

Lesson 23

Numbers & Quantifiers, Pt 1

In English, we have two distinct modes of discussing plurality: a thing is either counted or measured. Things such as plates, cups, bowls, flowers, clouds, skirts, and pairs of shoes or gloves or trousers are *counted*; things such as water, flour, dirt, air, cloth, and sand are *measured*. *Counted* things can be said to be “few” or “several” through “many” to “uncountable,” etc. *Measured* things would be said to be “a bit” or “a little” through “some” or “quite a bit” to “a lot” or “a bunch” to “all there is.” This can get a bit confusing because sometimes collections of *counted* things become *measured* and vice versa: eg, *many* skirts, shirts, pants, dresses, socks, shoes, etc could easily be termed *a lot of* clothing. Conversely, *several* beaches may contain *a great deal* of sand or *a few* bolts may hold *a lot of* cloth. Láadan, like many natural languages, does not employ this mechanism; its pluralizing words are applicable equally to whatever objects, regardless of whether English would deem them *counted* or *measured*. This presents no difficulty in Láadan; the only drawback is when we’re translating into English or another language that makes the counted/measured distinction.

This lesson is going to contain a lot of vocabulary. But the two types of words we will learn fulfill the same function: they talk about the number of a noun—either amplifying and specifying the plural or standing in where we have no verb to take the plural. Both are used postpositionally (that is, they’re place after the case phrase (noun + ending) they modify). And, as postpositions, their forms are immutable; they take no affixes.

Numbers

raho

zero

0

nede

one

1

seen before in Lesson 21

shin

two

2

seen before in Lesson 21

boó

three

3

seen before in Lesson 21

bim

four

4

shan

five

5

bath

six

6

um

seven

7

nib

eight

8

bud

nine

9

thab

ten

10

debe

hundred

100

thob

thousand

1,000

rod

million

1,000,000

merod

billion

1,000,000,000

Examples

nedethab
eleven

11
shinethab
twelve

12
bathethab
sixteen
16

Just as in English, the “teen” forms add “thab” (ten) after the number to be added to ten. This rule applies to numbers from “nedethab” (eleven) to “budethab” (nineteen). Remember to insert an “e” where needed to separate forbidden consonant clusters.

thabeshin
twenty

20
thabeboó
thirty

30
debebim
four hundred
400

thobeshan
five thousand
5,000

rodebath
six million
6,000,000

merodum
seven billion
7,000,000,000

In the forms greater than the teens, the base (the ten, hundred, and so on) is presented first, followed by the number by which it is multiplied.

thobethabenib
eighty thousand
80,000

thobedebebud
nine hundred thousand
900,000

rodethab
ten million
10,000,000

rodethabeshin
twenty million
20,000,000

rodedebeboó
three hundred million
300,000,000

merodethabim
forty billion
40,000,000,000

merodedebeshan
five hundred billion
500,000,000,000

merodethobebath
six thousand billion
6,000,000,000,000

While numbers on this scale are not really Láadan’s core mission, it is feasible to form them. Just remember that when the bases decrease in magnitude, their values are multiplied—whereas, if the bases’ magnitude increases, their values are added (as in the “teen” forms).

thabeshin i shan
twenty-five

25
debeshan i thabebath i boó
five hundred sixty-three

563
thobenib i debebim i umethab
eight thousand four hundred
seventeen

8,417
thobebud i debe i thabeshin
nine thousand one hundred twenty
9,120

To combine elements having different bases, simply place the word “i” (which means “and,” used with numbers to represent addition) between them.

Notice that the base appears without modification if the digit in that place is “1”.

Notice, also, that any place having a zero value is simply omitted.

Additional Number-Related Vocabulary

lami

number

lamith

to count

elamith

mathematics [e- (SCIoF) + lamith (count)]

shinehoberídan

great-great aunt/uncle [shin (two) + hoberídan (great-aunt/uncle)]

shinehoshem

great-grandchild [shin (two) + hoshem (grandchild)]

shinehoshherídan

great-great-niece/nephew [shin (two) + hoshherídan (great-niece/nephew)]

shinehothul

great-grandparent [shin (two) + hothul (grandparent)]

uzh

symbol (of notation, alphabet, orthography)

Quantifiers

What can we do when we need to be more specific than merely plural—but we don't want to use a number? Or when we need to make a non-Subject case phrase plural and have no verb to show the plural—and we still don't want to use a number? Our answer is quantifiers:

menedebe

many

nedebe

few; several

woho

all; every

seen before in Lesson 21

waha

any

“Raho” (zero) can also appropriately be included in this set; in this sense, “raho” would mean “none.”

