

Lesson 61

Passive Voice

Passive Voice

There are two new Case roles that occur in the Passive voice that we ought to discuss. The first is the Patient. We've been using the Case label "Object" for the one that receives the action of the verb; another name for such a one is the Patient. The second is the Agent. An Agent is one type of Subject—specifically an Agent is a Subject that acts upon another: upon the Patient.

Heretofore, we've been discussing the Active Voice, which is characterized by the Subject being the actor (or Agent) of the verb; the Object is the one receiving the action (or Patient) of the verb. The Passive Voice is different; the Patient becomes the Subject in the Passive Voice. The Agent can be included in an *optional* Agentive case phrase.

In Láadan's Passive Voice, two things occur grammatically. One, the Patient is moved before the verb; it retains the Object case marker. The Agent remains in its place after the verb (and after the negative, if one is present). Two, the word "shub" (to do) is attached to the Agent.

**[(ToS) (Aux)
CP-Patient
Verb (Neg) CP-Agent+shub
CP-Mann
CP-Instr CP-Assoc
CP-Goal CP-Src CP-Plc CP-Time
CP-Benef CP-Purp CP-Coz
(Evid)]**

In the event that no Agent is identified in the Passive sentence, the Agentive "shub" is attached directly to the verb.

**[(Tos) (Aux)
CP-Patient
Verb+shub (Neg)
CP-Mann
CP-Instr CP-Assoc
CP-Goal CP-Src CP-Plc CP-Time
CP-Benef CP-Purp CP-Coz
(Evid)]**

Regarding Suzette Haden Elgin's motivation for this radical departure from standard Láadan word order, we have the following statement:

My goal is to make the passive sentence appear markedly different from the active one; if a nominal carrying the Object case-marker is placed before the verb, I will have accomplished that goal. [...] Just seeing that Object-marked nominal before the verb will forcibly signal that the sentence is a passive.

One final grammatical note: since the Patient takes the place of the Agent as the Subject in the Passive construction, the verb becomes plural when the Patient is plural, not the Agent. This may occasion a change in plural status when forming a Passive from an existing Active sentence.

Examples

Bíi yod rul thilith wa.
The cat eats fish.
Bíi thilith yod ruleshub wa.
Fish is eaten by the cat.
Bíi thilith yodeshub wa.
Fish is eaten.
Bíi aril lamith Méri losheth wáa.
Mary will count the money.
Bíi aril losheth lamith Méri beshub wáa.
The money will be counted by Mary.
Bíi aril losheth lamitheshub wáa.
The money will be counted.

In the above, note another situation in which names do not accept affixes.

Next, note that the verb becomes plural with the Patient.

Bé aril den le naneth wa.

[Promise] I will help beloved-you-many.

Bé aril naneth meden leshub wa.

[Promise] Beloved-you-many will be helped by me.

Bé aril naneth medeneshub wa.

[Promise] Beloved-you-many will be helped.

The Passive word order always begins with a noun phrase or an auxiliary. When Embedding a Passive construction that begins with a noun phrase (ie, no auxiliary to mark the beginning of the embedded clause), we will use the “in-support” model.

Bíi láad Méri [yod Ána anath]ehé(th) wa.

Mary perceives that Anna eats food.

Bíi láad Méri [eril yod Ána anath]ehé(th) wa.

Mary perceives that Anna ate food.

Bíi láad Méri [in anath yod Ána beshub]ehé(th) wa.

Mary perceives that the food is eaten by Anna.

Bíi láad Méri [eril anath yod Ána beshub]ehé(th) wa.

Mary perceives that the food was eaten by Anna.

Bíi láad Méri [in anath yodeshub]ehé(th) wa.

Mary perceives that the food is eaten.

Bíi láad Méri [eril anath yodeshub]ehé(th) wa.

Mary perceives that the food was eaten.

Bíi láad Méri [yod Ána anath]ehée(th) wa.

Mary perceives whether Anna eats food.

Bíi láad Méri [eril yod Ána anath]ehée(th) wa.

Mary perceives whether Anna ate food.

Bíi láad Méri [in anath yod Ána beshub]ehée(th) wa.

Mary perceives whether the food is eaten by Anna.

Bíi láad Méri [eril anath yod Ána beshub]ehée(th) wa.

