

# Lesson 18

## Identifier Case

### Vocabulary

áayo	skirt
ana	food
bini	gift
éelen	grape(s)
hath	time
hoth	place
inad	trousers; pants
lóa	perception
radal	nothing [ra- (NON) + dal (thing)]
shad	to be pure; to be perfect

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# Identifier Case

You may not be used to talking about the “case” of noun phrases. Case is the term that refers to the role the noun phrase has in a sentence—that is, whether it is something that acts, something acted upon, something used to act, etc. [...] (A Case Phrase is just a noun phrase plus its case-marker ending; a noun phrase is any sequence that can fill a case role, such as a noun or a pronoun.)

Another way to think about Case is that Case defines the relation that a noun phrase has to the verb. The Subject *does* the verb. The Identifier specifies what the Subject *is*. The action of the verb is performed *upon* the Object (we’ll discuss the Object in the next lesson). The other Cases we will be studying during these lessons define other relationships that nouns have to the verb in a sentence.

[(Aux) Ø-Verb (Neg) CP–S CP–ID]

**-m**                      Suffix (noun phrase): Identifier Case

An Identifier identifies the Subject by profession, gender, nationality, etc. The rule for forming an Identifier in Láadan is to add the suffix “-m.” Of course, if we’re adding this suffix to a Noun Phrase that ends in a consonant, we’ll need to add an “e” to separate the consonants.

When Suzette Haden Elgin first created Láadan, she opted for a zero-suffix (no apparent suffix) for the Identifier Case. This falls neatly in line with English, wherein Identifier structures are formally rendered in Subject Case:

Q: “May I speak to Mary?”  
A: “I am she.”

In ancillary materials, she allowed as how she didn’t *think* that would be a problem; in practice, however, it occasioned some unnecessary confusion. The decision was taken by the next generation to change from the zero-suffix to “-m.”

The other item of note about a sentence using an Identifier Case structure is that there is no apparent verb. Láadan doesn’t have a “copula” (the stand-alone verb “to be” that English uses, among other things, to equate two things). The Láadan Identifier structure appears to have no verb (linguist-speak: the verb *presents a null surface form*); we simply present the Subject (the one being Identified) and the Identifier (what the Subject is being Identified *as*). If we’re placing the Identification in another time and/or denying the Identification, the Auxiliary will precede, and/or the negative will follow, the invisible verb.

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## Examples

To make it clearer in the examples to follow, we'll insert a “•” where the invisible verb is.

- Bíi • le withem wa. I am a person.  
Bíi • le wothal wowithem wa. I am a good person.  
Bíi • le wothalehul wowithem wa. I am an extremely good person.

Notice that the Subject Case Phrase comes before any other Case Phrase.

- Bíi • háawith Ána bem wa. The child is Anna.

Note that personal names do not receive Case endings. When the name of a person or animal fulfills the role of a Case that would take a suffix, the name is followed by the pronoun “be” which accepts the Case ending instead. This rule applies to the names of living and once-living persons and creatures but not to the names of places or times.

- Bíi • Ána omám wa. Anna is a teacher.  
Bíi • Ána omám i thulem wa. Anna is a teacher and a parent.

Notice that the Subject—“Ána” (Anna) in the example set—can be Identified with more than one other noun.

- Báa • with thulem? Is the person a parent?  
Bíi eril • ra with thulem wa. The person was not a parent.  
Bíi • ra with thulem wa. The person is not a parent.  
Bíi aril • with thulem wa. The person will be a parent.

We can also deny the Identification by inserting “ra” after the verb, just as usual—except that the verb is invisible. Notice that in the Identifier Case structure, just as usual, the auxiliary comes before the verb and the negative comes after the verb; the only difference here is that the verb has that “null surface form” (it’s invisible and inaudible).

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## Identifying Conjunction

Along with the Case suffix comes a new conjunction: “**úmú**.” It implies that the Subject of the sentence can be Identified with something, and that the clause to follow explains what that something is. “**Úmú**” stands for the Identifier in the clause it introduces, and that clause is the Identifier of the larger sentence.

“**Úmú**” will most often be translated “**who**” or “**what**”—but not the forms of “**who**” or “**what**” that pose questions. This form introduces a clause that fulfills the Identifier case-role, as in the English sentences, “**I know who you are,**” or “**I know what you are.**” You will notice, in the examples below, that the clauses introduced by “**úmú**” have only a noun phrase; just as the Identifier uses no apparent verb, the clause introduced by “**úmú**” shows no apparent verb. Since Láadan doesn’t use the form of the verb “**to be**” known as a “copula”; for the purposes of translation into English, “**úmú**” acts as the copula as well as the “**who/what.**” In effect, “**úmú**” could be translated “**who/what [noun phrase] is/are/was/were/will be.**”

**Bóo di beye úmú • belidá, lu.**      **Please, someone, say who the carpenter is.**

Of course, the Possessive is one noun phrase, so it is perfectly reasonable to use a Possessive after “**úmú**.”

**Bíi ril dibáa le úmú • hena netha wa.**      **I’m asking who your sibling is.**

**Bíi ril dibáa le úmú eril • hena netha wa.**      **I’m asking who your sibling was.**

**Bíi eril dibíi behid úmú • hal betho wa.**      **He stated what his work was.**

**Bíi eril dibíi behid úmú aril • hal betho wa.**      **He stated what his work will be.**

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## Possessive Identifier

Báa · hena thulem?	Is the sibling a parent?
Báa · hena netha thulem?	Is your sibling a parent?
Báa · hena thul halátham?	Is the sibling the worker's parent?
Báa · hena netha thul halátham?	Is your sibling the worker's parent?

