

Lesson 46

Embedded Questions

Embedded Questions

-hée

Suffix (embedded clause): Question Embedding marker

This is another lesson on embedding one sentence inside another. In this lesson, the sentences we'll be embedding are questions. To embed a question, add the suffix “-hée” to the last word in the embedded question.

Just as the English word “that” eases the translation of embedded declarative clauses, “if” or “whether” will ease the translation of embedded questions.

Examples

In the examples to follow, I will present the embedded sentence in [brackets] to make the topic more accessible. I'll then present the English in progressively colloquial forms.

Bíi lothel le [noham lali]hée wa.

I know [has it finished raining?].

I know if/whether it has finished raining.

Bíi lothel ra le [noham lali]hée wa.

I don't know [has it finished raining?].

I don't know if/whether it has finished raining.

Báa lothel ne [noham lali]hée?

Do you know [has it finished raining?]?

Do you know if/whether it has finished raining?

The form of the “outer” sentence (inside which the question is embedded) may or may not, itself, be a question—as illustrated in the examples above.

Báa lothel bebáa [merahéthe muda]hé?

Who knows [the pigs are dirty]?

Who knows that the pigs are dirty?

Báa lothel bebáa [merahéthe muda]hée?

Who knows [are the pigs dirty]?

Who knows if/whether the pigs are dirty?

To borrow from the exercises in the lesson covering embedded sentences, the first of the two above embeds the statement, “The pigs are dirty;” there's no question that the pigs are dirty. The second, identical to the first except for the Embedding marker, throws this matter into doubt by embedding, as a question, “Are the pigs dirty?”

Bíi oth [thi Ána nemeth]ehé wa.

Be important [Anna have a pearl].

It's important that Anna have a pearl.

Bíi oth [thi Ána nemeth]ehée wa.

Be important [Does Anna have a pearl?].

It's important if/whether Anna has a pearl.

Whether Anna has a pearl is important.

Báa oth [thi Ána nemeth]ehée?

Is [Does Anna have a pearl?] important?

Is whether Anna has a pearl important?

Is it important whether Anna has a pearl?

Stative verbs and intransitive verbs can take an embedded clause *only* as their Subject. “Oth” (to be important) here is one such; another is “shóo,” (to happen; to occur; to come to pass) as we saw in the lesson on embedded sentences.

Up until this point, all the example embedded clauses in this lesson feature Yes/No style questions. It's just as feasible to embed **bebáa**-form questions, as we'll see in the following examples.

Bíi medibáa withizh [eril éthe bebáazh shod lethoth wushenan]ehée wa.

The women ask [who/what-few cleaned my room with a broom?].

The women ask who-few cleaned my room with a broom.

Bíi medibáa withizh [eril éthe Máyel bebáazheth wushenan]ehée wa.

The women ask [Michael cleaned what-few with a broom?].

The women ask [what-few did Michael clean with a broom?].

The women ask what-few Michael cleaned with a broom.

Bíi medibáa withizh [eril éthe Máyel shod bebáazhethoth]ehée wa.

The women ask [Michael cleaned the room of whom-few with a broom?].

The women ask [whose-few room did Michael clean with a broom?].

The women ask whose-few room Michael cleaned with a broom.

Bíi medibáa withizh [eril éthe Máyel shod lethoth bebáazhenan]ehée wa.

The women ask [Michael cleaned my room using what-few?].

The women ask [what-few did Michael use to clean my room?].

The women ask what-few Michael used to clean my room.

In an earlier lesson, we came across the sentence “I know which child ate the fish,” which we couldn't, at that point, translate. Now, however, we have the tools to translate it.

Bíi lothel le [eril meyod bebáan thilith; háawith nedaba]hée wa.

I know [Who/what-many ate the fish? Which children?].

I know which-many children ate the fish.

