

Lesson 29

Place Case

Vocabulary

benem	to stay
ehoth	geography [e- (science of) + hoth (place)]
hibo	hill [híya (small) + bo (mountain)]
luben	map
mari	island
math	building
rodoni	wilderness [ro (weather) + doni (land)] {AB}
than	underground
thib	to stand up; to be standing
thoma	to be near [thed (far) + oma (hand)]

Place Case

[VP CP–S CP–Place]

The Place Case Phrase locates an event or state as being at a specific location in space. To mark a Case Phrase as Place, add the suffix “-sha.”

When Suzette Haden Elgin first created Láadan, she designated “-ha” as the Place Case suffix. However, that ran into a problem when it interacted with nouns ending in “...ha” and with other suffixes that also closely resembled “-ha.” You might end up with a sequence like “...haha” or even “...hahaháa.” So Dr. Elgin offered an alternate suffix, “-sha,” for use on nouns ending in “...ha.” And then she had to offer an alternate for the other suffix (whose native form is “-háa”): “-sháa” in case it followed the “-ha” Place Case or a noun’s final “...ha.” The second generation decided that it would be far simpler to instead use “-sha” for the Place Case all the time and not have to mess with alternates at all. We will be using only the invariant forms in these lessons, but you might want to be able to recognize the archaic forms, should you happen upon them in older texts.

Along with the Place Case comes the conjunction “úshahú” (where). Not a question-word, “úshahú” introduces a clause that fulfills the Place case-role, as in the English sentence, “I know where the birds are singing.”

Historically, Suzette Haden Elgin coined a short series of conjunctions like “úshahú;” in fact, one (“widahoth” from “wida” (carry) + “hoth” (place)) filled the same lexical space as “úshahú.” Unfortunately, she only coined four of them. After her death, the second generation deemed it useful to have a set that included a conjunction for each of Láadan’s cases. So “widahoth” has been retired, and “úshahú” has taken its place; nevertheless, you should recognize “widahoth” if you happen upon it.

Notes

Examples

Bíi meham babí menedebe thoshesha wa. There are many birds in the sky.
Bíi meham rosh i óol thoshesha wa. The sun and moon are in the sky.

Láadan doesn't have—or need—the sort of verb called a “copula” (in English, “to be”). The use of “ham” in the two examples above is very formal, and stands in for such a verb. Less-formal Láadan simply does away with the verb altogether. In place of the examples above, “Bíi babí menedebe thoshesha wa,” and “Bíi rosh i óol thoshesha wa,” are both perfectly reasonable Láadan sentences. These less formal sentences do lack the sense of “there is/are” or “be present,” so the first would be translated as “Many birds are in the sky.”

Báa ham esh bebáasha? Where is there a boat?
Where is the boat (present)?
Bíi ham esh ilisha wa. There is a boat in the water.
The boat is (present) in the water.

Note the two different translations possible for each of the sentences above. Since “ham” can mean either “be present” or “there is/are,” these are acceptable translations for the Láadan sentences. The choice of which English version to use will be contextual: was a boat being talked about already? If not, the “there is/are” translation will suit better; if so, the “be present” version will be more appropriate.

Less formally, “Báa esh bebáasha?” (or, even less formally, “Esh bebáasha?”) and “Bíi esh ilisha wa,” are both perfectly reasonable Láadan sentences. These less formal sentences do lack the sense of “there is/are” or “be present,” so they would be translatable only as “Where is the boat?” and “The boat is in the water,” respectively.

Báa hal be bebáasha? Where does she work?
Bíi hal be úshahú ham hal wa. She works where there is work.
She works where the work is.

Note the two very different meanings of the English word “where.” In the first example above, it is a question word requesting information about a location (bebáasha in Láadan). In the second, it is a subordinating conjunction—in essence, it is saying that the clause which follows it describes a location (úshahú in Láadan).

Possessive Place

Bíi hal le bethesha wa. I come/go at (the) home.
Bíi hal le beth lethosha wa. I come/go at my home.

You may be tiring of the repeated observation that the Possessive suffixes move to the end of the case phrase. Nevertheless, it's also true in this context.

Notes

Postpositions

ihé	Postposition: before (place); in front of
ihée	Postposition: after (place); behind
mesh	Postposition: across
nol	Postposition: atop; on top of; upon (touching)
o	Postposition: around
ob	Postposition: by way of
obe	Postposition: through
óobe	Postposition: along
ranil	Postposition: outside
ranol	Postposition: under; beneath; underneath; being sat upon by (touching)
rayil	Postposition: above (not touching)
shinenil	Postposition: between [shin (two) + nil (inside)]
yil	Postposition: below; under (not touching)

English has a wide variety of prepositions which are used [...] to make the information more precise; thus, something will be said to be not just “at” a particular location but “inside, between, underneath” and so on. In English these prepositions are used as the first element in the phrase and could be said to be used instead of a more general case-marking preposition. In Láadan the general marker is always used, but there is a set of more narrow forms that can be added to the phrase to make its meaning more precise. We can say that “-sha” means “at” some place; if more precise information is required, the speaker puts an additional locational word at the end of the Case Phrase. [...] The set of words like “o” (called postpositions) never change their form in any way; they take no affixes at all.

