

Lesson 68

Advanced Degree Markers

The degree-markers we've seen up 'til now are all Neutral Degree Markers. They state a degree—without any judgment; they don't indicate an emotional response to that degree. There are also Degree Markers that convey, along with the degree, an emotional response. There is a set that conveys an approving response (“in favor of”) and another set that conveys a disapproving response (“opposed to”).

Vocabulary

Neutral Degree Markers

This set is presented here for the sake of completeness only; they're the same ones we've been using.

- hel
to a trivial degree; slightly
- hil
to a minor degree; rather; somewhat
- Ø
no lexicalized information about degree
- hal
to an unusual degree; quite
- hul
to an extreme degree
also disapproving: to a violent degree
- háalish
to an extraordinary degree

Interrogative Degree Marker

- hába
“to what degree”; “how VERB” {AB}

Approving Degree Markers

- théle
to a pleasing degree; fine
- thíle
to a more-than-pleasing degree; excellent
- thúul
to an extraordinarily pleasing degree; magnificent
- thúle
to the furthest degree of pleasingness possible; perfect

Disapproving Degree Markers

- shéle
to a troublesome degree
also neutral or approving: much
- hele
- shíle
to a severe degree
also neutral or approving: great
- hile
- shúul
to an intolerable degree
- hule
- shúle
special emergency form: unbearable to a degree that would cause catastrophic events such as suicide; a signal for immediate help
- shule

Among the Disapproving Degree Markers above, the last entry for each item presents Suzette Haden Elgin's unpublished versions of these markers. They were clearly a work-in-progress since, with the addition of any suffix, most of them would be indistinguishable from Neutral Degree Markers. The second generation undertook to make the Disapproving Degree Markers more distinctive by modeling them on the Approving markers, but utilizing the “sh” from Suzette's unpublished “special emergency” form.

Another aspect of these unpublished forms is the crossover where some Disapproving Degree Markers can be used in a neutral or Approving sense, and one of the Neutral markers can be used in a Disapproving sense. While it is possible to interpret an utterance in Láadan as positive or negative based upon Mood Suffixes or First- or Second-Declension emotion words, these are more impressions than clear markers. Without such transparent markers, it is impossible to tell whether an approving, neutral or disapproving meaning is intended. For this reason, these usages will not be put forward in these lessons.

Examples

Neutral

- Bíi íthihel yáanin wa.
The tree is trivially tall.
- Bíi íthihil yáanin wa.
The tree is tall to a minor degree.
- Bíi íthi yáanin wa.
The tree is tall (to unspecified degree).
- Bíi íthihal yáanin wa.
The tree is unusually tall.
- Bíi íthihul yáanin wa.
The tree is extremely tall.
- Bíi íthiháalish yáanin wa.
The tree is extraordinarily tall.

Interrogative

- Báa ralóolo memazh?
Is the train fast?
- Báa ralóolohába memazh?
How fast is the train?

Note that, with the presence of the interrogative degree marker, the Type-of-Sentence word “Báa” becomes redundant. It is still grammatically correct, but is not required.

Approving

- Bíi áya math wa.
The building is beautiful (to unspecified degree).
- Bíi áyathéle math wa.
The building is beautiful to a pleasing degree.
- Bíi áyathíle math wa.
The building is beautiful to an excellent degree.
- Bíi áyathúul math wa.
The building is beautiful to a magnificent degree.
- Bíi áyathúle math wa.
The building is beautiful to a perfect degree.

Disapproving

- Bíi éeya le wa.
I’m sick (to an unspecified degree).
- Bíi éeyashéle le wa.
I’m troublesomely sick.
(sniffles and a low-grade fever, but I’m gonna be okay)
- Bíi éeyashíle le wa.
I’m severely sick.
(muscle aches, fever, and a nasty cough; nevertheless, I expect to recover fully)
- Bíi éeyashúul le wa.
I’m intolerably sick.
(can’t get out of bed amid the coughing, sneezing, fever, muscle aches, and exhaustion; I do expect to recover, but it may be a while)
- Bíi éeyashúle le wa.
I’m sick unto death.
(I don’t know where I picked up this virus, but my lungs feel like they’re full of goo; I just hope the hospital has enough ventilators....)

Note that any Disapproving Degree Marker when applied to a stative verb (in English, an adjective) can be translated into English as being “too...” in some degree.

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Bíi aril shóo shun wodidethíle woháasháleya aril wáa.

E: _____

2 Bíi eril shudeshíle onida lethá wa; mehabelid lan wohíyashéle woshodesha shin neda.

E: _____

3 Bée loláad eduthahá zharashúleth beróo eril shebasheb áwith radóon bethowáan wáa.

E: _____

4 Báa owahába Anib wohan woHalishónisha? Owathéle e owashúul be?

E: _____

5 Bíi eríli dibó i hudi worawoth wohuhid mehel with lhebetho wohóyathúul wodéelath lhebédáahé wáa.

E: _____

6 Bíi mezhedi yodá abathúle bal i abathúul thulanahé wa.

E: _____

7 Bíi eril búshéle dadem mudathu eshesha nil wa.

E: _____

8 Bíide eril shumáad áalaá íthiháalishenal, id shumáad be heb; medibithim háawith beth úyahú rahíthithélenal be wa.

E: _____

9 Bíi rahíyashíle woliyen woháabe wi; báa shoshúul be íi?

E: _____

10 Bíi eril redeb ewithá eríli mehel wíitham mewohéedahul wothodehóo menedebe hathóolethameya thobeboó erileháa wáa.

E: _____

In #3, of course you had no trouble with “radóon” (be incorrect; error) [ra- (NON) + dóon (be correct)].

