

# Lesson 61

## Passive Voice

### Vocabulary

adama	to tickle [ada (laugh) + dama (touch)]
déedan	to interpret
dithal	to praise [di (speak) + thal (be good)]
dóho	to wrap [dó- (CAUSE <sub>TO</sub> ) + o (around)] {YML}
dóyom	to protect; to shield; to safeguard [dó- (CAUSE <sub>TO</sub> ) + yom (be safe)] {AB}
halid	competition [hal (work) + -id (MASC)]
héda	to drop; to spill; to let fall
héedan	to translate
humesh	to cut [hum (knife) + mesh (across)] {SH}
rumadoni	to bury [rumad (to cover) + doni (earth)]

### Passive Voice

[(Aux) CP–Patient Verb (Neg) CP–Agent+shub]  
[(Aux) CP–Patient Verb+shub (Neg)]

There are two new Case roles that occur in the Passive voice that we ought to discuss. The first is the Patient. We've been using the Case label "Object" for the one that receives the action of the verb; another name for such a one is the Patient. The second is the Agent. An Agent is one type of Subject—specifically an Agent is a Subject that acts upon another: upon the Patient.

Heretofore, we've been discussing the Active Voice, which is characterized by the Subject being the actor (or Agent) of the verb; the Object is the one receiving the action (or Patient) of the verb. The Passive Voice is different; the Patient becomes the Subject in the Passive Voice. The Agent can be included in an *optional* Agentive case phrase.

In Láadan's Passive Voice, two things occur grammatically. One, the Patient is moved *before* the verb; it retains the Object case marker. The Agent remains in its place after the verb (and after the negative, if one is present). Two, the word "**shub**" (to do) is attached to the Agent. In the event that no Agent is identified in the Passive sentence, the Agentive "**shub**" is attached directly to the verb.

Regarding Suzette Haden Elgin's motivation for this radical departure from standard Láadan word order, we have the following statement:

My goal is to make the passive sentence appear markedly different from the active one; if a nominal carrying the Object case-marker is placed *before* the verb, I will have accomplished that goal. [...] Just seeing that Object-marked nominal before the verb will forcibly signal that the sentence is a passive.

One final grammatical note: since the Agent is no longer the Subject of the Passive construction, the verb becomes plural when the Subject is plural, not the Agent. This may occasion a change in plural status when forming a Passive from an existing Active sentence.

## Examples

Bíi yod rul thilith wa.

The cat eats fish.

Bíi thilith yod ruleshub wa.

Fish is eaten by the cat.

Bíi thilith yodeshub wa.

Fish is eaten.

Bíi aril lamith Méri losheth wáa.

Mary will count the money.

Bíi aril losheth lamith Méri beshub wáa.

The money will be counted by Mary.

Bíi aril losheth lamitheshub wáa.

The money will be counted.

Note that the verb becomes plural with the Patient.

Bé aril den le naneth wa.

[Promise] I will help you (many, beloved).

Bé aril naneth meden leshub wa.

[Promise] You (many, beloved) will be helped by me.

Bé aril naneth medeneshub wa.

[Promise] You (many, beloved) will be helped.

The Passive word order always begins with a noun phrase or an auxiliary. When Embedding a Passive construction that begins with a noun phrase (ie, no auxiliary to mark the beginning of the embedded clause), we will use the “in-support” model.

Bíi melothel lezh [dóyom háawith lotheth]ehé(th) wa.

We know that the child protects the information.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril dóyom háawith lotheth]ehé(th) wa.

We know that the child protected the information.

Bíi melothel lezh [in lotheth dóyom háawitheshub]ehé(th) wa.

We know that the information is protected by the child.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril lotheth dóyom háawitheshub]ehé(th) wa.

We know that the information was protected by the child.

Bíi melothel lezh [in lotheth dóyomeshub]ehé(th) wa.

We know that the information is protected.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril lotheth dóyomeshub]ehé(th) wa.

We know that the information was protected.

Bíi melothel lezh [dóyom háawith lotheth]ehée(th) wa.

