

It’s Starting, S/he’s Leaving

Reviewed by JW Webster

a²¹hni²gi³³?a²

/ a²¹ /, v.i., JW p.33, CED p.25

PRC	-a ²² hni ² gi ³³ ?/a ²	Present	
	Note on Long / ³³ / Tone [†]	ga ²² ni ² gi ³³ ?a ²	I’m leaving.
		ha ²² hni ² gi ³³ ?a ²	You’re leaving.
		a ²¹ hni ² gi ³³ ?a ²	S/he’s leaving. (or) It’s starting.
NCMP	-a ²² hni ³ gi ³² sg-	Past	
		ga ²¹ ni ³ gi ³² sgv ²³ ?i ²	I was leaving.
		ha ²² hni ³ gi ³² sv ²³ ?i ²	You were leaving.
		a ²¹ hni ³ gi ³² sv ²³ ?i ²	S/he was leaving. (or) It was starting.
		Progressive Future	
		ga ²² ni ³ gi ³² sge ³³ sdi ²	I’ll be leaving.
		ha ²² hni ³ gi ³² sge ³³ sdi ²	You’ll be leaving.
		a ²² hni ³ gi ³² sge ³³ sdi ²	S/he’ll be leaving. (or) It’ll be starting.
		Habitual	
		ga ²² ni ³ gi ³² sgo ³³ ?i ²	I leave.
		ha ² hni ³ gi ³² sgo ³³ ?i ²	You leave.
		a ²¹ hni ³ gi ³² sgo ³³ ?i ²	S/he leaves. (or) It starts.
CMP	-a ²² hni ³ gi ³² s-	Past	
		a ²¹ gwa ²² hni ³ gi ³² sv ²³ ?i ²	I left.
		ja ²² hni ³ gi ³² sv ²³ ?i ²	You left.
		u ²¹ wa ²² hni ³ gi ³² sv ²³ ?i ²	S/he left. (or) It started.
		Future	
	Note on /h/ Alternation [‡]	da ² ga ²² hni ³ gi ³² si ²	I’ll leave.
		ta ²² ni ³ gi ³² si ²	You’ll leave.
		dv ²¹ hni ³ gi ³² si ²	S/he’ll leave. (or) It’ll start.
		Future Perfect	
		ga ²² hni ³ gi ³² se ³³ sdi ²	I’ll have left.
		ha ²² hni ³ gi ³² se ³³ sdi ²	You’ll have left.

[†] In most cases, a glottal stop will shorten any tone that comes before it. JW notes, however, that this is not usually the case with this verb. Most speakers, he says, pronounce the full long High /³³/ Tone before the glottal stop in this verb. This is apparently just an “irregularity” in this verb—but JW also notes that this is a matter of speaker preference. The verb will still be fully understood by any speaker with a shortened High /³/ tone in this position.

[‡] JW Notes that /h/ Alternation is only necessary in NCMP Stems.

		a ²² hni ³ gi ³² se ³³ sdi ²	S/he'll have left. (or) It'll have started.
IMM	-a ²² hni ² g/i ²	Command	
		wi ² ha ²² hni ² gi ²	You leave!
		wi ² sda ²² hni ² gi ²	You two leave!
		wi ²² ja ²² hni ² gi ²	Y'all leave!
		Immediate Past	
		ji ² ga ²² hni ² gi ⁰	I just left.
		cha ²² hni ² gi ⁰	You just left.
		ja ²² ni ² gi ⁰	S/he just left.
INF	-a ³ hni ³ gi ¹¹ sd/i ²	Basic Infinitive	
		a ²¹ gwa ³ hni ³ gi ¹¹ sdi ²	For me to leave.
		ja ³ hni ³ gi ¹¹ sdi ²	For you to leave.
		u ²¹ wa ³ hni ³ gi ¹¹ sdi ²	For him/her to leave. (or) For it to start.

Notes: This is a fun one—the parsed verb literally translates as “reversing one’s here-ness,” or “reversing [one’s presence] here.” Based on the literal meaning, it seems safe to assume the “leaving” meaning came first, with the verb gaining the “starting” meaning later through lexicalization. The “starting” meaning appears to be limited in use to describing “starting” a vehicle like a car. As far as I can tell, the connection is that “leaving” is to “start” going somewhere else. This makes particularly good sense in terms of a car “starting.” You get in a car when it’s time to *go*, i.e. *leave wherever it is you are*. †

So to summarize this verb in terms of usage: this verb is used to describe *leaving* a place, or to Intransitively describe when a vehicle (especially a car) *starts*. But importantly, it’s *not* used to describe the transitive act of *starting the car* or *causing the car to start*. For that use, you need to use “S/he’s Starting (It),” /a²¹hni³gi³²sdi²ha²/, No. 107. Keep in mind how limited the “start” meaning of this verb is, and make sure you don’t get it confused with “It’s Starting/Beginning,” /a²¹le²³ni³ha²/, No. 170. That verb is used to describe an event or activity starting or beginning, *not* to describe when a car or tractor “starts.”

Use of the Stationary Root Suffix may seem confusing at first—but think of it this way: if you are *only starting*, it means you haven’t *actually gone yet*. You don’t start actually *going* until you’ve already *left*. So, “leaving” receives a Stationary Focus. Other Stems shift to the Motion Focus /s/ Root Suffix because, in other Tenses, the movement is more emphasized.