In #5, did you note “hudi” (decree) [hu (ruler; boss) + di (speak)]? This is also one of the Láadan words that translate the English word “law”. “Hudi” refers to laws put in force by civic rulers; there’s also “thamedi” for laws put in force by religious authority. The third, “nalabesh” [-nal (MANN) + abesh (all-that-is)], refers to so-called “laws” such as gravity that are simply features of the physical universe rather than laws imposed by human agency.

In #7, did you note that the Láadan is ambiguous (just as is the English translation) as to whether there’s a pig in a boat in a picture or a pig in a picture in a boat? Can you craft a Láadan sentence that resolves this ambiguity? Try “Bíi eril búshéle dadem ham muda eshesha nileháathu wa,” (The picture of the pig that was in a boat was troublesomely odd) or “Bíi eril búshéle ham dadem mudathuhé eshesha nil wa,” (It was troublesomely odd that there was a picture of a pig in the boat).

Translate the following into Láadan.

11 This cake is severely (too) sweet; the pie is sweet to an excellent degree.

L: _____

12 Aunt Margaret enjoys needleworking to a fine degree.

L: _____

13 How sour are the berries?

L: _____

14 My pillow is downy to an excellent degree, but it's slightly too (troublesomely) firm.

L: _____

15 The sky yesterday was perfectly blue and fleecy-clouded to a fine degree.

L: _____

16 Mary's beautiful sibling was intolerably tired; she severely needed to sleep.

L: _____

17 Your cat is perfectly well; she jumps magnificently and plays unusually vigorously.

L: _____

18 The dentist hurt me troublesomely, but I wasn't troublesomely afraid.

L: _____

19 The nurse felt shame-beyond-what-she-could-live-with at the death of a baby; the baby's parents and grandparents all showed her compassion (despite), and they think she'll survive.

L: _____

20 This classroom (magnificently) is much more wonderfully clean than my home (excellently).

L: _____

In #12, you may have noticed we haven't got a verb "to enjoy." In Láadan we convey this meaning by saying, as in this example, "needleworking pleases Aunt Margaret." In the answer, the Object suffix for the name "Mázhareth"—applied to the title "Berídan" (Aunt)—is in parentheses because it's optional; it would be nonsense to say "Aunt Margaret greatly pleases needleworking."

In #18, did you have any difficulty with the verb "to hurt" used in a transitive sense? Beyond "olob" (blow/trauma; to strike/injure)—a connotative difference not found in the English—we don't have one, but we can say "cause to feel pain."

In #19, did you find a way to form the concept of "to survive"? Try "to continue to be alive."

Answers

- 1 The ceremony will take place in the excellently early (positive: early to an excellent degree) morning tomorrow.
- 2 My family was severely poor; we (many, beloved) lived in only two troublesomely small rooms.
- 3 [Warning] The physician feels such regret (Ext,+,-) because a baby died due to her error that she's liable to [commit suicide/ murder/etc.].
- 4 How warm is August in Southern California? Is it warm to a fine degree or intolerably warm?
- 5 Long ago a foolish king commanded and decreed that his (he is despised) people build a magnificently beautiful garden as their duty to him.
- 6 The diners agree-in-word that the bread is perfectly fragrant and the soup is magnificently fragrant OR The diners agree-in-word that the bread is even more delightfully fragrant than the soup.
- 7 The picture of a pig in a boat was troublesomely odd.
- 8 [Narrative] The butterfly flew extraordinarily high, and then she flew down; the children greeted her when she was low to fine degree.
- 9 The green book is clearly severely large; is it also intolerably heavy?
- 10 An anthropologist found many extremely sacred writings (that were) made by priests three thousand years ago.
- 11 Bíi meéaneshíle thuzh hi; meéanethíle thizh wa.
- 12 Bíi shithéle dathim Mázhareth Berídan(eth) wa.
- 13 Báa meyemehába dalatham?
- 14 Bíi shanethíle thom letho, izh radazheshéle be.
- 15 Bíi eril leyithúle i boleshéle thosh sháal(eya) eril wáa.
- 16 Bíi eril óohashúul woháya wohena Méri betha; themeshíle ina be wa.
- 17 Bíi tháathíle rul netho; oóbethúul i elashehal be wa.
- 18 Bíi eril dóhúuyashéle edashá leth, izh héeyashéle ra le wa.
- 19 Bíi eril loláad onin lhohoshúleth shebasheb áwithethuwáan wáa; medam thul i hothul áwithetha mehenath bedim, i ril melith ben aril nágíi behé.
- 20 Bíi éthethúul bedishod hi i éthethíle beth letho wa.