

Lesson 54

The Pejorative Affix & Inherently Negative Words

In Láadan, there is a consonant, “lh”, that English does not have.

It is a sound with a hissing quality, and is not especially pleasant to hear. In Láadan it occurs only in words that are themselves references to something unpleasant, and can be added to words to give them a negative meaning. This is patterned after a similar feature of Navajo, and is something so very handy that I have always wished it existed in English.

The Pejorative in Láadan

lh-; -lh-; -lh

Affix (any): pejorative

The “lh” sound can be a prefix (you may need to add an “e” between it and an initial consonant) or a suffix (an “e” may be needed in case of a final consonant). As you may also remember from that “Translation” lesson, an existing “l” sound in the word can be changed to a “lh” to make the word pejorative. None of these changes would be found in a dictionary; they are made on-the-fly and understood to be temporary.

The sound “lh” can also be an “infix;” this is most common when forming new words from combinations of other words: where vowels would abut, the “lh” conveniently provides the alternation of vowel sounds and consonant sounds that Láadan demands while also conveying the negative meaning.

The second use of the sound “lh” occurs in words with an inherent negative meaning. These would be found in a dictionary. These unfortunate words also comprise our vocabulary for this lesson.

From Suzette Haden Elgin in an article on creating words to add to Láadan vocabulary:

The consonant LH is a consonant like any other consonant, and it's entirely legitimate to use it to add new words. However, it's also a morpheme that has as its specific purpose the semantic information that the item it occurs in has a negative [LS: pejorative] meaning. To use it in any other way would create misleading and ambiguous items.

For example, the word for “apple” is “doyu”; one way to refer to a rotten apple, or an apple with a worm inside it, or an apple that is in some other way repugnant, is to call it “doyulh” instead of just “doyu.” Doing that doesn't create a new word of Láadan meaning something like “nasty apple,” it just uses LH the way English would use an adjective. On the other hand, there is the word for “rape,” which is “ralh”; in that case, the negative meaning carried by LH is an inherent part of the word.

For either of these uses of LH, the only rule is that LH must be added in such a way that the alternating consonant/vowel pattern is preserved and no other rule of the sound system is broken. For example, the word for food is “ana.” If you wanted to say of some particular food that it was spoiled, or tasted awful, or anything of that kind, you could say either “analh” or “lhana”; both are acceptable and both would be understood to have that meaning. If you are constructing a new word of Láadan that has an inherently negative meaning you would follow the same rule, but your choice would be more final. It would be unlikely, and uneconomical, for the dictionary of Láadan to include both “analh” and “lhana.”

Vocabulary

erabalh
temptation
ílhí
disgust
lha
sin
lhebe
hatred
lhoho
shame

lhu
poison
ralh
rape
shulhe
to not-fit; to be inappropriate; to be wrong for
ulhad
to betray
zhilhad
prisoner

The above are all original words not derived from any others. On the other hand, sometimes, when forming a new word with an inherently negative meaning, we use extant words and word-parts that suggest the meaning we're after, but the negativized meaning goes beyond the combination of words and the "pejorative" influence to acquire a separate meaning of its own; such words would be found in dictionaries. The Additional Vocabulary section in this lesson presents some words of this kind.

Additional Vocabulary

dólhó-
Prefix(v): force to VERB [dó- (CAUSEto) + -lh- (PEJ)] {AB}
lháada
smirk [lh- (PEJ) + áada (smile)] {AB}
lhada
deride; scoff at; laugh-to-scorn [lh- (PEJ) + ada (laugh)] {AB}
lhed
discord-in-the-home [lh- (PEJ) + lod (household)]
ninálh
the one to blame [nin (cause) + -á (DOER) = niná (the one responsible) + -lh (PEJ)]
rahlh
slave [ra- (NON) + hu (ruler) + -lh (PEJ)]
ralhoham
love of evil [ra- (NON) + -lh- (PEJ) + oham (love of the holy)]
ranahálh
alcoholic [rana (beverage) + -á (DOER) = ranahá (drinker) + -lh (PEJ)]
rashelh
torture [ra- (NON) + she (comfort) = rashe (torment) + -lh (PEJ)]
rashonelh
war [ra- (NON) + shon (peace) = rashon (quarrel) + -lh (PEJ)]
yodálh
glutton [yod (eat) + -á (DOER) = yodá (diner) + -lh (PEJ)]

Of course you noticed two new words, not so pejorative, embedded within that last set:

niná
the one responsible [nin (cause) + -á (DOER)]
ranahá
drinker; one who drinks [rana (beverage) + -á (DOER)]