We know whether the child protects the information.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril dóyom háawith lotheth]ehée(th) wa.

We know whether the child protected the information.

Bíi melothel lezh [in lotheth dóyom háawitheshub]ehée(th) wa.

We know whether the information is protected by the child.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril lotheth dóyom háawitheshub]ehée(th) wa.

We know whether the information was protected by the child.

Bíi melothel lezh [in lotheth dóyomeshub]ehée(th) wa.

We know whether the information is protected.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril lotheth dóyomeshub]ehée(th) wa.

We know whether the information was protected.

Bíi melothel lezh [dóyom háawith lothehóoth]eháa(th) wa.

We know the information that the child protects.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril dóyom háawith lothehóoth]eháa(th) wa.

We know the information that the child protected.

Bíi melothel lezh [in lothehóoth dóyom háawitheshub]eháa(th) wa.

We know the information that is protected by the child.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril lothehóoth dóyom háawitheshub]eháa(th) wa.

We know the information that was protected by the child.

Bíi melothel lezh [in lotheth dóyomeshub]eháa(th) wa.

We know the information that is protected.

Bíi melothel lezh [eril lotheth dóyomeshub]eháa(th) wa.

We know the information that was protected.

When making a Verb Complex passive—and when there is no Agent case phrase to carry the Agentive “-shub”—the suffix is attached *only* to the *first* verb in the Verb Complex.

Bíi néde yod rul thilith wáa.

The cat wants to eat fish.

Bíi thilith néde yod ruleshub wáa.

The fish is wanted to be eaten by the cat.

Bíi thilith nédeshub yod wáa.

The fish is wanted to be eaten.

The Passive wording of these in English is problematic. The Verb Complex in the Active sentence is short-hand for an embedded sentence something like:

Bíi néde rul [yod rul thilith]ehéth wáa.

The cat wants [(that) the cat eat fish].

The Passive construction of the fully-embedded sentence would be one of the two below, depending on whether the inner or the outer sentence was converted to the Passive. The Verb Complex form, as an abbreviated form of embedding, doesn't permit this level of specificity.

Bíi néde rul in thilith yod ruleshub wáa.

Bíi néde rul in thilith yodeshub wáa.

The cat wants [(that) the fish be eaten (by the cat)].

Bíi yod rul thilithehéth néde ruleshub wáa.

Bíi yod rul thilithehéth nédeshub wáa.

[(That) the cat eat fish] is wanted (by the cat).

It is wanted (by the cat) that the cat eat fish.

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In English, it is possible to promote a case phrase other than the Object/Patient in a Passive construction. For example, for the Active sentence, “**Mary gave me a flower,**” we can either promote the Object, “**A flower was given to me by Mary,**” or the Indirect Object (Goal), “**I was given a flower by Mary.**” Láadan also allows this, promoting a non-Object case element to the role of Subject in the Passive structure:

Bíi eril ban Méri mahinath ledim wa.	Mary gave me a flower.
Bíi eril mahinath ban Méri beshub ledim wa.	A flower was given to me by Mary.
Bíi eril ledim ban Méri beshub mahinath wa.	I was given a flower by Mary.
Bíi eril im Méri bode wa.	Mary traveled from the mountain.
Bíi eril bode im Méri beshub wa.	The mountain was traveled from by Mary.
Bíi eril yime Méri meladim wa.	Mary ran to the sea.
Bíi eril meladim yime Méri beshub wa.	The sea was run to by Mary.

## Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Bíi eril lanemideth bóodan Máthu Háabeshub wáa.
- 2 Bíi mewohéeda wothodeth medéedan oháshub wa.
- 3 Bée rilrili ranath hédashub!
- 4 Báa eril medath mehumes anadaláshub?
- 5 Bíide eríli huth dithaleshub wáa.
- 6 Bíi eril mehím len memazhenanehéeth dibáadu olowodeshub wa.

Remember, in #2, that the verb becomes plural with the Patient, which acts as the Subject of the Passive sentence.

