

# CHAPTER 14

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## Questions

### 14.1 Polar questions

#### 14.1.1 Asking polar questions

The main strategy for forming polar (AKA yes–no) questions in Kamyá is by using the sentence-initial interrogative particle *şel*.<sup>1</sup> This same particle can also be used at the end of a clause in certain question-tag formulations (see §14.3).

- (1) *Şel hay kavukar kişa?*

*şel hay kavuk-ar-Ø ki-şa*  
 Q 3PL.NOM dwell-PL-PRES PROX-LOC  
 ‘Do they live here?’

- (2) *Şel ta pezit di az?*

*şel ta pez-it di a-z*  
 Q 2SG.NOM know-NPST already 3SG-ACC  
 ‘Have you already met him?’

Cross-linguistically, the use of an interrogative particle is the commonest method of forming polar questions (Dryer 2013a), with a sentence-initial in particular being the second most popular option among such languages (Dryer 2013c).

As described in ??, in Kamyá, there is typically a rise in intonation towards the end of polar questions. In fact, in the colloquial language, it is possible, though still not exceedingly common, to omit the interrogative particle entirely and convey that the utterance is a question rather than a declarative statement through intonation alone.

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1 It appears that *şel* is etymologically related to the interrogative adverb *seyal* ‘how’ (see §14.2.1).

## (3) Kunyaş usi şi tişaç?

kunya-ş usi şi tişaç  
 2PL-DAT EXIST.PRES INDEF cat.NOM  
 ‘Do you have a cat?’

Similarly, the scope of a polar question is also typically communicated by intonation. Consider the example in (4) below.

## (4) Şel ta reçit aş şi leylaz?

şel ta reç-it a-ş şi leyla-z  
 Q 2SG.NOM give-NPST 3SG-DAT INDEF flower-ACC  
 ‘Did you give him a flower?’

A general question is conveyed with the global rise in intonation described above. However, it may be made more focused in scope by an intonational peak on the focused word. Thus, a peak on *ta* would make the identity of the giver the focus and a peak on *leylaz* would instead make the particular object given the focus, for example.

In the conditional mood, it is possible to use polar questions in the function of polite or deferential imperatives.

## (5) Şel ta reçiz ceş na handa kudiz?

şel ta reç-iz-Ø ceş na handa kudi-z  
 Q 2SG.NOM give-COND-PRES 1SG.DAT DEF MED book-ACC  
 ‘Could you give me that book?’

Additionally, the interrogative particle *şel* can be used with either the imperative or hortative moods in order to form expressions of exasperation, as in (6) and (7) below.

## (6) Şel kunya çeltara?

şel kunya çelt-ar-a  
 Q 2PL.NOM be.quiet-PL-IMP  
 ‘Will you be quiet!?’

## (7) Şel me heydarija?

şel me heyda-r-ija  
 Q 1PL.NOM leave-PL-HORT  
 ‘Can we get going!?’

For more information on the conditional, imperative and hortative moods, see §§??, ?? and ?? respectively.

### 14.1.2 Answering polar questions

In Kamya, polar questions can be answered using the words *eç* ‘yes’ and *agad* ‘no’ (though as discussed below *be* and *biş* are also used). Firstly, *eç* is used to show agreement with positive statements.

(8) Şel ta ak perçaz? – Eç, cen ak perçaz.

şel ta ak perç-az eç cen ak perç-az  
Q 2SG.NOM eat.PRES meat-ACC yes 1SG.NOM eat.PRES meat-ACC

‘Do you eat meat? – Yes, I eat meat.’

Likewise, *eç* is also used to show agreement with negative statements.

(9) Şel ta be sadh çiranaz? – Eç, cen sadh çiranaz.

şel ta be sadh çiran-az eç cen sadh çiran-az  
Q 2SG.NOM NEG drink.PRES beer-ACC yes 1SG.NOM drink.PRES beer-ACC

‘Do you not drink beer? – No, I do drink beer.’

On the other hand, *agad* is used to disagree with positive statements.

