

Lesson 43

Focus Marker

Vocabulary

bad	mineral
badazh	metal [bad (mineral) + ?dazh (pliant)?] {SH}
balinemid	turtle; tortoise [balin (old) + mid (creature)]
dalatham	berry [dala (plant) + tham (circle)]
dol	root (as of a plant)
-hóo	Suffix (any): Focus Marker
lel	seaweed
sheshi	sand
sheshioth	beach [sheshi (sand) + hoth (place)]
uhudemid	tick (the arachnid) [uhud (nuisance) + mid (creature)]

The question-marks around the etymology of “badazh” indicate that no official etymology has been supplied; I’m guessing at the thought process of the person who coined this word.

Focus Marker

In English we use a combination word order and stress to emphasize a certain word in a sentence—to move the “focus” of the sentence onto that word. For example, in a simple declarative sentence like “**The book is red**,” if we need to emphasize that it’s the book (and not some other thing) that’s red, we can say “**The BOOK is red**,” or “**It’s the BOOK that’s red**,” or a number of other things. Similar processes would be employed to emphasize that RED (rather than some other color) is the color of the book, or that the book IS (rather than “isn’t,” or “was,” or “will be,” or “ought to be”) red.

Láadan word order is fairly inflexible, and emphatic stress is not employed. So we must find some other mechanism to emphasize one part of a sentence over another. The Focus Marker, “-hóo,” is that mechanism.

When I questioned Dr. Elgin about the use of “-hóo,” I got the following very informative response:

English has several kinds of emphatic stress. The one that’s used in “It wasn’t Tuesday morning, it was WEDNESday morning” is called “contrastive stress.” Another is what I call “announcement stress,” as in “That was the PRESIDENT on the phone!” And then there’s the emphatic stress a speaker gives to a word or a part of a word simply to indicate that that element is the part of the language sequence that matters most to him or her and is being foregrounded, with stress as the foregrounding mechanism.

Láadan uses “-hóo” for all three of those kinds of emphasis.

Notes

Adverbs

In the lesson on the Manner Case, we briefly discussed “true adverbs.” There was one English example we had no Láadan counterpart for: “**even**,” the Focus Marker fulfills that functionality in Láadan.

Even Margaret can run to the shop.	Bíi thad yime Mázhareth behóo wehedim wa.
Margaret can even run to the shop.	Bíi thad yimehóo Mázareth wehedim wa.
Margaret can run even to the shop.	Bíi thad yime Mázhareth wehedimehóo wa. Bíi thad yime Mázhareth wehehóodim wa.

This simple set of examples illustrates how “true adverbs” can change the meaning of a sentence as their placement within that sentence changes. In the first sentence above, it’s clear that the speaker is not impressed with Margaret’s ability to run—and it’s likely that the store is very near.

In the second, the speaker assumes that Margaret could get to the shop, but the statement here is that the shop is near enough that she could run the whole way; Margaret’s physical prowess is not in dispute.

In the third, on the other hand, Margaret’s ability to run is being touted, and the shop is implied to be some distance off.

In the Láadan translations of this third example, the emphasis is ambiguous in that either that Margaret can run “**TO the shop**” (-dim is receiving the Focus), or “**TO the SHOP**” (wehedim as a whole is receiving the Focus), or “**to the SHOP**” (wehe alone receives the Focus, resolving the ambiguity); this will be discussed further below.

Examples

Bíi laya áabe wa.	The book is red.
Bíi layahóo áabe wa.	The book is RED.
Bíi layahóo áabe, léli ra wa.	The book is RED, not yellow.
Bíi laya áabehóo wa.	The BOOK is red.
Bíi laya áabehóo, ra thodi wa.	The BOOK is red, not the writing implement.
Bíi erilehóo laya áabe; ril léli be wa.	The book WAS red; now it’s yellow.
Bíi laya áabe netho wa; léli hi lehóotho.	Your book is red; MINE is yellow.

The above illustrates focusing for the purpose of foregrounding as well as contrastive focusing.

