

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- Prefix, Suffix, Infix (any): the pejorative element “lh” can always be added to a word to give it a negative connotation, so long as it precedes or follows a vowel and does not violate the rules of the Láadan sound system by creating a forbidden cluster. The addition of “lh” need not create an actual new word; for example, “áwith” means “baby”—to use instead “lháwith” (or “áwithelh”) means only something like “the darned baby” and is ordinarily a temporary addition. But it is very handy indeed. We are indebted to the Navajo language for this device. {SHE}

The sound “lh” is used in two main ways to add that “negative meaning” to words: first, as you may remember from our first “Translation” lesson, the sound “lh” can be added to a word to indicate a temporary negative perception. The “lh” 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.

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Vocabulary

erabalh	temptation
ílhi	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)]
rahulh	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)]

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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 neháana be thom lethosha nol wa.	She's asleep on my pillow again.
Báa ham rulh bebáasha?	Where's the darned cat?
Bíid neháana be thom lethosha nol wa.	[Angry] She's asleep on my pillow again.
Báa ham lherul bebáasha?	Where's the darned cat?
Bíid neháana be thom lethosha nol wa.	[Angry] She's asleep on my pillow again.
Báa ham rulelh bebáasha?	Where's the darned cat?
Bíid neháana 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.

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Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Baa loláad yodálh lhohoth?
- 2 Bíi eril loláad le ílhi úwáanú rabalh oba ranahálhetha wa.
- 3 Baa ralh ibem e lham? Em, i ralhá ibálhem i lhahám íi wi.
- 4 Bíi meshulhe dáan danethu withidethu withizheth; mehulhad ben woho behizheth wa.
- 5 Bíide eril ham le marisha sholhanenal bud, ana, i rana raden wo.
- 6 Baa rilrili bere loláad ra with oham, ébere dush loláad be ralhoam? E rilrili loláad be lash mehedeláad beyen mehéeda dalehóo hinehétheháadim?

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 very 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}]?**

- 1 E: _____
- 2 E: _____
- 3 E: _____
- 4 E: _____
- 5 E: _____
- 6 E: _____

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Make the underlined word pejorative; translate into English before and after.

- 7 Báad eril nórashe ne zhihadeth bebáaya?
- 8 Bíi láadom le ulhadá; eril be leb lethom wa.
- 9 Bíith thóhel zhub beth bethoth oyo lethasha nil wa.
- 10 Bóo di ne ledim eril láad Elízhabeth zho romidethu bim oyunanehé.
- 11 Bíidu wóoban lhed lhebeth; héeya niná wo.
- 12 Báa eril meredeb ewithá merashon olowod shineháa?

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- (**SCloF**) + **with** (**person**) = **ewith** (**anthropology**) + “-á” (**DOER**)]?

7 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

8 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

9 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

10 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

11 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

12 **E:** _____
L: _____
E: _____

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