Also in #2, did the word “ohá” give you any trouble? Remember the prefix “o-” (study of; study of the teachings of)? It would ordinarily be used with the name of a discipline or religious figure and, optionally, an agentive “-á” (DOER) to give the meaning “student of (the teachings of)”. In this exercise, however, we forgo the object of study and abut the prefix and the suffix to give the meaning “student of the teachings.” The difference between this type of student and “bedihá” (student) [bedi (learn) + -á (DOER)] is the depth of study: a bedihá learns what is put in front of her in school; an ohá searches out the deep learning in her chosen topic or subject or field.

#6 is a bit advanced. The Patient (what would have been the Object of the Active sentence) is an embedded question, “mehím len memazhenanehéé” (whether we travel by train).

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

**Transform the following sentences from Active to Passive, both with and without the Agent; translate all three sentences into English.**

- 7 Bii dóyom thul betha áshemeth abesh rawáan wi.
- 8 Bíidi eril el edaná dáaneth édáanewáan wa.
- 9 Bíili eril dóho wehehá binith nada wa.
- 10 Bii aril mehédan ehá wobalin woháabeth Láadanedim wáa.
- 11 Bii ril loláad with radedehenath óhaháalish rawáan wo.
- 12 Bii ril mezhelith nan eril adama Shósho háawithideth ashonewánehé wa.

In #7, the verb “**dóyom**” (**protect**) is transparently a “**dó-**” formation from the stative verb, “**yom**” (**be safe**). So, of course the Subject of “**yom**” would become the Object (and the Patient in the Passive) of “**dóyom**,” and “**dóyom**” would take a new Subject: the one doing the protecting. But what case role ought we to assign to the thing/condition the protector is safeguarding the Patient *from*? In English, clearly, it’s the Source case as illustrated by that very “*from*” in the previous sentence. Use of the Source case is idiomatic in English; however, idiomatic usage in one language, by definition, does not translate well into another. The crux of the discussion of protection “*from*” some threat is that the patient/object is safe **despite** the presence of that threat. In Láadan, therefore, it seems meet that the thing being protected from (exemplified by **X**) should be rendered in the negated Cause case: “**X rawáan**.” This case assignment would apply equally to the verb “**yom**” (**be safe**); in this way, the transformation from “**yom**” to “**dóyom**” would entail as few case reassignments as possible.

Again, in #10, the verb will become singular with the Patient (**wobalin woháabeth**). Should you want to show, concretely, that there is more than one scientist (**ehá**) involved, you’d need to provide a quantifier to do that.

In #12, you have your choice. You may convert the inner sentence or the outer sentence to the Passive. Or, as an added challenge, do one and then the other; both answers are provided.

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12 En:

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Noi

**Translate the following into Láadan.**

- 13 Bread is given to Elizabeth by the baker because of friendliness (for bad reasons).
- 14 The bells were rung by the dancer before the celebration.
- 15 The grain is harvested repeatedly in autumn (obviously).
- 16 Was your uncle met by your sister at the airport yesterday?
- 17 The quality of her needleworking may be helped by more study.
- 18 By whom will the kittens that are living under old Miss Suzette's house be cared for?

In #14, did you remember what verb applies to non-linguistic sounds made by creatures or objects?

In the answer provided for #16, did you note that the Time case suffix on “sháal” in the idiomatic phrase “sháaleyá eril” (yesterday) is, in fact, superfluous? In less formal speech or writing, the Time case suffix could be omitted because it's clear that “sháal eril” (yesterday) is a Time element. If, on the other hand, we were saying “until yesterday” (sháaledim eril) or “since yesterday” (sháalede eril), those case suffixes would not be optional.

Sorry; #18 is rather advanced. The Patient is represented by an embedded relative clause, and the Agent is an interrogative—a structure we haven't seen before.

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

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1 The dog was rescued by young Master Matthew. 2 The sacred writings are interpreted by the clergy. 3 [warning] The drink may be spilled! 4 Were the vegetables cut by the cook? 5 [story] Long ago the ruler was praised. 6 Whether we (many) would travel by train was inquired poetically by the group. —or— It was inquired poetically by the group whether we (many) would travel by train.