(10) Şel teş uşar taha layda? – Agad, çeş uşar biş layda.

şel teş uş-ar taha layda agad çeş uş-ar biş  
Q 2SG.DAT EXIST.PRES-PL some money.NOM no 1SG.DAT EXIST.PRES-PL none  
layda  
money.NOM

‘Do you have some money? – No, I don’t have any money.’

It is also used to disagree with negative statements.

(11) Şel ta b’ ihir rusuçata? – Agad, cen ihir rusuçata.

şel ta b’ ihir rusuç-ata agad cen ihir  
Q 2SG.NOM NEG speak.PRES Russian-INST no 1SG.NOM speak.PRES  
rusuç-ata  
Russian-INST

‘Do you not speak Russian? – Yes, I do speak Russian.’

In addition to *eç* and *agad*, the nominal and verbal negators *be* and *biş* (see §§?? and ??) may be used to convey agreement with negative statements and disagreement with positive statements, with *biş* used as a negative response to a nominal element and *be* to a verbal element or the statement as a whole.

(12) Şel ta cal regeçaz? – Be, cen be cal bişaz.

şel ta cal regeç-az be cen be cal biş-az  
Q 2SG.NOM want.PRES salt-ACC NEG 1SG.NOM NEG want.PRES none-ACC

‘Do you want salt? – No, I don’t want any.’

(13) Şel teş bod akaç? – Biş, ceş bod biş.

şel tes bod akaç biş ceş bod biş  
Q 2SG.DAT NEG.EXIST.PRES food-ACC none 1SG.DAT NEG.EXIST.PRES none

‘Do you not have food? – No, I don’t have any.’

Note, however, that *be* and *biş* differ slightly from *eç* and *agad* in their pragmatics as they are used in a less forceful, more perfunctory or pro forma way. That said, *eç* and *agad* are not necessarily inherently forceful.

## 14.2 Content questions

### 14.2.1 Interrogative words

There are various interrogative words (AKA *wh*-words in English) in Kamya. These are presented in (14) and discussed further below that.

(14) a. buka <sup>2</sup>	‘who’	g. kaşa	‘where’
b. he <sup>3</sup>	‘what, which’	h. kazen	‘whence’
c. heşe	‘which, what’	i. kazuri	‘whither’
d. hegin	‘how much, many’	j. nazen	‘why (cause)’
e. seyal	‘how’	k. nahiş	‘why (end)’
f. vaka	‘when’		

Firstly, *buka* is used in reference to humans—as well as sometimes animals, especially pets, according to the discretion or disposition of the speaker—whereas *he* is used with non-human referents, which are usually inanimate.<sup>4</sup>

(15) Buka hecuz?

buka hecuz  
who.NOM go.FUT

‘Who is going?’

(16) He usi na gidoşa?

he usi na gido-şa  
what.NOM EXIST.PRES DEF table-LOC

‘What is on the table?’

2 *Buka* has the irregular form *bukere* rather than *\*bukare* in the genitive case.

3 *He* has the irregular form *hata* rather than *\*heta* in the instrumental case.

4 An exception to this generalisation is that *buka* rather than *he* is used in reference to the personal names, thus *Na tere odam buka?* ‘What is your name?’ and *Ta odamath buka?* ‘What are you called?’ rather than *#Na tere odam he?* and *#Ta odamath he?*

These two interrogative words take on any case marking required by their role in the sentence.

(17) Ta mal bukaz?

ta mal buka-z  
2SG.NOM see.PRES who-ACC

‘Who can you see?’

(18) Kunya calar hez?

kunya cal-ar-Ø he-z  
2PL.NOM want-PL-PRES what-ACC

‘What do you want?’

Note that both *buka* and *he* can only be used pronominally and not adnominally. Conversely, *heşe*, which may be used with both human and non-human referent nouns alike, is used almost exclusively adnominally alongside the definite article *na* instead of pronominally, though the latter is possible for certain speakers without an article.