Mary perceives whether the food was eaten by Anna.

Bíi láad Méri [in anath yodeshub]ehée(th) wa.

Mary perceives whether the food is eaten.

Bíi láad Méri [eril anath yodeshub]ehée(th) wa.

Mary perceives whether the food was eaten.

Bíi láad Méri [yod Ána anath]eháa(th) wa.

Mary perceives the food that Anna eats.

Bíi láad Méri [eril yod Ána anath]eháa(th) wa.

Mary perceives the food that Anna ate.

Bíi láad Méri [in anath yod Ána beshub]eháa(th) wa.

Mary perceives the food that is eaten by Anna.

Bíi láad Méri [eril anath yod Ána beshub]eháa(th) wa.

Mary perceives the food that was eaten by Anna.

Bíi láad Méri [in anath yodeshub]eháa(th) wa.

Mary perceives the food that is eaten.

Bíi láad Méri [eril anath yodeshub]eháa(th) wa.

Mary perceives the food that was eaten.

When making a Verb Complex passive—and when there is no Agent case phrase to carry the Agentive “-shub”—the suffix is attached only to the first verb in the Verb Complex.

Bíi néde yod rul thilith wáa.

The cat wants to eat fish.

Bíi thilith néde yod ruleshub wáa.

The fish is wanted to be eaten by the cat.

Bíi thilith nédeshub yod wáa.

The fish is wanted to be eaten.

The Passive wording of these in English is problematic. The Verb Complex in the Active sentence is short-hand for an embedded sentence something like:

Bíi néde rul [yod rul thilith]ehéth wáa.

The cat wants [(that) the cat eat fish].

The Passive construction of the fully-embedded sentence would be one of the two below, depending on whether the inner or the outer sentence was converted to the Passive. The Verb Complex form, as an abbreviated form of embedding, doesn't permit this level of specificity.

Bíi néde rul in thilith yod ruleshub wáa.

Bíi néde rul in thilith yodeshub wáa.

The cat wants [(that) fish be eaten (by the cat)].

The cat wants fish to be eaten (by the cat).

Bíi yod rul thilithéhéth néde ruleshub wáa.

Bíi yod rul thilithéhéth nédeshub wáa.

[(That) the cat eat fish] is wanted (by the cat).

It is wanted (by the cat) that the cat eat fish.

In English, it is possible to promote a case phrase other than the Object/Patient in a Passive construction. For example, for the Active sentence, “Mary gave me a flower,” we can either promote the Object, “A flower was given to me by Mary,” or the Indirect Object (Goal), “I was given a flower by Mary.” Láadan also allows this, promoting a non-Object case element to the role of Subject in the Passive structure:

Bíi eril ban Méri mahinath ledim wa.

Mary gave me a flower.

Bíi eril mahinath ban Méri beshub ledim wa.

A flower was given to me by Mary.

Bíi eril ledim ban Méri beshub mahinath wa.

I was given a flower by Mary.

Bíi eril im Méri bode wa.

Mary traveled from the mountain.

Bíi eril bode im Méri beshub wa.

The mountain was traveled from by Mary.

Bíi eril yime Méri meladim sheshihotesha mesh wa.

Mary ran across the beach to the sea.

Bíi eril meladim yime Méri beshub sheshihotesha mesh wa.

The sea was run to across the beach by Mary.

Bíi eril sheshihotesha mesh yime Méri beshub meladim wa.

The beach was run across to the sea by Mary.

Vocabulary

adama

to tickle [ada (laugh) + dama (touch)]

déedan

to interpret

dithal

to praise [di (speak) + thal (be good)]

dóham

put [dó- (CAUSE_{to}) + ham (be present)]

dóho

to wrap [dó- (CAUSE_{to}) + o (around)] {YML}

háda

to fall

see also: *héda* (to drop); *héeda* (be sacred); *héedá* (to pick up)

halid

competition [hal (work) + -id (MASC)]

héda

to drop; to spill; to let fall

see also: *háda* (to fall); *héeda* (be sacred); *héedá* (to pick up)

héedan

to translate

rumadoni

to bury [rumad (to cover) + doni (earth)]

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Bíi eril lanemideth bóodan Máthu Háabeshub wáa.

