

Lesson 64

Comparisons, Pt 1

Implicit Comparison

The culture embodied in Láadan does not foster competition to the same degree that those inherent in man-languages do. Consequently, comparatives do not come as easily in Láadan as they do in most man-languages. One way we *can* effect comparison is to *imply* a comparison.

To do this, we state that the two or more things being compared share a quality, each to a different degree. To this end, we use the same verb for each—but with different degree markers. The difference in the degree markers will imply which is more intensely VERBed than the other—*voilà*, instant comparison. Of course, we could use the *same* degree marker for two or more of them; we would then be stating that they are equally VERBed.

Examples

In these examples, a fairly literal transposition from Láadan will be followed by a more natural English translation.

Bíi melirihal babí zhe melirihul mahina wa.

The birds are unusually colorful like the flowers are extremely colorful.

The flowers are more colorful than the birds.

Please notice that the comparisons here are not explicit. The speaker states that the birds and the flowers are both highly colorful. We are able to infer that the flowers are more so from the fact that they are presented as colorful to an “**extreme degree**” (melirihul) whereas the birds are presented as colorful only to an “**unusual degree**” (melirihal).

Bíi mehíthi yu, i mehíthihul mahina, izh mehíthihel mi wa.

The fruit are high, and the flowers are extremely high, but the leaves are scarcely high.

The flowers are higher than the fruit, but they are both much higher than the leaves.

Notice also that the implied form is quite flexible. We can use it to compare two or even more things in the same sentence. And the implied comparison comes with (from, actually) an explicit statement about actual degrees of VERBing—that some things are not very VERB at all (like the leaves)—and that some are just ordinarily or highly VERB (like the fruit or the flowers).

Vocabulary Recap: Degree Markers

-hel

Suffix (verb): to a trivial degree

-hil

Suffix (verb): to a minor degree

-Ø

Null Suffix (verb): to a neutral degree; no statement about degree

-hal

Suffix (verb): to an unusual degree

-hul

Suffix (verb): to an extreme degree

-háalish

Suffix (verb): to an extraordinary degree

Vocabulary

báanibel

to give and take [ban (give) + i (and) + bel (take/bring)] {SH}

badazhel

smith-craft [badazh (metal) + el (make)] {AB}

badazhelá

smith [badazhel (smith-craft) + -á (doer)] {AB}

lóothi

be black and white [loyo (black) + líithi (white)]

nóowid

be big and little

sholalan

be alone in a crowd of people [sholan (alone)]

yéshile

be good and bad

zhethal

be fair; be just; be equitable [zhe (alike) + thal (good)] {AB}

zhethaleshub

to police; to act as police [zhethal (just(ice)) + shub (do)] {AB}

zhethaleshubá

police officer; one who polices [zhethaleshub (to police) + -á (doer)] {AB}

In “báanibel,” “lóothi,” “nóowid,” and “yéshile” we meet a class of Láadan verbs that contain diametrically opposed qualities within the same word. These are indicative of a reality where something is not entirely one thing nor its opposite but a blending of the two; anything so described contains both opposites in one.

Exercises

Translate the following into English, both literally and in the colloquial English comparative.

1 Bídi yéshile halid, i yéshilehul ralima wa.

E:

E:

2 Bíi shel emath, izh shelehal elosh, i shelehel ezho wi.

E:

E:

3 Bíi balinehel wehehá; balineháalish shinehothul letha wa.

E:

E:

4 Bíi éthe idon, izh éthehul don wa.

E:

E:

5 Bíidu shohal dosh, íizha shohel dim bethu we.

E:

E:

6 Bíidi meénan hom, i meénanehal yun wi.

E:

E:

Form implicit comparisons from the supplied verb and nouns (to the degrees indicated); translate into English, both literally and colloquially.

