

Lesson 11

Possessives

Vocabulary

-tha	Suffix (CP): Possessive, by birth
-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.

Additional Vocabulary

beth	home
ith	light
óol	moon
rosh	sun
shem	offspring; daughter; son

Possessive Case

[Verb (Neg) CP–Possessive–S]

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.

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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 meháya hena?	Are the siblings beautiful?
Báa meháya hena netha?	Are your (by birth) siblings beautiful?
Báa 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.)

Examples

Bíi mebalin ra rul wa.	The cats are not old.
Bíi mebalin ra rul bethi wa.	Her/his (by chance) cats are not old.
Bíi mebalin ra rul Ána bethi wa.	Anna's (by chance) cats are not old.
Bíi loyo lanemid wa.	The dog is black.
Bíi loyo lanemid lethe wa.	My (no known reason) dog is black.
Bíi loyo lanemid Máthu betha wa.	Matthew's (no known reason) dog is black.

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

Bíi rahíya dithemid wa.	The cow is large.
Bíi rahíya dithemid betho wa.	Her/his (other valid reason) cow is large.
Bíi rahíya dithemid Elízabeth betho wa.	Elizabeth's (other valid reason) cow is 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.

Báa áya dala?	Is the plant beautiful?
Báa áya dala netho?	Is your plant beautiful?
Báa áya dala Shuzhéth betho?	Is Suzette's plant beautiful?
Báa áya dala bebáatho?	Whose (other valid reason) plant is beautiful?

Did the word “**bebáatho**” confuse you? In a wh-question, the item of information being requested is represented by “**bebáa**.” Here, the item of information being requested is “**whose**” or “**owned by whom**.” “**bebáatho**.”

Báa laya dim?	Is the container red?
Báa laya dim udethu?	Is the container of rocks red?

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.

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Báa balin omid?

Is the horse old?

Báa balin omid lanethe?

Is the friend's horse old?

Báa balin omid lanethe henatho?

Is the sibling's friend's horse old?

Báa balin omid lanethe henatho Hérel betha?

Is Carol's sibling's friend's horse old?

Here we see how Láadan can “stack” Possessives. The horse belongs (by chance—perhaps won in a contest?) to the friend; the friend “belongs” (other valid reason) to the sibling; the sibling “belongs” (by birth) to Carol. In most cases, formal writing would avoid this type of structure—in English or in Láadan. However, in speech or informal writing, it would not be at all uncommon.

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Bii amedara i ada onida lethwa.
- 2 Báa medathim hena Shuzhéth betha i lan letho?
- 3 Bii merahu áath belidethu lezhetho wáa.
- 4 Báa owahul bal omáthe?
- 5 Bii áya ith roshethu, óolethu, i ashethu wa.
- 6 Báa medo oda bebáatha?

1 En:

2 En:

3 En:

4 En:

5 En:

6 En:

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

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|----|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 7 | Bíi mebalin thul wa. | Bethany's parents |
| 8 | Báa tháa ábed? | the dancer's farm |
| 9 | Bíi áana hena wáa. | their (many of them) sister |
| 10 | Báa doth lanemid? | whose (few of them, by gift) dog |
| 11 | Bíi mewam urahu déelathu waá. | our (many of us) garden |
| 12 | Báa rabun róomath? | Teresa's barn |

In #8, were you able to form the word for “dancer?” If “to dance” is “amedara” then “one who dances” or “dancer” would be “amedarahá” [amedara (to dance) + -á (doer)].

#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!

7 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

8 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

9 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

10 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

11 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

12 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

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Translate the following into Láadan.

- 13 The wind’s song is new (self-evident).
- 14 Margaret’s (by chance) goat’s work is easy (I’m reliably informed).
- 15 Steven’s cow’s milk is good (I perceive)
- 16 Are the peacemaker’s horses extremely safe?
- 17 Whose (many of them) grandmother is menopausal?
- 18 The farmer’s container of clothing is open (I’m reliably informed).

13 La:

14 La:

15 La:

16 La:

17 La:

18 La:

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1 My (by birth) family dances and laughs. 2 Are Suzette’s sibling and my friend needleworking? 3 The doors of our (few of us) house are closed. 4 Is the teacher’s (no known/acknowledged reason) bread extremely warm? 5 The light of (partitive) the sun, the moon and the star(s) is beautiful. 6 Whose (by birth) arms are strong? 7 The parents are old. Bli mebalin thul Bétheni betha wa. Bethany’s parents are old. 8 Is the farm thriving? Baa thaa ábed amedarahátho? Is the dancer’s farm thriving? 9 The sibling is sleeping. Bli áana hena betha wa. Their (many of them) sibling is asleep. 10 Does the dog follow? Baa doth lanemid bebdázhetho? Whose (few of them) dog is following? 11 The garden gates are still. Bli mewam urahu déelathu lenetho wa. Our garden gates are still. 12 Is the barn new? Baa rabun róomath Therisha betho? Is Teresa’s barn new? 13 Bli bun lom yuliethu wi. 14 Bli doz hál éezhetho Mázhareth betho wa. 15 Bli thal lal dithemidethu Thiben betho wa. 16 Baa meyomehul omid shonátho? 17 Baa zháadin hothul bebdáanetha? 18 Bli u dim budethu ábbedátho wa.