

Lesson 12

“Wh” Questions

Vocabulary

aba	to be fragrant
bebáa	interrogative pronoun
bo	mountain
dan	language
dim	container
dizh	kettle
du-	Prefix (verb): try to VERB
léli	to be yellow
mahina	flower
othel	to be blessed

“Wh”-Questions

[(Aux) Verb (Neg) CP–S]

The subject of the lesson is Wh-questions (a very English term that owes its form to the fact that most English question words start with “wh”), questions that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no.” They are very simply formed in Láadan, but look so different from their English counterparts that they are likely to be awkward for English speakers at first.

In the interrogative pronoun, the interrogative “báa” is attached to the pronoun “be.” Since “bebáa” (who/what) is a pronoun, it also has plural forms “bebáazh” (who/what, few/several) and “bebáan” (who/what, many). These plural forms will be used less often than the singular—only when the questioner has reason to expect that more than one thing will satisfy her query. Plurality in an interrogative pronoun may seem foreign to English speakers, but it does provide additional opportunities to mark the plural—such opportunities being relatively rare in Láadan.

Formally, all questions begin with “Báa.” Less formally, since we have a form of the word “báa” embedded in the interrogative pronoun, “bebáa,” there can be no confusion that it’s a question being posed; therefore, in casual speech and writing we can omit the initial “Báa.”

Additionally, if the speaker wishes to limit her query to persons or animals of only one gender, it is perfectly feasible to incorporate one of the gender suffixes: bebáahizh (who/what, single, female); bebáahid (who/what, single, male); bebáazhizh (who/what, few/several, all female); bebáazhid (who/what, few/several, all male); bebáanizh (who/what, many, all female); bebáanid (who/what, many, all male). Of course, the plural gendered forms are limiting the entire group that would answer the question to the gender specified; if the speaker wished to include both genders, she would not use a gender suffix to limit her question.

Notes

Examples

Bíi thal shon wa.

Peace is good.

Báa thal shon?

Is peace good?

Báa thal bebáa?

Who/what is good?

Thal bebáa?

Who's/what's good?

Bíi néde om with wáa.

The person wants to teach.

Báa néde om with?

Does the person want to teach?

Báa néde om bebáa?

Who/what wants to teach?

Néde om bebáa?

Who/what wants to teach?

Bíi meháya withizh wa.

The women are beautiful.

Báa meháya withizh?

Are the women beautiful?

Báa meháya bebáazh?

Who/what (few/several) are beautiful?

Meháya bebáazh?

Who're/what're (few/several) beautiful?

Báa meháya bebáan?

Who/what (many) are beautiful?

Meháya bebáan?

Who're/what're (many) beautiful?

Bíi eríl u ra áath wi.

The door clearly was not open.

Báa eríl u ra áath?

Wasn't the door open?

Báa eríl u ra bebáa?

What/who wasn't open?

Eríl u ra bebáa?

Who/what wasn't open?

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Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Baa ril othel bebáa?
- 2 Baa aril mehamedara bebáan?
- 3 Baa eríli dudoth ra bebáa?
- 4 Baa eril medi i menahada bebáazh?
- 5 Baa rilrili nime míi bebáa?
- 6 Baa aril medush mehal bebáan?

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

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Transform the following into “Wh”-questions. Translate into English before and after the transformation.

- 7 Bii aril dathim shoná wo.
- 8 Bé eril balin déelahá wa.
- 9 Bii ril merahíya ra dim wáa.
- 10 Bii híya i shane edemid wi.
- 11 Bii eril héeya lawida amedarahá wáa.
- 12 Bé aril methad melalom belidá wa.

Did the word “amedarahá” in #11 give you any trouble? From “amedara” (to dance) and “-á” (doer/maker), it means “dancer.” One note: “aa” is an allowed vowel combination in Láadan within a word or word-part; in fact we’ve seen it in the Evidence word “waá.” However, in this case, the “a” comes from “amedara” (dance) and the “á” from “-á” (DOER)—**separate** words/word-parts—so we do have to separate them with an “h.”

It’s perfectly understandable if the word “belidá” in #12 was difficult; it’s not the most transparent formation. “Belidá” comes from “belid” (house) and “-á” (doer/maker); a “maker of houses” is a “carpenter.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translate the following questions into Láadan. Then answer each question in Láadan with the supplied word and translate your answer into English.

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|
| 13 | What may be extremely hot? | kettle |
| 14 | What (few/several) are beautiful(place)? | mountain |
| 15 | What (many) isn't alien? | language |
| 16 | What is yellow and fragrant? | flower |
| 17 | Who intended to be good? | grandparent |
| 18 | Who (few/several) promised to remember? | peace-scientist |

In #18, we see a verb, “dom” (to remember), that we’ve only ever seen as the first element of a Verb Complex (what in English we’ve been taught to call a “helping verb”) used as the **second** verb (as the main verb in the sentence). It’s important to remember that all verbs—even those we’re used to seeing as “helping verbs”—can be used in this way.

13 L: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

14 L: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

15 L: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

16 L: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

17 L: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

18 L: _____
 L: _____
 E: _____

Notes

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1 Who/what is blessed? 2 Who (many) will dance? 3 Who, long ago, didn't try to follow? 4 Who (few/several) spoke and began to laugh? 5 Who might be willing to be amazed? 6 Who (many) will have to work?

7 I suppose the peacemaker will needlework. *Báa aril dathim shond?* Will the peacemaker needlework? 8 Upon my oath, the gardener was old. *Báa eril balin délahá?* Was the gardener old? 9 I understand the containers are not large. *Báa ril merahya ra dim?* Aren't the containers large? 10 A mouse is small and furry, of course. *Báa hiya i shane bebdá?* What is small and furry? 11 The dancer was afraid to be pregnant, I understand. *Báa eril héya lawida amdarahá?* Was the dancer afraid to be pregnant? 12 I promise the carpenters will be able to sing. *Báa aril method melalom belidd?* Will the carpenters be able to sing?

13 *Báa rilri! owahul bebdá?* *Bil rilri! owahul dizh wo.* I suppose the kettle may be extremely hot. 14 *Báa ril mehóya bebdázh?* *Bil ril mehóya bo wa.* The mountains are beautiful(place). 15 *Báa ril mené ra bebdán?* *Bil ril mené ra dan wá.* I understand the languages are not alien. 16 *Báa aril léli! abá?* *Bil aril léli! abá mahina wi.* A flower is yellow and fragrant, clearly. 17 *Báa eril nédeshub thal bebdá?* *Bil eril nédeshub thal hothul wá.* I understand the grandparent intended to be good. 18 *Báa eril dibé dom bebdá?* *Bil eril dibé dom eshoná wa.* The peace-scientist promised to remember.