Lesson 58 Notes

In this edition: perfect tense: reflexive verbs

Je me suis levé à sept heures
Reflexive verbs in the perfect tense

Programme Notes

Welcome to Coffee Break French, the podcast aimed at independent learners of French. Our regular podcasts will introduce you to the French language in easy steps.

Last week we were looking at verbs which take *être* as their auxiliary verb in the perfect tense. As a challenge, Mark asks Anna if she can remember all fifteen *être* verbs:

aller, venir,

entrer, sortir,

arriver, partir,

monter, descendre,

naître, mourir,

rentrer, retourner, revenir, rester,

tomber

Before moving on, Mark tests Anna on *être* verbs by giving her 5 sentences to translate from English into French:

I went to the market	**je suis allé(e) au marché**
she arrived at the station	**elle est arrivée à la gare**
we left at three o'clock	**nous sommes parti(e)s à trois heures**
they were born in January	**ils sont nés en janvier**
she died in 1979	**elle est morte en 1979 (mil neuf cent soixante dix-neuf)**

In Lesson 57 we learned fifteen *être* verbs but there is in fact another group of verbs that take *être* as their auxiliary verb in the perfect tense. These are reflexive verbs. Remember that reflexive verbs are verbs that you "do to yourself," for example *se laver* ("to wash oneself"), *s'habiller* ("to dress oneself"), *s'appeler* ("to call oneself"). Take a look back at Lesson 43 to remind yourself of reflexive verbs used to describe our daily routine.

Let's now look at how we would describe our daily routine in the perfect tense. *Se lever* means "to get up" or more literally "to get oneself up." To say "I get up" we would say *je me lève*. When we put this

into the perfect tense we need to add in part of the auxiliary verb, *être*. So it would become *je me suis levé(e)* ("I got up"). Let's break this phrase down into its grammatical components:

subject pronoun	*je*
reflexive pronoun	*me*
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*suis*
past participle	*levé(e)*

As is the case with the fifteen *être* verbs we learned in Lesson 57, the past participle has to agree with the subject. So if a male person wanted to say "I got up" he would say *je me suis levé*, but a female person would say *je me suis levée* with an extra *-e* added to the past participle.

To say "you got up" we change the various components of the phrase:

subject pronoun	*tu*
reflexive pronoun	*te* (shortened to *t'*)
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*es*
past participle	*levé(e)*

In this case we need to shorten the reflexive pronoun, *te*, as it is followed by a vowel in *es*. *Te* therefore becomes *t'*. So to say "you got up" we would say *tu t'es levé(e)*. Again the past participle has to agree with the subject.

A similar thing happens with the 3rd person singular:

subject pronoun	*il / elle*
reflexive pronoun	*se* (shortened to *s'*)
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*est*
past participle	*levé(e)*

So "he got up" would be *il s'est levé* and "she got up" would be *elle s'est levée.*

Things get slightly more complicated as we move onto the *nous* form of the perfect tense of reflexive verbs. The pronoun we need to use is *nous* but the reflexive pronoun is also *nous*.

subject pronoun	*nous*
reflexive pronoun	*nous*
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*sommes*
past participle	*levé(e)s*

So "we got up" is *nous nous sommes levé(e)s*.

Similarly, for the *vous* part, the reflexive pronoun is also *vous*.

subject pronoun	*vous*
reflexive pronoun	*vous*
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*êtes*
past participle	*levé(e/s/es)*

Remember that *vous* can mean "you" (plural) or "you" (formal, singular). So "you (plural) got up" would be *vous vous êtes levé(e)s* and "you (formal, singular) got up" would be *vous vous êtes levé(e)*.