E: _____

2 Bíi mewohéeda wothodeth medéedan oháshub wa.

E: _____

3 Bée rilrili ranath hédashub wa!

E: _____

4 Báa eril medath mehumesh anadaláshub?

E: _____

5 Bíide eríli huth dithaleshub wáa.

E: _____

6 Bíi eril mehim len memazhenanehéeth dibáadu olowodeshub wa.

E: _____

Remember, in #2, that the verb becomes plural with the Patient, which acts as the Subject of the Passive sentence.

Also in #2, did the word “ohá” give you any trouble? Remember the prefix “o-” (study of; study of the teachings of)? It would ordinarily be used with the name of a discipline or religious figure and, optionally, an agentive “-á” (DOER) to give the meaning “student of (the teachings of)”. In this exercise, however, we forgo the object of study and abut the prefix and the suffix to give the meaning “scholar; student of the teachings.” The difference between this type of student and “bedihá” (student) [bedi (learn) + -á (DOER)] is the depth of study: a *bedihá* learns what is put in front of her in school; an *ohá* searches out the deep learning in her chosen topic or subject or field.

#6 is a bit advanced. The Patient (what would have been the Object of the Active sentence) is an embedded question, “*mehim len memazhenanehé*” (whether we travel by train).

Transform the following sentences from Active to Passive, both with and without the Agent; translate all three sentences into English.

7 Bíi dóyom thul betha áshemeth abesh rawáan wi.

E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

8 Bíidi eril el edaná dáaneth édáanewáan wa.

E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

9 Bíili eril dóho wehehá binith nada; dóham le beth dimesha hi nil wa.

E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

10 Bíi aril mehéedan ehá wobalin woháabeth Láadanedim wáa.

E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

11 Bíi ril loláad with radedehenath óohaháalish rawáan wo.

E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

12 Bíida eril háda háawithid lubeneth halid adamathuwáan wáa; ril lothel rawith in beth rumadonishub bebáashahée.

E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

In #7, the verb “**dóyom**” (**protect**) is transparently a “**dó-**” formation from the stative verb, “**yom**” (**be safe**). So, of course the Subject of “**yom**” would become the Object (and the Patient in the Passive) of “**dóyom**,” and “**dóyom**” would take a new Subject: the one doing the protecting. But what case role ought we to assign to the thing/condition the protector is safeguarding the Patient *from*? In English, clearly, it’s the Source case as illustrated by that very “*from*” in the previous sentence. Use of the Source case is idiomatic in English; however, idiomatic usage in one language, by definition, does not translate well into another. The crux of the discussion of protection “*from*” some threat is that the patient/object is safe *despite* the presence of that threat. In Láadan, therefore, it seems meet that the thing being protected from (exemplified by X) should be rendered in the negated Cause case: “**X rawáan**.” This case assignment would apply equally to the verb “**yom**” (**be safe**); in this way, the transformation from “**yom**” to “**dóyom**” will entail as few case reassignments as possible.

In #9, you have a choice: you may convert the first clause or the second to the Passive—or, do both. All three answers are provided.

Again, in #10, the verb will become singular with the Patient (**wobalin woháabeth**). Should you want to show, concretely, that there is more than one scientist (**ehá**) involved, you’d need to provide a quantifier to do that.

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 Bread is given to Elizabeth by the baker because of friendliness (for bad reasons).

L: _____

14 The bells were rung by the dancer before the celebration.

L: _____

15 The grain is harvested repeatedly in autumn (obviously).

L: _____

16 Was your uncle met by your sister at the airport yesterday?

L: _____

17 The quality of her needleworking may be helped by more study.

L: _____

18 By whom will the kittens that are living under old Miz Suzette's house be cared for?

L: _____

In #14, did you remember what verb applies to non-linguistic sounds made by creatures or objects?

In the answer provided for #16, did you note that the Time case suffix on “sháal” in the idiomatic phrase “sháaleya eril” (yesterday) is, in fact, superfluous? In less formal speech or writing, the Time case suffix could be omitted because it's clear that “sháal eril” (yesterday) is a Time element. If, on the other hand, we were saying “until yesterday” (sháaledim eril) or “since yesterday” (sháalede eril), those case suffixes would not be optional.

Sorry; #18 is rather advanced. The Patient is represented by an embedded relative clause, and the Agent is an interrogative—a structure we haven't seen before.