Bíi eril ban Mázhareth nemeth ledim wa.	Margaret gave me a pearl.
Bíi eril ban Mázhareth behóo nemeth ledim wa.	MARGaret gave me a pearl!
Bíi eril ban Mázhareth nemethehóo ledim wa.	Margaret gave me a PEARL!
Bíi eril ban Mázhareth nemeth lehóodim wa.	Margaret gave ME a pearl!
Bíi eril ban Mázhareth nemeth ledimehóo wa.	Margaret gave a pearl TO me! Margaret gave a pearl TO ME!

This is meant to be announcement focusing. The final two examples also illustrate another response received from Suzette Haden Elgin to an inquiry whether the focus marker would always be placed at the end of the word, or if it might be placed immediately following the morpheme (meaningful word-part) that the speaker wants to emphasize:

Like placing emphatic stress in spoken English, the focus marker gets placed where it will genuinely indicate what is most important to the speaker of the utterance. Some placements are going to be far more likely than others, certainly, and it may sometimes be a struggle to place it properly, but it's at the discretion of the user.

That means that we can place the Focus Marker directly after any part of the word we want to emphasize. In the middle of a word that's perfectly clear. But when the part that needs emphasis is at the end of the word, the result is ambiguous as to whether it's the last part or the whole word that we wanted to emphasize.

Báa ril bel Ána losh lethoth maridim?

Is Anna taking/bringing my money to the island?

Báa rilehóo bel Ána losh lethoth maridim?

Is Anna, RIGHT NOW, taking/bringing my money to the island?

Báa ril belehóo Ána losh lethoth maridim?

Is Anna TAKING/BRINGING my money to the island?

Báa ril bel Ánahóo losh lethoth maridim?

Is ANNA taking/bringing my money to the island?

Báa ril bel Ána loshehóo lethoth maridim?

Is Anna taking/bringing my MONEY to the island?

Báa ril bel Ána losh lehóothoth maridim?

Is Anna taking/bringing the money belonging to ME to the island?

Báa ril bel Ána losh lethohóoth maridim?

Is Anna taking/bringing the money BELONGING TO me to the island?

Báa ril bel Ána losh lethothehóo maridim?

Is Anna taking/bringing MY money to the island?

Is Anna taking/bringing MY MONEY to the island?

Báa ril bel Ána losh lethoth marihóodim?

Is Anna taking/bringing my money to the ISLAND?

Báa ril bel Ána losh lethoth maridimehóo?

Is Anna taking/bringing my money TO the island?

Is Anna taking/bringing my money TO the ISLAND?

The ambiguity in the eighth example above is whether the emphasis is on the Object status of “my money” or on the whole word saying that whatever-it-is (the money, in this case) belongs to me and is the Object of the sentence—or, arguably, since this is a Possessive structure and can be perceived as a single unit, the emphasis is on the entire phrase “losh lethoth” (my money as an Object).

The ambiguity in the last example above is more straightforward. Does the speaker/writer intend to emphasize the *direction* the money is being taken/brought (just the Goal Case suffix, “-dim”) or the whole word, “maridim” (to the island)?

Notes

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Baa thi Araneshahóo sheshihoth?
- 2 Bíi eril beth letho boshethuhóo, ra badazhethu wa.
- 3 Bíi eril di ábedá wa, "Bóo damahóo ra ne ábabíth."
- 4 Baa methel halá bebáath hibosha nedebenil; badehóoth nedaba?
- 5 Bíi ril eduthahá thóo ebaláhóothom yedesha, ra belidáthom wa.
- 6 Bíi eril ulanin Shuzhéth edanethehóo ulaneya, ra elamitheth wáa.

1 En:

2 En:

3 En:

4 En:

5 En:

6 En:

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Move the focus to the supplied word; translate into English before and after.

- | | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 7 | Bíi thóshumáadehóo balinemid Ána betho maridim we. | tortoise |
| 8 | Bíi ra bash ubem; be uhudehóom hath menedebe wa. | balm |
| 9 | Bíi eril wem Méri nemehóoth imeya waá. | Mary |
| 10 | Bíi Máyel zha lehóothom wa. | name |
| 11 | Bíi delishe Bétheni olob rawáan izh sholanewáanehóo wáa. | weep |
| 12 | Báa rilrili shihóo bini lede Elízabeth beth? | me |

Did you recognize, in #8, the phrase “hath menedebe” (literally, “many times”). This is the idiom (a phrase in one language that may not have the same meaning—or, indeed, any meaning at all—when translated word-for-word into another language) for the English word “often.” There is a related idiom for “seldom:” “hath nedebe” (literally, “few/several times”).