(19) Teş usi na heşe daru?

teş usi na heşe daru  
2SG.DAT EXIST.PRES DEF which car.NOM

‘What/Which car do you have?’

(20) (#) Ta huçat heşez?

ta huça-t heşe-z  
2SG.NOM choose-NPST which-ACC

‘Which one did you choose?’

*Buka*, *he* and *heşe* may all be used with plural referents. Thus, when found in the subject role, they may trigger plural marking on the verb (see ??). Very rarely, they may also even bear the overt plural marker *-da* (see ??). Nevertheless, the default use is in the singular, in terms of both nominal and verbal marking, with the plural only being used when the speaker wishes to either overtly reference or insist on the plurality of the referent or referents.

The genitive forms of *buka* and *he*—namely, *bukere* and *here*—are used adnominally to express the same interrogative meaning as English *whose*.

(21) Ta fandit na bukere terpoz?

ta fan-dit na buka-re terpo-z  
2SG.NOM break-NPST DEF who-GEN cup-ACC

‘Whose cup have you broken?’

When pronominal, the corresponding forms *bukeren* and *heren*, derived from the genitives with the suffix *-n* are used instead (cf. possessive pronouns; see ??). These forms are in actuality somewhat uncommon, however.

(22) A gihucuz bukerenaz?

a            gih-ucuz buka-re-n-az  
3SG.NOM buy-FUT who-GEN-NM-ACC  
'Whose is he going to buy?'

Like *heşe*, the interrogative quantifier *hegin* may be used with human and non-human nouns. Unlike *heşe*, however, *hegin* is freely found in both adnominal and pronominal uses. It is often, though not obligatorily, employed with a following numeral classifier with count nouns (see ??).

(23) Meş çutor hegin layda?

me-ş    çut-o-r-Ø            hegin    layda  
1PL-DAT need-MDP-PL-PRES how.much money.NOM  
'How much money do we need?'

(24) Hay akardit heginaz?

hay    ak-ar-dit    hegin-az  
3PL.NOM eat-PL-NPST how.much-ACC  
'How much did they eat?'

(25) Hegin sak çalgi sodhar?

hegin    sak çalgi            sodha-r-Ø  
how.much CL carrot.NOM remain-PL-PRES  
'How many carrots are left?'

The manner adverb *seyal* is used, as one would expect, in questions relating to manner.

(26) Na kada seyal ganat?

na kada    seyal gana-t  
DEF man.NOM how walk-NPST  
'How did the man walk?'

Similarly, the temporal adverb *vaka* is used to ask questions of time.

(27) Me vatarcuz vaka?

me    vata-r-cuz    vaka  
1PL.NOM arrive-PL-FUT when  
'When are going to arrive?'

The three spatial adverbs *kaşa*, *kazen*, *kazuri* refer to locations, goals and sources respectively. Thus, there are used in the same way as nouns in the locative, ablative and allative cases (see §§??, ?? and ??).

- (28) Kunya kavukar kaşa?  
 kunya kavuk-ar-Ø ka-şa  
 2PL.NOM dwell-PL-PRES where-LOC  
 ‘Where do you live?’
- (29) Ta het kazen?  
 ta het ka-zen  
 2SG.NOM go.NPST where-ABL  
 ‘Where did you come from?’
- (30) Hay hardit kazuri?  
 hay har-dit ka-zuri  
 3PL.NOM go.PL-NPST where-ALL  
 ‘Where have they gone?’

In Kamyá, there are two separate words corresponding to English *why*, namely *nazen* and *nahiş*. Where *nazen* is generally used to ask about the cause of something, *nahiş* is used to question to the end goal.<sup>5</sup>

- (31) Na dital fanot nazen?  
 na dital fan-o-t nazen  
 DEF window.NOM break-MDP-NPST how.come  
 ‘How come the window broke?’
- (32) Hay tawar nahiş?  
 hay taw-ar-Ø nahiş  
 3PL.NOM run-PL-PRES what.for  
 ‘What are they running for?’

These same words are also commonly used as conjunctions in purpose and reason clauses (see §§?? and ?? respectively).