Some more words might have been added to our Vocabulary list except that we've already seen them:

lhith
fret [lh- (PEJ) + lith (think)]
lhitharil
worry [lhith (fret) + aril (FUT)]
lhitheril
regret [lhith (fret) + eril (PAST)]
waálh
Evidence Word: information presented as "of dubious reliability"—and the speaker believes the source for the information is lying on purpose with ill intent
zholh
noise [zho (sound) + -lh (PEJ)]

Did you notice the difference in notation among "lh-" as a prefix, "-lh-" as an infix, and "-lh" as a suffix? This notational distinction, while not semantically distinctive among the pejorative affixes, can elsewhere be very important: for example, the prefix "á-" (INFANT) is very different from the suffix "-á" (DOER).

Examples

Our examples will not necessarily incorporate the vocabulary above. We can now use this new tool to cast a negative light on any word we've learned to this point.

Bíi eril meyod lezh thilith wa.

We ate fish.

Bíi eril meyod lezh thilhith wa.

We ate (tainted) fish.

Báa ham rul bebáasha?

Where's the cat?

Bíi nehina be thom lethosha nol wa.

She's asleep on my pillow again.

Báa ham rulh bebáasha?

Báa ham lherul bebáasha?

Báa ham rulelh bebáasha?

Where's the darned cat?

Bíid nehina be thom lethosha nol wa.

[Angry] She's asleep on my pillow again.

Notice that the “darned cat” concept is expressed equally well by converting the “l” to “lh” or by adding the “lh-” prefix or the “-lh” suffix.

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Báa loláad yodálh lhohoth?

E: _____

2 Bíi eril loláad le ílhi úwáanú rabalh oba ranahálhetha wa.

E: _____

3 Báa ralh ibem e lham? Em, i ralhá ibálhem i lhahám íi wi.

E: _____

4 Bíi meshulhe dáan danethu withidethu withizheth; mehulhad ben wohohóo behizheth wa.

E: _____

5 Bíide eril ham le marisha sholhanenal bud, ana, i rana raden wo.

E: _____

6 Báa rilrili bere loláad ra with oham, ébere dush loláad be ralhoham? E rilrili loláad be lash mehedeláad beyen mehéeda dalehóo hinehétheháadim?

E: _____

In #2, we see the word “**rabalh**” (**reek, stink**) [**ra-** (NON) + **aba** (be fragrant) + **-lh** (PEJ)].

In #3, we see “**doer**” forms for “**lha**” (**sin**), “**ralh**” (**rape**), and “**ib**” (**crime**). It is interesting that “**ibálh**” (**criminal**) is always formed using the pejorative; the official Láadan dictionary contains no non-pejorative word for “**criminal**.” If there were such a word, “**ibá**” [**ib** (crime) + **-á** (DOER)]—without the pejorative—might refer to a person who committed a crime, but who could not be classified as a “**criminal**.” One could not possibly hold the same expectation for “**rapist**” as for “**ibá**,” sensibly, the root “**ralh**” (**rape**) already incorporates the pejorative.

In #5, we see the form “**sholhan**,” translated here “**all alone**” with the suggestion “**abandoned**.” Another entirely feasible translation for “**sholhan**” might be “**lonely**,” however, it has never been proposed as the official translation for this form; consequently, it is treated here as a simple on-the-fly formation lending a pejorative flavor to alone-ness.

In #6, we see a double-embedding. The clause “**mehéeda dalehóo hin**” (**these many things are sacred**) is embedded as the Object of the relative clause “**mehedeláad beyen...**” (**many believe...**), giving a translation of “**these (many) things that many believe are sacred**.” This is embedded, in turn, as the Goal of “**loláad be lash...**” (**she feels indifference...**). Perhaps this structure could be clarified by some bracketing: E rilrili loláad be lash [mehedeláad beyen {mehéeda dalehóo hin} ehéth]eháadim? This would give a “structural” translation: Or does she perhaps feel indifference toward [(that) many believe {these THINGS are sacred}]?

Make the asterisk-marked *word* pejorative; translate into English before and after.

7 Báad eril *nórashe* ne zhihadeth bebáaya?

E:

L:

E:

8 Bíi láadom le ulhadá; eril be *leb* lethom wa.

E:

L:

E:

9 Bíith thóhel *zhub* beth bethoth oyo lethasha nil wa.

E:

L:

E:

10 Bóo di ne ledim eril láad Elízhabeth *zho* romidethu bim oyunanehee.

E:

L:

E:

11 Bíidu wóoban lhed lhebeth; héeya *niná* wo.

E:

L:

E:

12 Báa eril meredeb ewithá *merashon* olowod shineháa?

E:

L:

E:

Of course, the word “ulhadá” in #8 holds no mystery for you: it means “**betray**er” [ulhad (**betray**) + -á (**DOER**)].