Regardless of Case, the Possessive becomes *part of* the Case Phrase. Since the Possessive Noun Phrase is a single unit (and so nothing can be inserted between its elements), the Case Suffix must be added to the end—on the Possessor, not on the thing possessed.

The Case Suffix for the Subject (the only Case we've addressed up until now) is what's known as a "null suffix" or "zero suffix" (or, in Linguist-Speak, the suffix is said to "*present a null surface form*"). That "null suffix" on a Possessive in the Subject is attached to the end of the Possessive sequence; however, since it's a "null suffix" (which cannot be seen or heard), we haven't had to address concerns around its placement until now. Perhaps it'll be a little clearer if presented in morphemic analysis of the first and fourth examples above. We'll insert "Ø" where the Subject's null-suffix is.

Báa	·	henaØ		thulem?	
Q		SIBLING + SUBJ		PARENT + IDENT	
Báa	·	hena	nethaØ	thul	halátham?
Q		SIBLING	YOU1 + POSSBIRTH + SUBJ	PARENT	WORKER + POSSBIRTH + IDENT

A multiply-possessive structure is still a single unit, and so the Case Suffix belongs at the end of the Possessive structure. Note the changes in the Possessive endings as the ownership of the dog evolves through the examples.

Bíi · hi woléli wolanemidem wa.	This is a yellow dog.
Bíi · hi woléli wolanemid lethim wa.	This is my (chance) yellow dog.
Bíi · hi woléli wolanemid lanethi lethom wa.	This is my (other reason) friend's (chance) yellow dog.
Bíi · hi woléli wolanemid lanethi edinetho letham wa.	This is my (birth) cousin's (other reason) friend's (chance) yellow dog.

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## Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Bii berídanizh lethá wothal wolalomám wáa.
- 2 Bóo di ne úmú wohóoha wodená, lu.
- 3 Báa héena bebáatho ábedám?
- 4 Bii ra wii yomem wi.
- 5 Bii eríli Therísha edalahám wáa.
- 6 Bii beth letho wolíithi wobelid Mázhareth bethom wa.

In #5, did you get the “sense” of “edalahá?” It means “botanist” [e- (SCloF) + dala (plant) + -á (DOER)]. It also suggests “edala” (botany) [e- (SCloF) + dala (plant)]. Note that, though “áá” is an allowed Láadan vowel combination, because the “a” comes from “dala” (plant) and the “á” is from “-á” (DOER) they must be separated by an “h.”

- 1 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 E: \_\_\_\_\_

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7 **L:**

**E:**

**L:**

**E:**

8 **L:**

**E:**

**L:**

**E:**

9 **L:**

**E:**

**L:**

**E:**

10 **L:**

**E:**

**L:**

**E:**

11 **L:**

**E:**

**L:**

**E:**

12 **L:**

**E:**

**L:**

**E:**

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**Translate the following into Láadan.**

- 13 Is Elizabeth’s nephew a short peace-scientist?
- 14 The furry creature is not the alien’s niece’s cat.
- 15 Being old will be a **lot** of work.
- 16 The voice of the needleworker is a slow song.
- 17 To laugh and to dance is to be beautiful.
- 18 The sound of the still wind is wisdom.

As we see in #15, nouns can also be made “more so” by the addition of “-hul;” however, their increase in degree isn’t usually rendered well in English by the word “**extremely.**”

Also in #15, we see a Degree Marker, “-hul” (**extremely**), and a Case Marker, “-m” (**IDENT**) applied to the same word. In general, the Case suffix will be the last piece added to the word, so it will be at the very end; this means that any Degree Marker will, perforce, be added beforehand. Semantically, this means that the [Noun + Degree] compound becomes one unit, and that compound unit fulfills the Case role.

- 13 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 15 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 16 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 17 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 L: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 My aunt is a good singer. 2 Please tell who the weary assistant is. 3 Whose heart-sibling is a farmer? 4 To be alive is not to be safe (or: Being alive is not being safe. or: Aliveness is not safety.) (obviously). 5 Teresa was, long ago, a botanist. 6 My home is Margaret’s white house.

7 Baa aril inaad i woshad wohdayo binim? Will the trousers and the perfect skirt be gifts? Bii aril ra inaad i woshad wohdayo binim wa. The trousers and the perfect skirt will not be gifts. 8 Baa ril ra hi wohowa wohanam? Isn’t this warm food? Bii eril hi wohowa wohanam wa. This was warm food. 9 Baa dan hi Laadaneem? Is this language Laadan? Bii ra dan hi Laadaneem wa. This language is not Laadan. 10 Baa ra womeenan woyu mewolula wohelenem? Isn’t the sweet fruit purple grapes? Bii womeenan woyu mewolula wohelenem. The sweet fruit is purple grapes. 11 Baa eril laa hathethu radalem? Was the perception of time nothing? Bii eril ra laa hathethu radalem wa. Long ago the perception of time was not nothing. 12 Baa hoth hi Halishonim e Aranesham? Is that place California or Arkansas? Bii hoth hi Halishonim e Aranesham wa.

This place is California or Arkansas. 13 Baa sheridanid Elizhabeth betha worahithi woheshonam? 14 Bii ra woshane womid rul sheridanizhetho neehatham wa. 15 Bii aril balin halehulem wi. 16 Bii dith dathimatha wordolo wolomeem wa. 17 Bii ada i amedara dayam wa. 18 Bii zho wowam woyulethu wothem wa.