Root Formula:

					Approx. Literal Meanings
/ a ³ ha ² ni ² /	+	/ gi ² /	+	/ ? /	“Reversing One’s Presence Here”
Here		Reversive		Root Suff.	“Reversing One’s ‘Here-ness’”
				Stationary	“ ‘Un-Here-ing’ ”
				/ a ² /	
				PRC	

† JW Notes: This verb can also sometimes be used for “starting” other machines, especially if those machines have moving parts, and *especially* if the machine has an *engine*. So this verb may be used with vehicles like cars, trucks, or tractors—but it may also be used for a chainsaw, or a lawn mower, sometimes even a computer (especially, says JW, if the computer has an internal fan—and *especially espeically*, I think, if the fan is visible or audible when it starts). However, most speakers will use “Plug (it) In,” gu²²da³lv³²sga², No. 545, or “Open (It),” a²¹sdu^{3?}i^{2?}a², No. 217, to describe “starting” most electronics. Similarly, “Unplug (It),” gu²²da²le³a², No. 544, or “Close (It),” a²³sdu³²hv²sga², No. 216 are common words to describe “shutting” or “turning” off electronics.

Sentences:

Svhi sunale jigesv ju²¹hni³gi³²sv²³?i².
/ yesterday / morning / when it was / he left /
He left yesterday morning. (CED)

Suhliloda iyudanhida uwasadohyv dagwalela kila u²¹hni²³gi³sv²³?i².
/ one mile / that’s how long / he pushed it / car / until / it started /
He pushed the car for a mile before it started. (CED)

Digutesgi jajeli tla ya²²hni³gi³²sge³³sd—dogi jinulsdaneha?
/ truck / yours / not / it will not start / what now / that it’s happening to it /
Your truck won’t start—what’s wrong with it?

Doyu agwaduli u²²wa³hni³gi¹¹sdi² kilawyusdi sgin asgayegvsda. Tladv anigehy yigeginakandisgesdi [†] ahani yedoha, geli’a.
/ really / I want it / for him to leave / soon-like / that / handsome guy / definitely not / women / they won’t be looking at us / here / if he’s around / I think so /
I hope that handsome guy leaves soon. The women won’t be looking at us as long as he’s here, I think.

Gadohv uyehdli kila ja²¹hni³gi³²se³ dijialvhwsdandi?
/ what then / reason / early / you left / your work /
Why’d you leave work early?

Hisg lvhdlv ahli’ilisv ga²²ni³gi³²sgo³ digilvhwsdanhdi, asehnv Jungilosdiyv nvhg ahli’ilisv ga²²ni³gi³²sgo³³?i².
/ five / around / it is time / I leave / my work / but / when it’s Friday [‡] / four / it is time / I leave /
I usually leave work around five o’clock, but on Fridays I leave at four.

Hilayv ja²²hni³gi³²se³³?i²?
/ when / you left? /
When did you leave?

lje anagalisgi uhlana, ahida u²¹hni³gi³²sv² dagwalela.
/ new / battery / when he put it in / easy / it started / car /
When he put a new battery in the car, it started up easily. (CED)

Hihiyuv’i na dagwalela i³³ha²hni²³gi³sv⁴⁴?i².
/ you shall leave it behind / the / car / when you leave again /
Leave the car when you go back. (CED)

Udodagwad gohid ganehldisgv agwahnigisdohdi gadalugodohdi, asehn aginulvhnv’i.
/ all day / span of time / I was trying / for me to start it / tractor / but / I failed /
I worked all day trying to get that tractor to start, but I failed. [¶] (“work” verb unnecessary here)

Kila yi²ha²²hni³gi³²sgo³ nigolv dijialvhwsdanhdi’l, yejanvsadisesdi.
/ soon / if you leave / always / your work / someone might throw you out /
If you leave work early all the time, you might get fired.

Ase dagilvhwsdanelesdi—ga²ni²gi³³?a²!
/ must / I will have gone to work / I’m leaving /
I have to go to work—I’m leaving!

Related Words: “S/he’s Starting (It),” a²¹hni³gi³²sdi²ha², No. 107.

[¶] I included the verb “worked” in the English translation because I think this speech pattern is common in English. You would often say “I worked on x,” or “I *was working* on y” when talking about something you’ve been *doing* in English. But Cherokee speakers are unlikely to use “work” in sentences like this—the verb describing the activity is usually enough by itself. So in this sentence, you don’t need to try and include “work” just because that’s how you’d say it in English. In Cherokee, it’s more normal to just say “I tried all day to get the tractor to start” instead of “I *worked* all day *trying* to get the tractor to start.”
[†] JW says this is an older verb for “Looking at (It),” literally translating to “Putting Eyes on (It).” I note it here, more than anything, so I can remember to return to it and make a Verb Table for it. The more common modern verb “Looking at, Watching (It),” a²¹ga⁰to²²sdi²³ha², No. 157, would also work in this sentence—in the form “yi²de²²gi³³na²ga⁰to²²sdi²²sge³³sdi²,” *they won’t be looking at you and I.*”
[‡] JW says the “Around Then” /yv²/ Prefix on “Jungilosdi” makes the word mean something like “*when* it’s Friday.” A more literal gloss would be something like “Friday-around.”