Finally "they" got up would be *ils se sont levés* or *elles se sont levées*.

subject pronoun	*ils / elles*
reflexive pronoun	*se*
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*sont*
past participle	*levé(e)s*

The table below shows all parts of *se lever* in the perfect tense.

se lever ("to get up") - perfect tense	
je me suis levé(e)	nous nous sommes levé(e)s
tu t'es levé(e)	vous vous êtes levé(e/s/es)
il s'est levé	ils se sont levés
elle s'est levée	elles se sont levées

Let's now think about how we would put this into the negative. Remember that to form the negative, *ne* and *pas* go round the conjugated verb. In this case the conjugated verb is *être*. With reflexive verbs, the *ne* and *pas* also have to go round the reflexive pronoun. So *je me suis levé(e)* would become:

je <u>ne</u> me suis <u>pas</u> levé(e)
I did not get up

For example:

je ne me suis pas levé(e) à sept heures, je me suis levé(e) à huit heures
I did not get up at seven o'clock, I got up at eight o'clock

last night I didn't go to bed at nine o'clock, I went to bed at ten o'clock	**hier soir je ne me suis pas couché(e) à neuf heures, je me suis couché(e) à dix heures**
I got dressed	**je me suis habillé(e)**

An advanced point...

There is an exception regarding agreements with the perfect tense when using reflexive verbs. If the reflexive verb has a direct object, then there is no agreement. This is particularly common when using verbs such as *se brosser* (to brush, as in "to brush one's teeth") and *se casser* (to break, as in "to break one's leg").

I brushed my teeth	**je me suis brossé les dents**
she brushed her teeth	**elle s'est brossé* les dents**
I broke my leg	**je me suis cassé la jambe**
the girl broke her leg	**la fille s'est cassé* la jambe**

Note in particular that when "she" brushed her teeth and when "the girl" broke her leg, there is no agreement on the past participle because of the direct object which follows.

Revision of the perfect tense

perfect tense = auxiliary verb (*avoir* or *être*) + past participle

For regular verbs, the past participle endings are shown below:

Type of verb	Past participle ending
-er	-é
-ir	-i
-re	-u

We also learned some common irregular past participles:

Infinitive	Past Participle
boire	bu
comprendre	compris
dire	dit
écrire	écrit
faire	fait
lire	lu
mettre	mis
pouvoir	pu
savoir	su

Infinitive	Past Participle
voir	vu
vivre	vécu
prendre	pris
être	été

We then learned that certain verbs use *être* as their auxiliary verb in the perfect tense instead of *avoir*. These verbs are:

aller, venir,

entrer, sortir,

arriver, partir,

monter, descendre,

naître, mourir,

rentrer, retourner, revenir, rester,

tomber

Today we have learned that reflexive verbs also use *être* as their auxiliary verb. We need four components to put a reflexive verb into the perfect tense:

subject pronoun	*je*
reflexive pronoun	*me*
auxiliary verb (part of *être*)	*suis*
past participle	*levé(e)*

Therefore "I got up" is *je me suis levé(e)* and "I did not get up" is *je ne me suis pas levé(e)*. For reflexive verbs, the *ne* and *pas* have to go round the auxiliary verb and the reflexive pronoun.

Note that the information listed below is part of the test in the bonus podcast. We would advise you to listen to the podcast before you read the content below.

Bonus episode test		
1	**Je me suis levé à sept heures.**	I got up at seven o'clock.
2	**Elle s'est habillée dans sa chambre.**	She got dressed in her bedroom.
3	**Il s'est brossé les dents.**	He brushed his teeth.
4	**Les filles se sont maquillées.**	The girls put on their makeup.
5	**Je me suis promené avec Louise.**	I went for a walk with Louise.
6	**The children went to bed at nine o'clock.**	Les enfants se sont couchés à neuf heures.
7	**What time did you go to bed at last night, Clarisse?**	Tu t'es couché à quelle heure hier soir, Clarisse?
8	**He went for a swim in the sea.**	Il s'est baigné dans la mer.
9	**I got angry.**	Je me suis fâché.
10	**Did you rest this morning?**	Vous vous êtes reposés ce matin?

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