Answers

- 1 The dog was rescued by young Master Matthew.
- 2 The sacred writings are interpreted by the scholar(s).
- 3 [warning] The drink may be spilled!
- 4 Were the vegetables cut by the cook?
- 5 [story] Long ago the ruler was praised.
- 6 Whether we (many) would travel by train was inquired poetically by the group. OR It was inquired poetically by the group whether we (many) would travel by train.
- 7 Of course her parent protects a baby from everything.
 Bíi áshemeth dóyom thul bethashub abesh rawáan wi.
 Of course a baby is protected from everything by her parent.
 Bíi áshemeth dóyomeshub abesh rawáan wi.
 Of course a baby is protected from everything.
- 8 [didactic] The linguist created the word because of a lexical gap.
 Bíidi eril dáaneth el edanáshub édáanewáan wa.
 [didactic] The word was created by the linguist because of a lexical gap.
 Bíidi eril dáaneth eleshub édáanewáan wa.
 [didactic] The word was created because of a lexical gap.
- 9 [LOVE] A shopkeeper wrapped the gift for beloved-you; I put it in this container.
 FIRST:
 Bíili eril binith dóho weheháshub nada; dóham le beth dimesha hi nil wa.
 [LOVE] The gift was wrapped by a shopkeeper for beloved-you; I put it in this container.
 Bíili eril binith dóhoshub nada; dóham le beth dimesha hi nil wa.
 [LOVE] The gift was wrapped for beloved-you; I put it in this container.
 SECOND:
 Bíili eril dóho wehehá binith nada; beth dóham leshub dimesha hi nil wa.
 [LOVE] A shopkeeper wrapped the gift for beloved-you; it was put in this container by me.
 Bíili eril dóho wehehá binith nada; beth dóhameshub dimesha hi nil wa.
 [LOVE] A shopkeeper wrapped the gift for beloved-you; it was put in this container.
 BOTH:
 Bíili eril binith dóho weheháshub nada; beth dóham leshub dimesha hi nil wa.
 [LOVE] The gift was wrapped by a shopkeeper for beloved-you; it was put in this container by me.
 Bíili eril binith dóhoshub nada; beth dóhameshub dimesha hi nil wa.
 [LOVE] The gift was wrapped for beloved-you; it was put in this container.
- 10 The scientists will translate the antique book into Láadan.
 Bíi aril wobalin woháabeth héedan ehášhub (nedebe/menedebe) Láadanedim wáa.
 The antique book will be translated into Láadan by the scientist(s).
 Bíi aril wobalin woháabeth héedaneshub Láadanedim wáa.
 The antique book will be translated into Láadan.
- 11 The woman feels perseverance (despite negative circumstances) in spite of being extraordinarily weary (I suppose).
 Bíi ril radedehenath loláad witheshub óohahálish rawáan wo.
 Perseverance (despite negative circumstances) is felt by the woman in spite of being extraordinarily weary (I suppose).
 Bíi ril radedehenath loláadeshub óohahálish rawáan wo.
 Perseverance (despite negative circumstances) is felt in spite of being extraordinarily weary (I suppose).
- 12 A boy-child dropped the map due to a tickling competition; now no-one knows where it's buried.
 Bíida lubeneth háda háawithideshub halid adamathuwáan wáa; ril lothel rawith in beth rumadonishub bebáashahée.
 The map was dropped by a boy-child due to a tickling competition; now no-one knows where it's buried.
 Bíida lubeneth hádashub halid adamathuwáan wáa; ril lothel rawith in beth rumadonishub bebáashahée.
 The map was dropped due to a tickling competition; now no-one knows where it's buried.
- 13 Bíi baleth ban ebalášhub Elízhabeth bedim dunawáan wáa.
- 14 Bíi eril limlimeth mezho amedarahášhub elahelaya eril wa.
- 15 Bíi edeth róoshub wemoneya baradan wi.
- 16 Báa eril berídanid nethath bithim hena nethashub hozhazhesha sháaleya eril?
- 17 Bíi rilrili thal dathimethu bethoth den ulanineshub nidi wa.
- 18 Báa aril ril mehabelid háarul belid Shuzhéth Zháabethosha yileháath menaya bebáashub?