

Lesson 4

Plural

Vocabulary

dathim	to needlework
di	to say; to talk; to speak
-id	Suffix: male
-izh	Suffix: female
le	I (first person pronoun, singular)
lezh	we (first person pronoun, several: 2 to 5)
len	we (first person pronoun, many: more than 5)
liyen	to be green
me-	Prefix (on verb): plural
míi	to be amazed
wáa	Evidence Word: assumed true by speaker because speaker trusts source

The verb “**di**” (to say; to talk; to speak) is a very general word. It becomes much more specific when a Type-of-Sentence word is attached to it. So, adding the declarative Type-of-Sentence word, “**bíi**,” we arrive at “**dibíi**” (to state; to declare). When used as a noun, it would mean “**statement; declaration.**”

Pronouns, as in English, fill the position of nouns and are treated, grammatically, like nouns—except that Láadan pronouns, unlike Láadan nouns, have plural forms. Unlike English pronouns that have only a singular and a plural form, each Láadan pronoun has three forms: a *single* form, a *few-to-several* (defined as 2 to 5) form, and a *many* (defined as more than 5) form. They’re all perfectly regular, so for pronouns introduced in future lessons, we’ll be given the single form and the plurals will be easy to work out.

In connected sentences uttered by the same speaker where the Evidence Word would not change—“**wa**” (my perception) vs “**wáa**” (trusted report)—from sentence to sentence, it may be omitted after the first sentence.

The male suffix, “**-id**,” defines the noun or pronoun to which it is applied as male. Similarly, the female suffix, “**-izh**,” defines the noun or pronoun to which it is applied as female. Without either of these suffixes, the noun or pronoun is gender-neutral. So, to specify “**man**” we would use “**with**” (person) and apply the male suffix, giving “**withid**.” And, to specify “**woman**” we would apply the female suffix, giving “**withizh**.”

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Originally, in the mid-1980s when Suzette Haden Elgin began creating Láadan, she felt the need, as a reaction to a profoundly male-dominated language and culture, for Láadan to be female-default. That is, all nouns and pronouns for which gender was a consideration were deemed to be female unless the male suffix, “**-id**,” was applied (or context made it obvious that a male was being discussed). So, “**with**” could as easily be translated “**woman**” as “**person**,” and “**man**” would have to be “**withid**.” Since Suzette has died and a second generation is continuing the development of Láadan, we’ve added “**-izh**” (female suffix) and now consider nouns and pronouns non-gendered by default. The result is a more gender-balanced language.
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Plural

[Verb CP–S]

In this and subsequent Pattern models, we will assume that the Type-of-Sentence Word is present at the beginning of the model sentence and that the Evidence Word is at the end. With that assumption (and allowing for abbreviations) you will notice that this model is exactly the same as that in Lesson 2.

To make a sentence plural in Láadan, only the verb is affected. To make a verb plural, put the prefix “**me-**” at the beginning of the word. Notice that the shape of the noun phrase doesn’t change in the plural.

Láadan insists that consonant sounds and vowel sounds occur in strict alternation. No two consonant sounds may occur together, and no two vowels may occur together (except for this special case: if, *within the same indivisible word unit—for example, in the word áath*—a vowel is doubled and one or the other of them is high-toned, that is acceptable). To accomplish this alternation, Láadan inserts an “**h**” to separate two vowels or an “**e**” to separate two consonants. So, if the verb being made plural begins with a vowel, we must insert an “**h**” between the final “**e**” of “**me-**” and the verb’s initial vowel.

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There used to be a variant plural form which is now obsolete, though you may encounter it in older texts. When the verb being made plural began with a “**d**,” it could be pluralized using the variant plural prefix “**n-**.” This “**n-**” was known as a “syllabic n;” it was a syllable unto itself—like the last syllable of the English word “**button**.” As a syllable unto itself, no inserted “**e**” was necessary to separate it from the following “**d**.” Nevertheless, that gave rise to a “n-grade” plural prefix “**ne-**” that was sometimes used on verbs beginning with “**d**.” This caused a lot of confusion, and was finally deemed counterproductive in what was intended to be a global language. We mention these variant plural forms here only so you won’t be confused if you see them; we will be using “**me-**” exclusively in these lessons.
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Examples

Bíi hal le wa.	I work.
Bíi mehal lezh wa.	We (few) work.
Bíi mehal len wa.	We (many) work.

