

Lesson 15

Possessives

Possessive Case

[(Aux) Verb (Neg) CP–Possessive–S]

–tha

Suffix (CP): Possessive, by birth or growth

–the

Suffix (CP): Possessive, for no known or acknowledged reason

–thi

Suffix (CP): Possessive, by chance

–thu

Suffix (CP): “False” possessive (Partitive); also used to mean “about”

–tho

Suffix (CP): Possessive, for all other reasons, including law, custom, etc.

To use the Láadan possessive, you must first decide what sort of “ownership” is involved. Is it because of birth, as with “my arm” or “my mother?” If so, add the ending “–tha.”

Is it for no known reason—for example, a task that you just ended up with somehow, inexplicably, and that is now “your” work? Then the proper ending is “–the.”

Is it a phony ownership, marked in English by “of” but really involving no possession, as in “a heart of stone” or “a collection of books?” If so, use the ending “–thu.”

Is it by luck, by chance? Use the ending “–thi.”

In any other situation, when ownership is due to law or custom or anything not included in the other forms, use the ending “–tho.” You would use “–tho” if you were not certain of the reason but were quite sure there was one and that it was legitimate.

The Láadan Possessive word order may seem awkward at first because English expresses the possessive by stating the possessor first and the thing possessed afterward; arguably, this indicates that the possessor is more important in English while the thing possessed is more important in Láadan.

Finally, you cannot add the Possessive markers directly to the name of a person or animal. Instead, you add a pronoun to carry the case ending—like this:

Báa ril meháya hena?

Are the siblings beautiful?

Báa ril meháya hena netha?

Are your (by birth) siblings beautiful?

Báa ril meháya hena Méri betha?

Are Mary’s (by birth) siblings beautiful?

The sequence “Méri betha” is literally “[Mary] [X1 + POSS_{BIRTH}].” You cannot say “Méritha” to mean “Mary + POSS_{BIRTH}.” (Note that this rule does not apply to names of places and of times—only living or once-living beings.)

Possessive Pronouns

The Demonstrative pronouns, “**hi/hizh/hin**,” can stand in for the noun in a Possessive phrase; this construction would be translated “**mine**” or “**ours**” or “**yours**” or “**his/hers**” or “**theirs**” rather than “**my [noun]**” or “**our [noun]**” or “**your [noun]**” or “**his/her [noun]**” or “**their [noun]**.”

- Bíi wil u dem wa.
Would that the window be open.
Bíi wil u dem letho wa.
Would that my window be open.
Bíi wil u hi netho wa.
Would that yours be open.
Bíi wil mehu hin Therisha betho wa.
Would that Teresa’s (many) be open.

Interrogative Possessive

In a wh-question, the item of information being requested is represented by “**bebáa**.” In such a question where the possessor is the item of information being requested, “**bebáa**” would take the possessive suffix: “**bebáatha**” (whose, by birth), “**bebáathe**” (whose, for no known or acknowledged reason), “**bebáathi**” (whose, by chance), “**bebáatho**” (whose, for other valid reason), or “**bebáathu**” (of what, as in “container of what” or “house made of what”).

- Báa rilrili tháa dala?
Might the plant be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa dala netho?
Might your (other valid reason) plant be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa dala Shuzhéth betho?
Might Suzette’s plant be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa hi Shuzhéth betho?
Might Suzette’s be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa dala bebáatho?
Whose plant might be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa hi bebáatho?
Whose might be thriving?

Examples

- Bíi ril medo oda wo.
I suppose arms are strong.
Bíi ril medo oda netha wo.
I suppose your (by birth) arms are strong.
Bíi ril medo oda Átheni betha wo.
I suppose Anthony’s arms are strong.
Bíi ril medo hizh omátha wo.
I suppose the teacher’s arms are strong.
Báa ril medo oda bebáatha?
Whose arms are strong?

