

## LESSON 19

### The Assertive Verb

The Assertive Verb is used to bring part of a sentence forward for emphasis. This is required in Gàidhlig as stress in speech is not usually marked by tonal changes. The Assertive Verb is known to present many problems to the learner and examples of usage are probably best learned off.

The following examples use only the independent form of the verb **Is** which is best translated directly as **It is**. In both literature and spoken Gàidhlig the accepted practice is to shorten **Is** to **'S**, and particularly before words beginning with a vowel or **fh**.

1. To translate **I am, you are, he is, it is** etc when followed by:

a) a proper noun e.g.

'S mise Calum - I'm Calum (lit. It is I Calum)

'S ise Màiri - She's Màiri (lit. It is she Màiri)

'S iadsan Iain is Eilidh - They're John and Helen (lit. It is they John and Helen)

b) a common noun with a definite article e.g.

'S esan am fear? - He's the man?

'S e sin am balach - That's the boy

'S iadsan na h-Albannaich - They're the Scots people

c) a common noun with a possessive adjective e.g.

'S esan m' athair - He's my father

'S e do chù? - It's your dog?

'S e sin mo thaigh - That's my house

d) a pronoun e.g.

'S mise - It's me, I am

Is sinne - It's we, We are

'S tusa - It's you, You are

Is sibhse - It's you, You are,

'S esan - It's he, He is

'S iadsan - It's they, They are

'S ise - It's she, She is

**Note:** All personal pronouns used with the Assertive Verb are usually in their emphatic forms, with **tusa** replacing **thusa** after **Is**

e) demonstrative pronouns, with **'S e** being optional and understood e.g.

('S e) seo ... - This is ...

('S e) sin ... - That is ...

('S e) siud ... - Yon is ...

2. To translate the verb **To Be** when the first word is either (a) an adjective or (b) an indefinite noun. The word order is the reverse of English. The meaning is **very** emphatic and except for category (a) is mostly restricted to the written language.

(a) adjective:

Is bòidheach an là (e) - It's a beautiful day - lit. Is beautiful the day

Is mòr am balach e - The boy is big - lit. Is big the boy

Is furasta a' cheist sin - That question is easy - lit. Is easy that question

(b) an indefinite noun:

Is saor am fear sin - That man is a joiner - lit. Is a joiner that man

Is iasg bradan - A salmon is a fish - lit. Is a fish a salmon

Is banaltram am boireannach seo - She is a nurse - lit. Is a nurse this woman

Note: The Assertive Verb must never be followed directly by a definite or proper noun:

He is the sailor - 'S esan an seòladair - **never** Is an seòladair esan

Mòrag is the singer - 'S i Mòrag an seinneadair **never** Is Mòrag an seinneadair

### Other Forms of the Verb Is

The dependent form of the Assertive Verb is subsumed into the negative and interrogatives which have become simply **Chan, An** and **Nach**

Negative statements:

Cha doirbh a' cheist sin - That question is not difficult

Cha sibhse - It is not you

Chan esan mo bhràthair † - He is not my brother

Cha mhòr am balach e ‡ - He is not a big boy

Chan fhurasta an obair sin \* - That job is not easy

\* **Cha** as usual will lenite the following consonant. However, words beginning with **d, t** or **s** tend to resist lenition after **Cha**.

‡ lenited **f** is silent so **Chan** replaces **Cha** just as it also does before a vowel †.

Interrogative statements:

An tusa mo mhàthair? - Are you my mother?

An e sin do thaigh? - Is that your house?

Am mise do ghràdh? \* - Am I your love?

\* **An** becomes **Am** before words beginning with **b, f, m** or **p**.

Negative Interrogative statements:

Nach math sin? - Isn't that good?

Nach fhurasta a' cheist sin? - Isn't that question easy?

Nach ise do phiuthar? - Is she not your sister?

## Other Tenses of the Assertive Verb

The past and conditional forms are identical and the meaning arises from context.

The independent form is **Bu**, and lenites the following word if possible. Before words beginning with a vowel or **fh** this is contracted to **B'** in both literature and speech:

B' e sin mo bhean - I t was my wife

Bu mhòr am beud - I t was a great pity

B' e sin - That was

The dependent forms in the past and conditional are **Cha bu**, **Am bu** and **Nach bu**. Before a vowel these are contracted to **Cha b'**, **Am b'** and **Nach b'** in both literature and speech:

Cha bu mhise - I t wasn't me

Am b' e sin do chù ? - Was that your dog?

