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Interrogatives in Yanomam

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INTERROGATIVES IN YANOMÁM

by

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This thesis, submitted by Richard A. Thiele in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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12 - 9 - 93

iii

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS[1]

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
Class	Classifier
Cmp	Completive
D	Dual
Dim	Diminutive
Dir	Directional
Dur	Durative
Erg	Ergative
Evid	Evidential
Gen	General
Hort	Hortative
Inch	Inchoative
Incmp	Incompletive
Indic	Indicative
Inst	Instrumental
Int	Interrogative particle

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[1]In this thesis, I sometimes use symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to describe the sounds of Yanomám. These symbols include: p, t, k, tʰ, s, ʃ, h, hʷ, m, n, l, ɾ, w, j, i, ɨ, ɯ, u, e, o, ə, ɛ, ɔ, a, ʔ, plus two diacritics: a tilde ~ for nasalization, and a vertical stroke ' for primary stress.

Inten	Intensifier
Inv	Involvement
Loc	Locative
Neg	Negative
P	Plural
Past	Past
Permis	Permission
Poss	Possessive
Pres	Present
Punct	Punctual
Rec	Recent
Ref	Referential
Rem	Remote
S	Singular
Spec	Specifier
Wh	Information question word
:	Complex morpheme (in morpheme gloss)
-	Morpheme break
=	Clitic

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Finally, I thank the Yanomami Indians -- particularly those who live in the village of Palimi-U, the Palimithelis -- for their help and patience in teaching me about their language and culture.

To the Palimithelis

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a general linguistic description of yes-no and information questions in Yanomám (a member of the Yanomami language family of Brazil and Venezuela) in the descriptive/typological tradition, including morphosyntax and semantics, appropriate responses, certain discourse-pragmatic conditions of their use (such as bias and focus), and intonation patterns.

Some things in the Yanomám language that are typologically unusual are an information question system that utilizes just one interrogative word, interaction of temporal-evidential particles with questions, and the occurrence of hortative constructions in questions.

My sources of information include the limited published works and articles on the language, previously unpublished materials, and my own field notes.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I investigate the various types of yes-no and information questions which occur in Yanomám, the central dialect of the Yanomami language family.

The intended audience is the general linguistic community as well as non-linguists who work among the Yanomami and who might find the material to be helpful.

1. Yanomami People

Approximately twenty thousand Yanomami Indians live in villages scattered throughout the rain forest in northwestern Brazil and in southeastern Venezuela. The majority of those people live in Venezuela, where they are often referred to by the generic term *Guaica* (Gomez 1990: xiii). The remainder live in Brazil, where they are called *Ianomami*. Journalists tend to refer to the entire ethnic group as the Yanomami.

2. Yanomám Language

The Yanomami language family is not known to be related to any other language group. This family consists of four closely-related languages (Borgman 1990:6-7). Grimes (1992:32,34,38) lists these languages as Ninam (or Yanam, Xirianá, Shiriana Casapare, Kasrapai,

Jawaperi, Crichana, Jawari), Sanumá (or Tsanuma, Sanema, Guaika, Samatari, Samatali, Xamatari), Yanomámi (or Waicá, Waiká, Yanoam, Yanomam, Yanomamé, Surara, Xurima, Parahuri), and Yanomamö (Guaica, Guaharibo, Yanoama, Yanomami, Shamatari, Shamathari). Gomez (1990:xiii) claims that Brazilian anthropologists currently use the terms Yanam, Sanumá, Yanomam, and YanomamI, respectively. These four languages are subdivided into various local dialects which are named after the village(s) where they are spoken.

Yanomámi (following Grimes) or Yanomam (following Gomez), one of the four major languages, is also known as the central dialect of the Yanomami language family. Some Yanomami Indians from other dialects use the word *Waiká*[1] to specify the Indians who speak this dialect (Borgman 1990:17). Until recently, linguists used the word *waica* to refer to the people and their language (Borgman and Cue 1963:222; Albright, Borgman, Cue, Grimes and Seeley 1965:1-4; Voegelin and Voegelin 1965:32-35,147). Linguists and anthropologists now prefer the term *Yanomám*, sometimes omitting the accent (Borgman 1990:7, Gomez 1990:xiii). Indians who speak this dialect refer to it as *yanèmam thèé* [janə'mam tʰə̄:] 'Yanomami (people)'s language.' In this thesis, I call the language Yanomám.

About two to four thousand Yanomami speak Yanomám. They live in numerous villages, including Catrimani, Maitá, Novo Demini, Palimi-U,[2] Surucucu, Tototobi, and Tukuxim.

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[1]*Waiká* means 'fierce, wicked' in some dialects.

[2]This thesis is based upon the dialect spoken at Palimi-U, a small Yanomami village located on the Uraricuera River, about one hour's flight by small plane to the west-northwest of Boa Vista, Roraima.