Note that there is only one plural form of the verb, used with both the “few/several” form and the “many” form of a pronoun.

Bíi di withid wáa.	The man speaks (I’m reliably informed).
Bíi medi withid wáa.	The men speak (I’m told).

Bíi áya withizh wa.	The woman is beautiful (my perception).
Bíi meháya withizh wa.	The women are beautiful (my perception).

Note the “h” that has been inserted to separate the final “e” in “me-” from the initial “á” in “áya.” Also note that it wasn’t necessary when pluralizing “hal” or “di,” which begin with consonant sounds, “h” and “d,” respectively.

Bíi meháya thom i hesh wa.	The pillow and the grass are beautiful.
Bíi mezháadin Ána i Bétheni wáa.	Anna and Bethany are menopausal (I’m told).

Of course, with a compound Subject, the verb must be plural.

Bíi áya i thal with wa.	The person is beautiful and good (my perception).
Bíi meháya i methal with wa.	The people are beautiful and good (my perception).

Notice the compound verbs in the examples in the set above. When the sentence is plural, of course, both verbs have to be plural.

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Exercises

Make the following sentences singular; translate into English before and after.

- 1 Bii memii thul waa.
- 2 Bii mezháadin with waa.
- 3 Bii meháya thili wa.
- 4 Bii meliyen thom wa.
- 5 Bii meháana lezhizh wa.
- 6 Bii medoth hena wa.

In #2, the Subject, “with” is not marked as female, so it would be formally translated “**person/people**,” however, it’s generally women who menopause, so this would be correctly translated “**woman/women**.” It has been pointed out that trans-men might also experience menopause-like symptoms during their transition, though care is taken in the medical process to avoid or mitigate those symptoms. If we’re discussing a trans-man experiencing such symptoms, the form “with” might be translated “**man**” or “**person**”—or “withid” would be specifically “**man**.”

In #5, “lezh” is marked as female. We don’t have an easy way to render this in English; we’ll have to make do with “**we few women**.”

- 1 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____
- 2 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____
- 3 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____
- 4 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____
- 5 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____
- 6 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____



Make the following sentences plural; translate into English before and after.

- 7 Bii héeya mid wa.
- 8 Bii wii mudahizh wáa.
- 9 Bii hal withid wa.
- 10 Bii thal rana wáa.
- 11 Bii di le wa.
- 12 Bii u áath wa.

7 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

8 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

9 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

10 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

11 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

12 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

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Translate these into Láadan (all according to your own perception).

- 13 The boars are tired.
- 14 The songs are good.
- 15 Carol and Matthew needlework.
- 16 We (many) speak.
- 17 The stones are beautiful.
- 18 The mothers are menopausal.

13 L: _____

14 L: _____

15 L: _____

16 L: _____

17 L: _____

18 L: _____

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1 The parents are amazed. Bii mii thul wá. The parent is amazed. 2 The women are menopausal. Bii zhadin with wá. The woman is menopausal. 3 The fish are beautiful. Bii dya thili wá. The fish is beautiful. 4 The pillows are green. Bii liyen thom wá. The pillow is green. 5 We (few women) sleep. Bii dana lehizh wá. I (female) sleep. 6 The siblings follow. Bii doth hena wá. The sibling follows.

7 The animal is afraid. Bii meheya mid wá. The animals are afraid. 8 The sow (female pig) is alive. Bii mewii mudahizh wá. The sows are alive. 9 The man works. Bii mehal withid wá. The man work. 10 The drink is good. Bii methal rana wá. The drinks are good. 11 I speak. Bii medi len (lezh) wá. We (many/few) speak. 12 The door is open. Bii mehu dath wá. The doors are open.

13 Bii mehooha mudahid wá. 14 Bii methal lom wá. 15 Bii medathim Hérel ! Mathu wá. 16 Bii medi len wá. 17 Bii mehaya ud wá. 18 Bii mezhadadin thulizh wá.