

Lesson 16

Relativizer

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[(Aux) Verb (Neg) CP–S]

wo–

Prefix (verb-and-noun pair): relativizer

Láadan has a form that is much like an English “adjective + noun” sequence, as in “green tree” or “small child.” You can take any sequence of verb and subject (remembering that “adjectives” are only ordinary verbs in Láadan) and put the marker “wo–” at the beginning of each one. “Beautiful woman” is thus “woháya wowith.” This is very useful, but it is a bit different from English because it can only be used if you have just one verb. You cannot use this pattern to translate an English sequence like “little red brick wall.”

The plural marker is always the last piece added to any verb; thus “beautiful women” will be “mewoháya wowith.”

Of course, translating “woháya wowith” as “beautiful woman” and “mewoháya wowith” as “beautiful women,” as quoted above, is the older, female-default version of Láadan.

Linguistic Note:

English derives “the green grass” from “the grass which is green,” with “which is green” the relative clause; when a language does that with a morpheme instead of by grammatical processes like moving things around and deleting and inserting stuff, the morpheme is called a “relativizer.” So, “liyen” is “be green” and “hesh” is “grass;” “woliyen wohesh” is “green grass” because of the relativizing prefix.

Regarding Suzette Haden Elgin’s example “little red brick wall” above: it would be possible to translate into Láadan by combining the Relativizer with the partitive (false possessive): “wohiya wothibá mewolaya woyóhudethu” (little wall of red bricks). Yes, we were just introduced to two new words, one of which incorporates a new prefix: “thibá” (wall) [thib (to stand; to stand up) + –á (DOER)] and “yóhud” (brick) [yó– (ARTIFIC) + ud (stone)]. Of course, should the meaning you wish to convey be some other combination of these English words (eg, “red wall of little bricks”) the translation would be different. If your meaning were “wall made of little red bricks,” you’d be up against the one-verb-one-noun rule again.

Examples

Bíi rahíthi dala wa.

The plant is short.

Bíi modí dala wa.

The plant is ugly.

Bíi rahíthi womodi wodala wa.

The ugly plant is short.

Bíi modi worahíthi wodala wa.

The short plant is ugly.

Bíi bun omá wa.

A teacher is new.

Bíi ham omá wa.

A teacher is present.

Bíi mebun omá wa.

The teachers are new.

Bíi meham omá wa.

The teachers are present.

Bíi ham wobun wohomá wa.

A new teacher is present.

Bíi meham mewobun wohomá wa.

The new teachers are present.

Bíi rahíthi womodi wodala omátho wa.
 The teacher's ugly plant is short.
 Bíi modi worahíthi wodala omátho wa.
 The teacher's short plant is ugly.
 Bíi rahíthi dala wobun wohomátho wa.
 The new teacher's plant is short.
 Bíi modi dala wobun wohomátho wa.
 The new teacher's plant is ugly.
 Bíi rahíthi womodi wodala wobun wohomátho wa.
 The new teacher's ugly plant is short.
 Bíi modi worahíthi wodala wobun wohomátho wa.
 The new teacher's short plant is ugly.

In the above we see “bun” (new, of inanimates) used of a teacher—a profession filled largely by animate beings. There is no real difficulty; the English definition merely needs a bit of tweaking: “bun” (new, of inanimates or of persons “new” to a role or position).

We also see a new formation: “rahíthi” (to be short; to be low; to be not-tall; to be not-high) [ra- (NON) + íthi (to be tall/high)]. This is rather more narrow in meaning than the English adjective “short” which can indicate limited dimensions of length or time as well; those meanings have different Láadan forms.

Vocabulary

dazh
 to be soft, pliant, yielding
 en
 to understand
 éthe
 to be clean
 leb
 enemy
 liri
 to be colored
 náwí
 to grow; growth [ná- (CONT) + wí (life)] {AB}
 radazh
 to be hard; to be firm; to be unyielding [ra- (NON) + dazh (be soft)]
 rilin
 to drink
 shidi
 to be together
 yide
 to be hungry

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Báa aril doth woléli wolanemid?

