

S/he’s Dying (a Human)

Reviewed by JW.

a²¹yo²²hu²³sga²

/a²¹/, v.i., JW p.97, CED p.64.

NCMP+	-yo ²² hu ²² sg-	Present	
	Note on /h/ and /?/ Alternation [†]	ji ² yo ² ?u ²³ sga ²	<i>I’m dying.</i>
		hi ² yo ²² hu ²³ sga ²	<i>You’re dying.</i>
		a ²¹ yo ²² hu ²³ sga ²	<i>S/he’s dying.</i>
		Past	
		ji ² yo ² ?u ²² sgv ²³ ?i ²	<i>I was dying.</i>
		hi ² yo ²² hu ²² sgv ²³ ?i ²	<i>You were dying.</i>
		a ²¹ yo ²² hu ²² sgv ²³ ?i ²	<i>S/he was dying.</i>
		Future	
		ji ² yo ²² ?u ²² sge ³³ sdi ²	<i>I will be dying.</i>
		hi ² yo ²² hu ²² sge ³³ sdi ²	<i>You will be dying.</i>
		a ²² yo ²² hu ²² sge ³³ sdi ²	<i>S/he will be dying.</i>
		Habitual	
		a ²¹ yo ²² hu ²² sgo ³³ ?i ²	<i>S/he dies.</i>
		v ²¹ yo ²² hu ²² sgo ³³ ?i ²	<i>“One” dies.</i>
		a ²¹ ni ² yo ²² hu ²² sgo ³³ ?i ²	<i>They die.</i>
CMP	-yo ²² hu ²² s-	Past	
		u ²¹ yo ²² hu ²² sv ²³ ?i ²	<i>S/he died.</i>
		u ²¹ ni ² yo ²² hu ²² sv ²³ ?i ²	<i>They died.</i>
		Future	
		da ² ji ² yo ²² hu ²³ si ²	<i>I will die.</i>
		ti ² yo ²² hu ²³ si ²	<i>You will die.</i>
		dv ²² yo ²² hu ²³ si ²	<i>S/he will die.</i>
IMM	-yo ²² hu ²² h/i ²	Command	

[†] /h/ and /?/ Alternation are often used to distinguish 1st Person Singular and 3rd Person Singular Pronomials when they would otherwise be indistinguishable. However, JW notes that this is not the *only* function of Alternation. In this verb, /h/ Alternation occurs in the 1st Person Singular even though it isn’t necessary to “distinguish” them from one another. JW says the function of /h/ Alternation here is to “show respect” for different experiences. This is accomplished specifically by denoting a “closeness” to the experience of the action, from the perspective of the 1st Person speaker. He explained this as follows: “it’s because the 3rd Person isn’t always there to speak for themselves, so the /h/ alternation shows that [what the speaker is saying is] hearsay.” JW says in this context it helps make a distinction that is somewhat analogous to the distinction between Experienced and Reportative Past Tenses. JW says a member of his family—I believe it was an uncle or a cousin, I failed to note exactly who—would use /h/ and /?/ Alternation actively and productively in any verb where he felt it made sense, to express this extra “familiarity” information. To summarize, in the 1st Person form here, /h/ Alternation happens to denote the 1st Person’s “closeness” to the action described, whereas it does not occur in other Persons for the opposite reason—to reflect a “distance” between the speaker and the action described, and avoid unfounded presumptions or judgments.

		hi²yo²²hu²³hi²	<i>You, die!</i>
		Immediate Past	
	Note on Distinguishing IMM Comm. from IMM Past †	ji²ji²yo²²hu²³hi²	<i>I just died.</i>
		chi²yo²²hu²³hi² (or) ji²hi²yo²²hu²³hi²	<i>You just died.</i>
		ja²¹yo²²hu²³hi²	<i>S/he just died.</i>
		ja²¹ni²yo²²hu²³hi²	<i>They just died.</i>
INF	-yo²²hu²²hi²sd/i²	Basic Infinitive	
		a²²gi²yo²²hu²²hi²sdi²	<i>For me to die.</i>
		ja²yo²²hu²²hi²sdi²	<i>For you to die.</i>
		u²²yo²²hu²²hi²sdi²	<i>For him/her to die.</i>

Notes: The underlying morphemes of this verb do not have flat tones, but the tones are flattened in the verb root. Underlying tones of lexicalized verbs tend to flatten over time, according to JW. This (along with the older form of the “Going” Adverbial Suffix) suggests the word was probably lexicalized in this form a very, very long time ago. The morphemes composing the verb root refer to a “releasing” of an “inner” aspect of the self, so that it may “go on” after death. The aspect of self that is released upon death is the “mind soul,” which contains a person’s consciousness, identity, and memories—one of four souls that comprise each person.