Nach b' ise do phiuthar? - Was she not your sister?

In practice the Assertive Verb is usually followed by a relative clause. In this situation the spoken language mostly only uses its present tense as the tense and meaning are realised from the relative clause that follows, unless greater emphasis is needed:

An ise a bha a' snàmh anns a' mhuir? - Is it (Was it = understood) her who was swimming in the sea?

'S tusa a bha anns an sgoil - I t's (I t was = understood) you who was in school

Cha mhise a bha ann - I t isn't (I t wasn't = understood) me who was there

Nach sinne a bha toilichte? - I sn't it (Wasn't it = understood) us who were pleased?

An e do chù a bha a' comhartaich? - I s (was = understood) that your dog who was barking?

Nach ise do bhean a bha anns an tubaist? - I s (was = understood) is not your wife who was in the accident?

Frequently in spoken Gàidhlig **An e**, **'S e**, **Chan e** and **Nach e** are used before the emphatic personal pronouns when they precede a relative clause. Compare with first four statements in the previous section:

An e ise a bha a' snàmh anns a' mhuir? - Is it (Was it = understood) her who was swimming in the sea?

'S e thusa a bha anns an sgoil - I t's (I t was = understood) you who was in school

Chan e mise a bha ann - I t isn't (wasn't = understood) me who was there

Nach e sinne a bha toilichte? - I sn't it (Wasn't it = understood) us who were pleased?

## The Assertive Verb with the Dependent Clause

The Assertive Verb like all others can be used in reported speech (dependent clause). In general you only need use the independent clause in the present tense as the meaning is realised from the other verbs. In the present tense these are **gur** and **nach**:

Tha mi ag ràdh gur ise mo mhàthair - I say that she is my mother

Tha mi a' creidsinn gur e do chù a bha a' comhartaich - I believe it is (was = realised) your dog who was barking

Bha mi 'n dòchas nach esan a bhiodh ann - I was hoping that he wouldn't be there

## Using the Assertive Verb to Introduce Adverbial and Prepositional Clauses

There is a special form of the Assertive Verb to introduce and emphasise adverbial and prepositional phrases. In practice only the present tense is used as the tense and meaning are realised by the subordinate clause.

In the present tense this is **Is ann**, which in both literature and spoken Gàidhlig is contracted to **'S ann**:

'S ann fon bhòrd a bha am ball - The ball was under the table. (lit. I t's under the table that the ball was)

'S ann a-nochd a chì mi thu - I will see you tonight (lit. I t's tonight I will see you)

'S ann ormsa a tha an cnatan - I have a cold (lit. I t is on me that there is a (the) cold)

The negative **Chan ann**, the interrogatives **An ann** and **Nach ann** are also heard:

Chan ann an-diugh a rugadh mi - I was not born today (lit. I t is not today that I was born)

An ann aig an sgoil a bha thu an-diugh? - Were you in school? (lit. I t is in school that you were today?)

Nach ann tric a bhios tu thall thairis? - Are you not abroad often? (lit. I t is not often that you will be abroad?)

The dependent clause (reported speech) forms are **gur ann** and **nach ann**:

Tha mi a' creidsinn gur ann fon bhòrd a bha am ball - I believe that the ball was under the table (lit. I believe that is under the table that the ball was)

Tha e ag ràdh nach ann tric a bhios e a-muigh - He says that he isn't out often (lit. He says that it is not often that he will be out)

**Be careful and economical with the use of the Assertive Verb in all the above examples as emphasis is always implied by its usage.**

**Two of its more important usage are given in the following sections**

1. You have already met the idiomatic use of the preposition **aig** and its prepositional pronouns. This idiom does not convey a sense of ownership but merely in one's possession:

Tha peann agam - I have a pen

Tha cù agam - I have a dog

Whereas the use of the Assertive Verb with the preposition **le** and its prepositional pronouns conveys a more permanent ownership. The prepositional pronouns themselves are used with their emphatic suffices:

'S ann le Màiri a tha a' chroit - Màiri owns the croft (lit. I t is with Màiri that the croft is)

'S ann leamsa a tha an taigh sin - I own that house (lit. I t is with me that house is)

An ann leatsa a tha an càr? - Do you own the car? (lit. I t is with you the car is?)