When Suzette Haden Elgin first created Láadan, she included a “syllabic n.” As you might glean from the name, it stood as a syllable unto itself (like the final syllable in the English word “button”) and required no vowel to separate it from the letter “d” that always followed it. We’ve noted this when pluralizing verbs beginning with “d.” It was problematic in that setting and was no less so among numbers and quantifiers.

There were variant formations for “nede,” “menedebe” and “nedebe,” presented here, incorporating the “syllabic n” in place of the “ne” in all these words. “Mendebe” (the variant of “menedebe”) was still a four-syllable word: me-n-de-be. “Ndebe” (the variant of “nedebe”) was still a three-syllable word: n-de-be. “Nde,” (the variant of “nede”) was a two-syllable word: n-de. We won’t be using these variant forms, but you should recognize them if you come across them.

Examples

Bíi hal with wa.

A person works.

Bíi mehal with boó wa.

Three people work.

When a quantifier or a number greater than “nede” (one) is used to modify the Subject, the verb must be plural.

Bíi naya be mideth wi.

Clearly, s/he cares for an animal.

Bíi menaya bezh mideth wi.

Clearly, they-few care for an animal.

Bíi naya be mideth nedebe wi.

Clearly, s/he cares for several animals.

Bíi naya be mideth menedebe wi.

Clearly, s/he cares for many animals.

Bíi naya be mideth nib wi.

Clearly, s/he cares for eight animals.

There are times when when you need to indicate a plural, but you have no verb to take the plural marker, [as in the third, fourth and fifth sentences above]. You can then put the word “menedebe” (many) immediately after the noun phrase you want to make plural. The same thing is done with numbers, and with the words “nedebe” (few, several), and “woho” (all, every). These words never change their form, never add prefixes or suffixes; thus, if the “animal” up there were “many animals,” you would use “mideth menedebe” (the case marker would never appear on “menedebe”), as below.

Bíi lan bath omám.

The six friends are teachers.

Bíi lan bath omám bim i edalahám shin.

The six friends are four teachers and two botanists.

The above examples do not have any Evidence [Word] at the end, and they are not in a series of connected sentences that would indicate what the speaker intended. This is possible in Láadan, but it can mean only one thing: that the speaker does not wish to state the reason why she considers what she says to be true.

Additional Postposition Vocabulary

neda

Postposition: only

nidi

Postposition: additional; more (not comparative) {AB}

X nidi

another X—“one more” is assumed.

X nidi nede

one more X—“one” is explicit, either for clarity or emphasis.

X nidi #

more X—“#” is a number or quantifier.

X nidi # neda

only # more X—# is not optional, even if it is “nede” (one).

Exercises

Translate the following into numerals.

1 thabum i um

E: _____

2 debeshin i thabeshan i bath

E: _____

3 thobeshan i debeshan i thabeshan i shin

E: _____

4 debebud i thabebath i shin

E: _____

5 thobebath i debeshan i thabebud i bud

E: _____

6 thobenib i debe i thabeshan i nib

E: _____

7 thobebath i debeshin i bim

E: _____

8 debeboó i thabeshan

E: _____

9 thobum i nibethab

E: _____

10 thobeboó i debenib i thabebim

E: _____

Form the following numbers in Láadan.

11 57

L: _____

12 524

L: _____

13 4,587

L: _____

14 3,605

L: _____

15 6,540

L: _____

16 6,158

L: _____

17 3,651

L: _____

18 6,058

L: _____

19 1,295

L: _____

20 7,854

L: _____

Translate the following into English.

21 Bîi eril memîi elamithá um waá.

E: _____

22 Báa eril thel hothul déelahátha binith nedebe?

E: _____

23 Bé eril belid beth onidathom nede neda wa.

E: _____

24 Bîi shóodehul thul áshemetha bud wi; menin áwith menedebe halehuleth.

E: _____

25 Bîi medush mebedi mewothad woyáawith woho elamitheth wo.

E: _____

26 Báa eril menéde mehamedara shinehoberídanizh bebáatha boó?

E: _____

In #21, did you divine the meaning of the word “elamithá?” Derived from “elamith” (**mathematics**) and “-á” (**DÖER**), “elamithá” means “**mathematician**.”

In #24, did you notice the word “áshem?” It’s made up of “á-” (**life-stage: infant**) and “shem” (**offspring**), and it means “**infant offspring**.” This form would not usually appear in a dictionary because it’s a regular, derived form whose meaning is transparent from its constituent parts.

In #25, did you notice that the English phrase “**every child**” is singular while the synonymous “**all children**” is plural? In Láadan, “háawith woho” is clearly plural.

