

Lesson 22

Advanced Pronouns

Inflected Pronouns

The pronouns of Láadan are perfectly serviceable in their neutral forms. However, we can convey more information about our perception of the person being referred to by inflecting the pronoun. This is accomplished by changing the vowel of the base form away from the “e” of the neutral form.

We can incorporate the meaning “beloved” by changing the “e” to “a.” To imbue the pronoun with the sense “honored,” we change the vowel to “i.” The third inflection of the pronoun brings the meaning “despised;” to do this, rather than changing the vowel, we attach the prefix “lh-” (PEJ) to the base form (of course, we must also insert the “e” to separate the “lh” from the consonant that begins the base form).

In the following excerpt from an online conversation with Suzette Haden Elgin, the italic paragraph is the question posed to Dr. Elgin; the rest is her response:

Whereas I can reconcile with myself 2nd & 3rd person usage (e.g. “na,” “ni,” “lhene”), I have some difficulty with 1st person (e.g. “la,” “li,” “lhele”). Is the agent ambiguous for all persons (“na” meaning “you, beloved by someone”) rather than specific (“na” meaning “you, beloved by me”)? I have some difficulty not seeing “la” and “li” as rather conceited if the agent isn’t ambiguous.

That’s a very good question, and I don’t mean that in the cliché sense—it really is a good question; it falls into the area of linguistics called pragmatics. But you’ve already answered it for yourself. It certainly would be conceited and arrogant for anyone to refer to himself or herself in the first person using the “beloved” or “honored” pronoun forms. There might be special and extraordinary situations in which that would be appropriate, but they would be extremely rare. (Example: in a very intimate situation, one lover might say to the other, “I am so honored to be your beloved,” or something of the kind, and that might involve the beloved/honored pronoun forms. And it wouldn’t be likely to happen more than once.) It’s one thing for someone to say “Honored-you” or “Honored-she”; it’s quite another to say “Honored-I.” In referring to oneself, the neutral pronouns would be used 999 out of 1000 times.

Implicit in that answer you may have noticed that, as the questioner puts it, the agent is *not* ambiguous; the “honor” or “love” or “despite” is from the point of view of the speaker. In other words, “na” does mean “you, beloved by me” and “bi” does mean “she, honored by me” and “lhele” does mean “I, despised by myself”.

Reflexive Pronouns

When the Subject and another Case Phrase both refer to the same person, the other Case Phrase uses what is referred to as a reflexive pronoun. In English, this is signalled by the suffix “-self;” in Láadan, we use the infix “-yóo-” between the base form (“le,” “ne,” or “be”) or its inflected form and the number ending (“-Ø,” “-zh” or “-n” for singular, few/several, or many, respectively) and then the case suffix. The result looks similar to the “beye” forms (referred to grammatically as indefinite pronouns), except that reflexive pronouns are not limited to the third person.

One way to present the process of forming advanced pronouns is the schematic at right. Simply select one from each group (of course Ø indicates an optional element). Another way is the full listing presented below.

Person

l- (1st)
n- (2nd)
b- (3rd)

Inflection

-e- (neutral)
-a- (beloved)
-i- (honored)
lhe-e- (despised)

Infix

-Ø-
-báa- (interrogative)
-ye- (indefinite)
-yóo- (reflexive)

Number

-Ø (1)
-zh (2-5)
-n (>5)

Singular Several Many	Singular Several Many	Singular Several Many
1st person	2nd person	3rd person
neutral le (leyóo) lezh (leyóozh) len (leyóon)	neutral ne (neyóo) nezh (neyóozh) nen (neyóon)	neutral be (beyóo) bezh (beyóozh) ben (beyóon)
beloved la (layóo) lazh (layóozh) lan (layóon)	beloved na (nayóo) nazh (nayóozh) nan (nayóon)	beloved ba (bayóo) bazh (bayóozh) ban (bayóon)
honored li (liyóo) lizh (liyóozh) lin (liyóon)	honored ni (niyóo) nizh (niyóozh) nin (niyóon)	honored bi (biyóo) bizh (biyóozh) bin (biyóon)
despised lhele (lheyóo) lhelezh (lheyóozh) lhelen (lheyóon)	despised lhene (lheneyóo) lhenezh (lheneyóozh) lhenen (lheneyóon)	despised lhebe (lhebeyóo) lhebezh (lhebeyóozh) lheben (lhebeyóon)

As you may already have observed, the “-báa-” and “-ye-” infixes are an interrogative marker and an indefinite marker, respectively, that are attached to the “be” (third person pronoun) forms. This would in no way interfere with the “be” portion of the interrogative and indefinite pronouns carrying the sense of “beloved” or “honored” or “despised.”

