Introduction to Dhivehi Lessons

About Dhivehi

- Dhivehi is the official language of the Maldives, a country made up of around 1200 islands in the Indian Ocean
- It is also spoken on the island of Minicoy (or Maliku), an Island which used to be part of the Maldives, but is now a part of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep in India. As far as I’m aware, the language isn’t officially recognised there.
- There are significant communities of Dhivehi speakers in India (mainly Trivandrum and Kochi), Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore, as well as smaller communities in the UK, Egypt, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand.
- There are around 350,000 speakers altogether

Features of Dhivehi

- Dhivehi has its own script called Thaana, and is written almost entirely phonetically
- It has a relatively simple noun case system (when compared to many European languages)
- There is no grammatical gender
- Verbs are conjugated only for tense/mood and not for person or number
- There are very few irregular verbs
- It is a null subject language

Difficulty of Dhivehi for Speakers of Other Languages

The features listed above make Dhivehi a relatively easy language to learn. However, it becomes even easier if you know any of the following languages:

- Sinhalese – This is the closest related language to Dhivehi. The grammar and vocabulary of both languages are very similar, although they are not mutually intelligible.
- Hindi/Urdu – The relationship is not as close as Sinhalese, but there are still some similarities in grammar and vocabulary.
- Arabic – Most loanwords in Dhivehi are of Arabic origin. In some cases the meanings are slightly altered, but it is still a great advantage in terms of vocabulary.
- Tamil/Malayalam – The noun cases and verb conjugations in both these languages are similar to those in Dhivehi. However, there are very few similarities in vocabulary.
Dhivehi Lesson 1: Script and Pronunciation

The script used to write Dhivehi is called Thaana and is written from right to left. It is a relatively simple script with features of an alphabet as well as an abugida. Consonants are written with diacritics either above or below them to indicate vowel sounds. Vowel diacritics are not considered to be part of the alphabet.

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to recognise and pronounce the letters and diacritics of Thaana. You will not be able to fully read Dhivehi texts because there are special uses of one particular diacritic which I will explain in the next lesson.

I do not want you to become dependant on transliteration, and the semi-official Dhivehi-Latin transliteration system is not that good, so I will use it as little as possible throughout the course of these lessons.

Consonants

The following table lists the consonants, their names, and the way they are pronounced. The majority of consonants are pronounced the same way they are in English. The ones written in red are pronounced slightly different to the examples given, or they may be difficult for English speakers to pronounce. Explanations are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Haa</td>
<td>H as in 'Hat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Shaviyani</td>
<td>Sh as in 'Shine'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Nooru</td>
<td>N as in 'No'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Raav</td>
<td>Alveolar tap - Like Italian 'R'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Baa</td>
<td>B as in 'Bake'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Lhaviyani</td>
<td>Retroflex 'L'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Kaafu</td>
<td>K as in 'Kite'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Alifu</td>
<td>Glottal stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Vaavu</td>
<td>V as in 'Vent'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Meemu</td>
<td>M as in 'Mouse'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Faamu</td>
<td>F as in 'Fall'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Dhaalu</td>
<td>Th as in 'This'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Thaa</td>
<td>Th as in 'Think'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Laamu</td>
<td>L as in 'Life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Gaafu</td>
<td>G as in 'Good'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Nyaviyani</td>
<td>Like Spanish Ñ as in 'Piñata'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Seenu</td>
<td>S as in 'Safe'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Daviyan</td>
<td>Retroflex 'D'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Zaviyani</td>
<td>Z as in 'Zoo'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Taviyani</td>
<td>Retroflex 'T'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Yaa</td>
<td>Y as in 'Yes'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Paviyani</td>
<td>P as in 'Party'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Javiyani</td>
<td>J as in 'Jump'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>并不意味</td>
<td>Chaviyani</td>
<td>Ch as in 'Change'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The pronunciation of ރ depends to an extent on the vowel which comes after it. If that vowel is ‘i’ or ‘e’, native speakers will tend to pronounce it as ‘Rsh’, with the tongue tapping the upper palate before making the ‘Sh’ sound. However, this also depends on the age of the speaker (it is more noticeable in older people) and where they are from. Pronouncing this letter like the English ‘Sh’ regardless of the following vowel will not have a significant effect on your accent, and people will still be able to understand you.
• You can listen to an alveolar tap here to help you with the pronunciation of ރ.
• A retroflex sound is made when you curl your tongue backwards and touch the roof of your mouth. Listen to a retroflex ‘T’, a retroflex ‘D’. (There is a retroflex ‘L’ audio sample, but it is not the same way it is pronounced in Dhivehi)
• Listen to a glottal stop here. It is the sound made in your throat when you say “uh-oh”. In diphthongs, the vowel carried by ރ is joined to the preceding vowel and you do not hear the glottal stop.
• ރ is technically meant to be pronounced kind of like this – between ‘V’ and ‘W’ (but leaning towards ‘V’). This is common in South Asian languages. Once again, you will be understood just fine if you pronounce it like an English ‘V’.
• When pronouncing ރ and ބ do not move your tongue too far forward. It should be placed behind the front teeth, stopping the flow of air.
• ބ is pronounced like this, for those of you who are not familiar with the letter ‘Ñ’. This sound only occurs in the middle of English words (like ‘canyon’) but can occur at the beginning of Dhivehi words.

If you still need clarification as to how the letters are pronounced, watch this video.

Vowels/Diacritics

Vowels in Thaana are indicated by diacritics known as “fili”. The following table shows these diacritics, their names, and the way they are pronounced. Eleven indicate vowel sounds and one indicates that there is no vowel sound after the consonant. Diacritics never occur by themselves; they must always be carried by a consonant. Similarly, consonants must always carry one of the diacritics, except in two special cases which you will see in the next lesson. In the table, the dotted circles are where the consonants would be written.
There are no real equivalents of ubufili and ooboofili sounds in English which occur in all spoken forms of the language. This should help you with the pronunciations of those sounds. Keep your lips rounded and your tongue back. Another way I like to think about it is the noise people make when someone is insulted or makes a good comeback.

Avoid turning the long vowels into diphthongs, particularly 'ъ' and 'ъъ'. You will sound very foreign if you do.

*Aibaifili is not technically a “fili” as it includes two letters. In personal names it is pronounced like the ‘y’ in ‘fly’. In pretty much every other case it is pronounced like a long version of the ‘a’ in ‘hat’.

**Dotted Letters for Foreign Sounds**

Some time during the 70s or 80s, a special set of Thaana letters were developed to represent Arabic sounds (and an English one) which are not found in Dhivehi. The use of these letters is not entirely consistent, and Maldivians do not always pronounce them the way they would be pronounced in the original languages. At this stage, you only need to know how Maldivians pronounce them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel Diacritic</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>Aabafili</td>
<td>Short 'a' - like the ‘u’ in ‘up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>Aabaafili</td>
<td>Long 'a' - like in ‘father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ٍ</td>
<td>Ibifili</td>
<td>Short 'i' - like in ‘fit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ٮ</td>
<td>Eeebeefili</td>
<td>Long 'i' - like the ‘ee’ in ‘feet’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>٨</td>
<td>Uubufili</td>
<td>Short 'u' - like in ‘put’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>٩</td>
<td>Ooboofili</td>
<td>Long 'u' - like the ‘oo’ in ‘boot’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>َ</td>
<td>Eebeefili</td>
<td>Short 'e' - like in ‘red’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>٠</td>
<td>Eybyeefili</td>
<td>Long 'e' - like the word ‘air’ (Without pronouncing the ‘r’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>َ٠</td>
<td>Oofili</td>
<td>Short 'o' - like in ‘pot’ (British accent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>٠٠</td>
<td>Oaboafili</td>
<td>Long ‘o’ - like the word ‘or’ (Without pronouncing the ‘r’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>َ٠</td>
<td>Sukun</td>
<td>Indicates no vowel sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ۚٚ*</td>
<td>Aibaifili*</td>
<td>Like the ‘y’ in ‘fly’ or more commonly a long version of the ‘a’ in ‘hat’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You will notice that in many cases, Maldivians pronounce the dotted letters the same as the corresponding undotted letter, but in some cases the pronunciation is totally different. This is because the people who developed these letters decided to base them on the Arabic script and not the way Maldivians pronounced them (which was not the best idea, in my opinion).

### Writing and Keyboards

Writing Thaana letters is pretty straightforward. Follow the general rule of “top right to bottom left” and you should be able to write most letters. The same applies for the diacritics, except which is written clockwise, starting from the bottom. Diacritics are written after the letter carrying them. Keep in mind that Thaana is written from right to left. For more details on how to write the letters, watch [this video](#).