7 Of course her parent protects a baby from everything. Bii ashemeth dōyom thul bethashub abeshede wi. Of course a baby is protected from everything by her parent. Bii ashemeth dōyomeshub abeshede wi. Of course a baby is protected from everything. 8 [didactic] The linguist created the word because of a lexical gap. Biiidi eril ddaneth el edanashub éddanéwādan wa. [didactic] The word was created by the linguist because of a lexical gap. Biiidi eril ddaneth el edaneth eleshub éddanéwādan wa. [didactic] The word was created because of a lexical gap. 9 [with love] The storekeeper wrapped the gift for you (beloved). Biiidi eril biniith dōho weheshub nada wa. [with love] The gift was wrapped for you (beloved) by the storekeeper. Biiidi eril biniith dōhoshub nada wa. [with love] The gift was wrapped for you (beloved). 10 The scientists will translate the antique book into Láadan. Bii aril wobalin wōhabeth hēedan ehāshub (nedebe/menedebe) Láadanedim wā. The antique book will be translated into Láadan by the scientist(s). Bii aril wobalin wōhabeth hēdaneshub Láadanedim wā. The antique book will be translated into Láadan. 11 The woman feels perseverance (despite negative circumstances) in spite of being extraordinarily weary (I suppose). Bii ril radedehenath lolād witheshub dōhādālish rawādan wo. Perseverance (despite negative circumstances) is felt by the woman in spite of being extraordinarily weary (I suppose). Bii ril radedehenath lolād witheshub dōhādālish rawādan wo. Perseverance felt in spite of being extraordinarily weary (I suppose). 12 You (many, beloved) agree-in-thought that Magic Granny tickled the boy out of heart-kin-love (with such love as the Cause). INNR: Bii ril mezhelith nan eril hāawithideth adama Shōsho beshub ashonewānehēth wa. You (many, beloved) agree-in-thought that the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love. Bii ril mezhelith nan eril hāawithideth adama Shōsho beshub ashonewānehēth wa. You (many, beloved) agree-in-thought that the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love. You (many, beloved) agree-in-thought that the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love. You (many, beloved) agree-in-thought that the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love. OUTER: Bii ril eril adama Shōsho hāawithideth ashonewānehēth wa. That Magic Granny tickled the boy out of heart-kin-love is agreed-in-thought. Bii ril eril adama Shōsho hāawithideth ashonewānehēth zhelitheshub wa. That Magic Granny tickled the boy out of heart-kin-love is agreed-in-thought. —or— It is agreed-in-thought that Magic Granny tickled the boy out of heart-kin-love. BOTH: Bii ril eril hāawithideth adama Shōsho beshub ashonewānehēth zhelith naneshub wa. That the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love is agreed-in-thought. —or— It is agreed-in-thought that the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love. Bii ril eril hāawithideth adama Shōsho beshub ashonewānehēth zhelith naneshub wa. That the boy was tickled by Magic Granny out of heart-kin-love is agreed-in-thought. —or— It is agreed-in-thought that the boy was tickled out of heart-kin-love. Bii ril eril hāawithideth adama Shōsho beshub ashonewānehēth zhelitheshub wa. That the boy was tickled out of heart-kin-love is agreed-in-thought. —or— It is agreed-in-thought that the boy was tickled out of heart-kin-love. Bii ril eril hāawithideth adama Shōsho beshub ashonewānehēth zhelitheshub wa. That the boy was tickled out of heart-kin-love is agreed-in-thought. —or— It is agreed-in-thought that the boy was tickled out of heart-kin-love. 13 Bii baleth ban ebalāshub Elizhabeth bedim dunawādan wā. 14 Bii eril lilmimeth mezhō amedarahāshub elahelaya eril wa. 15 Bii edeth rōoshub wemoneya barādan wi. 16 Bāa eril beridanid nethath bithim hena nethashub hozhazheshā shalēya eril? 17 Bii rilrili! thal dathimethu bethoth den ulanineshub nidi wa. 18 Bāa aril ril mehabelid hāarui belid Shuzhēth Zhābethoshā yilehāath menaya bebādashub?

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