Where there is no subordinate clause a more simple structure is frequently heard:

Is le Màiri a' chroit - Màiri owns the croft (lit. I t is with Màiri the croft)

Is leamsa an taigh sin - I own that house (lit. I t is with me that house)

An leatsa an càr? - Do you own the car? (lit. Is it with you the car?)

2. Personal attributes and professions with a sense of permanence and completeness can be conveyed using the prepositional **ann** and its prepositional pronouns with the assertive verb:

'S e saor a tha ann an Iain - Iain is a carpenter (lit. It's a carpenter that is in Iain)

Chan e balach a tha ann - He is not a boy (lit. It's not a boy that is in him)

'S e seòladair a tha ann - He's a sailor (lit. It's a sailor that is in him)

'S e caileag a tha innte - She's a girl (lit. It's a girl that is in her)

As you met in Lesson 17 the verb **To Be** in association with the augmented prepositions of **ann** can also be used to express occupation or state of an individual. This form has less emphasis but may be further elaborated:

Tha e na shaor anns a' chompanaidh sin - He is a carpenter (lit. He is in his carpenter) in that company

Chan eil e na bhalach - He is not a boy (lit. He is not in his boy)

Tha e na sheòladair air a' bhàta seo - He's a sailor (lit. He is in his sailor) on this boat

Tha i na caileig - She's a girl (lit. She is in her girl)

Bha iad nan seinneadairean - They were singers (lit. They were in their singers)

All augmented prepositions are shown in [Appendix 1](#)

## NEW WORDS

### Adjectives

doirbh - difficult

fiadhaich - fierce, wild

sona - happy

eireachdail - handsome

neo-chiontach - innocent

tiugh - thick, dense

### Adverbs

thall thairis - abroad

### Nouns

beud (m) - fault, pity

companaidh (m) - company

lighiche (m) - doctor, medic (commonly: dotair (m))

seinneadair (m) - singer

sgoilear (m) - pupil, scholar

àrdsgoil (f) - high school, secondary school

iolaire (f) - eagle

rùnaire (f) - secretary

bradan (m) - salmon

eun (m) - bird

Sgiathanach (m) - Skye person

Uibhisteach (m) - Uist person

long (f) - ship

### Verbs

comhartaich, comhartaich - bark

snàmh, snàmh - swim

teagaisg, teagasg (do) - teach (to)

## Verbal Phrases

Tha mi 'n dòchas gu - I hope that

Tha thu 'n dòchas gu - You hope that

Tha e 'n dòchas gu - He hopes that

Tha i 'n dòchas gu - She hopes that

Tha sinn an dòchas gu - We hope that

Tha sibh an dòchas gu - You hope that

Tha iad an dòchas gu - They hope that

## EXERCISE 1 Translate into English

1. Is saighdear e
2. Nach bòidheach a' chaileag sin
3. Is e ministear a tha innte
4. Is rùnaire e dhan chompanaidh sin
5. Tha e ag ràdh gur Sgiathanach e
6. Tha mi a' creidsinn gur e Uibhisteach a tha innte
7. An iasg iolaire? Chan e
8. Is i mo phiuthar an seinneadair aig a' chèilidh a-nochd
9. Nach là brèagha e?
10. Is iasg bradan

## EXERCISE 2 Translate into Gàidhlig using the Assertive verb IS. The element to be emphasised has been underlined. Remember adjectives can be stressed using 'S ANN

1. I am a sailor on that ship
2. He is my brother Calum
3. They say that the bird is an eagle
4. We think he is handsome
5. He is a carpenter
6. My brother is a doctor
7. The dog is fierce
8. She is a good singer
9. I am a secretary
10. He is innocent of the crime

## EXERCISE 3 Translate into Gàidhlig using the present tense of the verb TO BE with the augmented pronouns

1. I am a sailor on that ship
2. They say that the bird is an eagle
3. We think he is handsome
4. He is a carpenter
5. My brother is a doctor
6. I am a secretary
7. She is a good singer
8. They are pupils in the high school

**EXERCISE 4 Translate into Gàidhlig using the Assertive verb BU. The element to be emphasised has been underlined. Remember adjectives can be stressed using 'S ANN**

1. I was a sailor on that ship
2. We were happy
3. They say that the bird was an eagle
4. We think he was handsome
5. He was a carpenter
6. My brother was doctor
7. The dog was fierce
8. She was a good singer
9. I was a secretary
10. He was innocent of the crime

