

Lesson 65

Comparisons, Pt 2

Explicit Comparison

[(Aux) “hesho” [verb: surpass] (Neg) CP–S CP–O ...]

hesho

to surpass (in comparatives)

The implicit comparison is very flexible and useful, but occasionally we don’t have all the information, or the point of our discourse would be obfuscated by the inclusion of the degrees of VERBing found in each of the things being compared.

As a general principle, the form of an explicit comparative statement involves a statement that two or more things share some characteristic followed by a statement that one of them surpasses the other or others. No information need be provided beyond the fact that one or another of the things surpasses.

Suzette Haden Elgin gives this account of her answer to the expressed need for an explicit comparative structure in Láadan.

This came up in an issue of the newsletter that (briefly) was published by the original Láadan Network. The solution I chose was based on the comparative construction used in Kumeyaay, a Native American language of California. In Kumeyaay, when you want to say “The tree is taller than the bush” you say, literally, “The tree is tall; the bush is tall; the tree wins.” That’s the basic pattern, and it works very well. Suppose in Láadan you want to say that X is more beautiful than Y, or that Y is less beautiful than X. It’s done by saying, literally, “X is beautiful; Y is beautiful; X surpasses.” (Or “Y is beautiful; X is beautiful; X surpasses.” The order is irrelevant.) For “nobody surpasses,” (X and Y are equally beautiful, X is as beautiful as Y), you’d use “rawith,” the word for “nobody.” The verb for “surpasses” is “hesho;” I have it in my dictionary as “hesho—to surpass; used in comparatives.”

Examples

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

Bíi íthi yu wa. Íthi mi. Hesho mi.

The fruit is high. The leaf is high. The leaf surpasses.

The leaf is higher than the fruit.

Bíi mehiya edemid i zhub hi wa. Hesho zhub.

A mouse and this insect are small. The insect surpasses.

This insect is smaller than a mouse.

Notice in the examples above that the sentences after the first need neither Type-of-Sentence Words nor Evidence Words. In connected speech (or writing), when these two words would remain the same they need not be repeated for sentences after the first—though of course they may be, at the speaker’s discretion.

Bíi melaya mi i mahina wi; báa hesho mahina?

The leaf and the flower are red (obviously); does the flower surpass?

Is the flower redder than the leaf?

Here, of course, the Type-of-Sentence Word and Evidence Word must be included in the second clause because they differ from those in the first. Of course, a question requires no Evidence Word, so none is included in the second clause here.

Bíi melaya mi i mahina wi; hesho bebáa?

The leaf and the flower clearly are red; what surpasses?
Which is redder, the flower or the leaf?

This is only a slight variation on the previous example, but with a form of the word “bebáa” included, the second clause is obviously a question, so the interrogative Type-of-Sentence Word can be omitted. However, a Type-of-Sentence Word can always be included even when not necessary; it remains perfectly grammatical.

Bíi meyide sháawith i háawith i áwith; mehesho áwith i háawith; heshohul áwith wa.

The adult, the child and the baby are hungry; the baby and the child surpass; the baby surpasses very much.

The child is hungrier than the adult; the baby is much hungrier than either of them.

Yes, we can combine explicit comparisons (hesho vs heshohul) with implicit comparisons—to great effect, as we see here.

When “hesho” takes an Object, it is the person or thing that is surpassed:

Bíi methed beth letho, hi Ána betho, i hi omátho wa; hesho hi letho hi Ána bethoth, izh ra hi omáthoth.

My home, Anna’s and the teacher’s are all far; mine surpasses Anna’s but not the teacher’s.

My home is further away than Anna’s but not than the teacher’s.

In the above example, did you have any difficulty with the Possessive phrases containing “hi” (this/that)? Remember, when forming the Láadan counterpart to the English “possessive pronouns” we use “hi” or one of its plurals in place of the noun. So, “beth letho” is “my home” and “hi letho” is “mine”; “beth Ána betho” would be “Anna’s home” (as might well go unsaid by this point, personal names do not accept suffixes, so we add a pronoun to take the suffix) and “hi Ana betho” is “Anna’s”; “beth omátho” would be “the teacher’s home” and “hi omátho” is “the teacher’s.” If any of us had more than one home, we’d say “hizh Xtho” or “hin Xtho.”

