

Lesson 11

Yes/No Questions

Yes/No Questions

[(Aux) Verb (Neg) CP–S]

Báa

Type-of-Sentence Word: interrogative

You'll notice that the sentence word-order is exactly the same for asking a question as for making a statement. There are two main differences. The first is that instead of starting the sentence with "Bíi," we begin with "Báa," the interrogative Type-of-Sentence Word. The second is that we're asking for information rather than providing information for which we would provide evidence. Therefore, we wouldn't use an Evidence Word at the end of a question.

As we have discussed before, once the Type-of-Sentence Word is established, it need not be repeated in connected sentences. We now have three Type-of-Sentence Words; when the Type-of-Sentence Word changes (among "statement," "promise," and "question"), the new one must be given. Where the Type-of-Sentence Word does not change from sentence to connected sentence, it may be omitted after the first sentence.

One further note about questions in Láadan: in English we employ a rising tone at the end of a question. This raised tone is not employed in Láadan; in fact, it might very well confuse the meaning of the word at the end of the question since some Láadan words only vary by the tone on the last syllable.

With the addition of "báa," we also gain a new verb: "dibáa" (to question; to ask). "Dibáa" asks a question; to "ask for" something would involve a different Type-of-Sentence word. Of course, "dibáa" can be used as a noun, in which case it would mean "a/the question."

Examples

Bíi tháa ne wa.

You thrive.

Báa tháa ne?

Do you thrive? Are you well?

"Báa tháa ne?" is also the standard conversation-opener, "How are you?"

Bíi laya bal waá.

The bread is red (I hear, but I don't believe it).

Báa laya bal?

Is the bread red?

Bíi liyen ra dala wi.

The plant is clearly not green.

Báa liyen ra dala?

Isn't the plant green?

Bíi néde thal withizh wo.

I suppose the woman wants to be good.

Báa néde thal withizh?

Does the woman want to be good?

Bíi eril menédeshub mehamedara ra omá wáa.

The teachers did not intend to dance.

Báa eril menédeshub mehamedara ra omá?

Didn't the teachers intend to dance?

Vocabulary

balin

to be old (of persons or animals; rarely of inanimates to mean “antique”)

bun

to be new (of inanimates; sometimes of persons who are “new” to a role or position)

dala

plant, any growing thing

lawida

to be pregnant

loyo

to be black

oób

to jump

shane

to be downy; to be furry

sho

to be heavy

yem

to be sour (flavor)

zho

sound

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Báa shane mid?

E: _____

2 Báa aril mehóoha ra thulid?

E: _____

3 Báa eril nime hal be?

E: _____

4 Báa aril héeya balin ra déelahá?

E: _____

5 Báa ril medibé medibáa ehomá?

E: _____

6 Báa rilrili methad mehina ra Bétheni i Shuzhéth?

E: _____

Did the word “thulid” in #2 give you any difficulty? We know “thul” (parent); we also know “-id” (MASC). This suffix applied to this noun would give the meaning “male parent” or “father.” Of course, this sentence is plural, so “thulid” here would be translated “fathers.” “Thulid” also suggests “thulizh” (mother) [thul (parent) + -izh (FEM)].

How did you do understanding the word “déelahá” in #4? Its components are “déela” (garden) and “-á” (doer/maker). Together, these components give the meaning “gardener.”

Transform the following into questions; translate into English before and after.

7 Bé ril wíi edemid wa.

E:

L:

E:

8 Bíi eríli mehu áath i dem wáa.

E:

L:

E:

9 Bíi rahíya i sho dithemid wi.

E:

L:

E:

10 Bíi aril dush bun belid wa.

E:

L:

E:

11 Bé eril methem mehoób omid wa.

E:

L:

E:

12 Bíi ril nime lawida ra ábedá wáa.

E:

L:

E:

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 Is the pillow old?

L:

14 Were the rocks black?

L:

15 Won't the fruit be sour?

L:

16 Might the mother hope to menopause?

L:

17 Didn't the grandparents remember to eat?

L:

18 Did the workers begin to laugh?

L:

In #13, you might be tempted to use the verb “balin” (old, of animates). The pillow in this sentence doesn't qualify (unless it's an antique—a state not declared for it here). Instead, we need to use “rabun” (old, of inanimates) [ra- (NON) + bun (new, of inanimates)]. This means “old”—but a very different “old” than “balin.” “Balin” refers to people or animals that are honored for having survived a long time. “Rabun” refers instead to objects or things that are no longer new—with the implication that they may be worn out or outmoded. English uses the same word “old” for both concepts. The words we use tend to channel the things we think; so, having only the one word, it becomes more difficult to distinguish the two concepts. This leads to much suffering by our elders as well as much squandering of the skills and wisdom they have accrued over their long lives— which might otherwise benefit us all.

English does much better with “young” versus “new” (“rabalin” versus “bun”). There is no conflation here to muddle our thinking—which also gives us the entree to disambiguating the various meanings of “old.”

Did you notice that #18 is a “trick question?” It doesn't actually involve a Verb Complex. Instead we have a verb that uses a prefix to impart one of those meanings that might be mistaken for Verb Complexes. Also note that “me-,” the plural prefix, is added subsequent to all other prefixes, with the result that it appears at the very beginning of the word.

Answers

- 1 Is the creature furry?
- 2 Won't the fathers be weary?
- 3 Was s/he willing to work?
- 4 Won't the gardener be afraid to be old?
- 5 Do the education-specialists promise to ask?
- 6 Might Bethany and Suzette not be able to sleep?
- 7 I swear the mouse is alive.
Báa ril wíi edemid?
Is the mouse alive?
- 8 I understand the door and the window, long ago, were open.
Báa erili mehu áath i dem?
Were the door and the window open, long ago?
- 9 Clearly, the cow is large and heavy.
Báa rahiya i sho dithemid?
Is the cow large and heavy?
- 10 The house will have to be new.
Báa aril dush bun belid?
Will the house have to be new?
- 11 Upon my oath, the horses needed to jump.
Báa eril methem mehoób omid?
Did the horses need to jump?
- 12 I understand the farmer is not willing to be pregnant.
Báa ril nime lawida ra ábedá?
Is the farmer not willing to be pregnant?
- 13 Báa rabun thom?
- 14 Báa eril meloyo ud?
- 15 Báa aril yem ra yu?
- 16 Báa rilrili ul zháadin thulizh?
- 17 Báa eril medom meyod ra hothul?
- 18 Báa eril menahada halá?