It is relatively easy to set up Thaana keyboards on most computers. I use Windows 10 so it’s just a matter of adding a language in the “time and language” settings. I don’t know how it is for Macs.

Typing is also fairly easy, as most of the letters correspond to their Latin equivalents (this can also help you learn to read). You just have to remember that w= and q=.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Arabic Letter</th>
<th>How Maldivians Pronounce It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
<td>Sh' as in 'Shine' (more common)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
<td>OR މ (mostly older people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
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<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
<td>Like the 's' in 'measure'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>މ</td>
<td>Not Arabic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dhivehi Lesson 2: Sukun, Empty letters, Emphasis

Sukun

You know from the last lesson that the sukun is used to indicate that there is no vowel sound after a consonant. In this lesson, you’ll see that in some cases, it’s not as simple as that.

In standard Dhivehi, the sukun can only be carried by five letters. We will go through each of those letters one by one to see their particular pronunciations.

Alifu Sukun (ệ)

At the end of a word ệ is pronounced as a glottal stop. The sound of the preceding vowel is cut short and the airflow stops. It is similar to the way some people say the word ‘what’ without pronouncing the ‘t’ at the end.

ệ is also used for geminatio, that is, doubling the sounds of consonants. When ệ is in the middle of a word, the sound of the following consonant is doubled. Even if it is at the end of the word but the middle of a sentence, the first consonant of the following word is doubled.

However, if the following consonant is either ހ or another ệ, the ệ is pronounced like the ‘ng’ in ‘sing’ (nasal, without pronouncing the ‘g’). This is just because it is kind of awkward doubling a ‘h’ sound or a glottal stop.

Examples

I will use IPA (as best as I can) to help you with the pronunciation.

ệ /ekeʔ/ one

ệ /foʔeʔ/ a book

ệ /bappa/ dad, father (note that it is not /baʔpa/)

ệ /eŋhaːs/ one thousand (note that it is not /ehhaːs/ or /eʔhaːs/)

Shaviyani sukun (ʃ)

The exact same rules as ệ apply in this case as well. Keep in mind that it is NOT pronounced ‘sh’ in this case.

Examples

ʃ /raʔ/ island

ʃ /aʔɖiʔa/ (not /aʔɖiʔa/) eighty
eight thousand

These words would be pronounced the same even if ކ was replaced by އ. The reason ކ is used is because the ‘sh’ sound is retained when adding suffixes (in cases like ރަށ), or to keep the the original root of the word (like in އރަރ ހްރަވ where ރަރ means ‘eight’).

Thaa sukun (ދ)

This is probably the most difficult sukun letter to explain. The pronunciation depends on the preceding vowel.

- If it is ހ or ރ, ދ is pronounced the same way as ރ (a glottal stop), but the ބ and ބ will change to short and long versions, respectively, of the ‘a’ in ‘hat’ (IPA /æ/)
- If it is ބ, ބ, ބ or ބ, ދ is pronounced the same was as ރ
- If it is any other vowel, ދ is pronounced as if it were ‘އްއ’ , but it forms part of the same syllable as the preceding vowel
- ދ NEVER makes a ‘th’ sound (in native words)

Because of its similarity to ރ, it also doubles consonants and is pronounced like the ‘ng’ in ‘sing’ if the next consonant is either ބ or ރ.

Examples

ރަޤ /ɾæʔ/ red
ރަޤ /mæʔ/ high level
ރަޤ /hiʔ/ heart
ރަޤ /neʔ/ there is not
ރަޤ /oiʔ/ there is
ރަޤ /muiʔ/ pearl
ރަޤ /t̪oippeʔ/ a hat
ރަޤ /dæŋ aɭa:/ bite

Noonu sukun (ި)

The pronunciation of this one depends of the letter that comes after it.

- At the end of words, or when the next letter is ި or ރ, it is pronounced like the ‘ng’ in ‘sing’.
- In all other cases it represents the nasal equivalent of the following consonant:
If the next letter is އ or ރ, it is pronounced like the ‘ng’ in ‘sing’
If the next letter is ތ or ދ, it is pronounced as a dental ‘n’
If the next letter is ޓ or ބ, it is pronounced as a retroflex ‘n’
If the next letter is އ or ި, it is pronounced ‘m’ (which is a bilabial nasal)
If the next letter is ް or ވ, it is pronounced as a labiodental nasal
If the next letter is ް or ް, the sound of that letter is doubled

The key thing to remember is that **it glides on to the next sound** and very rarely sounds like a pure ‘n’.

**Examples**

ދެް ޭ /deŋ/ then
އްް ޭ /kaːŋ/ to eat
ަ ް ޭ /boːŋ/ to drink
ަ ރ ް /sukun/ sukun
ކްއ /aŋhen/ girl, female, wife
އް/singa:/ lion
ރ ް ރ /baŋdu/ closed
ރ ް ް /hanɖi/ demon
ރ ް ރ /pampu/ pump
ރ ް ރ /karamfu:/ clove
ރ ް ރ /annanŋ/ to come
ރ ް ރ /mamma/ mum, mother

**Seenu sukun (ރ)**

This is the easiest of all sukun consonants as it is always pronounced ‘s’.

**Examples**

ރ ް /bis/ egg
ރ ް /las/ late
As mentioned before, those are the only five letters which are allowed to carry sukun. The only times you will see sukun carried by other letters are in loanwords, personal names, names of foreign places, and non-standard Dhivehi dialects. In these cases, the letters follow the standard sukun rule of no vowel sound afterwards.

Many loanwords are Maldivianised somewhat by using ޝ where there would otherwise be a consonant cluster.

Just a little fun-fact (and an explanation why I presented the letters in this order): Maldivians use the mnemonic “ެާރ ިދ ިހ” (eight needles) to remember these letters.

Empty Letters

I said in the first lesson that all letters must have a fili except for two special cases. We will now look at those cases.

Hus noonu (ރ)

Hus noonu (empty noonu) represents prenasalisation of the following consonant which is always ރ, ބ, ބ or ތ.

It makes the same sound that ރ would in each of those situations, but now that sound is at the beginning of the syllable instead of the end. Think of the English words ‘singer’ vs ‘finger’. Hus noonu would be used in ‘singer’, while noonu sukun would be used in ‘finger’.

For those who know Sinhalese, hus noonu is used in Dhivehi where Sinhalese would use ඼, ල, ඾, or ව.

Examples

އަރާލ /aŋa/ mouth (The two syllables are /a/ and /ŋa/. If the word were ރރ, the syllables would be /aŋ/ and /ga/)

އަރާބ /baŋdu/ stomach (/ba/ and /ŋdu/)

އަރާބ /haŋdu/ moon (/ha/ and /ŋdu/)

އަރާބ /aŋbu/ mango (/a/ and /ŋbu/)

Hus raa (ރ)

This is used in English loanwords which have ‘-er’, ‘-or’, ‘-ur’, etc. pronounced as a schwa. Usage of the letter ރ this way is a relatively recent phenomenon.
**Examples**

odore  doctor

adere director

ador contractor

It would also be acceptable to write the words with ‘ (e.g. adore). This is more common in the spoken language, as Maldivians can find it difficult to pronounce a schwa (they usually change it to ‘).

**Emphasis**

This is the easiest part of this lesson. In Dhivehi words, emphasis is always on the first syllable.

Even with loanwords like adere, the emphasis is on ‘ and not on ‘, as is the case in English.

**Still Need Help?**

Now you should be able to read any Dhivehi text. However, if you still need help with pronunciation, you can try apps like Magey Adu and Thaana for kids. They will also help you to learn some vocabulary.

You can also watch a live stream of VTV or listen to Maldivian radio (1, 2, 3) to get a feel for how the language sounds.
Dhivehi Lesson 3: Nouns, Plural and Indefinite Markers

In this lesson, we will look at how nouns are made indefinite and how they are made plural. This lesson will also give you your first batch of vocabulary words.

Forming Plural Nouns

We’ll start off with plurals as they are easier to learn than articles. There are two main plural suffixes in Dhivehi, and a third which is a variant of one of those. The one you use depends on whether the noun is human or non-human.

Non-Human Nouns

For non-human nouns, the suffix ބޭ is added to the end. Consider the following nouns:

- ދްަް ބޭ – Apple
- ްރބ ބޭ – Book
- ރޝް ބޭ – Bird
- ގަރ ބޭ – Star
- ދަދ ބޭ – Street
- ަޅް ބޭ – Cat

Their plural forms are:

- ދްަް ބޭ – Apples
- ރޝް ބޭ – Books
- ރޝް ބޭ – Birds
- ގަރ ބޭ – Stars
- ދަދ ބޭ – Streets
- ަޅް ބޭ – Cats

Human Nouns

For human nouns, the suffix ރ or ރ is added to the end. Consider the following human nouns:

- ދައ ވްރަ ރ – Teacher
- ދަރް ރ – Child
- ދަރް ރ – Foreigner
- ހައ ވްރަ ރ – Doctor
- ރައ ވްރަ ރ – Muslim

Their plural forms are:

- ދައ ވްރަ ރ – Teachers
- ދަރް ރ – Children
- Foreigners
- Doctors
- Muslims

The following words have irregular plurals:

- ްހރަ – Person / ްހަރް – People (see below)
- ްހާާ – Kid / ްހާާރް – Kids
- ްަދރްސްޭ – Fisherman / ްަދރްް ރް – Fishermen
- ްަދރްބ – Tourist / ްަދރްބރް – Tourists

Sometimes you will see plurals like these written with ްހރަ instead of ްހަރް (for example ްްސްުރ). The latter is more common and it is the way people pronounce the words.

If a word ends with ރ, it changes to ބ before ރ is added:

- ދްވެއރ – Maldivian / ދްވެހް – Maldivians
- ްްސްރ – Police officer / ްްސްް ރ – Police (officers)
- ރ – Person (not used often by itself. ދްރ is more common) / ދްުރ – People

Family Nouns

If a human noun refers to a family member, ރ or ިރ can be added to the end:

- ދްވުރ – Mother / ދްވުހރް – Mothers
- ރ – Father / ރްސްރ – Fathers
- ރ ްބ – Grandmother / ރ ްބރް – Grandmothers
- ރރ – Grandfather / ރރރރ – Grandfathers

ރ is more formal and more “correct” for pluralisation than ރ, meaning that family nouns are not that different to other human nouns. In addition, ރ ރ has another meaning which you will see in a future lesson.

It is possible to use ރ instead of ރ with human nouns. However, this has the effect of dehumanising the noun and can be quite insulting (like calling a person “it” instead of “he” or “she”). It is also possible to use ރ and ރ together to emphasise the fact that there are many people, for example ރރ ރ or ރރރރ. This does not have any dehumanising effect, and can be thought of as a plural of a plural.
Summary

The following table summarises when to use which plural marker:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Noun</th>
<th>Plural Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-human</td>
<td>މާދ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>މާދ ރ or މާދ ބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>މާދ ބ or މާދ ރ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Forming Indefinite Nouns**

Dhivehi does not have a definite article (“the”), meaning that a noun by itself could mean “[noun]” or “the [noun]”. However, there is a suffix which is used to make nouns indefinite – the equivalent of using “a/an”. That suffix is މާދ, which by itself means “one”.

Many words change slightly when taking this suffix, depending on their endings. We’ll look at them one by one. (Brace yourselves, there are quite a few of these)

**Words Ending with ރ**

Most Dhivehi words end with ރ because, as you know from the previous lesson, only five letters can carry ރ. The ރ is replaced as though it is not part of the word.

- ރޫނ – Apple / ރޫނރު – an apple (NOT ރޫނރު ރާދ)
- ރެއ – Street / ރެއރު – a street
- ރަރް – Doctor / ރަރްރު – a doctor
- ރަރު – Muslim / ރަރުރު – a Muslim

**Words Ending with ބ**

ބ changes to ވ:

- ބިއ – Frog / ބިއވ – a frog
- ބިރ – One / ބިރވ – One (used when counting – more on this later)

Nouns ending with ބ are not very common. However, the ވ – ބ change is important to know as there are other more frequently occurring situations where it happens.

For those who know Malay or Indonesian, ބ is kind of like the ‘k’ at the end of words like ‘jelek’ – it doesn’t make its own sound until a suffix is added, like in ‘kejelekan’. At the end of words, ބ is actually ވ, but they are pretty much the same thing (they are both stop consonants) and that is why the change occurs.
Words Ending with ް or ް

The ރ or ބ is replaced, and the ރ or ބ is pronounced normally:

- ރްށޫ – Book / ރްށެއ – a book
- ރްށޫ – Hand / ރްށެއ – a hand
- ރްށޫ – Island / ރްށެއ – an island

Words Ending with ރ

ރ becomes ރ:

- ރްނޢ – Name / ރްނޢއ – a name
- ރްސ – Thing (abstract, not physical) / ރްސަ – a thing

But not in all cases:

- ރްނޢ – Fire / ރްނޢއ – a fire
- ރްސ – Water / ރްސަ – a (body of) water

The reason this does not occur in all words is that some words originally ended with ރ while others originally ended with ބ. The pronunciation of ބ gradually changed to ރ, but ބ is still used if there are suffixes.

Words Ending with ބ

ބ changes to ބ:

- ބްއ – Tree / ބްއަ – a tree
- ބްއ – Language / ބްއަ – a language
- ބްއ – Egg / ބްއަ – an egg
- ބްއ – Fish / ބްއަ – a fish
- ބްއ – Person (not used often by itself. ބ is more common) / ބްއ – a person

Exceptions:

- ބްރައ – Maldivian / ބްރައ – a Maldivian
- ބްރައ – Teacher / ބްރައ or ބްރައ – a teacher
- ބްރައ – Friend / ބްރައ – a friend
Words Ending with ރ

ރ becomes ރ:

- ރ – Fly / ރރ – a fly
- ރ – Lobster / ރރރ – a lobster

This category is related to the previous one, with some words having forms for both. For example, ދރރ is technically the indefinite of ދރ, but ދރ is an adjective, not a noun like ދރރ. The same applies to ރރރ, where ރރ is an adjective (ރރ is the plural). You should note that words like ދރރ and ރރރ rarely occur without a suffix. Some might not even consider the latter to be a proper word.

Words Ending with ބ

ބ becomes ބ:

- ބ – Plate / ބބ – a plate
- ބ – Coconut / ބބބ – a coconut
- ބ – Roshi (Maldivian flatbread) / ބބބ – a roshi

An irregular word where this change occurs:

- ބބ – Goat / ބބބ – a goat

The word was originally ބބ (people from the northern atolls say it this way). The ބ became ބ in the standard language.

Sometimes you will see these words written with ބ instead of ބ (e.g. ބބބ). I would say that both spellings are equally common. Both are pronounced the same way.

Words Ending with ބ

ބ becomes ބ:

- ބ – Bird / ބބ – a bird
- ބ – Ant / ބބ – an ant
- ބ – Crab / ބބ – a crab
Words Ending with ވ, އ, ަ or ރ

ވ is inserted before the letter and the ރ is replaced:

- ވރ – Arab (like ދްވެހްޭ, this is technically an adjective) / ދްވެހްރ – an Arab
- ވިވ – Bubble or Lightbulb / ވިވިެވ – a bubble or a lightbulb
- ވރ – Sunlight / ވިރު – a sunlight (this makes sense in Dhivehi)
- ރދ – Hat / ރދުރ – a hat

Note how ރ changes to ބ.

Words Ending with ރ

ރ is replaced:

- ރދ – Foot / ބަޔ – a foot
- ރިދ – Body / ބަޔިދ – a body

Sometimes you will see the ރ changed to ބ (e.g. ބިރިދ), although this is not as common.

Words Ending with ބ

ބ becomes ބި:

- ބިދ – Thing / ބަޔރިދ – a thing

Words Ending with ބ

ބ becomes ބި:

- ބިދ – Sand / ބިިދިެއ – a sand (this makes sense in Dhivehi)
- ބިދ – Feyli (Traditional Sarong) / ބިިދުއ – a feyli

Words Ending with a Long Vowel

Long vowel becomes short and ރ is added:

- ރާރ – Onion / ބިރާރ – an onion
- ރރ – Flower / ބިރރ – a flower
- ރރ – Head / ބިރރ – a head
- ރރ – Tongue / ބިރރ – a tongue
Originally, the words would have ended with ރ, but the sound disappeared and changed into a long vowel in the standard language. In the southern atolls, you will still hear people say things like ދިވި and ްްސަް ޭ.

This change does not apply to words which did not originally end with ރ:

- ރ ރ – Garden / ްްޜްެ – a garden
- ްަރ ރ – Toilet / ދިވިރަ – a toilet (usually pronounced ްވިރަ ރ/ދިވިރަ ރ)
- ްސި – Kid / ްސިރ – a kid (this one is irregular)

**Words Ending with ރ**

ރ is replaced with ރ, and in some cases the preceding vowel is lengthened:

- ރ ރ – Oil / ރުމި – an oil
- ރ ރ – Hammer / ރުމިރ – a hammer
- ރ ރ – Banana / ރުމިރ – a banana

Like in the previous category, these words originally ended with ރ.

Note that to say “a banana”, ރ ރ is not used as frequently as ރ ރ ރ ރ ރ ރ ރ. This is kind of like when people say “a piece of cake” in English.

**Other Words**

Words which do not fit into any of the previous categories simply take ރ ރ ރ without any changes:

- ރ ރ – Mother / ރުމިރ – a mother
- ރ ރ – Father / ރުމިރ – a father
Summary

Use this table to help you remember how endings change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ތ</td>
<td>Replace ތ</td>
<td>ތައެވެރުފަލު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ރ</td>
<td>ފ→މ</td>
<td>ރދަބަބު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ސ or ބ</td>
<td>Replace ރ</td>
<td>ބުތްއުރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ</td>
<td>ރ→އ</td>
<td>ބީތްރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ތ</td>
<td>ރ→އ</td>
<td>ތީރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ތ</td>
<td>ރ→ބ</td>
<td>ރެލިރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދ</td>
<td>ބ→ބ</td>
<td>ދެލިރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTH</td>
<td>ބ→ބ</td>
<td>ބިރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ, ހ, ތ or ދ</td>
<td>Add ރ, replace ތ, change ބ to ބ</td>
<td>ބިރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ރ</td>
<td>Replace, or ރ→އ</td>
<td>ރދަބަބު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ</td>
<td>ރ→ބ</td>
<td>ބީރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ</td>
<td>ރ→އ</td>
<td>ބީރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Vowel</td>
<td>Shorten vowel, add ބ</td>
<td>ބިރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>މ</td>
<td>ބ→ބ</td>
<td>ބިރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>ބިރު</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These changes do not occur only with the indefinite suffix, they also occur when changing noun cases, and some other suffixes too. Therefore, it is very important to know how they work.

Plural Indefinite

The suffixes ތައ and އެއ can combine to form ތައެރ (note the ރ changed to ބ). When ރެރ އ is attached to a noun, it means there is a large, indeterminable number of that noun, and the group as a whole is indefinite. To get the same meaning in English, we use the word ‘some’ or another measure word. For example:

- ބަވެރުފ އ – Some cats, a group of cats
- ބްއަރުފ ދ – Some books, a pile of books
- ބީރުފ ބ – Some flies, a swarm of flies
- ބްއަރުފ ބ – Some coconuts, a bunch of coconuts
- ބިރުދ – Some people, a group of people

Adding ދ to a human noun has the same dehumanising effect as adding ބ by itself.
Vocabulary

These are the words you have learnt so far (including from the previous lesson). Try to remember the ones you would use more frequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td></td>
<td>One thousand</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feyli</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clove</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crab</td>
<td>Heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sand</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bite</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td>To eat</td>
<td>There isn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldivian</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hammer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td>Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td>Street</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kid</td>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mouth</td>
<td>Roshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flower</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eight thousand</td>
<td>Stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eighty</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star</td>
<td></td>
<td>High level</td>
<td></td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td></td>
<td>To come</td>
<td>Goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>Garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearl</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hand</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Foreign(er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunlight</td>
<td>Egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Foot</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>Bubble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lobster</td>
<td>Frog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pump</td>
<td></td>
<td>Onion</td>
<td></td>
<td>One</td>
<td>To drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dhivehi Lesson 4: Repetition, Quotation and Word Order

This will be a short but important lesson that will allow to add another layer of depth to your speech.

Repetition

The suffix އ ރޫ is used to emphasise a word, with the implication that you have said it before. It also highlights that word as the main/important part of a sentence. Depending on the way a person says it, it can add a sense of urgency to a sentence. When adding it to a word, the same changes discussed in the previous lesson apply. It can be used with most types of words (be they nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) but we will look mainly at nouns in this lesson since you already know some. When it comes to nouns, this suffix is mostly found attached to indefinite nouns, but there is no reason it can’t be used with other nouns.

- ވިވރ ުހ (the) cat / ވިވރ ުހ – (the) cat!
- ވިވރރާހ ރް ޮ – a cat / ވިވރރާހ ރް ޮ – a cat!
- ބުދިރ – (the) island / ބުދިރ – (the) island!
- ދިރރރރ ރް – (the) mothers / ދިރރރރ ރް – (the) mothers!
- ދިރރރރ ރް – some birds / ދިރރރރ ރް – some birds!
- ދިރރރރ ރް – Maldivians / ދިރރރރ ރް – Maldivians! (Note the double ރ. This is how non-family human plurals take the suffix)

Quotation

The suffix ރ emphasises a word with the implication that someone else has said it before. Just like ރ, it can be used with most types of words, and the sound changes occur as usual. I won’t provide translations for the examples here because there is no context (And this concept doesn’t really translate into English)

- ރިވރރރ ރް – ރިވރރރ ރް
- ރިވރރރ ރް – ރިވރރރ ރް
- ރިވރރރ ރް – ރިވރރރ ރް
- ރިވރރރ ރް – ރިވރރރ ރް

Word Order

Word order in Dhivehi is flexible, but typically, sentences are are Subject-Object-Verb. However, a noun that takes the suffix ރ or ބ usually goes at the beginning of a sentence, regardless of whether it is the subject or the object.

Examples Using English Sentences

These examples should help to clarify how these suffixes are used.

- A cat ate the apple – simple statement
- A cat-ރ ate the apple – I said before that it was a cat that ate the apple, and not something else.
- A cat ate the apple – Apparently a cat ate the apple. I don’t know for certain that it was a cat. I got the information from somewhere/someone else.
- The apple a cat ate – It was *that* apple and not something else that the cat ate. (note word order)
- The apple a cat ate – It turns out that *the* apple was eaten by a cat. I don’t know for certain that it was the apple. I got the information from somewhere/someone else. (note word order)
- A cat ate the apple – The cat didn’t do something else with the apple.
- A cat ate the apple – Apparently the cat ate the apple the apple and didn’t do something else with it. I don’t know this for certain. I got the information from somewhere/someone else.

- He is well – simple statement
- He is well – I am emphasising his wellness
- He is well – Someone else told me that he is well (he may have even told me himself)

Sometimes subjects and objects can consist of more than one word, for example an adjective and a noun. The suffixes and are attached to the subject/object as a whole. To emphasise the adjective only, you would have to change the sentence.

- A [black cat] ate the [red apple] – The subject and object are a unit
- A [black cat] ate the [red apple] – correct
- The [red apple] a [black cat] ate – correct
- A [black cat] ate the [red apple] – incorrect
- The cat which ate the red apple was black – correct
- A [black cat] ate the [red apple] – incorrect
- The apple which the black cat ate was red – correct

Try doing this with your own simple sentences in English and see if you can work out the implied meaning.
Dhivehi Lesson 5: Adjectives

Adjectives are probably the simplest type of word in Dhivehi because they have fewer forms than other types of words. These forms are independent of the plurality/definiteness/case of the noun that the adjective qualifies.

Like in English, adjectives come before nouns:

- ހަް ޭ ރްރބ – Hot water
- ަ ރްޭބް – A big tree
- ދްގ ޭ – Long hair
- ޮންްޭދ – A red flower
- ރަތ ޭ – An old person
- ރިއްޭ – Nice/pretty dress
- ްްސްރ – Sweet banana
- ބްްޭބ – Dry leaves
- ްދްހ – A bad smell
- ރުމަލ – Bad kids

If the adjective comes after the noun, it translates into a full sentence in English:

- ހަް ޭ – Hot water
- ރްރބ ހަް – The water is hot
- ދްގ ޭ – Long hair
- ޮންްޭދ – The hair is long

In this kind of sentence the noun cannot be indefinite. So you cannot say something like “ރަތ ހަދްް ދްގ ޭ”.

**Negative Adjectives**

An adjective can be made negative by adding ްަް ޭ after it. This is similar to the way “non-” is used in English, except ްަް ޭ can be used with pretty much any adjective.

- ަ ރްޭބް ްަް ޭ – A tree that is not big
- ދްގ ޭ ްަް ޭ – Hair that is not long
- ްްސްރ ްަް ޭ – A day that is not cold
- ރަތ ޭ ްަް ޭ – People who are not old

We’ll look at the full sentence equivalents of these in another lesson.
Adjectives for Good and Bad Things

The words for “good” and “bad” vary, depending on the nature of the thing you are talking about.

- ރަްގަޅ ޭ – Good in general, okay, acceptable
- ރ ތްޭ – Good in appearance, pretty, beautiful
- ރ ރ ބ – Good of tastes and smells, tasty, delicious
- ރދން – Bad in general, or of tastes and smells, wrong, incorrect, unacceptable
- ރަރި – Bad in character
- ހަޑްޭ – Bad in appearance or quality/character, ugly

Yes, it would be easier to say that they all have different meanings, but that may give you the idea that the connotations are the same as in English. For example, ރދން does not have the exact same meaning as “delicious”.

Usage

You can use the words with whichever nouns you like, but the meaning of the word will impact the meaning of the sentence.

If you describe food as ރަރި, you are saying it tastes good. If you say it is ރަްގަޅ ޭ, you are saying it is presented nicely. If you say it is ރދން ރދން, you are either saying it tastes alright, or it is suitable for a certain occasion or for certain people.

If you describe someone’s clothes as ހަޑްރި, you are saying that they do not look good. If you describe them as ރދން ރދން, it would mean they are inappropriate (for whatever occasion).

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasty</th>
<th>Bad/Wrong</th>
<th>Old</th>
<th>Hot</th>
<th>ރަްގަޅ ޭ</th>
<th>ރދން</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Big</td>
<td>ރަރި</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Bad/Ugly</td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>ރަރި</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>No/Not</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>ރަރި</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Good/Okay</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Bottom/Low</td>
<td>Top/High</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
<td>ރދން</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table includes some words I have not used in the main part of the lesson.
Dhivehi Lesson 6: Demonstratives

Demonstratives are words like *this* and *that*, used to differentiate things from other things.

Before learning what the Dhivehi words are, there is a new concept that English speakers will have to get used to.

English makes a two-way distinction between its demonstratives: *this* refers to things near the speaker, and *that* refers to things away from the speaker.

Dhivehi makes a three-way distinction, equivalent to first, second and third person. That is, one word refers to things near the speaker, another word refers to things near the person being spoken to, and another word refers to things far away from both of them. (I call this first, second and third “place”)

This three-way distinction also occurs in other languages like Spanish and Japanese, so if you know any of those, this concept shouldn’t be too hard to grasp.

Here are the Dhivehi demonstratives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Place”</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>This/These</td>
<td>ް</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>That/Those</td>
<td>ކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>That/Those</td>
<td>މ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Dhivehi words are the same for singular and plural. The meaning can be inferred from the noun they qualify.

Examples

- ްްޭ – This book
- ދްް ެ – That door
- ްްޭ – This table
- ކރުރ – That pen (you have) OR That pen (near you)
- ބރުރ – Those pens (you have/near you)
- ބރުރ – That kid
- ބރުރ – Those kids
- ްްޭ – This apple
- ބރުރ – These apples

Very often you will see the demonstratives used like prefixes; attached to the beginning of the noun they qualify. The attached way of writing can be considered more “proper”, but it is still acceptable to write the words separately. I will probably use a mix of both ways throughout the lessons. It is just one of the many inconsistencies of written Dhivehi that you will have to get used to.
Demonstrative Pronouns

The words shown above were demonstrative determiners, meaning that they modify a noun. In contrast, demonstrative pronouns replace nouns altogether. Compare the sentences “Those apples are good” and “Those are good”.

In Dhivehi, the two ideas are kind of mixed together, as demonstrative pronouns are formed by combining the demonstrative determiners and the word “thing” or “things”.

The Dhivehi word for “thing” is އްއުޙ, and the word for “things” is ދްއުދ (usually pronounced ދްއުޜ and often spelt that way). Some slight changes occur in pronunciation when they combine with the demonstratives.

In addition to meaning “this”, “that”, “these” and “those”, the demonstrative pronouns are also used where third person neuter pronouns (“it” and “they”) would be used in English.

Here are the Dhivehi demonstrative pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>“Place”</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>This/it</td>
<td>ދްއުދ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>That/it</td>
<td>ދްއުޜ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>That/it</td>
<td>ދްއުހ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>These/They</td>
<td>ދްބާދްއުދ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Those/They</td>
<td>ދްބާދްއުޜ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Those/They</td>
<td>ދްބާދްއުހ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ދްއުދްއުދ and ދްބާދްއުދ are usually pronounced ދްދްއުދ and ދްބާދްއުދ respectively. They are occasionally spelt that way.

Examples/Comparisons

- ދްއުދ – This apple is tasty
- ދްދްއުދ – This is tasty
- ދްއުޅްރު – That dress (you have/you are wearing) is very nice
- ދްއުޜ – That is very nice
- ދްބާދްއުދ – Those lollies are very bad
- ދްބާދްއުޜ – Those are very bad
- ދްއުދްަރ ރަަރ – This shirt is good
- ދްދްއުރ – This is good
Two things to note:

- Dhivehi doesn’t have words for “is” or “are”. To say “[noun] [adjective]”, you simply say “[noun] [adjective]”
- These forms of the demonstrative pronouns can only be used in “[noun] [adjective]” type sentences. There is another form used for “[noun] [noun]” sentences which we will look at in a future lesson.

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>مَذَلب</th>
<th>Thing</th>
<th>مَذَلب</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Door</td>
<td>مَذَلب</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>مَذَلب</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirt</td>
<td>مَذَلب</td>
<td>Lolly/Candy</td>
<td>مَذَلب</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dhivehi Lesson 7: Pronouns

These are words used to refer to people and things without using their names. Unlike English, Dhivehi has more registers for its pronouns, meaning there are several words for the same thing but they are used under different circumstances.

The following table shows the most commonly used Dhivehi pronouns and how formal they are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
<th>Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>ދު</td>
<td>Informal – can be used amongst friends, family and others you know well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ގާދަރވަ</td>
<td>Standard – Acceptable in all situations. Good if you are not close with the people you are speaking to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ދުސްބިބާބ</td>
<td>Standard – Rarely used without a suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>ބީބ</td>
<td>Informal – Used with friends and family, or even strangers in informal situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>He/She</td>
<td>ރުބ</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ގާބ (proximal)</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>We</td>
<td>ދުބުބ</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ދުބުބ (proximal)</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>ބީބ</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ބީބ (proximal)</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>They</td>
<td>ރުބ</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ރުބ (proximal)</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Person Words

Besides the ones given above, some less common ones that you might see/hear include:

- ދުސްބިބ – informal/standard, plural, used only in a few atolls
- ދުރުބރަބ – standard/formal, singular, usually found in poetry
- ދީބިބ – standard, singular, used in Addu (the southernmost atoll)
- ދުބުބ – standard, plural, used just as frequently as ބީބ. In normal speech, it is difficult to tell the difference

Second Person Words

You may notice that there is no standard of saying ‘you’ (singular) in Dhivehi. This is not really a problem because, as you will find out, Dhivehi is a null subject language meaning that sentences do not require subjects to make sense. It can be inferred from context who is being spoken about.
Alternatively, if you want to say ‘you’, it is acceptable to use the person’s name. In fact it is quite common for Maldivians to speak in third person. You will often hear people use their own name instead of saying ބ or ބްޭރުބ when speaking about themselves. It may be a bit uncomfortable speaking this way at first if your native language does not work this way.

If you really desperately want a word for ‘you’, you can say ބ which isn’t a word “officially” but people will still get what you are trying to say.

**Other words for ‘you’**

- ބ – standard, singular, used only in a few atolls
- ބްޭރުބ – standard, plural, used only in a few atolls
- ބްސާބ – formal, singular
- ބްސާބ – formal, singular
- ބްސާބ – formal, plural
- ބްސާބ – formal, plural

The formal words are rarely heard in everyday speech. They are more commonly found in writing. ބސ refers to people of higher social status, but these words can be used to address people formally regardless of their social status.

**Third Person Words**

Like English, Dhivehi words do not have gender. Dhivehi goes a step further than English in that it does not differentiate male and female personal pronouns. ބ and ބްްޭ both mean he or she. Dhivehi, however, does differentiate the words based on the proximity to the speaker. ބ is used if the person is far away and ބްްޭ is used if the person if near. It is the same with ބސ and ބސސ. You can think of ބްްޭ as ‘this guy (over here)’. ބސސ literally means ‘these people’ and ބސސ literally means “those people”.

**A Note on Pronunciation**

Although ބ and ބްްޭ are spelt with ބ, people usually pronounce them as ބ and ބްްޭ. You will also see them spelt this way occasionally, although the former spelling is more common.

**The suffix ބްެރު**

You may have noticed this suffix being used to indicate plurality in a few of the pronouns. This suffix can also be attached to the end of a person’s name to indicate the meaning of “that person and the person/people associated with that person”. For example, ބްްޭބްސަބ could mean “Aisthu and her friend(s)”, “Aisthu and her family” or even “Aisthu and her co-worker(s)” depending on the context.

The same meaning could apply even if the suffix is used with a family word. For example, ބްސާބްސާބްސާބ does not necessarily mean a group of mothers. It could be one mother and a group of people associated with her.
This suffix can be used in 1st, 2nd and 3rd person. So in the first example, Aisthu could be talking about herself and group of others, or someone could be talking to her, or people could be speaking about her.

**Third Person Neuter**

You learnt in the previous lesson that demonstrative pronouns are also used as third person neuter pronouns “it” and “they”. Just to refresh your memory, here are the demonstrative pronouns again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>“Place”</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>This/It</td>
<td>ތްޭ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>That/It</td>
<td>އެހްޭ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>That/It</td>
<td>ރި</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>These/They</td>
<td>ބީރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Those/They</td>
<td>ބީޕީރު</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Those/They</td>
<td>ބީދުރު</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While all of these can mean “it” or “they”, it is typically ތްޭ and ރި which are used that way. This is because when people talk about “it”, the thing is usually in some unspecified location.
Dhivehi Lesson 8: Noun-Noun Sentences

You already know that to form a sentence with the structure “[noun] is [adjective]”, it is simply a matter of putting the adjective after the noun, for example:

- ދްވެހިރ ީރު – This dress is small
- ހަްވެހިރ ީރު – The water is very hot

To form a sentence with the structure “[noun] is [noun]”, the suffix ރ ބ ބ is added to the first noun. ރ ބ ބ is actually a combination of ބ (the indefinite marker) and ބ (which kind of means “is”, but we’ll get to that later), meaning that whatever noun it is attached to becomes indefinite. Both nouns are usually indefinite in simple noun-noun sentences. In more complicated sentences, they can be definite.

ރ ބ ބ is often used in general statements, and implies a constant state of being. Dhivehi uses indefinite singular nouns for such statements, but English can use plural nouns, as you will see.

To negate a noun-noun sentence (that is, to make it “[noun] is not [noun]”), simply add ދްވެހިރ ީރު at the end.

Examples:

- ިރުވރ ދްވެހިރ ީރު – I am a Maldivian (note that it is not ިރުވރ ބ ބ)
- ދްވެހިރ ީރު – A cat is an animal/Cats are animals
- ިރުވރ ދްވެހިރ ީރު – A mango is not a coconut/Mangoes are not coconuts

For the second and third sentences, it is not necessary to use the plural forms of the nouns. In fact, if the sentence were ދްވެހިރ ީރު ސްސްއ, it would mean you are talking about a specific group of cats (in which case it would make more sense to say ދްވެހިރ ބ ބ ސްސްއ), and not cats in general.

Demonstrative Pronouns in Noun-Noun Sentences

Remember from lesson 6 that demonstrative pronouns replace nouns, unlike demonstrative modifiers which only qualify them (“this is small” vs “this dress is small”). The demonstrative pronouns are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>“Place”</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>This/It</td>
<td>ރ ބ ބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>That/It</td>
<td>ރ ބ ބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>That/It</td>
<td>ރ ބ ބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>These/They</td>
<td>ރ ބ ބ ބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Those/They</td>
<td>ރ ބ ބ ބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Those/They</td>
<td>ރ ބ ބ ބ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These word do not normally take the suffix ކު. They have the following forms instead:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Place&quot;</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>This is/These are</td>
<td>ބާ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>That is/Those are</td>
<td>ބި ބާ OR ބިބާ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>That is/Those are</td>
<td>ބި</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ބި and ބި are pronounced ބ and ބ respectively, and you will find them written that way too. ބ is one syllable. ބބ is more a formal/literary style. Some would argue whether or not ބބ is a proper word. Nonetheless, it is used in writing.

Examples:

- ބިބާބުރިބ – This is an apple
- ބިބުރިބ – That is not a table
- ބުރިބ – That is an island

**Pronouns in Noun-Noun Sentences**

There are two ways pronouns can be used in noun-noun sentences. One of them, which you have already seen, is to treat them like a regular noun and attach the suffix ކު. The other way is to use an appropriate demonstrative form. The following table gives a summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dhivehi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>I am</td>
<td>ބާ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ބާބުރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ބާބުރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>You are</td>
<td>ބާބުރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ބާބުރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>He/She is</td>
<td>ބާބުރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ބާބުރިބ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | Plural | 1st | We are   | ބާބުރިބ |
|        |        |  |           | ބާބުރިބ |
|        |        |  |           | ބާބުރިބ |
|        |        | 2nd | You are  | ބާބުރިބ |
|        |        |    |           | ބާބުރިބ |
|        |        | 3rd | They are | ބާބުރިބ |
|        |        |    |           | ބާބުރިބ |
Usually, there is no need to use the pronoun and the demonstrative together (especially for 2nd and 3rd person). It can be inferred from the context whether it is a human or a non-human being spoken about.

Sometimes you will see ްއ and ސެރްއެއ instead of ރ and ށ. This is another thing for which the standard is not set in stone.

*Other forms of these words are ސެރްއެއ and ސެރްއެއ (this is one of the uses of ރ by itself), but these are literary forms. You are more likely to hear people saying what is shown on the table.

Examples:
- ސަހަރެް ް ސަރަްގަޅ – He/she is such a good kid
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – He/she is a doctor
- ސަހަރެް ް ސަރަްގަޅ – You are a fisherman

Modifying the Nouns

More complex noun-noun sentences have one of the nouns modified, either with a demonstrative, an adjective, a relative clause or a combination of those.

Demonstrative

In noun-noun sentences, demonstrative suffixes can be used to make the nouns definite.

Examples:
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – I am that/the person
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ ސަރަްގަޅ – That/the cat is an animal
- ސަހަރެް ސަރަްގަޅ – That is that/the island

Adjective

As usual, adjectives come before the noun they qualify.

Examples:
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – That bird is a red bird
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – I am a rich person
- ސަހަރެް ބައ – You are a crazy person
- ސަހަރެް ސަރަްގަޅ – He/she is such a good kid

Keep in mind that even though an adjective follows the first noun, it is not a noun-adjective sentence. Never use ސަހަރެް in a noun-adjective sentence. Take the following sentence pairs for example:

- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – incorrect
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – correct
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – incorrect
- ސަހަރެް ރަތ – correct
Relative Clause

Consider the sentence “The person who finishes the race first is the winner”. This is just a more complicated noun-noun sentence, where the two nouns are “person” and “winner”. The relative clause “who finishes the race first” modifies the first noun (it’s basically a really long adjective). In Dhivehi, this sentence would use އައ ޭ. I won’t show you an example here because there’s a long way to go before getting to relative clauses. For now you just need to know that a noun can be modified this way and still be a part of a noun-noun sentence.

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So/such</th>
<th>ާރާބ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>އާރާބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td>އާރާބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>އާރާބ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dhivehi Lesson 9: Another Indefinite Marker

You know that to make a noun indefinite, you have to add the suffix ހުއ to it. There is another very similar suffix which is also used to make nouns indefinite. You kind of came across it in the previous lesson. That suffix is ރި.

ރި vs ބރބ

When a noun is suffixed with ރި it refers to a specific indefinite thing or person. A noun with ބރބ refers to an unspecified thing or person. It is similar to the way the word “some” is used with singular nouns. For example:

| ބަޅ | Person |
| ބަކ | A person |
| ބައ | Some person |

ރި is more common than ބރބ. However, when a suffix is added onto an indefinite noun, it is added to ބރބ in most cases. You saw this in the previous lesson with ބރބ, and you’ll see this in the next lesson as well.

ބރބ, like ރި, also requires the word ending to change where appropriate. Hopefully you’ve gotten used to the changes. Here’s the summary table again:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ރ</td>
<td>Replace ރ</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ or ބ</td>
<td>Replace ބ</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ރި</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ރ</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ or ބ</td>
<td>Replace ބ, addReplace ބ, add ބ茉 ބ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ茉</td>
<td>Replace, or ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ茉</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Vowel</td>
<td>Shorten vowel, add ބ茉 ބ茉</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ބ茉茉茉</td>
<td>ރ茉 ރ茉, Lengthen vowel</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>ބރބ އރބކ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Try adding އައ ޭ to some of the words from the vocabulary section.

Even though there are technically no rules as to the kind of words އައ ޭ can be attached to, it isn’t normally thrown around at the whim of the speaker. You can get a feel for its use by listening to Maldivians speaking.

An Irregular Word

ތަް ޭ, which means “place”, can become either ތަްައ ޭ or ތްއ ޭ. The latter is more common. Don’t ask why, that’s just the way it is.
Dhivehi Lesson 10: Noun Cases

Noun cases provide more information about a noun. In Dhivehi, as in many other languages, noun cases are indicated by suffixes (meaning that the endings of words will have to change where appropriate). They are used where English would normally use prepositions. If you’ve studied a language like Latin, Russian, Finnish or Icelandic, the notion of grammatical case may evoke some bad memories, but the Dhivehi case system is much simpler than that of those languages; being more akin to case systems of Dravidian languages like Tamil.

Let’s go through the cases, one by one.

**Nominative Case**

This case indicates that a noun is the subject of a sentence. There is no suffix used to indicate this case; the noun is left as is.

**Accusative Case**

This case indicates that a noun is the direct object of a sentence. As with the nominative case, the accusative also has no suffix.

In English, a noun can be determined to be a subject or an object by looking at its position in a sentence. This is not always possible in Dhivehi because word order is a lot more flexible. Instead, you have to rely on the context to know whether a noun is the subject or the object.

**Genitive Case**

This case is used to describe possession. It is the equivalent of “’s” or “of” in English, for example, “the person’s hat”/”the hat of the person”. The suffix for this case is ގެޭ.

If a word ends with ރ or ބ or އރ the suffix is attached without any changes to the word. If a word does not end with ރ, the ending must be changed to ބ (using the normal changes) before adding the suffix. There are some exceptions (and exceptions to the exceptions):

- If a word ends with ބ, it changes to ބ.
  - If it ends with ބ it stays the same.
- If a word ends with ބ, it changes to ޅ.
- If a word ends with ބ, ބ is added before ގެޭ. This is also sometimes done with words ending with ބ, after changing it to ބ. It is another case where normal pronunciation conflicts with standard rules.
  - Family words are exceptions.

Examples:

- ރައޮބ – Of the doctor/The doctor’s
- ރައޮބ – Of the eye/The eye’s (not ރައޮބ)
- ރައޮބ – Of the frog/The frog’s (not ރައޮބ)
- ރައޮބ – Of the island/The island’s (not ރައޮބ)
• ‘Of the heart/The heart’s (not ރަމެ)’
• ‘Of the pen/The pen’s (not ރަރެ)’
• ‘Of the water/The water’s (not ރަބް)’
• ‘Of the language/The language’s (not ރަައ)’
• ‘Of the coconut/The coconut’s (not ރައްއ)’
• ‘Of the body/The body’s (not ރަވަރ)’
• ‘Of the house/The house’s (not ރަކރ)’
• ‘Of the colour/The colour’s (not ރައަރ)’
• ‘Of the mother/The mother’s (not ރަރަރ)’

Plural and indefinite markers always come before case suffixes. For plural nouns, ރަބް and ރަމެ combine to make ރައަބް. For indefinite nouns, ރައަބް and ރަމެ make ރައަބްރަބް. You may occasionally see ރަވަރ ރަމެ but it is rare. For human plurals, ރަބް is added after ރަރެ without any changes.

Examples:
• ‘Of a person/A person’s’
• ‘Of the birds/ The birds’
• ‘Of the fishermen/The fishermen’s’
• ‘Of some books/Some books’

Dative Case

This case marks the indirect object of a sentence. It is used to mean “to” or “for”. It implies movement towards a person, place or object. The suffix for this case is ގެރ. 

Examples:
• ‘To the house/home’
• ‘To the island’
• ‘To the fish’
• ‘To the top’
• ‘To the eye’
• ‘To the boat’

For indefinite nouns ރަބް is used. Even ރަބްރަރެ becomes ރަބްރަބް: 
• ‘To a house’
• ‘To/For a person’
• ‘To/For a country’
• ‘For a day’
• ‘To/For a Maldivian’
• ‘To some books’
Plural nouns:

- ހައްޫރ – To/For (the) people
- ްބޭހައްސ – To the trees

This case is often used with verbs of motion where English would instead use “in”. For example, in English you would say “pour the water in the cup”, whereas in Dhivehi you would say “pour the water to the cup”. You’ll learn more about this in the verb lessons.

**Locative Case**

This case is used to mean “in”, “at” or “on”. It means that something exists in a particular location. The suffix for this case is ރްއި (pronounced ސ). Examples:

- އެމދ ރްއި – On the bed
- އަބ ރްއި – On the head (not ރަބ ރްއި)
- ރަބ ރްއި – On the palm tree (not ރަބ ރްއި)
- ރަބ ރްއި – On the island (not ރަބ ރްއި)
- ދްބުރްއި – In the hand (not ދްބުރްއި)
- ރަބ ރްއި – In the water (not ރަބ ރްއި)
- އަތްއި – In the thing/idea/issue (not އަތްއި)
- އަބ ރްއި – On the tree (not ސަބ ރްއި)
- އ.reader – At the bottom
- ރަބ ރްއި – At home/At the house
- ރްބަރްއި – (On the) inside
- ދްބުރްއި – In the colour
- ރަބ ރްއި – In the toilet (Can also be ރަބ ރްއި)

The word ރްސ is irregular. Although it can be ރްސ ރްއި in the locative case, more often you will hear ރްސ ރްސ, especially in the words ރްސ ރްސ and ރްސ ރްސ, which mean “over there” and “over here” respectively. People often pronounce these words as though the ރ is not there (ރްސ ރްސ and ރްސ ރްސ).

**More Specific Locatives**

To say that something is in a specific location (as opposed to just existing in a place generally), you can use the formula [noun] + [location word] + ރްސ, where the location word is something like ބުރްސ (“top”) or ރްސ (“inside”). For example:

- އެމދ ރްސ – On top of the bed
- އަބ ރްސ – Inside the cupboard
- ރަބ ރްސ – At the bottom of the sea
- ދްބުރްސ – Near the mosque
• ްަކ – Under the table

For most words, you can determine whether ްދަށރިއ looks like "in", "on" or "at", simply from the word itself. For example, if someone said ްދަށރިސްސްެ, the most likely meaning is "inside the cupboard" because normally people put things inside them instead of on top of them. However, ްދަށރިސްސްެ could also mean "on the cupboard". To specify that something is on it rather than in it, you would say ްދަށރިސ ްޫ ރިސ ްސްެ.

Plural and Indefinite Nouns

The suffix ދެއ combined with ްދަދަވ makes ްދެދަދ. The suffix ދެބ combined with ްދަދަވ is ދެބދަދ (but this is rarely used). The suffix ދެބ combined with ްދަދަވ is ދެބދ. ރިވ ރިސ ދަދަވ is rarely used. The suffix ްދިރ ދަދަވ combined with ްަސްސްެ is ްދިރދަދ.

Examples:

• ދެދިރިއ – At a house
• ދެބދިރިއ – On the islands/In the countries
• ދިރިސ ދަދަވ – At some place (this is one of the few occasions where ދެބދަދ is actually used)
• ދިރިސ ރިސ ދަދަވ – In a bunch of flowers

ހ ރިބ as Locative

As well as making a noun unspecified and indefinite, ހ ރިބ can also be used in place of ްދަދަވ to mean "in", "on" or "at". This usage is typically found in sentences with ރިއިއ, which is the negative form of the verb "there to be".

Some commonly used words with ްދިބ instead of ްދަދަވ:

• ރިއިއްއިބ = ރިއިބ – Over here
• ރިސ ރިބ ރިސ = ރިސ ރިބ – Over there
• ރިބ ރިސ ރިބ ރިސ = ރިބ ރިސ – In the hand (this is one of the ways "to have" is expressed)

Don’t worry too much about “there to be” and “to have”; they will be covered in a future lesson. For now you just need to know that ރިބ can be used the same way as ްދަދަވ.

Ablative Case

This case is used to mean “from”. The suffix for this case is ރިސ. ރިސ ރިބ have to be changed. For words ending with ރިސ ރިބ ރިސ ރިސ, ރިސ ރިބ is often pronounced ރިރިސ.
Examples:

- ރައޣރ – From the table
- ރައަރރ – From the harbour
- ރައަރ – From the head
- ރައަރަރ – From the mouth
- ރައަރަހ – From the toilet
- ރައަރަޣ – From the house (most people would say ރައި)

For plural nouns, ރައ becomes ރައ. For indefinite nouns, only ރައ is used.

Examples:

- ރައަރ – From an island
- ރައަރު – From a plate
- ރައަރރ – From the doors

The word ރައރ, which literally means “from the side” goes after definite and plural human nouns. It is common for the noun itself to be in the genitive case, but it does not have to be that way. For indefinite human nouns ރައ is used.

Examples:

- ރައރރ – From the fishermen (literally “From the side of the fishermen”)
- ރައރ – From the person
- ރައރ – From a person

Instrumental Case

This case is used to mean “with”, in the sense of “using” or “by means of”. The suffix for this case is the same as that for the ablative case and the same rules apply. The meaning of a word with the suffix ރ (whether it is “from” or “with”) can be inferred from the context.

Examples:

- ރރ – With the knife
- ރރރ – With a pen
- ރރ – With the foot
- ރރ – With a pillow

Associative Case

This case is used to mean “with”, as in “along with”, “together with” or “in the company of”. The suffix for this case is ބ or ބބ (which is also pronounced ބ). The rules of adding this suffix are the same as those for ބ. Indefinite nouns use ބ. 
It is arguable whether this is a real case or not because the same suffix is used to mean “and”. To differentiate between the two meanings, words like އެއ އ ށ ޭ, އެއ ޭ and ދި can be used after the word to emphasise the idea of oneness/togetherness (ހައ means “one”).

Examples:

- ދްަް ްައްޭ – With mum
- ްސި – With a person
- ރުރުއ – With the police
- ްސިވި – With a cat
- ެރބ – With the flowers

Modifiers

Declined nouns (i.e. nouns with case suffixes) do not affect modifiers like adjectives or demonstratives. Unlike some other languages, Dhivehi does not have cases for these modifiers.

Examples:

- ިި – At the house
- ދްސިސ – In the big house
- ިި – In this house
- ިިރ – In this big house
- ވިިސ – In a big house

Summary

The following table summarises the Dhivehi noun case system. The indefinite noun column gives the most commonly used suffix for each case; not necessarily the one that must always be used. For example, it was explained earlier that ދި can be used for the genitive and locative cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Indefinite Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>ރަބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>Direct object</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>Of, ‘s</td>
<td>ރިބ</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>To, For</td>
<td>ރިބ</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>In, On, At</td>
<td>ރިބ</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>From</td>
<td>ރިބ</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>ރިބ</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associative</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>ރިބ</td>
<td>ރިބ ރިބ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rethinking Thiki Thaana

(Thikijehi Thaana) refers to the set of dotted letters used in Dhivehi to represent foreign (mainly Arabic) sounds. The following table shows these letters, the corresponding Arabic letters, and the way Maldivians usually pronounce them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Arabic Letter</th>
<th>How Maldivians Pronounce It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ئ</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>م</td>
<td>م</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ن</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خ</td>
<td>خ</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ه</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ش</td>
<td>ش</td>
<td>'Sh' as in 'Shine' (more common) OR س (mostly older people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ص</td>
<td>ص</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ض</td>
<td>ض</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ط</td>
<td>ط</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ز</td>
<td>س</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ع</td>
<td>ع</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>غ</td>
<td>غ</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ق</td>
<td>ق</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ف</td>
<td>ف</td>
<td>سر</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ن | ن | مس

I’ve said good things about Thaana before, and I have also criticised it. When it comes to ئ، I have mostly criticism.

What’s the Problem?

First, I should point out that I have no problem with the existence of these letters. The way I see it, having them means that we are on the way to having a Thaana-based IPA. My problem is with the way that they are used and the way they are “built”.


Problem No. 1 – The Dots Make No Difference

Let me give you an example:

The word ގައ ރް ޭ (meaning “country”) comes from the Arabic word ރ ާ ް, and is sometimes spelt ރ ާ ް. Now let me ask you, what difference exactly do those two dots make? If you answered something like “it tells us that the pronunciation is /q/ and not /g/”, I would say “why do we need to know that, and why do we need to pronounce it that way?”

You might answer along the lines of “To stay true to the original Arabic pronunciation”, to which I would reply:

“We are not Arabs. The only time we would have to care about staying true the original Arabic pronunciation is when we are actually speaking Arabic. By giving this word a foreign pronunciation, you are “betraying” the Dhivehi pronunciation; you are turning a Dhivehi word into a foreign word, which is detrimental to the Dhivehi language. Get your priorities straight. The dots on the ރ are not necessary.”

To reinforce the idea that the dots essentially do nothing, I would suggest copying the Arabic spelling completely. After all, wouldn’t it be truer to the original Arabic if we spelt it “ރ ާ ރ”? In fact, why don’t we just use the Arabic script?* Why don’t we just speak Arabic all the time?

I might also add something about how it’s hypocritical not to stay true to the original pronunciation of English loanwords.

So basically, I think that 99% of the time, dotted letters are completely useless. It would be like using accents for French words:

“I can’t décide on what movie to watch at the cinéma. I think I would préfer to stay home and watch télévision. It’s more convénient.”

Superfluous and pretentious, right?

It’s just as annoying to see things like “ރ ދ ރ”, “ރ ި ރ”, “ރ ރ ރ”, and “ރ ރ ރ”.

That’s why I don’t like seeing dotted letters in writing. And it’s even more annoying when I hear people speaking that way. Like, who do you think you are? Do you think that speaking that way makes you better than everyone else? Are you trying to be Pakistani or something?

So please, Dhivehi people, don’t use Thikijehi Thaana. There are very few occasions when the dots actually make a difference.

*One of the few good things about Thikijehi Thaana is that it allowed Maldivians to stop using the Arabic script for loanwords.

Problem No.2 – Consistency

Because the dotted letters make no difference, people are at a loss when it comes to using them. Sometimes, you’ll even find these letters used inconsistently within the same paragraph.
Also, Dhivehi has enough problems when it comes to standardised spelling (e.g. ރ އ ޓެއ ޭ vs ރ ށ ޓެއ ޭ); adding in the extra letters makes things worse. Here are all the ways you can write the Dhivehi word for “culture”, and the number of results you get when you search each word on Google:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dhivehi Word</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ދްފެހެއިރެ</td>
<td>4,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްށެހެއިރެ</td>
<td>21,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްކްއެހެއިރެ</td>
<td>1,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްއަހެއިރެ</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްއަދްއަހެއިރެ</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްސްއެއިރެ</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްތަރައިރެ</td>
<td>3,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ދްމަރުއިރެ</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amazing thing is that there can be inconsistency even within one word! If that doesn’t prove how pointless the dots are, nothing will.

**Problem No.3 – Sounds Don’t Match**

It’s bad enough that these letters are used the way they are, but what’s worse is that they are badly constructed, so to speak.

I just had to put this in.

Look back at the table with the letters and you’ll see a pattern. The Arabic letters consist of basic shapes, to which one or more dots are added. The Dhivehi letters are formed by using a letter that corresponds to the basic shape and then adding the same dots. This may seem logical, but it fails to take into account the way Maldivians pronounce the letters. This is why there are no less than 6 dotted letters (ޢ, ޡ, ޟ, ވ, ލ, ޜ) whose pronunciations don’t match that of their basic shape.

Now, I would hate to defame the most holy Arabic language (sarcasm), but the fact is, the Arabic script (like most other scripts) does not follow any particular logic. The dotted letters are just unnecessarily importing extra illogicalness.

This post is intended for a Maldivian audience that would be familiar with the Arabic script. But just as an example to those who can’t read Arabic, consider the letter F which is pronounced /f/. In Arabic, if you add two dots on top of that letter (F¨ – pretend the dots are on top), it is pronounced /q/.

Luckily, this problem can be easily fixed. It is simply a matter of remodelling the letters based on the third column, that is, the way Maldivians pronounce them. I think they should look something like these:
It doesn’t really matter where the dots go, as long as the correct letters are used.

Having the letters this way means that the dots can be ignored. This is already the case with the other letters. For example, މަނަް ޭ is the same as ވަތަް ޭ, and ރަް ޤ ޭ is the same as ރަްްްަތ ޭ. However, with the current dotted letters, މަޡ ްްޭ is not the same as ވަޒ ްްޭ, and ރަް ޤ ޭ is not the same as ރަް ްްް. If the dotted letter is pronounced the same way as the undotted letter, it is easier to read.

**Conclusion**

*Thikijehi Thaana* is illogical and in most cases unnecessary. The problem of having the letters look the way people say them can be fixed relatively easily. And while the problem of excessive usage even where it makes no difference could be solved simply by not using the letters, the underlying issues of attitudes regarding cultural and linguistic identity would need to be addressed first. Specifically, Maldivians need to fix this *inferiority complex* they have with Arabs/Arabic. Then they might be able to give their own language the respect it deserves. That does not necessarily mean doing away with *Thikijehi Thaana* entirely, but it certainly does not mean continuing to use it the way it is used now.