Also in #8, the word “lheb” [lh- (**PEJ**) + leb (**enemy**)] in the transformed sentence still means “**enemy**,” but with much stronger pejorative overtones than “leb.”

In #9, the transformed sentence uses “lhezhub” (**noxious insect**). The official Láadan dictionary *does* have this as an entry separate from “zhub” (**insect**).

In #12, did you correctly interpret “ewithá” (**anthropologist**) [e- (**SCIoF**) + with (**person**) = ewith (**anthropology**) + -á (**DOER**)]?

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 [WARN-AFRAID] The physician has many drugs and poisons in her bag.

L: _____

14 [ANGRY] The slave is unwilling to show respect (despite neg circ) [self-evident].

L: _____

15 Prithee buy the plate, bowl and cup I made using seven layers of metal.

L: _____

16 Anthony will write the symbol on paper with a new-fangled writing-implement.

L: _____

17 [PAIN] The dratted snake struck me suddenly.

L: _____

18 I was tempted; I took the foul object; now the family is forcing me to give it back because of discord.

L: _____

In #16, did you succeed in forming a word for “new-fangled”? Consider who uses this term—and why. It is used by those who are, or profess to be, content with the old ways—and to whom new ways are not welcome; in other words, it is pejorative. So, for the term “new-fangled” we could form “lhebun” [lh- (PEJ) + bun (new)] or “bunelh” [bun (new) + -lh (PEJ)].

In the answer to #18, we’ve introduced a new formation: “raban” (to take away) [ra- (NON) + ban (give)]. Do not confuse this new formation with “bel” which means “to take,” but does not mean “to take away from” or “to steal;” “bel” is limited to the “transport” sense of “to take.”

Also in #18, notice that there are two Objects in the third clause. The first is the object of “dólhó-” (FORCE_{to}), and the second is the Object of “ban” (give). This sort of thing will happen as the very-Láadan process of word formation and embellishment proceeds; it will not lead to confusion, promise!

Answers

- 1 Is the glutton ashamed?
- 2 I was disgusted because the alcoholic's body reeked.
- 3 Is rape a crime or a sin? Yes, and the rapist is clearly also a criminal and a sinner.
- 4 The words of man's language don't fit a woman; they all, each and every one, betray her.
- 5 [NARRATIVE, MADEUP] I was on an island all alone (abandoned?) without clothing, food or drink.
- 6 If perhaps a person didn't feel love for the holy, then must X feel love for evil? Or might she feel indifference toward those things that some believe are sacred?
- 7 [ANGRY] When did you stop tormenting the prisoner?
Báad eril nórashelh ne zhihadeth bebáaya?
[ANGRY] When did you stop torturing the prisoner?
- 8 I recognize the betrayer; X was my enemy.
Bíi láadom le ulhadá; eril be lheb lethom wa.
I recognize the betrayer; X was my bitter enemy.
- 9 [PAIN] An insect has just made its home inside my nose.
Bíith thóhel lhezhub beth bethoth oyo lethasha nil wa.
[PAIN] A noxious insect has just made its home inside my nose.
- 10 Pray tell me whether Elizabeth heard the sound of the four wild animals.
Bóo di ne ledim eril láad Elízabeth zholh romidethu bim oyunanehé.
Pray tell me whether Elizabeth heard the noise of the four wild animals.
- 11 [POETRY, MADEUP] Discord in the home gives birth to hatred; fear is the responsible one.
Bíidu wóoban lhed lhebeth; héeya ninálh wo.
[POETRY, MADEUP] Discord in the home gives birth to hatred; fear is the one to blame.
- 12 Did the anthropologists find the two groups that were quarreling?
Báa eril meredeb ewithá merashonelh olowod shineháa?
Did the anthropologists find the two groups that were at war [lit.: that were warring]?
- 13 Béeya thi eduthahá desheth i lhuth menedebe dimod bethosha wáa.
- 14 Bíid ranime dam rahulh ohehenath wi.
- 15 Bóo eb ne eril el le rineth, bineth i nith bire badazhethunan umeháath.
- 16 Bíi aril thod Átheni uzeth melesha wolhebun wodalelethodewanenan wa.
- 17 Bíith eril olob ezhalh leth bishibenal wa.
- 18 Bíi eril loláad le erabalh; raban le dalheleth; ril dólhónéban onida leth lhebeth rashawáan wa.