Bíi eril mebalin ra rul wa.
The cats were not old.
Bíi eril mebalin ra rul nethi wa.
Your (by chance) cats were not old.
Bíi eril mebalin ra rul Elízhabeth bethi wa.
Elizabeth’s cats were not old.
Bíi eril mebalin ra hizh shonáthi wa.
The peacemaker’s were not old.
Báa eril mebalin ra rul bebáathi?
Whose cats are not old?

Bíi rilrili loyo lanemid wa.
A dog may be black.
Bíi rilrili loyo lanemid nethe wa.
Your (no known reason) dog may be black.
Bíi rilrili loyo lanemid Máthu bethe wa.
Matthew’s dog may be black.
Bíi rilrili loyo hi belidáthe wa.
The carpenter’s may be black.
Báa rilrili loyo lanemid bebáathe?
Whose dog may be black?

Notice that, in this example set, the speaker knows or acknowledges no reason why this dog should belong either to me, to Matthew, or to the carpenter; that’s why she chose to use the possessive suffix “**-the**.”

- Bíi aril rahiya éezh wi.
Clearly, the goat will be large.
Bíi aril rahiya éezh netho wi.
Clearly, your (other valid reason) goat will be large.
Bíi aril rahiya éezh Ána betho wi.
Clearly, Anna’s goat will be large.
Bíi aril rahiya hi ábedátho wi.
Clearly, the farmer’s will be large.
Báa aril rahiya éezh bebáatho?
Whose goat will be large?

Notice, in the third of each of these sets, that the name of a living or once-living person or animal doesn’t take suffixes directly. We must insert the pronoun “**be**” following the name and apply the suffixes to the pronoun instead.

Bíi laya dim wáa.
 The container is red, I'm told.
 Bíi laya dim udethu wáa.
 The container of rocks is red, I'm told.
 Bíi laya hi udethu wáa.
 That of rocks is red, I'm told.
 The one of rocks is red, I'm told.
 Báa laya dim bebáathu?
 The container is red; what is it a container of?
 The container of what is red?
 What does the red container contain?

In this example we see the “false possessive” (or, as students of other case languages may be comfortable calling it, the “partitive”) case. In Láadan, this is Possessive in form, even though there is no actual ownership involved. The third example in this set is specifying, since containers being red had already been being discussed, whether that applied to the one containing rocks.

Báa léli omid?
 Is the horse yellow?
 Báa léli omid Hérel bethé?
 Is Carol's horse yellow?
 Báa léli omid lanethe Hérel betho?
 Is Carol's friend's horse yellow?
 Báa léli omid lanethe edinetho Hérel betha?
 Is Carol's cousin's friend's horse yellow?

Here we see how Láadan can “stack” Possessives. The horse belongs (for no known or acknowledged reason) first to Carol, then to her friend, and lastly to her cousin's friend; the friend “belongs” (other valid reason) first to Carol, then to Carol's cousin; the cousin “belongs” (by birth) to Carol. Note how the Possessive suffix applied to the pronoun (rather than directly to Carol's name) changes in each sentence.

In most cases, formal writing—in English or in Láadan—would avoid this type of structure. However, in speech or informal writing, it is not at all uncommon.

Vocabulary

beth
 home
 delith
 hair
 dith
 voice
 ith
 light
 oba
 body (body part)

oda
 arm (body part)
 oma
 hand (body part)
 óoda
 leg (body part) [oda (arm)]
 óol
 moon
 rosh
 sun

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Bé aril lalom i amedara onida ehomátha wa.

E: _____

2 Báa ril menédeshub medathim sherídan Másha betha i héena déelahátho?

E: _____

3 Bíi eril medush merahu áath belidethu lezhetho wáa.

E: _____

4 Bíi théethad shumáad yáababí Máyel betho wi.

E: _____

5 Báa abahul bal berídanetho bebáatha?

E: _____

6 Bíi eril ranime ina hoshem Bétheni betha wáa.

E: _____

Did you note the new word in #6? It's a straightforward opposite, so you may have just translated it without noticing that we haven't actually seen it before: “ranime” (to be unwilling) [ra- (NON) + nime (be willing)].