In addition to the set of postpositions above, we saw “nil” (inside) in the previous lesson.

English uses “between” to refer to a location intermediate to two objects and “among” if the location is intermediate to three or more objects. Just so, Láadan uses different words to refer to a location intermediate to two, three-to-five, or six-or-more objects. They are “shinenil,” “nedebenil” [**nedebe** (few/several) + **nil** (inside)], and “menedebenil” [**menedebe** (many) + **nil** (inside)], respectively.

Bíi thib le mathesha wa.	I stand at the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha ihé wa.	I stand in front of the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha ihée wa.	I stand behind the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha mesh wa.	I stand across the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha nil wa.	I stand inside the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha o wa.	I stand around the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha obe wa.	I stand through the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha óobe wa.	I stand along the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha ranil wa.	I stand outside the building.
Bíi thib le mathesha shinenil wa.	I stand between the (2) buildings.
Bíi thib le mathesha nedebenil wa.	I stand among the (3-5) buildings.
Bíi thib le mathesha menedebenil wa.	I stand among the (>5) buildings.

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There are a few whose English translations are not particularly clear:

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|--------------------------------|---|
| Bíi thib le mathesha nol wa. | I stand atop the building.
<i>(touching the top of the building)</i> |
| Bíi thib le mathesha ranol wa. | I stand under the building.
<i>(the building is sitting atop me?!)</i> |
| Bíi thib le mathesha yil wa. | I stand below the building.
<i>(not touching it; in the basement or a tunnel, perhaps)</i> |
| Bíi thib le mathesha rayil wa. | I stand above the building.
<i>(not touching it; in the air above it)</i> |

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Baa ham wolawida wohomid bebáasha? —or— Baa wolawida wohomid bebáasha?
—or— Ham wolawida wohomid bebáasha? —or— Wolawida wohomid bebáasha?
- 2 Bíi aril yod imá úshahú ban beye anath bedim wáa.
- 3 Bíi yom onida lethá beth ehasháthosha wa.
- 4 Bíi eril benem bóodan Máyel woléli wolanemideth déela duthaháthosha wo.
- 5 Habelid romid bebáasha?
- 6 Bíi eril el ehothá luben rodonithuth miwishesha thed wáa.

Did you have any problem with the word “**ehashá**” in #3 (presented here stripped of the Possessive and Place case suffixes—which by now we’re all competent to discount)? The initial “**e-**” means “**science of;**” the final “**-á**” means “**doer/maker;**” the root word, therefore, is either “**hash**” or “**ash;**” it’s impossible to tell without context. However, extra-contextually, we have a word “**ash**” (**star**); we don’t have a word “**hash.**” Plausibly, therefore, “**ehash**” would mean “**astronomy**” (**science of the stars**); “**ehashá**” would then be “**astronomer**” (**doer of the science of the stars**).

In #5, did you get the “flavor” of “**romid?**” Formed from “**ro**” (**weather**) + “**mid**” (**creature**), it means “**wild animal.**” The invocation of “**weather**” as the most-untameable-thing-there-is is quite eloquent. The complement of “**romid**” is “**shamid**” (**domestic animal**) from “**sha**” (**harmony**) + “**mid**” (**creature**).

In #6, of course you had no problem with “**ehothá**” (**geographer**) [**e-** (**science of**) + **hoth** (**place**) (= **geography**) + **-á** (**doer/maker**)].

Also in #6, we see “**thed**” (**be far**) used postpositionally to modify a Place case phrase, meaning “**far from.**” This is perfectly acceptable Láadan. “**Thoma**” (**be near**) can also be used in this way.

- 1 En: _____
- 2 En: _____
- 3 En: _____
- 4 En: _____
- 5 En: _____
- 6 En: _____

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Incorporate the second noun phrase as a Place; translate into English before and after.

- 7 Bii eril mebithim lan netho hoshemizh lethath waa. mari
- 8 Baa ham wilidun? bebaa
- 9 Baa aril bedi ni ehasheth e ehotheth? hibo
- 10 Bii eril meh meta hawith i thul bezhetha wa. both
- 11 Bii meham mewolirihul wohesh mendebe wa. reele
- 12 Bii eril mehim ehá honede hathamedim id hunedim waa. rabo

In #8, did you get the sense of “wilidun”? We know “wili” (river), and we know “dun” (field). “Wilidun” is the Láadan word for “lake”.

