

Chapter 34

Prepositions and Conjunctions

In this Chapter, we will discuss some commonly used prepositions and conjunctions and how they are used in a sentence. A preposition describes a relationship between words in a sentence and it shows time, space, and logical relationship. A conjunction is a word that connects words, phrases and clauses. There are two kinds of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions. A coordinating conjunction links words, phrases and independent clauses in a sentence. However, a subordinating conjunction connects independent clause(s) and dependant clause(s). Some words can be either a preposition or conjunction depending on the context.

Section A: Prepositions

Some Swahili words exist as prepositions, while other prepositions are constructed using the *-a* of Association or its derived phrases. Some common Swahili words that exist as prepositions are:

- mpaka* – until, as far as, up to
- kutoka, toka, tokea* – from, out of
- hata* – even, until
- bila* – without
- kama* – as, if, like
- tangu* – since
- kisha* – then, and then
- hadi* – until, as far as, up to

kwa – by, to/by means of, for, with, on

na – and, with, by

Examples:

Alisoma mpaka jioni. – He/She studied until evening.

Nimenunua kikapu kutoka Kenya. – I have bought a basket from Kenya.

Wanasafiri bila pasipoti. – They are travelling without passports.

Tutakwenda kwa miguu. – We will go by foot.

The preposition *katika* which commonly means “in” also belongs to the list above. However, since it can be translated in different ways into English depending on the context, we will go into further detail here. *Katika* can be used in reference to both time and space. When used in reference to space, it indicates location exactly as the locative *-ni*. For example, the phrase below could be either:

katika soko – in the market

OR

sokoni – in the market

However, when an adjective or demonstrative is used with a noun, only the construction with *katika* can be used. For example:

katika soko kubwa – in the big market

katika soko lile – in that market

Katika can also be used in reference to time, for example:

Katika safari yetu, tulimwona kichakuro. – During our journey, we saw a squirrel.

Here are more examples where the preposition *katika* is translated in different ways.

Kuanguka katika shimo. – To fall into a hole.

Vikombe viko katika meza. – The cups are on the table.

Other prepositions called compound prepositions can be formed from nouns, adjectives and adverbs using *kwa*, *na* or the *-a* of Association. Some common compound prepositions are:

badala ya – instead of
kwa ajili ya – for the sake of
kwa sababu ya – because of
kabla ya – before
baada ya – after, afterwards
karibu na – near
mbali na – far from
zaidi ya – more than
mahali pa – instead of
nje ya – outside
katikati ya – among, middle
pamoja na – together with
sawa na – equal to, similar

As you can see from the above examples, some compound prepositions take *kwa* at the beginning and all compound preposition end with either *na* or the *-a* of Association.

Examples:

Mwalimu wa sayansi alikuja badala ya mwalimu wa jiografia.

The science teacher came instead of the geography teacher.

Pikipiki imepinduka katikati ya barabara.

A motorcycle has overturned in the middle of the road.

Compound prepositions using *na* are followed by personal pronouns, for example:

Alifuatana pamoja na mimi.

He/She came with me.

If a compound prepositions using *kwa* or the *-a* of Association is followed by a possessive, it must take “y” as a prefix, for example:

Alikuja badala yangu.

He/She came instead of me.

In Swahili, just as in English, the preposition is usually placed before the noun, pronoun or phrase that connects it to the rest of the sentence. Also note that some prepositions can be used as conjunctions as you will see in Section B.

Practice Exercise A

Translate the following sentences into Swahili.

1. Her salary is more than her husband's salary.
2. He sold his property which was outside of the city.
3. I will solve the problem together with my colleague.
4. The priest did not finish the prayers before 6 pm.
5. I know her uncle since 1990.
6. The celebrity went with that car to the concert.
7. He agreed to marry her because of me.
8. He ran until evening.
9. On this question, there is no answer.
10. The boyfriend went to the restaurant without his girlfriend.

Section B: Conjunctions

As mentioned in the introduction, there are two kinds of conjunctions in Swahili: coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions. A coordinating conjunctions links words, phrases and independent clauses in a sentence. These are further divided according to what they express as shown below:

- i) Coordinating conjunctions that express addition are:

na – and, also

pia – also, too

tena – again, furthermore, besides

juu ya hayo – in addition, furthermore

pamoja na hayo – in addition, furthermore

zaidi ya hayo – in addition, furthermore

Examples:

Alileta mkate na mchuzi.