In #9, you did remember to split the Focus suffix onto a “be” pronoun, didn’t you? Remember, we don’t put affixes on the names of living or once-living persons or animals.

In #11, did you notice the phrase “olob rawáan?” The structure “ra + Case ending,” when used *in place of* a noun, means “nothing + Case” (in Cause Case, it would mean “having no cause”), but when it *follows* a noun (as it does in this exercise), it reverses the meaning of the Case itself (in this instance “despite” an injury). This same mechanism also can be used with other cases; for example, we could say “lan raden” to mean “without (unaccompanied by) friend(s),” or “withizh rada” meaning “against the interests of a/the woman/women.”

7 En:

La:

En:

8 En:

La:

En:

9 En:

La:

En:

10 En:

La:

En:

11 En:

La:

En:

12 En:

La:

En:

Translate the following into Láadan.

- 13 My family will go NORTH, not east, and meet you (many) again on the plain.
- 14 COURTESY, not being right, causes harmony (a lesson).
- 15 There's a GARDEN in the center of the meadow! (celebratory)
- 16 The pregnant woman SIGNED, rather than called, "Hello," to her sibling.
- 17 Matthew was ABLE to color the picture of a fish with a writing implement.
- 18 Will Marsha ARRIVE at the farm during the evening?

Regarding #18: in English, we say that someone "arrives at" their destination; this seems like it would translate into a straightforward Place Case formation. In Láadan, however, "to arrive" is "nosháad" [no- (FINISH) + sháad (come/go)]. Sháad takes "the place one is coming/going to" as a Goal Case rather than a Place Case element. There is no reason why that case assignment would change by dint of the simple addition of the "FINISH" prefix. Therefore the phrase "arrive...at the farm" in #18 must be translated as "sháad...ábededim" rather than "sháad...ábedesha."

- 13 La: _____
- 14 La: _____
- 15 La: _____
- 16 La: _____
- 17 La: _____
- 18 La: _____

Notes

Notes

No

1 Does ARKANSAS have beach(es)? 2 My house was of WOOD, not of metal. 3 The farmer said, "Prithee, don't TOUCH the baby bird." 4 What MINERAL do the workers get among the (several) hills? 5 The physician is the BAKER's guest in the valley, not the carpenter's. 6 Suzette studied LINGUISTICS at school, not mathematics. 7 Anna's tortoise JUST FLEW to the island, I dreamt. Bii thóshumáad balinémidehóo Ana betha maridim we. Anna's TORTOISE just flew to the island, I dreamt. 8 Common sense is no balm; it is often a NUISANCE. Bii ra bash ubehóo; be uhud hath menedebe wa. Common sense is no BALM; it is often a nuisance. 9 Mary lost a PEARL while traveling (I doubt). Bii eril wem Méri behóo nemeth imeya wáa. MARY lost a pearl while traveling (I doubt). 10 Michael is MY name (the name belonging to ME). Bii Mäyel zhahóo lethom wa. Michael is my NAME. 11 Bethany is weeping not from an injury but from ALONENESS. Bii delisheshéó Bètheni olob rawáan izh sholanewáan wáa. Bethany is WEEPing not because of an injury but because of aloneness. 12 Might a gift from me PLEASE Elizabeth? Baa rilrili shi bini lehóode Elizhabeth beth? Might a gift from ME please Elizabeth? 13 Bii eril sháad onida lethá hunedimehóo, hene radim, i nebitim neneth rabosha wa. 14 Bii! nin shalehóo, ra dóon, shath wa. 15 Bii! an ham delahóo hatham dunethusha wa. 16 Bii eril lishidehóo, dithed ra, wolawida wowitz "Wil sha," hena bethadim wáa. 17 Bii eril thadehóo doliri! MATHU dadem thilithuth thodinan wa. 18 Baa eril noshadehóo Masha ábededim háandaleyá obéé?