Singular Several Many	Singular Several Many
interrogative	indefinite
neutral bebáa (beyóo) bebáazh (beyóozh) bebáan (beyóon)	neutral beye (beyóo) beyezh (beyóozh) beyen (beyóon)
beloved babáa (bayóo) babáazh (bayóozh) babáan (bayóon)	beloved baye (bayóo) bayezh (bayóozh) bayen (bayóon)
honored bibáa (biyóo) bibáazh (biyóozh) bibáan (biyóon)	honored biye (biyóo) biyezh (biyóozh) biyen (biyóon)
despised lhebebáa (lhebeyóo) lhebebáazh (lhebeyóozh) lhebebáan (lhebeyóon)	despised lhebeye (lhebeyóo) lhebeyezh (lhebeyóozh) lhebeyen (lhebeyóon)

Examples

Báa meshe nin bayeth?

Will you (many, honored) comfort someone (beloved)?

Báa aril meshe nin niyóoneth?

Will you (many, honored) comfort yourselves?

Notice that, when the honored/beloved/despised form is used in the Subject, it is proper to use that form in the reflexive also—since the same person(s) is(are) being referred to.

Báa eril dóhéthe bibáa shod lethoth?
Who (honored) cleaned my room?
Báa eril dóhéthe bibáa biyóoth?
Who (honored) cleaned themselves?

Bíi ril lhebeyezh yáawithem wi.
Someones (few, despised) clearly are teenagers.
Bíi ril lhebeyezh lhebeyóozhem wi.
Someones (few, despised) clearly are themselves.

When the Subject is an Indefinite (one of the “beye” forms) or an Interrogative (one of the “bebáa” forms), the Reflexive will be the corresponding third person form (the matching “be” form with the “-yóo-” infix instead of the “-ye-” or “-báa-” infix). The inflection (neutral/love/honor/despise) and number (single/several/many) will be the same as the Subject—since, again, the same person(s) is(are) being referred to.

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Báa eril bedi sherídan Ána bitha ehasheth?

E: _____

2 Bóo ril menahina nazzh, shem lethath.

E: _____

3 Bíi ril menédeshub merashe lhebeyen Máyel bath; báa menime medóyom bebáazh bath?

E: _____

4 Bé aril dóhada dená bizhetho bayóoneth wa.

E: _____

5 Bíi merathi lhenezh radaletth wa; bóo menahal doól.

E: _____

6 Bíi eril dudódóon berídan Thíben lhebetha di Láadanethu lethoth wa.

E: _____

In #1, note that we can use the inflected pronoun forms wherever we use a pronoun. The pronoun need not be the primary nominal in its case phrase. The inflected form here grants the attribute “honored” to Anna.

Also in #1, did you successfully form a word for “astronomy?” Consider that “astronomy” is the “science of stars:” “ehash” [e- (SCIOF) + ash (star)]. This form also suggests “ehashá” (astronomer) [ehash (astronomy) + -á (DOER)].

In #3, since the “he/she/it” referred to in both the clauses here is the same person, we would render them both with the same inflection (neutral/loved/honored/despised)—unless your attitude toward that person changed between one clause and the next, which would certainly be strongly indicated by a mismatch in the inflection of these two pronouns.

Also in #3, how did you do forming a word for “protect?” Please consider that “to protect” means “to make safe;” try “dóyom” (to protect; to shield; to safeguard) [dó- (CAUSEto) + yom (be safe)].

In #5, notice the lack of a Subject in the second clause, despite the rule that the Subject is not optional in a Láadan request. This is perfectly acceptable because it’s the same as the Subject in the first clause. Human languages resist the restatement of identical information in successive clauses. Of course, it could be included for emphasis, as it was in #3, above.