Translate the second phrase into Láadan & modify the sentence to include the quantified noun phrase; translate into English before and after.

27 Bii eril yod omid edeth hi wa.

only six horses

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

28 Bé ril u urahu wa; aril nosháad lalomá.

all the gates, three singers

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

29 Báa eril an bebáa amedaraháth?

ten dancers

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

30 Bii ril úuya ra héena shonátho; eril dutha sherídanizh betha beth wa.

many heart-siblings

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

31 Báa she wobun wothom beye nath?

sixteen pillows

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

32 Báa eril dibé bud lamithá beyóoth?

any accountants

E: _____

L: _____

E: _____

Though the surface shape of the Object forms for “ed” (tool) and “ede” (grain) are indistinguishable, the horse in #27 is probably not eating a “tool” (ed); “grain” (ede) is much more likely. This is illustrative of the concept of “*semantic domain*,” (linguist-speak: the topics of discussion that are likely to include a given word). The semantic domains of “ed” (tool) and “ede” (grain) are sufficiently far apart that confusion is unlikely.

In #32, did you recognize the sources for the word “lamithá” (accountant) [lamith (to count) + -á (DOER)]?

Translate the following into Láadan.

33 The one thousand extremely colorful birds are beautiful.

L: _____

34 Five farmers cannot bring one hundred more large pigs.

L: _____

35 The three low plants have many leaves but few flowers—and only one fruit.

L: _____

36 I doubt they (honored many) counted the million symbols.

L: _____

37 I swear forty animals departed, and twelve more stayed.

L: _____

38 Would that (beloved) Michael's (birth) great-grandchildren break almost no promise.

L: _____

Answers

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|----|--------|
| 1 | 77. | 3 | 5,552. | 5 | 6,599. | 7 | 6,204. | 9 | 7,018. |
| 2 | 256. | 4 | 962. | 6 | 8,158. | 8 | 350. | 10 | 3,840. |
-
- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|---|----|-------------------------------------|
| 11 | thabeshan i um. | 15 | thobebath i debeshan i thabebim. | 18 | thobebath i thabeshan i nib. |
| 12 | debeshan i thabeshin i bim. | 16 | thobebath i debe i thabeshan i nib. | 19 | thob i debeshin i thadebud i shan. |
| 13 | thobebim i debeshan i thabenib i um. | 17 | thobeboó i debebath i thabeshan i nede. | 20 | thobum i debenib i thabeshan i bim. |
| 14 | thobeboó i debebath i shan. | | | | |
-
- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 21 | I doubt the seven mathematicians were amazed. | 30 | The peace-maker's heart-sibling isn't in pain now; her niece healed her.
Bíi ril mehúuya ra héena shonátho menedebe; eril dutha sherídanizh betha beneth wa.
The peace-maker's many heart-siblings aren't in pain; her niece healed them. |
| 22 | Did the gardener's grandparent get several gifts? | | |
| 23 | I swear the house is the home of only one family. | | |
| 24 | The parent of nine infant offspring is, clearly, extremely busy; many babies cause an immense amount of work. | 31 | Does some new pillow comfort you (beloved)?
Báa meshe mewobun wothom beyen bathethab nath?
Do some sixteen new pillows comfort you (beloved)? |
| 25 | I theorize every child who is able (all children who are able) must learn mathematics. | | |
| 26 | Whose three great-great-aunts wanted to dance? | 32 | Did the accountant promise to clothe her/himself?
Báa eril medibé mebud lamithá waha beyóoth?
Did any accountants promise to clothe themselves? |
| 27 | The horse eats this grain.
Bíi meyod omid bath neda edeth hi wa.
Only six horses eat this grain. | 33 | Bíi meháya mewolirihul wobabí thob wa. |
| 28 | On my oath, the gate is open; the singer will arrive.
Bé ril mehu urahu woho wa; menosháad lalomá boó.
On my oath, all the gates will be open; three singers will arrive. | 34 | Bíi merathad mebel ábedá shan meworahíya womudath nidi debe wáa. |
| 29 | Who knew the dancer?
Báa eril an bebáa amedaraháth thab?
Who knew the ten dancers? | 35 | Bíi methi meworahíthi wodala boó mith menedebe izh mahinath nedebe—i yuth nede neda wa. |
| | | 36 | Bíi eril melamith bin uzeth rod wáa. |
| | | 37 | Bé eril menasháad mid thabebim wa, i mebenem mid nidi shinethab. |
| | | 38 | Bíi wil methen shinehoshem Máyel bitha dibéth raho rano wa. |