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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Incorporate the postposition from the second column to the Place case phrase; translate into English before and after.

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|----|---|---------------|
| 13 | Bíi eril wóoban rul belidesha wa. | yil |
| 14 | Bíi eril sholan héena edanátho wethesha wa. | ihée |
| 15 | Bé aril ilisháad le wilisha wa. | e mesh e óobe |
| 16 | Bóo medoth sherídan lethá shamid heshehothesha. | o |
| 17 | Bíi eril ri berídanizh lethá shub shishidebethethuth áabesha wa. | nil |
| 18 | Báa dush un Elízhabeth haláth shinethab hanede mathedim shenisha? | thoma |

13 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

14 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

15 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

16 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

17 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

18 En: _____
 La: _____
 En: _____

Notes Notes Notes

Translate the following into Láadan.

- 19 Something is happening atop the tall tower.
- 20 The student, the carpenter and all their children know they are together underground.
- 21 Where (many places) will the conventions be?
- 22 William was invited from before the church through its door.
- 23 Are Steven’s cousins playing among the (many) trees at the forest.
- 24 Prithee fly (you many beloved) above the desert to the eastern mountains.

In #19, could you form a word for “tower”? A “tower” is a “building that reaches up into the air:” “shumath” [shum (air) + math (building)].

In #20, were you able to form a word for “student”? In Láadan, a “student” is actually a “learner.” “Student” is a straightforward “doer” formation of “bedi” (learn).

In #22, we see the verb “shineshid” (invite) used in an intransitive (taking no Object) sense to mean “be invited.”

In #23, we see the postposition “menedebenil.” This clearly states there are many trees among which the cousins are playing. If there were only several trees (or only two trees) we could have used “nedebenil” (or “shinenil”).

- 19 La: _____
- 20 La: _____
- 21 La: _____
- 22 La: _____
- 23 La: _____
- 24 La: _____

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1 Where is the pregnant horse? 2 The traveler will eat where someone gives her food. 3 My family is safe at the astronomer's home. 4 Michael stayed to rescue the yellow dog in the healer's garden. 5 Where does the wild animal dwell? 6 The geographer made a map of the wilderness far from the city.

7 Your friends met my granddaughter. Bii eril mebitim lan netho hoshemizh lethath marisha wá. Your friends met my granddaughter at the island. 8 Is there a lake? Bâa ham willidun bebâasha? Where is there a lake? —or— Willidun bebâasha? Where is the lake? 9 Will you (hon) learn astronomy or geography? Bâa aril bedi ni ehasheth e ethotheth hibosha? Will you (hon) learn astronomy or geography at the hill? 10 The children and their parents slept. Bii eril meháana háawith ! thul bezhetha bothesha wa. The children and their parents slept at a hotel. 11 There are many extremely colorful boats. Bii meham mewolirihul wohesh mendedebe réelesha wa. There are many extremely colorful boats at the harbor.

12 The scientists traveled from the west to the center and then to the north. Bii eril mehím ehá honede hathamedim id hunedim rabosha wa. The scientists traveled from the west to the center and then to the north on the plain. 13 The cat gave birth at the house. Bii eril wóban nul belidesha yil wa. The cat gave birth under the house. 14 The linguist's heart-sibling is alone at the road. Bii eril sholan héena edanátho wethesha ihéé wa. The linguist's heart-sibling is alone beyond the road. 15 I promise to swim at the river. Bê aril ilisháad le willisha e mesh e dóbe wa. I promise to swim either across the river or along the river. 16 Prithee, children of my sibling, follow the domestic animal at the park. Bóo medoth sheridan lethá shamid heshethosha o. Prithee, children of my sibling, follow the domestic animal around the park. 17 My aunt recorded the events of the nation (at) a book. Bii eril ri beridanzh lethá shub shishidebethethuth dabesha nil wa. My aunt recorded the events of the nation inside a book. 18 Must Elizabeth lead twelve workers from the south to the building at the intersection? Bâa dush un Elizabeth haláth shinehab hanede mathedim shenisha thoma? Must Elizabeth lead twelve workers from the south to the building near the intersection?

19 Bii shóo beye wohithi woshumathesha nol wa. 20 Bii melothel meshidi bedihá, beliddá ! shem bezhetho woho thanesha wá. 21 Bâa aril buzh bebâashesha? 22 Bii eril shineshid Wilem áthamede ihé áth behusha obe wa. 23 Bâa mehelas edin Thiben betha yáaninesha mendedebenil olinesha? 24 Bóo meshumáad nan shéshe rayil mewohene wobodim.

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