7 léli, hob (minor), ódon hi (unusual)

L:

E:

E:

8 duthel, eyon (unusual), eróo (extreme), eri (extraordinary)

L:

E:

E:

9 dazh, od (extreme), thom (extraordinary)

L:

E:

E:

10 íthi, eril sháad with bodim (unusual), eril benem with bethesha (minor)

L:

E:

E:

11 bú, Mázhareth (unusual), hothul betha (extraordinary)

L:

E:

E:

12 bol, thosh sháaleya ril (trivial), thosh sháaleya bim eril (extreme)

L:

E:

E:

In the answer provided for #12, did you note that the Auxiliaries as well as the Time Case markers are unnecessary? The construction “sháal # AUX” clearly marks a time, so the Time Case affix is not needed. And the fact that one is set in “sháal ril” (today) clearly indicates it’s in the present time, while the other just as clearly places the action “sháal bim eril” (four days ago)—clearly past, no Auxiliaries needed for either.

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 [LOVE] Beloved-your eyes are bluer (extreme) than the lake (neutral).

L:

14 The horse is faster (unusual) than the pig (trivial); the bird is faster (extreme) yet.

L:

15 The water was still (neutral), but the air was utterly (extraordinary) still.

L:

16 The fish was not so (unusual) orange as leaves in autumn (extraordinary).

L:

17 The desert is much (extreme) farther than the ocean is (neutral).

L:

18 A tooth (neutral) is much less hard than metal (extreme).

L:

Answers

- 1 Competition is good and bad, and mistrust (int, Ø, -) is extremely good and bad.
Mistrust (int, Ø, -) is both much better and much worse than competition.
- 2 Architecture is rigorous, but economy is unusually rigorous, and acoustics is extremely rigorous.
Acoustics is much more rigorous than economy, but architecture is rather less rigorous than either.
- 3 The storekeeper is not very (trivially) old; my great grandmother is extraordinarily old.
My great grandmother is ever so much older than the storekeeper.
- 4 The brush is clean, but the comb is extremely clean.
The comb is much cleaner than the brush.
- 5 [POETIC/DREAM] The burden is unusually heavy, although its container is trivially heavy.
[POETIC/DREAM] The burden is much heavier than its container.
- 6 [DIDACT] Clearly, nectar is sweet (neutral), and an orange is unusually sweet.
[DIDACT] Clearly, an orange is somewhat sweeter than nectar.
- 7 Bii lélihil hob; lélihal ódon hi wa.
Butter is a little yellow; this cheese is quite yellow.
This cheese is quite a bit yellower than butter.
- 8 Bii duthelhal eyon, duthelhaul eróo, i duthelhaalish eri wa.
Government is unusually useful, agriculture is extremely useful, and history is extraordinarily useful.
While agriculture is more useful than government, by my lights history is much more useful than either.
- 9 Bii wil dazhehul od, i dazhehaalish thom wa.
Would that the fabric were extremely soft and the pillow were extraordinarily soft.
I wish the cloth were almost as soft as the pillow.
- 10 Bii íthihal eril sháad with bodimeháa; íthihil eril benem with betheshaháa wa.
The person who went to the mountain is unusually tall; the person who stayed home is slightly tall (minor).
The person who went to the mountain is taller than the person who stayed home.
- 11 Bii búhal Mázhareth; búhaalish hothul betha wáa.
Margaret is pretty strange; her grandmother is extraordinarily odd.
Margaret is much less odd than (or: nowhere nearly so odd as) her grandmother.
- 12 Bii ril bolehel thosh sháaleya ril; eril bolehaul thosh sháaleya bim eril wa.
The sky today is trivially cloudy; four days ago the sky was extremely cloudy.
The sky today is not nearly so cloudy as it was four days ago.
- 13 Biiili meleyihul oyi natha; leyi wilidun wa.
- 14 Bii ralóolohal omid; ralóolohel muda; ralóolohul babí wa.
- 15 Bii eril wam ili, izh wamehaalish shum wa.
- 16 Bii eril layunehal thili; melayunehaalish mi wemoneya wa.
- 17 Bii thedehul shée, i thed mela wáa.
- 18 Bii radazh dash; radazhehul badazh wáa.