In #6, we’ve used the very formal “dódóon” (CAUSEto + be correct). In more casual usage, “dóon” would be quite sufficient; the fact that there’s an Object in the sentence is sufficient to convey the information that someone is correcting (active verb), not simply being correct (stative verb).

Change the inflection of the asterisk-marked *pronoun* to that described; translate into English before and after.

7 Báa eríli meden *lhebeyezh lhebeyóozheth*?
beloved

E: _____
L: _____
E: _____

8 Bíi ril liriul dadem mahinathu *binetho* wa.
despised

E: _____
L: _____
E: _____

9 Bé aril doth *li* *nath* wa.
despised honored

E: _____
L: _____
E: _____

10 Báa eril merahíthi hemen *lhenenetho*?
beloved

E: _____
L: _____
E: _____

11 Bíi wil owahal woloyo wodizh *bazhethe* wa.
despised

E: _____
L: _____
E: _____

12 Báa ril mehan *biyen* wobalin wohábedáth?
beloved

E: _____
L: _____
E: _____

In #7, remember that the Reflexive of an Indefinite pronoun deletes the “-ye-” infix and inserts a “-yóo-” infix in that same place.

In #9, did the form “li” (I, honored) give you pause? Well it might. It could be taken as being akin to the “royal we” in English, whereby a monarch refers to her/himself in the plural to set themselves apart from those they rule—or, as might be argued, to demonstrate linguistically that they are speaking for their domain, including all their subjects. The post-substitution “lhele” (I, despised) is much less troublesome; it simply speaks of the speaker’s despite of her/himself.

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 Are someones (honored several) hungry?

L: _____

14 Would that (despised singular) you clothe yourself.

L: _____

15 I swear (honored several) your alien creature amazed the zoologist.

L: _____

16 Will (honored singular) someone heal her/himself?

L: _____

17 (Honored many) You are, clearly, yourselves.

L: _____

18 The traveler was unwilling to perceive some-pregnant-and-despised-one, I hear.

L: _____

In #14, did you remember that “bud” (clothing), when used as a verb, means “to clothe?”

In #15, how did you do creating a word for “zoologist?” Consider that zoology is the study of animals: “emid” [e- (SCIoF) + mid (creature)]. Given that, “zoologist” is “emidá” [emid (zoology) + -á (DOER)].

In #18, notice that pronouns, including Indefinite pronouns can also be modified by a Relativized verb.

Answers

- 1 Did (honored) Anna's (birth) niece learn astronomy?
- 2 Prithee go to sleep (begin to sleep), my (birth) (beloved few) offspring.
- 3 Several (despised) intend to torment (beloved) Michael; who (several) are willing to protect him (beloved).
- 4 I promise honored-few-their assistants will make them-beloved-many-selves laugh.
- 5 You (several despised) lack nothing as I perceive it; prithee get to work (begin working) at last.
- 6 (Despised) Steven's aunt tried to correct my speaking of Láadan.
- 7 Did some-despised-few-ones help themselves, long ago?
Báa eríli meden bayezh bayóozheth?
Did some-beloved-few-ones help themselves, long ago?
- 8 (Honored, many) Their picture of flowers is extremely colorful.
Bíi ril lirihi dadem mahinathu lhebentheth wa.
(Despised, many) Their picture of flowers is extremely colorful.
- 9 "We" (I, honored) promise "We" (I, honored) will follow (beloved) you.
Bé aril doth lhele nith wa.
(Despised) I promise I will follow (honored) you.
- 10 Were (despised, many) your (other) bushes short?
Báa eril merahíthi hemen nanetho?
Were (beloved, many) your bushes short?
- 11 Would that (beloved several) their (no reason) black kettle be unusually warm.
Bíi wil owahal wolooyo wodizh lhebentheth wa.
Would that (despised several) their (no reason) black kettle be unusually warm.
- 12 Do (honored many) someone know the old farmer?
Báa ril mehan bayen wobalin wohábedáth?
Do (beloved many) someone know the old farmer?
- 13 Báa ril meyide biyeth?
- 14 Bíi wil bud lheneth lheneyóoth wa.
- 15 Bé eril dómíi wonée womid nizeheth emidáth wa.
- 16 Báa aril dutha biye biyóoth?
- 17 Bíi ril nin niyóonem wi.
- 18 Bíi ril ranime láad imá wolawida wolhebeyeth wáa.