**EXERCISE 5 Translate into Gàidhlig using the past of the verb TO BE with the augmented pronouns**

1. I was a sailor on that ship
2. We were happy
3. They say that the bird was an eagle
4. We think he was handsome
5. He was a carpenter
6. My brother was a doctor
7. I was a secretary
8. She was a good singer

**EXERCISE 6 Translate into English**

1. 'S ann an-diugh a bha mi anns a' bhaile
2. 'S ann leotha a tha am bàta
3. 'S ann anns a' mhuir a bha mi a' snàmh
4. 'S ann airsan a tha an dèideadh
5. An ann anns an abhainn a bha thu? Chan ann
6. Nach ann tric a bha thu tinn nuair a bha thu òg? 'S ann
- 7a. An leatsa an càr? 'S e
- 7b. An ann leatsa a tha an càr? 'S ann
8. Ann an a-màireach a bhios tu a' falbh air saor-làithean? Chan ann
9. 'S ann ormsa a bha còta tiugh blàth
10. An ann anns an sgoil sin a bha thu a' teagasg? 'S ann

### LESSON 19: ANSWERS 1

1. He's a soldier
2. Isn't that girl beautiful
3. She's a minister
4. He's secretary for (to) that company
5. He says he's a Skyeman
6. I believe that she's a Uibhist woman
7. Is an eagle a fish? No
8. My sister is the singer at the ceilidh tonight
9. Isn't it a lovely day?
10. A salmon is a fish

### LESSON 19: ANSWERS 2 The most common is given

- 1a. 'S e seòladair air an luing sin a tha annam
- 1b. Is seòladair air an luing sin mi
2. 'S esan Calum, mo bhràthair
- 3a. Tha iad ag ràdh gur e iolair a tha anns an eun
- 3b. Tha iad ag ràdh gur iolair an t-eun
- 4a. Tha sinn a' smaointinn gur ann eirreachdail a tha e
- 4b. Tha sinn a' smaointinn gur eirreachdail e
- 5a. 'S e saor a tha ann
- 5b. Is saor e
- 6a. 'S e dotair a tha nam bhràthair
- 6b. Is dotair mo bhràthair
- 7a. 'S ann fiadhaich a tha an cù
- 7b. Is fiadhaich an Cù
- 8a. 'S e seinneadair math a tha innte
- 8b. Is seinneadair math!
- 9a. 'S e rùnaire a tha annam
- 9b. Is rùnaire mi
- 10a. Is neo-chiontach den eucoir e
- 10b. 'S ann neo-chiontach den eucoir a tha e

### LESSON 19: ANSWERS 3

1. Tha mi nam sheòladair air an luing sin
2. Tha iad ag ràdh gu bheil an t-eun na iolair
3. Tha sinn a' smaointinn gu bheil e eirreachdail
4. Tha e na shaor
5. Tha mo bhràthair na dhotair
6. Tha mi nam rùnaire
7. Tha i na seinneadair math
8. Tha iad nan sgoilearan anns an àrdscoil

### LESSON 19: ANSWERS 4 The most common is given

- 1a. 'S e seòladair air an luing sin a tha annam
- 1b. B' e seòladair air an luing sin a bha annam
- 1c. Bu sheòladair air an luing sin mi
- 2a. 'S ann sona a bha sinn
- 2b. Bu shona sinn
- 3a. Tha iad ag ràdh gur e iolair a bha anns an eun

### LESSON 19: ANSWERS 6 The emphasised element is underlined

1. I was in town today
2. They own the boat
3. I was swimming in the sea
4. He has (the) toothache
5. Were you in the river? No
6. Were you not often sick when you were young? Yes
- 7a. & 7b. Do you own the car? Yes
8. Will you be going away on holiday tomorrow? No
9. I wore a thick warm coat
10. Were you teaching in that school? Yes

### LESSON 19: ANSWERS 5

1. Bha mi nam sheòladair air an luing sin
2. Bha sinn sona
3. Tha iad ag ràdh gun robh an t-eun na iolair
4. Tha sinn a' smaointinn gun robh e eirreachdail
5. Bha e na shaor
6. Bha mo bhràthair na dhotair
7. Bha mi nam rùnaire
8. Bha i na seinneadair math