E: _____

2 Bíi rilrili om wolirihal wohud wo.

E: _____

3 Bé eril dazhehal wolooyo wodelith halátha wa.

E: _____

4 Báa eril mehoób mewonasháad womelamid.

E: _____

5 Bíi aba wowam woshum bethethu wi.

E: _____

6 Bíi othel wuhu wohurahu déelathu wa.

E: _____

Transform the following into relativized form in Láadan; then translate the result into English.

Example: “Bíi áya withizh wa. Balin withizh.” becomes “Bíi áya wobalin wowithizh wa.” (The old woman is beautiful.)

Note that the Type-of-Sentence Word, Auxiliary, and Evidence Word often are not included in the second source sentence. They have to be if they change or if the sentences are not connected to each other. The sentences are, by the nature of the exercise, connected; we can therefore assume that the Type-of-Sentence Word, Auxiliary, and the Evidence Word are the same when not presented.

7 Bíi owa áwith wa.

Yide áwith.

L: _____

E: _____

8 Bíi rilrili memahina ra dala wáa.

Menée dala.

L: _____

E: _____

9 Bíi wil melithehul eshoná wa.

Merabalin eshoná.

L: _____

E: _____

10 Báa ril melawida mid bebáatho?

Bíi meshane mid wáa.

L: _____

E: _____

11 Bé eril mehéthe oma i óoda amedarahátha wa.

Bíi methad oma. Medo óoda.

L: _____

E: _____

12 Báa eril radom lalom onida imátha?

Bíi rahiya onida wa. Shóod imá wáa.

L: _____

E: _____

In #8, did you have any trouble with the word “memahina?” Just as any Láadan verb may be used as a noun (so long as the result isn’t nonsense), any noun may be used as a verb—and with just as little fuss. Simply apply the appropriate verb affixes (or lack thereof in the singular) to the noun and use it in the verb’s position in the sentence. “To put forth flowers” or, more briefly, “to flower” is the most straightforward meaning for the noun “mahina” (flower) when used as a verb. “Memahina” is simply the plural form.

In #12, did the word “radom” give you any difficulty? It’s a straightforward opposite of “dom” (to remember) and means “to forget.” Like its root, it can be a standalone verb or act as the first element in a Verb Complex.

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 Might the quick birds depart?

L: _____

14 Did the singer's clothed body have to swim?

L: _____

15 The beautiful voices of the peacemakers will speak [I expect].

L: _____

16 The moon's white light is cool, clearly.

L: _____

17 On my honor, that high mountain is now absent.

L: _____

18 Of whose green house are the purple door and the blue windows closed?

L: _____

In #14, we see “bud” (clothing) used as a verb. In this sense “bud” means “to clothe.”

Could you form a word for “to be absent” in #17? “To be absent” is the opposite of “to be present;” try “raham” (to be absent) [ra- (NON) + ham (be present)].

Answers

- 1 Will the yellow dog follow?
- 2 An unusually colorful stone might teach, I suppose.
- 3 I swear the worker's black hair was unusually soft.
- 4 Did the departing dolphins jump?
- 5 The still air of home is fragrant, obviously.
- 6 An open garden-gate is blessed.
- 7 Bii owa woyide woháwith wa.
The hungry baby is warm.
- 8 Bii rilrili memahina ra mewonée wodala wáa.
The alien plants may not flower, I'm told.
- 9 Báa eril radom lalom worahíya wohonida woshóod wohimátha?
Did the large family of the busy traveler forget to sing?
- 10 Bé eril mehétthe mewothad wohoma i mewodo wohóoda amedarahátha wa.
I swear the dancer's capable hands and strong legs were clean.
- 11 Báa ril melawida mewoshane womid bebáatho?
Whose furry animals are pregnant?
- 12 Bii wil melithehul meworabalin woheshoná wa.
Would that the young peace-scientists think deeply.
- 13 Báa rilrili menasháad meworalóolo wobabí?
- 14 Báa eril dush ilisháad wobud wohoba lalomátha?
- 15 Bii aril medi mewoháya wodith shonátha wa.
- 16 Bii rahowa wolíithi wohith óolethu wi.
- 17 Bé ril raham wohíthi wobo hi wa.
- 18 Báa merahu wolula woháath i mewoleyi wodem woliyen wobelidethu bebáatho?