
19. They will cook for each other because they love one another very much.
20. They were happy with each other after seeing each other.
21. Singing to each other is a very good thing.
22. Many years have passed and they have not yet forgiven each other for their mistakes.
23. Did they give each other their addresses?
24. The management and workers agreed on not having strikes at the work place.
25. They did not wait for each other after watching a movie.

Answers to Practice Exercise C

26. He/She got along with his/her step mother.
Original verb stem: *pata* – get
27. The boxers from Brazil and Bangladesh will fight tomorrow.
Original verb stem: *piga* – hit
28. The lovers of many years have run away from each other.
Original verb stem: *kimbia* – run
29. The two soccer teams will laugh (mockingly) at each other.
Original verb stem: *cheka* – laugh
30. The grandchild and grandmother smiled at each other.
Original verb stem: *cheka* – laugh
31. *Wageni na mwenyeji wao walisalimiana.*
32. *Nilisikia kelele kwa sababu vijana walipigana.*
33. *Mimi na wewe tulionana mwaka jana.*
34. *Wapokezi wa simu walifuatana na meneja wao kwenda Ujerumani.*
35. *Timu mbili za wachezaji ngoma zilishindana katika mashindano ya mkoa.*
36. *Wabunge walikubaliana kuhusu uchaguzi mkuu.*
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42. *Baada ya kukutana dada na shangazi waliandamana kwenda kuona mchezo wa kikapu.*
43. *Peter alioana na Mariam Jumamosi.*
44. *Mwanamuziki aliahidiana na watazamaji kwamba atawatumbuiza.*
45. *Watu wengi nchini Rwanda waliuana wenyewe kwa wenyewe.*