### 14.2.2 Asking content questions

In content questions (AKA *wh*-questions) in Kamyá, rather than being fronted, interrogative words and other interrogative phrases remain *in situ* as is also the case in, for example, Japanese (Hinds 1986: 25–41), Mongolian (Juhanen 2012: 254–6) and Turkish (Göksel & Kerslake 2005: 258–67). Indeed, interrogative words remaining *in situ* is cross-linguistically commoner than fronting (Dryer 2013b).

This use of *in situ* interrogative words can be seen in the various examples in §14.2.1 but is also illustrated by those below.

5 The form *nazuri* is also occasionally heard as an alternative to *nahiş* though this is non-standard and most speakers would consider this a mistake. Indeed, *nahiş* is the historically original form with *nazuri* seemingly arrived at by analogy with *nazen* and the ablative–allative opposition in the case system (see §§?? and ??).

(33) Ta sadh hez?

ta sadh he-z  
2SG.NOM drink.PRES what-ACC  
'What are you drinking?'

(34) Meş çutor hegin sak cerak?

me-ş çut-o-r-Ø hegin sak cerak  
1PL-DAT need-MDP-PL-PRES how.much CL bottle.NOM  
'How many bottles do we need?'

(35) Kunya be rular nazen?

kunya be rular nazen  
2PL.NOM NEG know.PL-PRES how.come  
'How do you not know?'

(36) Yuli Sezar starumca vaka?

Yuli Sezar star-umca vaka  
Julius.Caesar.NOM die-FPST when  
'When did Julius Caesar die?'

Content questions may contain multiple interrogative words. However, in practice, sentences containing two interrogative words are uncommon, with three or more questions words in one sentence being vanishingly rare.

(37) Buka bukit bukaz?

buka bukit bukaz  
who.NOM hit-NPST who-ACC  
'Who hit whom?'

As described in ??, content questions exhibit a rise–fall intonation in the run up to the interrogative word with a rise on the interrogative word itself.

Finally, a sub-type of content questions is those questions that present the addressee with options from which to choose, usually contrasting conjoined noun or verb phrases. Such questions invariably contain *mana* 'or' or *bala* 'or, otherwise' and the sentence-initial interrogative particle *şel* seen in §14.1.1.

The first of these conjunctions, *mana*, can be used freely as either an inclusive or exclusive *or*.

(38) Şel ta cal çahaz mana kawaz?

şel ta cal çaha-z mana kawa-z  
Q 2SG.NOM want.PRES tea-ACC or coffee-ACC  
'Do you want tea or coffee?'



However, *bala* can only be used as an exclusive *or*, though the use of *bala* in the wrong social or inter-personal situation may be construed as either patronising or overly stern.

(39) Şel ta paracuz pitsaz bala lazanyaz?

şel ta            para-cuz    pitsa-z    bala            lazanya-z  
Q 2SG.NOM take-FUT pizza-ACC otherwise lasagne-ACC  
'Are you having pizza or lasagne?'

Both *mana* and *bala* have truncated colloquial monosyllabic variants, namely *ma* and *ba*.

The intonation of *mana*- and *bala*-questions is similar to normal content questions except that both options are usually given their own intonational peaks.

### 14.3 Question tags

In addition to the canonical polar-question strategy presented in §14.1.1, questions that expect an answer of 'yes' or 'no' can also be constructed by placing a short question tag after what would otherwise be a declarative statement.

One common question tag is simply the conjunction *mana* 'or'.

(40) Na tere huş şî valis, mana?

na tere    huş    Ø    şî    valis    mana  
DEF 2SG.GEN SON.NOM COP.PRES INDEF police.NOM or  
'Your son is policeman, right?'

Another is the particle *da* 'indeed, right'. This may be used on its own, as with *mana*, though this is rather rare. More usually, it is followed by *eç* 'yes' after affirmative statements and by *be* after negative statements.

(41) A ihir cermanuçata, da eç?

a            ihir            cermanuç-ata da    eç  
3SG.NOM speak.PRES German-INST indeed yes  
'He speaks German, doesn't he?'