Vocabulary

alehala

art [alehale (music)]

éeba

be portentous

huma

be sharp [hum (knife)]

muhum

scissors [hum (knife) + muh (knife, reflected)] {SH}

radiídin

non-holiday: a time allegedly a holiday but actually so much of a burden because of work and preparations that it is a dreadful occasion—especially when there are too many guests and none of them help

shinehal

computer [shin (two) + hal (work)]

shinishin

calculator [shin (two) + i (and) + shin (two)]

wothemid

mule [woth (wisdom) + mid (creature)]

yib

to be solid (rather than gaseous or liquid)

zhili

be liquid (as opposed to solid or gaseous) [ili (water)] {CH}

Exercises

Translate the following into English, literally and colloquially.

1 Bíi meliyen éelen hin i hesh; hesho hesh wa.

E:

E:

2 Bíi meshinóoya dun i olin i shée wa; hesho olin wi.

E:

E:

3 Bíi mehowa yul i lali wa. Báa hesho yul?

E:

E:

4 Bíi lath i lóda doshem wo. Báa hesho bebáa?

E:

E:

5 Bíi meruhob yed, wilidun beyen, i mela wáa; mehesho bebáazh?

E:

E:

6 Bíi meshud thi beye radaletheháa i ranime edethi witheháa; hesho edethi ra beyeháa wa.

E:

E:

Form explicit comparisons from the supplied verb and nouns (the asterisk-marked *noun* surpasses); translate into English, literally and colloquially.

7 meénan, yu, *thu*

L:

E:

E:

8 líithi, hish, *mel* hi

L:

E:

E:

9 rúsho, zhu, yob, *lhu* (yes-no question)

L:

E:

E:

10 huma, hum, muhum (wh-question)

L:

E:

E:

11 éeba, *zhethal*, éholob (warning)

L:

E:

E:

12 dazh, eril *oweth* el le, eril thometh eb hothul letha (present tense)

L:

E:

E:

Translate the following into Láadan using explicit comparisons.

13 The foal is funnier than the kitten.

L: _____

14 Is the beverage sourer than the vegetable?

L: _____

15 Those many rocks are not wetter than the road.

L: _____

16 Laughter is better medicine than drugs.

L: _____

17 Which pleases you more: the smell of a meal or the sound of music [in a dream]?

L: _____

18 The fish is saltier than the bread; the soup is saltier yet.

L: _____

Answers

- 1 These grapes and the grass are green; the grass surpasses.
The grass is greener than these grapes.
- 2 The field, the forest, and the desert are all fertile; the forest surpasses [obviously].
Of course the forest is more fertile than either a field or a desert.
- 3 The wind and the rain are both warm. Does the wind surpass?
Is the wind warmer than the rain?
- 4 Celibacy and weary-pregnancy are burdens. Which surpasses?
Which is the greater burden: celibacy or being wearily pregnant?
- 5 The valley, many lakes, and the sea are deep [trusted report]; what [few] surpass?
Which-few are deeper: the valley, some lakes, or the sea [according to trusted report]?
- 6 Someone who has nothing and someone who is unwilling to share are poor; someone who does not share surpasses.
Someone who will not share is poorer than someone who has nothing.
- 7 Bii meméénan yu i thu; hesho thu wa.
Fruit and honey are sweet; honey surpasses.
Honey is sweeter than fruit.
- 8 Bii líithi hish wa. Líithi mel hi. Hesho mel.
The snow is white. This paper is white. The paper surpasses.
This paper is whiter than snow.
- 9 Bii merúsho zhu, yob i lhu wa. Báa hesho lhu?
Tea, coffee and poison are bitter. Does the poison surpass?
Is poison bitterer than tea or coffee?
- 10 Bii mehuma hum i muhum wa. Báa hesho bebáa?
The knife and the scissors are sharp. Which surpasses?
Is the knife or the scissors sharper?
- 11 Bii mehéeba zhethal i éholob wi; bée hesho zhethal wa.
Justice and threats are portentous [obviously]; [warning] justice surpasses.
[Warning] Justice is more portentous than threats.
- 12 Bii ril medazh eril oweth el leháa i eril thometh eb hothul lethaháa; hesho owe wa.
The garment that I made and the pillow that my grandparent bought are soft; the garment surpasses.
The garment I made is softer than the pillow my grandparent bought.
- 13 Bii medóhada áhomid i árul wa. Hesho áhomid.
- 14 Bii meyem rana i meda wáa; báa hesho rana?
- 15 Bii lili weth; melili ud hin íi; mehesho ra ud wa.
- 16 Bii desh i ada mewothal wohedutham wa; hesho ada wa.
- 17 Bii meshi aba anadalethu i zho alehalethu leth we. Báa hesho bebáa?
- 18 Bii memáanan thili i bal i thulana wa. Hesho thili, i heshohal thulana.