Usage Note: JW says, when playing video games, traditional speech patterns would have a speaker talk about their “character” in the 3rd Person—because the player *controls* the character, but *is not* the character, and there is an intimate and important relationship between Pronominal use and Reality as a Grammatical Category. So, if you’re playing a video game you wouldn’t say “I died,” you would say “*he* [the character on-screen] died.”

Root Formula:

/yo²²h/
Release

+

/o³³hi²/
“Within”

+

/u³³/
“Go”
Archaic

+

/sg/
Root Suff.
Subj/Obj

=

/yo²²hu²²sg/
Approx. Literal Meaning

=

“It is Being Released from Within to Go On”

† JW’s preferred method of distinguishing IMM Past from IMM Commands is to add the /ji²/ Prepronominal and drop the final vowel from IMM Past constructions—also, IMM Commands take the /³³/ to /¹¹/ tone shift, which does not occur in the IMM Past. However, this method doesn’t always work—as illustrated by this verb. When the last syllable starts with an /h/, dropping the final vowel makes it impossible to clearly pronounce the /h/ that begins the final syllable (/h/ can’t really manifest without a vowel or some other sound to follow it up, it just turns into empty aspiration). Because this final /h/ is part of the actual verb root, the verb itself becomes unintelligible without the /h/ being clearly pronounced. So in this verb, JW says the IMM Past should take the /ji²/ Prefix *without* dropping the final vowel. He says the IMM Past and Command can be further distinguished from one another by stress, emphasis, or volume—the final syllable of the Command will be spoken more loudly or with more emphasis. This aligns with what George Stopp has told me about how *he* prefers to disinguish IMM Past and Command statements—he says he tends to distinguish the two based mostly on how “serious” or forceful the word is said. All that being said—ideally you’ll never need to use the Command form of *this* particular verb.

Sentences:

Hila iyv jigesv u²¹yo²²hu²²se³³?i²?
/ when / around then / it was / he died /
When did he die? (CED)

Gahlgwadu lvdlv iyagwadetiyvd jigesv elisi ju²¹yo²²hu²²sv⁴⁴?i².
/ seventeen / around / my number of years / then it was / grandma / when she died /
I was about seventeen when my grandma died.

Siquoya u²²yo²²hu²³se³ asgwaniyi neladuju⁰gwi⁰ nvhgsgo jo'i udetiyvsadise'i.
/ Sequoyah / he died / Mexico / eighteen-hundred / forty / three / the year that was /
Sequoyah died in Mexico in the year 1843.

Jiyu Gansini u²²yo²²hu²³se³ kaga'li ka'lv gahlgwadu ju⁰gwi⁰ sohnelsgo ta'li udetiyvsadise nidigalsdohdihnv uljvdagwad igohid ulsgise'i.
/ Dragging Canoe / he died / February / specific month / seventeen-hundred / ninety / two / year it was / and because / all night / duration / he danced /
Dragging Canoe died in February 1792 because he danced all night.

Aydv jigoliye'v nasgi adantehlvsgi ago'i ehi Chryssipus dudo'v ale u²²yo²²hu²³se³ uyetsge yugoha digalenvhid juyhyvsda'e'i nidigalsdohdihnv dudatanv duyoyv dagisge'i.
/ definitely me / I read it / that / thinker / Greece / resident / Chrysippus / he was called / and / he died / he was laughing / when he saw / donkey / it became drunk / because / fruit / rotten /
/ it was eating them /
I read that a Greek thinker named Chryssipus died from laughter when he saw a donkey get drunk from eating spoiled fruit.

Kilo yu²²yo²²hu²³sa³ yudaha doyu sday gehv gajinohehdi diniyohli.
/ someone / when they die / sometimes / really / hard / it is / for one to tell them / children /
When someone dies, sometimes it's hard to explain it to children.