Vocabulary

bath

nail (body part); claw (body part)

desh

drug

híyamesh

narrow [híya (small) + mesh (across)] {AB}

mezh

powder

shud

to be poor

shun

ritual; ceremony

yáath

turkey [yath (chicken)] {CH}

yáazh

goose [yazh (duck)] {CH}

yath

chicken {CH}

yazh

duck {CH}

In this vocabulary list we see “bath” (nail; claw), which is a homonym for a word we already know. Just as the other homonyms we've seen before, its semantic domain is sufficiently distinct from “bath” (six)—and, indeed, from “bath” (XLove1 + OBJ) that there should be no confusion.

You'll notice several specific fowl words in this list. It's worthy of note that Láadan uses the same word for the animal and for its meat. The split in English (cow/beef; chicken/poultry; pig/pork) stems from the historical domination in England of the Anglo-Saxons by the francophone Normans; the Anglo-Saxon words became the farmyard standard (since the peasants raised the animals), while the French-influenced words became the standard for the table (since it was the nobles who ate the meat).

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

1 Báa zhedi huhid memihí bodehée?

E: _____

2 Bíi eril dibáa ra ehá dama háawith yumeth bebáananehée wáa.

E: _____

3 Báa láad Mázhareth mebohí i mehíamesh bod nisha nolehéeth oyinan?

E: _____

4 Bóo mehulanin nezh eril hahí lush marethu lelethuhée.

E: _____

5 Bóo dibé ne lalom Therísha bebáath háanáaleya eril; lometh nedabahéeth olowodedim.

E: _____

6 Bíi aril wedeth ril mewéedan bedihá bebáathehée wa.

E: _____

In #1, did the word “**bod**” confuse you? It could be either of the homonyms “**bod**” (**line**) or “**bod**” (**dish**). One clue is the verb “**mihí**” (**small, 2 dimensions**); this verb is appropriate to a dish; a line would need “**bohí**” (**short, 1 dimension**). This type of problem only presents in isolated sentences such as this one; in actual discourse, the “semantic domain” would be much more clearly defined, leaving much less room for this sort of ambiguity.

In #3, of course, the situation from #1 is reversed; it must be “**bod**” (**line**) as evidenced by “**bohí**” (**short, 1 dimension**).

In #3 and #4, the embedded question is the Object of the verb in the outer sentence. As such, the Object suffix would, optionally, follow the “-hée” embedding suffix. I’ve chosen to use it in #3 but not in #4.

In #5, did you recognize what the word “**eril**” (**PAST**) was doing in the second clause? It’s part of the idiomatic phrase “**háanáaleya eril**” (**last evening**).

Turn the embedded statement into an embedded question. Translate into English before and after.

7 Bii methózheláad wíitham aril duth shun mezheth hizhehéth wáa.

E:

L:

E:

8 Bii en Elízhabeth eril im esh worahíyamesh womelasha meshehé wa.

E:

L:

E:

9 Bóo di na olob dumidal nath bathenanehéth duthahádim.

E:

L:

E:

10 Baa om bebáa eril íthi wobun woshumath birethu thabeshinehé?

E:

L:

E:

11 Baa medom nen náthad amedara wobalin wohoninehéth?

E:

L:

E:

12 Bii ril héeya Átheni eril ham belid henesahé wáa.

E:

L:

E:

In #7, speaking/writing less formally, we would not need the verb “duth” in the embedded sentence/question. We could just as intelligibly state, “Bii methózheláad wíitham [aril shun mezhenan hizh]ehé wáa,” which would become “Bii methózheláad wíitham [aril shun mezhenan hizh]ehée wáa.” Through the use of the Instrument Case “mezhenan” (rather than the Object Case “mezhet”) we would be providing the information that the ritual will use powder(s). Both versions will be understood.

In #8, did the word “rahíyamesh” (be wide; be broad) [ra- (NON) + híyamesh (be narrow)] give you any difficulty?

In #10, did you note the idiomatic use of “bire” (layer) to refer to the storeys or floors of a building?

