

Lesson 16

Verb Complexes

Vocabulary

dom	to remember; remembering
dush	to have to; to be obligated; must
néde	to want
nédeshub	to intend; intention
nime	to will; to be willing; willingness
thad	to be able; ability
them	to need; need
ul	to hope; hope

Additional Vocabulary

Bé	Type-of-Sentence Word: Promise
sherídan	niece/nephew

Along with the Type-of-Sentence word, “bé” (said as a promise), we also get a verb, “dibé” (to promise). Of course “dibé” is also a perfectly fine noun, meaning “a/the promise.”

When Suzette Haden Elgin created Láadan, she created a word “bédi” (promise); the second generation developing Láadan, as part of a systematic approach to Type-of-Sentence communication verbs, considers that word as obsolete, replaced with “dibé.” This allows the application of the Mood Suffixes to the Type-of-Sentence part of the speech verb. We won’t be using “bédi” in these lessons, but you may want to recognize it when you see it.

Verb Complexes

[(Aux) Verb Complex (Neg) CP–S]

The sequence “to want + to VERB” in Láadan forms a single unit called a Verb Complex, which is used just like an ordinary verb. The auxiliary goes before it, the negative follows it, and nothing can go between its two parts. Since two verbs are used, both must be marked plural if either is.

Linguistic note: The underlying form here is that of an embedded sentence whose subject is the same as the subject of the sentence as a whole. An example of this would be the sentence “I want to help you.” Its underlying structure is the sentence “I want [I help you],” with “I help you” as the embedded sentence. It is common practice in such cases among human languages to drop the duplicate subject of the embedded sentence. In English we usually substitute “to” in that place; in Láadan we treat the two verbs as a Verb Complex. We will address other types of embedded sentences in Láadan in other lessons.

There are many verbs in addition to “néde” (to want) that can become the first element in a Verb Complex; some of these form the bulk of our vocabulary for this lesson.

NO

Examples

Bíi dush le wa. I have to.
Bíi di le wa. I speak.
Bíi dush di le wa. I have to speak.

Bíi aril methad lezh wa. We will be able.
Bíi aril mehen lezh wa. We will understand.
Bíi aril methad mehen lezh wa. We will be able to understand.

Notice that the auxiliary marking time applies equally to both verbs in the Verb Complex. If we need to put different times on the two verbs, a different type of embedding would be required. We will study the other types of embedding in future lessons.

Bíi rilrili dibé ne wa. You might promise.
Bíi rilrili dibé ra ne wa. You might not promise.
Bíi rilrili yod ne wa. You might eat.
Bíi rilrili yod ra ne wa. You might not eat.
Bíi rilrili dibé yod ne wa. You might promise to eat.
Bíi rilrili dibé yod ra ne wa. You might not promise to eat.
You might promise not to eat.
You might not promise not to eat.

Notice that the Verb Complex structure in the negative does not allow the speaker to disambiguate whether the negative applies to the first or second verb. There are other types of embedding that will; we will study them in future lessons.

Bíi eril om le wa. I taught.
Bíi eril néde om le wa. I wanted to teach.
Bíi eril nahom le wa. I began to teach.

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Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Baa eril néde lalom Therísha?
- 2 Bíi aril mehul medi mewoshóod wowithizh wáa.
- 3 Baa aríli medom mehal sherídan Thíben betha?
- 4 Bíi ril them áana henahid lezhetha wa.
- 5 Bíi héeya yod wobalin wodená wáa.
- 6 Bíi nédeshub amedara womíi wohebalá wa.

In #5, did you have any trouble with the word “**dená**”? It’s a straightforward formation of “**den**” (to help) + “**-á**” (DOER); it means “**helper**” or “**assistant**.”

How about, in #6, the word “**ebalá**”? Formed of “**e-**” (SCIoF) + “**bal**” (bread) + “**-á**” (DOER), it means “**baker**” or, more literally, “**doer of the science of bread**.”

1 En:

2 En:

3 En:

4 En:

5 En:

6 En:

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Transform the following into Verb Complex form & translate into Láadan.

- 7 A pregnant peace-scientist promised [the pregnant peace-scientist swim].
- 8 Would that the blessed travelers be able [the blessed travelers needlework].
- 9 The furry mice are willing [the furry mice jump].
- 10 Steven may not want [Steven be warm].
- 11 Long ago, a traveling grandmother hoped [a traveling grandmother laugh].
- 12 Who doesn't need [who be safe]?

Did you have any trouble, in #8, with the word “traveler”? It’s a straightforward “doer” formation of “im” (to travel): “imá”.

7 En:

La:

8 En:

La:

9 En:

La:

10 En:

La:

11 En:

La:

12 En:

La:

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Translate the following into Láadan.

- 13 The worker’s friends were afraid to help.
- 14 Can’t the green plants be beautiful now?
- 15 Margaret’s heart-sibling’s child was not willing to be small.
- 16 Suzette tries to attend but begins to be weary.
- 17 Whose aunt promised, long ago, to follow?
- 18 The menopausal teacher remembers to be strong.

Did you notice that #16 is a “trick question?” It doesn’t actually involve a Verb Complex. Instead we have a compound verb, each verb of which uses a prefix to impart one of those meanings that might be mistaken for Verb Complexes.

- 13 La: _____
- 14 La: _____
- 15 La: _____
- 16 La: _____
- 17 La: _____
- 18 La: _____

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1 Did Teresa want to sing? 2 The busy women will hope to speak. 3 Will Steven’s nieces remember to work, in the far future? 4 Our (few of us) birth-brother needs to sleep now. 5 The old assistant is afraid to eat. 6 The amazed baker intends to dance.

7 A pregnant peace-scientist promised to swim. Bii eril dibé ilisháad wolawida woheshona wa. 8 Would that the blessed travelers be able to needlework. Bii wil methad medathim mewohothel wohima wa. 9 The furry mice are willing to jump. Bii ril menime mehobb mewoshane wohedemid wa. 10 Steven may not want to be warm. Bii rilrilli néde owa ra Thiben wa. 11 Long ago, a traveling grandmother hoped to laugh. Bii erilli ul ada wohim wohothul wáa. 12 Who doesn’t need to be safe? Baa them yom ra bebáa?

13 Bii eril mehéeya meden lan halátho wáa. 14 Baa ril methad meháya ra mewoliyen wodala? 15 Bii eril nime hiya ra shem héenatha Mázhareth betho wáa. 16 Bii duham izh nahóoha Shuzhéth wáa. 17 Baa erilli medibé medoth beridan bebáatha? 18 Bii dom do wozháadin wohomá wáa.