

## 13. Questions

### 13.1. Yes/no questions

Yes/no questions are formed by using an auxiliary verb in sentence-initial position and overlaying rising intonation on the final tonic syllable (rising intonation is symbolized by the diacritic '?'):

(98) a. Can she swim? '¿Puede ella nadar?'

AUX:poder 3SG:F:NOM nadar

b. Will you taste this? '¿Saborearás este?'

AUX:FUT 2 saborear DEMO1

If the corresponding non-interrogative sentence has no auxiliary, the semantically empty auxiliary *do* is used:

(99) Do you come here often? '¿Vienes aquí con frecuencia?'

AUX 2 venir aquí frecuentamente

(c.f. *You come here often.* 'Vienes aquí con frecuencia.')

### 13.2. Content questions

To form a content question, English uses a special interrogative pronoun. Normally, this occurs in sentence-initial position. Most such pronouns have as their first element the form *wh-*. If the element questioned is the subject, the interrogative pronoun simply occurs in subject position, with no variation from non-interrogative clause structure:

(100) **Who** said that? '¿Quién dijo eso?'

quién decir-PAS DEMO2

(c.f. *He said that.* 'El dijo eso.')

If a non-subject is questioned, the interrogative pronoun (inflected for animacy and for oblique semantic roles) occurs in initial position, an auxiliary verb is second, and the rest of the sentence follows:

(101) a. **What** should we do with this? '¿Qué debemos hacer con esto?'

qué deber 1PL:NOM hacer con DEMO1

Payne: a brief grammatical sketch of English

b. **Where** has he gone? '¿A dónde ha ido él?'  
a:donde haber:3SG:NOPAS 3SG:M:NOM ir:PPAS

c. **What** did they have? '¿Qué tenían ellos?'  
qué AUX:PAS 3PL:NOM tener:NOPAS

Example 101c illustrates that the semantically empty auxiliary *do* also occurs in content questions, when no other auxiliary is applicable.

Occasionally, question words may occur *in situ*, i.e., in the same position as the questioned element would occur in a non-interrogative clause. However, such constructions are generally judged to be non-standard, and are used in oral discourse principally for special emphatic effect (e.g., disbelief). Though this construction is largely limited to oral discourse, when rendered in written form (e.g., in a direct quote in an informal narrative), multiple question marks are often used to symbolize this special effect:

(102) a. She said **what??** '¿QUÉ dijo ella?'  
3SG:F:NOM decir-PAS qué

b. They went **where??** '¿A DÓNDE fueron ellos?'  
3PL:NOM ir:PAS dónde

c. Providence did **what** to my portrait??  
Providencia hacer:PAS qué a mi retrato  
'QUÉ hizo Providencia a mi retrato?'