Incorporate the Láadan for the English noun phrase into the sentence; translate the sentence into English before and after.

7 Baa eril owahal bud wo.

the traveler's clothes

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

8 Bíi rilrili dozh hal wo.

the assistant's (no reason) work

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

9 Bé eril zho dizh wa.

my grandmother's kettle

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

10 Baa aril dudoth éesh?

whose (few of them, by gift) sheep

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

11 Bíi wil medibé mebenem shem wa.

a singer's offspring

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

12 Bíi ril them den edin wi.

a dancer's cousin

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

Did the word “traveler” in #7 give you any trouble? It’s a straightforward “doer” formation based on “im” (to travel): imá (traveler).

How about “assistant” in #8? It’s also a straightforward “doer” formation based on “den” (to help): dená (helper; assistant).

#10 has a minor “trick question” component: “ownership by gift” is one of the meanings included in “-tho” (possessive: all other reasons, including law, custom, etc.). Congratulations if you perceived that for yourself!

Did you have any trouble with “singer” in #11? It’s a straightforward “doer” formation based on “lalom” (to sing): lalomá (singer). A note about this word: there is another related form based on “lom” (song); “-á,” the “doer” suffix, also means “maker” so “lomá” [lom (song) + -á (doer/maker)] means “songwriter” or “maker of songs:” a meaning distinct from “lalomá” (singer).

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 The songwriter's (no reason) flower is tiny and green.

L: _____

14 William's great-niece began to teach.

L: _____

15 Whose (many of them) great-aunt is menopausing?

L: _____

16 The light of the moon is cool and white, but the sun's light is warm and yellow.

L: _____

17 Do the needleworker's parents want to be safe?

L: _____

18 The alien's (by chance) creatures were unable to speak [trusted report].

L: _____

In #13, did the word “tiny” give you pause? Consider that “tiny” means “very small”: either *híyahá* [*híya* (be small) + *-há* (Degree: unusual)] or *híyahul* [*híya* (be small) + *-hul* (Degree: extreme)] would serve.

In #17, did you easily form a word for “needleworker?” Consider that a “needleworker” is “one who does needlework:” *dathimá* [*dathim* (needlework) + *-á* (doer/maker)].

Another new word in #20: “to be unable” is a straightforward opposite of “*thad*” (to be able): “*rathad*.”

Answers

- 1 I promise the education-specialist's family will sing and dance.
- 2 Do Marsha's niece and the gardener's heartsibling intend to needlework?
- 3 The doors of our house had to be closed.
- 4 Clearly, Michael's fledgling is about to be able to fly (but not any minute).
- 5 Whose aunt's bread is extremely fragrant?
- 6 Bethany's grandchild was unwilling to sleep, I heard.
- 7 I suppose the clothing was unusually warm.
Báa eril owahal bud imátho wo.
I suppose the traveler's clothing was unusually warm.
- 8 I suppose the work might be easy.
Bíi rilrili dozh hal denáthe wo.
I suppose the assistant's (no reason) work might be easy.
- 9 Upon my word, a kettle was singing.
Bé eril zho dizh hothuletho letha wa.
Upon my word, my grandmother's kettle was singing.
- 10 Will a sheep try to follow?
Báa aril dudoth éesh bebáazhetho?
Whose (few of them) sheep will try to follow?
- 11 Would that the offspring promise to stay.
Bíi wil medibé mebenem shem lalomátha wa.
Would that the singer's offspring promise to stay.
- 12 Clearly, the cousin needs to help.
Bíi ril them den edin amedarahátha wi.
Clearly, the dancer's cousin needs to help.
- 13 Bíi ril híyahul i liyen mahina lomáthe wáa.
- 14 Bíi eril nahom hosherídan Wílem betha wa.
- 15 Báa ril zháadin hoberídan bebáanetha?
- 16 Bíi rahowahil i líithi ith óolethu wi, izh owa i léli ith roshethu.
- 17 Báa menéde meyom thul dathimátha?
- 18 Bíi eril merathad medi mid néeháthi wáa.