Apologies: the English translations of #12 are not clear. The distinction here, as in all of these, is whether there is any question that “eril ham belid henesha” (there was a house in the east). Hopefully, using the English word “lest” instead of the standard “if/whether” will make the sense of this sentence clearer.

In all of the above, the embedded statement is the Object of the verb in the outer sentence and so could take the Object suffix after the embedding suffix. I’ve used it on some of them and omitted it on others; it’s optional throughout.

Translate the following into Láadan.

13 For what purpose is it important whether, long ago, Someone created all-that-is?

L: _____

14 Prithee state by what route the ducks flew to the lake.

L: _____

15 (WARN) I'm told you will have to recognize whether the rich man ate chicken or turkey.

L: _____

16 Do you know how you will drink the drug when the physician gives it to you in tea with nectar?

L: _____

17 No-one warned me whether the poor family was about to clean the building with a BROOM.

L: _____

18 The philosopher tries to learn which book is correct.

L: _____

In #15, did you have any difficulty in forming “rashud” (be wealthy; be rich) [ra- (NON) + shud (be poor)]?

How well did you do forming a word for “about to clean” in #17? We know “to clean:” “dóhéthe” [dó- (cause to) + éthe (be clean)]. We simply add the prefix “thé-” (about to VERB, any minute), and there we are: “thédóhéthe.”

Speaking less formally in #17, “éthe” (be clean), if provided with an Object (as it is here), would be understood to mean “to clean;” the use of the prefix “dó-” (cause to) is formally correct but not absolutely necessary to be understood. Ergo, in #17, “théhéthe” [thé- (ABOUTto) + éthe (be clean)] would be clearly understood.

Answers

- 1 Does the king agree (in word) whether the dishes are small (2D)?
- 2 The scientist did not ask what the child touched the beetle with.
- 3 Does Margaret see whether the lines upon the cup are short and narrow?
- 4 Prithee, you few, study whether the mystery of the absence of seaweed was brief.
- 5 Prithee swear to the group which song Teresa sang yesterday evening.
- 6 It will be clear what the students are reading now.
- 7 The clergy have just reached consensus that the ritual will use these-few powders.
Bíi methózheláad wíitham aril duth shun mezheth hizhehé(th) wáa.
The clergy have just reached consensus whether the ritual will use these-few powders.
- 8 Elizabeth understands that the boat traveled across the wide ocean.
Bíi en Elízhabeth eril im esh worahíyamesh womelasha meshehé(th) wa.
Elizabeth understands whether the boat traveled across the wide ocean.
- 9 Prithee, beloved, tell the healer that the fox injured you with (its) claws.
Bóo di na olob dumidal nath bathenanehé(th) duthahádim.
Prithee, beloved, tell the healer whether the fox injured you with (its) claws.
- 10 Who is teaching that the new tower with twenty storeys was tall?
Báa om bebáa eril íthi wobun woshumath birethu thabeshinehé(th)?
Who is teaching whether the new tower with twenty storeys was tall?
- 11 Prithee, you many, remember the old nurse can still dance.
Bóo medom nen náthad amedara wobalin wohoninehé(th).
Prithee, you many, remember whether the old nurse can still dance.
- 12 Anthony is afraid that there was a house in the east.
Bíi ril héeya Átheni eril ham belid heneshahé(th) wáa.
Anthony is afraid lest there was a house in the east.
- 13 Báa oth eríli el Beye abeshehé(th) bebáawan?
- 14 Bóo dibíi ne eril meshumáad yazh bebáasha ob wilidunedimehéeth.
- 15 Bée aril dush láadom ne yod worashud wowithid yatheth e yáathethehé wáa.
- 16 Báa ril lothel ne aril rilin ne desheth bebáanal úyahú ban eduthahá beth nedim zhusha nil homedenehé.
- 17 Bíi eril dibée rawith thédóhéthe woshud wohonida matheth wushehóonanehé(th) ledim wa.
- 18 Bíi dubedi ehená dóon bebáa; áabe nedabahé wáa.