(42) Ta b' ihir spanuçata, da be?

ta            b'    ihir            spanuç-ata da    be  
2SG.NOM NEG speak.PRES Spanish-INST indeed NEG  
'You don't speak Spanish, do you?'

The interrogative particle *şel* can also be used in this way. It is more common to use *şel* rather than *da* on its own, though it is also not uncommonly accompanied by *eç* or *be*.

(43) Kişun na hudaşa me akarcuz somaşava, şel?

kişun na huda-şa me ak-ar-cuz soma-şa-va şel  
today DEF evening-LOC 1PL.NOM eat-PL-FUT home-LOC-INESS Q

‘We’re eating at home tonight, right?’

As well being used in combination with *da* or *şel*, it is possible to use *eç* and *be* on their own after affirmative and negative declarative statements respectively. Note also that, in tags containing *eç* and *be*, these words gain primary stress and *da* and *şel* bear no stress.

One may also use *tata* ‘right, correct’ or *şeya* ‘true’ after both affirmative and negative statements as question tags either alone or preceded by *şel*.

(44) Panda kavuk Çinişa, şel tata?

panda kavuk Çin-işa şel tata  
panda.NOM dwell.PRES China-LOC Q correct

‘Pandas live in China, right?’

The intonation of questions formed using tags combines that of both declarative statements and polar questions, with the declarative-statement portion having a generally falling intonation and the question tag having a sharp rising contour (see also ??).

#### 14.4 Echo questions

There are, at least in Kamya, two ways in which echo questions may be categorised. Firstly, they may either be seeking clarification or expressing surprise in some way. Secondly, they may or may not replace a particular constituent in the utterance being echoed with an interrogative word (see §14.2.1).

Echo questions that are used by the speaker to seek clarification on something an interlocutor has said are usually formulated simply by repeating an utterance—or a portion of an utterance—with the intonation of a content question (see §§?? and 14.2.2) and replacing first-person forms with second-person forms—or vice versa—where necessary.

(45) Ceş uşar iz tişaç. — Teş uşar iz tişaç?

ceş uş-ar-Ø iz tişaç teş uş-ar iz tişaç  
1SG.NOM EXIST-PL-PRES three cat.NOM 2SG.NOM EXIST-PL-PRES three cat.NOM

‘I have three cats. — You have three cats?’

However, they may also include the replacement of the constituent for which clarification is being sought by an interrogative word.

(46) Na cere deyza pezi az. — Buka pezi az?

na cere deyza pezi a-z buka pezi a-z  
 DEF 1SG.GEN daughter.NOM know.PRES 3SG-ACC who.NOM know.PRES 3SG-ACC

‘My daughter knows him. — Who knows him?’

Echo questions that are intended to convey surprise or outrage on the part of the speaker are formed in the same way as clarification-seeking echo questions except that they employ a much more exaggerated intonation contour, especially on the constituent that is cause for surprise or alarm. They very often also include the mirative particle *co*, which occurs in a pre-verbal position (see ?? for more on this particle).

(47) A co bukit taz?

a co buk-it ta-z  
 3SG.NOM MIR hit-NPST 2SG-ACC

‘He hit you!?’

Note that the mirative particle *co* can also be used on its own as a question fragment and connotes disbelief or outrage in a similar manner to a full echo question.

# Abbreviations

1	first person	INDEF	indefinite
2	second person	INST	instrumental
3	third person	LOC	locative
ABL	ablative	MDP	mediopassive
ACC	accusative	MED	medial
ALL	allative	MIR	mirative
CL	numeral classifier	NEG	negative
COM	comitative	NM	nominaliser
COND	conditional	NOM	nominative
COP	copula	NPST	near past
DAT	dative	PL	plural
DEF	definite	PRES	present
EXIST	existential verb	PROX	proximal
FPST	far past	Q	question particle
FUT	future	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	VRB	verbaliser
HORT	hortative		
IMP	imperative		

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