Adahndo yulehwistana, a²¹yo²²hu²³sgo³ yvwi.
/ heart / if it's stopped / it dies / person /
When the heart stops, a person dies. (CED)

Uji u²²yo²²hu²²hi²sdi² gesv⁴⁴ yudantehla, adlohyihesdi.
/ his mother / her death / it is / if he thinks about it / he will cry /
If he even thinks about his mom dying, he cries. [†]

Ozzy Osborne ale Hulk Hogan e²²ju³³la² u²²ni²yo²²hu²³se³ hi'a udetiyvsadi.
/ Ozzy Osborne / and / Hulk Hogan / both / they died / this / the affixed year /
Ozzy Osborne and Hulk Hogan both died this year. [Reportive takes flattened tone]

[†] In English, we frequently use these little Adverbial modifying words like “even” to tweak the meaning of verbs. However, it is difficult to capture exactly what “even” adds to this sentence in terms of lexical meaning—I’d argue it functions mostly as an intensifier or an emphasizer more than anything else. These kinds of little helping words are often difficult to recreate in Cherokee, and JW advises against attempting to do so in most cases. To try and recreate the meaning of the English “even” in the Cherokee sentence would require “contorting” the Cherokee into an unnatural or strange-sounding speech pattern. However, I want to note that I’ve seen one exception to this: I saw the phrase “tlasgwu” (“not-also”) translated as “not even” in a story retold by Weynema Smith, as in “we didn’t even [verb].”

Yudahadv doyu ulsgeda adloyi⁰sdi nasgiya kilo yu²²yo²²hu²³sa².

/ definitely sometimes / really / important / for one to cry / just like that / someone / when they die [†] /
Sometimes it's really important to cry, like when someone dies.

Aki⁰sgalv ji²ji²²go²²hv⁴ulosv nidigalsdohdihnv a²²yo²²hu²²se³³sdi gelisgv'i.

/ I was afraid / when I saw him / he fell / and for it to happen [because] [§] / he will be dying / I was thinking so /
I was terrified when I saw him fall, because I thought he was going to die.

Hila iga aniyvw a²¹ni²yo²²hu²³sgo³ nidudetiyvhisv dowalel dandadvhnisdisgv jahntas? - Uniju⁰gwisdi aniyvw a²¹ni²yo²²hu²³sgo³ nidudetiyvhisv.

/ how many / of them / people / they die / yearly / car / when they are hitting themselves / do you know? / - / they are many / people / they die / yearly /
Do you know how many people die every year in car crashes? - Many people die every year [from car crashes]. [¶]

Kiloke hiyolig u²²yo³³hu²³se³ nidigalsdohdihnv adahyesgi nidulstanehv?

/ anyone? / do you know / they died / because / cancer [eater] / they were affected by it /
Do you know anyone who died from cancer?

Tladv yidodagilvhwisdanelesi eduj u²¹yo²²hu²³sv² kohiga.

/ definitely not / I'm not going to work / uncle / he died / today /
I'm not coming to work, [because] my uncle died today.

Related Words: “S/he’s Releasing (Him),” da²¹yo³sga², No. 369; “S/he’s Losing (It),” u²¹yo²²hu²³se³ha², No. 693.

[†] This construction [yi² + CMP Stem + a²] has been called the “Converbal.” JW dislikes this labelling, because he believes it fails to convey the actual function of the construction—JW prefers to label things with plain language that describes function or directly translates the meaning. For this reason, instead of “Converbal,” JW calls this the “if [verb action] ever comes to be so in the present,” or “whenever” construction. JW also notes that, in this sentence, the “whenever” construction /yu²²yo²²hu²³sa²/ could be interchanged with /yu²²yo²²hu²²he³³sdi²/ and the sentence would translate into English pretty much identically.

[§] JW seems to prefer this word for “because,” at least when it introduces a new clause. He explained to me that it’s derived from the INF Stem of the verb for “happen/become,” i²²yu³³li⁰sdo²hdi². Derivation is indicated by the shift to a Set A Pronominal on an INF Stem, which is also accompanied by a shift from /i²²yx³³/ to /ni²/. Use of the Conjunction Clitic /hmv³²/ accomplishes the Conjunction-like “clause-introducing” quality of the word—and this “clause-introducing” quality is, I think, the primary reason it comes to carry a “because” meaning. JW also noted that the sentence could also be written as:

Aksgalv jijiigohv ulosv gelisgvhehn a²²yo²²hu²²se³³sdi².

/ I was afraid / when I saw him / he fell / because I was thinking so / he was going to die /
I was afraid when I saw him fall, because I thought he was going to die.

[¶] When answering a question like this in Cherokee, it is not necessary to repeat information like this—the question was about car crashes, so the answer doesn’t need to explicitly mention car crashes again—doing so may even be considered impolite by some traditionally-minded speakers.