**Calentamientos: lo vs. lo que (v. qué?)**

<http://spanish.about.com/od/pronouns/a/lo-que.htm>

**Excerpt from a news article:** *Científicos europeos y estadounidenses presentan esta semana en “Science” un estudio que señala que el protón es más pequeño de lo que se cree. Los resultados confirman lo que el mismo equipo ya publicó en Nature en 2010: "El protón parece ser 0,00000000000003 milímetros menor de lo que pensaban los investigadores."*

**Source:** ABC.es. Retrieved Jan. 25, 2013.

**Suggested translation:**  European and American scientists are presenting a study in *“Science”*  this week that indicates that the proton is smaller than what (that which) is believed. The results confirm what (that which) the same research team already published in Nature in 2010: "The proton seems to be 0.00000000000003 millimeters smaller than what (that which) researchers thought."

**Key grammatical issue:** [*Lo que*](http://spanish.about.com/od/sentencestructure/a/what.htm), used in this selection three times, is a common way of starting a phrase that functions as a [noun](http://spanish.about.com/od/nouns/g/noun.htm). It is probably best to think of *lo que* here as a single word, a type of [neuter](http://spanish.about.com/cs/grammar/a/neuter.htm) [relative pronoun](http://spanish.about.com/od/pronouns/a/que_relative_pronouns.htm). When *lo que* refers to an idea or abstract action, it can almost always be translated as "what" or "that which."

Some examples of everyday phrases using *lo que* in this way:

* *Lo que pasa*, what is happening.
* *Lo que hemos hecho*, what we have done.
* *Lo que me preocupa*, what is worrying me.
* *Lo que sabemos*, what we know.
* *Lo que es inolvidable*, what is unforgettable.

"The thing that" can be used in translation when referring to something more specific: *lo que tiene seis ojos*, the thing that has six eyes.