He/She brought bread and curry.

Nyumba yake ya kupanga ni chafu, juu ya hayo iko mbali sana.

His/her rental house is dirty, in addition it is very far.

- ii) Coordinating conjunctions that express alternatives, including those that indicate choice are:

ama...ama – either...or

au...au – either...or

au – or

wala – neither

wala...wala – neither...nor

Examples:

Watapaka chumba chao rangi ya kijani au zambarau.

They will paint their room green or purple.

Haangalii wala televisheni wala hasomi magazeti.

He/She watches neither television nor does he/she read newspapers.

Wala is used with a negative verb as shown in the example above.

- iii) Coordinating conjunctions that express contrast are:

lakini – but, nevertheless

ila – but, except, unless

bali – but rather, on the contrary

Examples:

Anafanya kazi lakini hawezi kuweka pesa akiba.

He/She is working but is unable to save money.

Alifaulu masomo yote ila usimamizi wa fedha.

He/She passed all the subjects except financial management.

- iv) Coordinating conjunctions that express reason are:

kwa hivyo – because of this

kwa vile – because of this

kwa kuwa – for, because, the reason being

sababu, kwa sababu – for, because, the reason being

kwani – for, because, the reason being

kwa maana – for, because, the reason being

basi – enough, stop, well, then, so

kwa ajili ya hayo – therefore

Examples:

Je, ulichelewa kwani saa ya kukuamsha haikulia saa mbili asubuhi?

Were you late because the alarm did not go off at 8 am?

Dereva alikufa katika ajali kwa sababu hakuvaa mkanda wa usalama wa kiti.

The driver died in the accident because he/she was not wearing a seat belt.

A subordinating conjunction connects independent clause(s) and dependant clause(s). These are further divided according to what they express as shown below:

v) Subordinating conjunctions that express condition are:

kama – if, whether

kwamba – if, whether

kama kwamba – as if

iwapo – when, if, in case

ilimradi – provided that

Examples:

Nitakodi teksi kwenda kazini kama mvua itanyesha.

I will hire a taxi to go to work if it rains.

Mwuzaji atapata bonasi yake ilimradi anauza safari za utalii tatu wiki hii.

The salesman will get his bonus provided he sells three tours this week.

vi) Subordinating conjunctions that express purpose are:

ili – so that, in order that

ili kwamba – so that, in order that

kusudi – in order that, with the intention of

kwa nia ya – with the intention of

Examples:

Alisomea kozi ya cheti kwa nia ya kuwa mpiga picha.

He/She studied for the certificate course with the intention of becoming a photographer.

Tulisaga vitunguu saumu ili tuvutumie katika mchuzi.

We ground garlic so that we can use it in the curry.

vii) Subordinating conjunctions that simply provide an introduction are:

kwamba – that

ya kuwa – that

kama – that

Example:

Ofisa mipango alisema kwamba ataendeleza huduma za jamii.

The planning officer said that he/she would improve social services.

viii) Subordinating conjunctions that express unexpected results:

ingawa – although, even though, even if

japo/ijapo/ijapokuwa – although

hata hivyo – even though

bila kujali – in spite of

licha ya – despite

Example:

Ingawa hali ya uchumi ni mbaya, watu wanaendelea kununua kwa kadi za mkopo.

Although the economy is bad, people continue to buy with credit cards.

Practice Exercise B

Translate the following sentences into English.

