Lesson 8: Past Tense

Past tense is considerably trickier than present, continuous or future. This is because in past tense, the verb changes from its infinitive form – in more ways than one. First, we will go over the difference between Fante transitive and intransitive verbs. In Fante, transitive verbs can take an object; that is, a modifier that specifies the recipient of the verb's action. But intransitive verbs have no object. One Fante example of a transitive verb is kɔ. This verb can take an object or not:

>   Mokɔ. (*I go*.)
>   Mokɔ **fie**. (*I go* **home**.)

A good Fante instance of an intransitive verb is saw* (*to dance*):
>   Mesaw. (*I dance*.)

*"I danced **with him**" is not considered transitive, because the dancing is not being done to "him".

This is important because in the past tense, the verb changes differently according to whether an object is present or not. Let us look at some examples pra (*to sweep*). By now you should have a solid grasp on the present tense conjugation, so let's skip to the past:

- meprae (*I swept*)
- eprae (*you swept*)
- ɔprae (*he swept*)
- yɛprae (*we swept*)
- hom prae (*you [all] swept*)
- wɔprae (*they swept*)

But what happens when we add an object like dan no mu (*the floor*)?:

- mepraa dan no mu (*I swept the floor*)
- epraa dan no mu (*you swept the floor*)
- ɔpraa dan no mu (*he swept the floor*)
- yɛpraa dan no mu (*we swept the floor*)
- hom praa dan no mu (*you [all] swept the floor*)
- wɔpraa dan no mu (*they swept the floor*)

As we can see, the pattern for this kind of verb is to add e to the end in the case of no object, and to double the final vowel in the case of object. Verbs like da, fa, bra, dzi and tsi are some that follow this pattern, plus irregular verbs bɔ and tɔ (to buy).

Now let's take kɔ, first without object, then with object:

- mokɔree (*I went*)
- ekɔree (*you went*)
- ɔkɔree (*he went*)

- yɛkɔree (*we went*)
- hom kɔree (*you [all] went*)
- wɔkɔree (*they went*)

Adding object fie (home):

- mokɔɔr fie (*I went home*)
- ekɔɔr fie (*you went home*)
- ɔkɔɔr fie (*he went home*)

- yɛkɔɔr fie (*we went home*)
- hom kɔɔr fie (*you [all] went home*)
- wɔkɔɔr fie (*they went home*)

This pattern is to add *ree* at the end in the case of no object, and to double the last vowel and add *r* in the case of object. Verbs like fow (*to climb*), tow (*to throw*), saw, and irregular verbs dur, bor, and ber follow this pattern.

Tu (*to uproot*) without object, then with object:

- mutui (*I uprooted*)
- itui (*you uprooted*)
- otui (*he uprooted*)

- yetui (*we uprooted*)
- hom tui (*you [all] uprooted*)
- wotui (*they uprooted*)

Adding object bankye (*cassava*):

- mutuu (*I uprooted cassava*)
- ituu (*you uprooted cassava*)
- otuu (*he uprooted cassava*)

- yetuu (*we uprooted cassava*)
- hom tuu (*you [all] uprooted cassava*)
- wotuu (*they uprooted cassava*)

In the case of no object, add *i* to the end. In the case of object, double the final vowel. Verbs following this pattern include su, dum and irregular verbs twa and hwim.

Notes: