

Lesson 6: Noun Cases

Cases

1. Manchu nouns can appear in five possible cases: nominative, genitive, accusative, dative, and ablative.
2. In general, these cases are formed simply by adding the appropriate case marker to the end of the noun. Sometimes they are written linked to the noun (e.g. *boode*), sometimes separate (e.g. *niru de*).
3. There are special forms for pronouns – see the table below.

Nominative case

1. The nominative case is unmarked.
2. The nominative form is used when a noun is serving as the subject (e.g. *si saiyūn*). It is also used when a noun by itself (or noun + simple copula *bi*) serves as a predicate (for instance, in sentences of the form “*noun* is *noun*” neither noun is marked) (e.g. *si manju niyalma bio*).

Genitive case

1. The genitive case is formed by adding an “i” to the noun, with the exceptions of nouns that end with “ng,” to which a “ni” is added.
2. “i” may be written linked to a noun that ends with a vowel other than i though it may also be written separately (e.g., *niyalma i* and *niyalmai* are both acceptable). It must be written separately from any noun ending in a consonant or i (e.g. *jalan i*). “ni” must always be written separately from the noun (e.g. *tsang ni*).
3. Note that genitive *i*, when written separately from the noun, uses a special form of the letter *i*.
4. Functions of the genitive case:
 - a. Possessive (*ere niyalmai boo* – “this person’s home”)
 - b. Attributive (*kubuhe fulgiyan i manju gūsa* – “bordered red Manchu banner”)
 - c. Instrumental (*gala i arambi* – “write with the hand” or “write by hand.”)
 - d. Subject in a dependent clause (*bi ama i tehe boode tembi* – “I live in the house where my father lived,” *tehe* = past participle of *tembi*, meaning “to live”). This usage is similar to one of the uses of Japanese の (e.g. 私が父の住んだ家で住む – “I live in the house where my father lived.”)
 - e. Adverbializer – when following an adjective, *i* changes it into an adverb (*sain i arambi* = do/make/write well)

Accusative case

1. The accusative case is formed by adding “be” to the noun.
2. “be” is usually written separately from the noun, with the exception of a few very common short words (e.g. *ba*, place, in the accusative is usually *babe*).

3. Functions of the accusative case:
 - a. Direct object (*buda be jembi* - “eat the meal.”)
 - b. Motion through (*mederi be jimbi* - “come across the ocean.”)
 - c. With a causative verb, *be* marks the person made to perform an action (*ere niyalma be jebumbi* - “make this person eat”).
4. The accusative marker is frequently dropped when a noun is serving as the direct object if the meaning of the sentence remains clear, usually when the direct object immediately precedes the verb. (e.g. *buda jembi* rather than *buda be jembi*).
5. If there are multiple direct objects, only the final one need be marked with *be* (e.g. *ama eme be hairambi* = “love father and mother”)

Dative case

1. The dative case is formed by adding “de” to the noun.
2. “de” may be written either jointly with the noun (unless it ends in a consonant other than n) or separately. It is perhaps somewhat more common for it to be written separately. *Ere de* and *tere de* are frequently shortened to *ede* and *tede*.
3. Functions of the dative case:
 - a. Location in time or space (*juwan biyai orin de* - “on the twentieth [day] of the tenth month, *boode jakūn niyalma bi* - “there are ten people in the house”)
 - b. Indirect object (*niru be ama de bumbi* - “give the arrow to father”)
 - c. Indirect agent – that is, a meaning like “on account of” or “thanks to” (*ejen i kesi de gūsa de dosimbi* - “enter the banners thanks to/on account of the lord’s grace”)
 - d. Agent of a passive verb – (*i tere niyalma de wabuha* - “he was killed by that person”)
 - e. Destination (*alin de genembi* - “go to the mountain”).

Ablative Case

1. The ablative case is formed by adding “ci” to the noun.
2. Rules for writing are same as with “de”
3. Functions of the ablative case:
 - a. Point of origin in time or space – “from” (*alin ci jimbi* - “come from the mountain”)
 - b. Comparison (*tere ereci sain* - “that is better than this”)

Pronoun Cases

	Nominative	Genitive	Accusative	Dative	Ablative
I	<i>bi</i>	<i>mini</i>	<i>mimbe</i>	<i>minde</i>	<i>minci</i>
you	<i>si</i>	<i>sini</i>	<i>simbe</i>	<i>sinde</i>	<i>sinci</i>
he/she/it	<i>i</i>	<i>ini</i>	<i>imbe</i>	<i>inde</i>	<i>inci</i>
we (incl.)	<i>muse</i>	<i>musai</i>	<i>musebe</i>	<i>musede</i>	<i>museci</i>
we (excl.)	<i>be</i>	<i>meni</i>	<i>membe</i>	<i>mende</i>	<i>menci</i>
you (plural)	<i>suwe</i>	<i>suweni</i>	<i>suwembe</i>	<i>suwende</i>	<i>suwenci</i>
they	<i>ce</i>	<i>ceni</i>	<i>cembe</i>	<i>cente</i>	<i>cenci</i>

Example Sentences

- 12.
- 11.
- 10.
- 9.
- 8.
- 7.
- 6.
- 5.
- 4.
- 3.
- 2.
- 1.