11. *Alimwambia maneno mabaya zaidi ya hayo alimpiga na mkanda.*

12. *Mkulima wa bustani anapanda nyanya au matango.*

13. *Nilitarajia chakula cha moto bali nilipewa sandwichi.*

14. *Alikuwa na ngozi kavu, kwa hivyo alilia.*

15. *Nitawasilisha tasnifu yangu wiki hii ilimradi nikiandika kurasa kumi leo.*

16. *Alinunua ardhi katikati ya mji kusudi ajenge kituo cha afya.*

17. *Licha ya maonyo ataendelea kuvuta sigara.*

18. *Jeshi la anga liliambiwa kama litapata vifaa vipya.*

19. *Wayu wa kompyuta umelegea, kwa vile kompyuta haichaji.*

20. *Wamesafisha bafu pamoja na hayo wamepaka rangi jiko.*

New Vocabulary

- ama...ama*: either...or
anga: air, sky(ies)
au...au: either...or
badala ya: instead of
bafu: bath(s), bathroom(s)
bali: but, rather, on the contrary
bila: without
bila kujali: in spite of
chaji: charge(s)
cheti/vy-: chit(s), pass(es), certificate(s)
fuatana: go together
hadi: until, as far as, up to
hata: even, until
huduma: service(s), help
ila: but, except, unless
ili kwamba: so that, in order that
ilimradi: provided that
iwapo: when, if, in case
jamii: community(ies), family(ies)
japo/ijapo/ijapokuwa: although
jawabu/ma-: answer(s), reply(ies)
jiografia: geography
juu ya hayo: in addition, furthermore
kadi: card(s)
kama kwamba: as if
kavu: dry, disinteresting
kichakuro/vi-: squirrel(s)
kikapu/vi-: basket(s)
kipenzi/vi-: boyfriend(s), favourite(s)
kasha: then, and then
kitunguu/vi- saumu: garlic clove(s)
kozi: course(s)
kusudi: in order that, with the intention of
kwa ajili ya: for the sake of
kwa ajili ya hayo: therefore
kwa hivyo: because of this

kwa kuwa: for, because, the reason being
kwa maana: for, because, the reason being
kwa nia ya: with the intention of
kwa vile: because of this
kwani: for, because, the reason being
legea: relax, be loose, be weak
licha ya: despite
mahali pa: instead of
maonyesho: show(s), concert(s)
mbali na: far from
mkanda/mi-: belt(s)
mkopo/mi-: credit(s), loan(s)
mpango/mi-: plan(s)
mpiga/wa- picha: photographer(s)
mwuzaji/wa-: seller(s), salesperson(s)
ngozi: skin(s), leather(s), hide(s)
onyo/ma-: warning(s), advice
pamoja na hayo: in addition, furthermore
pasipoti: passport(s)
pia: also, too
pikipiki: motorcycle(s)
saa ya/za kukuamsha: alarm clock(s)
safari ya/za utalii: tour(s)
saga: crush, grind
sandwichi: sandwich(es)
sayansi: science(s)
shimo/ma-: hole(s)
tango/ma-: cucumber(s), gutter(s)
tasnifu: thesis/theses
tatua: solve
teksi/ma-: taxi(s)
usalama: safety, security
usimamizi: management
wala: neither
wala...wala: neither...nor
wasilisha: submit
waya/nyaya: wire(s)
zaidi ya hayo: in addition, furthermore

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. *Mshahara wake ni zaidi ya mshahara wa mume wake.*
2. *Aliuza mali yake iliyokuwa nje ya mji.*
3. *Nitatatua tatizo pamoja na mwenzangu.*
4. *Mchungaji hakumaliza sala kabla ya saa kumi na mbili jioni.*
5. *Ninamjua mjomba wake tangu mwaka wa elfu moja, mia tisa na tisini.*
6. *Mtu maarufu alikwenda kwa gari lile maonyeshoni.*
7. *Alikubali kumwoa kwa ajili yangu.*
8. *Alikimbia mpaka jioni.*
9. *Katika swali hili, hakuna jawabu.*
10. *Kipenzi alikwenda hotelini bila mpenzi wake.*

Answers to Practice Exercise B

11. He/She said bad words to him/her in addition he/she beat him/her with a belt.
12. The gardener plants tomatoes or cucumbers.
13. I expected a hot meal on the contrary I was given a sandwich.
14. He/She had dry skin, because of that he/she cried.
15. I will submit my thesis this week provided that I write 10 pages today.
16. He/She bought land in the city centre with the intention of building a health station.
17. Despite the warnings he/she will continue to smoke.
18. The air force was told that it will get new equipment.
19. The computer wire has loosened, because of this the computer is not charging.
20. They have cleaned the bathroom in addition they have painted the kitchen.