The basic word order of Yanomám active transitive clauses is SOV. The word order of nonactive clauses varies depending upon the presence and/or type of subject, complement, and copula.

The language has both derivational and inflectional suffixes, and enclitics. Clitic doubling can occur. Discontinuous morphemes exist and numerous morphophonemic changes can be found.

The noun phrase has ergative-absolutive case marking. Nouns are grouped into classes and take common classifiers which tend to be based upon shared semantic properties. Possessors precede the head noun, and adjectives follow. There are postpositions. Articles are absent; other devices in the language are sometimes used to express definiteness.

The verb phrase has verbal suffixes, some of which express aspect/tense, others which specify a particular action, goal, or object. When a transitive clause lacks an explicit dual or plural subject, the verb phrase must include a marker which contains that information. Temporal-evidential particles are frequently used.

Yanomám displays rich variety in its types of negation and in interrogatives.

3. Yanomám Orthography

Orthography guidelines for the Yanomám language were formulated during a workshop which was held in Boa Vista, Roraima in 1976 (Leite 1976:1-7). My transcriptions of Yanomami data follow these guidelines, but material that I cite from other sources may vary from this standard.

Yanomám has twenty different phonemes (thirteen consonants and seven vowels), plus contrastive nasalization at the word level. In the

description which follows, each sound is listed in italics, as it is written in Yanomám orthography, and in square brackets, as it is transcribed with symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Consonant sounds include voiceless unaspirated stops *p* [p], *t* [t], *k* [k]; a voiceless aspirated stop *th* [tʰ]; voiceless fricatives *s* [s], *x* [ʃ], *h* [h], *hw* [hʷ]; nasals *m* [m], *n* [n]; a liquid *l* [l,ɾ]; and two semi-vowels *w* [w], *y* [j].[3]

Vowel sounds include high vowels *i* [i], *ỳ* [ɨ],[4] *u* [u]; mid vowels *e* [e,ɛ], *ė* [ə], *o* [o,ɔ]; and low vowel *a* [a].

Nasalization is represented in the orthography by writing a tilde over the first vowel in a word. In speech, nasalization spreads throughout the word until interrupted by a stop or a word boundary.[5]

Although most words in Yanomám are stressed on the first syllable, some are stressed medially or finally. Stress is rarely contrastive in Yanomám, and it is not marked in the practical orthography.

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[3]In the Aikamtheli dialect, there is an additional sound *f* [f] and the *hw* [hʷ] sound is missing. In the Palimitheli dialect, the *hw* [hʷ] is gradually being replaced by the *h* [h] sound in the speech of the younger generation.

[4]The *ỳ* is actually pronounced somewhere between the central [ɨ] and the back [ɯ].

[5]Tracey (n.d.:27) states, "Nasalization occurs at two levels. Phonemic nasalization is fortis and occurs as a component of an entire word. Non-phonemic nasalization is lenis and optionally occurs with vowels in the environment of nasal consonants or nasal words...In the western dialect phonemic nasalization starts at the beginning of a word but terminates at any word-medial stop or grooved fricative."

CHAPTER II

YES-NO QUESTIONS

1. Definition

One major category of interrogatives is called yes-no questions
(Givón 1990:782, Greenberg 1966:80, Ultan 1978:216), polar questions
(Borgman 1990:72), binary choice questions (Moravcsik 1971:59-60), or
nexus questions (Sadock and Zwicky 1985:179).

A yes-no question expects a yes or no answer. It asks about the
truth value of a given proposition: X? The listener responds by agree-
ing or disagreeing, thus declaring the proposition to be true or false.

2. Yes-No Question Devices

In Yanomám, the syntactic structure of a yes-no question is
similar to that of a declarative statement. A yes-no question is
differentiated from a corresponding statement by various devices or
strategies including interrogative particles, interrogative intonation
patterns, and the lack of clause-final glottalization.

Compare the yes-no question (1) and corresponding statement (2):

(1) *Wa hu tha?*[1]
     2s go GenInt
     Will you go?

_____

[1]*tha* is the general interrogative particle.

5

(2) *Wa hu -[ʔ].*[2]
$\quad$ 2s go -Indic
$\quad$ You will go.

Question (1) has an interrogative particle, has rising intonation, and lacks clause-final glottalization. The corresponding statement in (2) does not have an interrogative particle, has falling intonation, and has clause-final glottalization.

Yanomám yes-no questions can have interrogative particles in sentence-final position. These include the general interrogative particle *tha*, the permission interrogative particle *xa*, and various temporal-evidential interrogative particles.[3]

Ultan (1978:219-220) presents fifteen yes-no question intonation pattern types for world languages. Two of these patterns occur in Yanomám, and their distribution is determined by syntactic criteria: When a proposition is followed by an interrogative particle, it has a "slight terminal rise"; when a proposition is not followed by an interrogative particle, it has a "higher ultima followed by falling."[4] (This rule applies to both yes-no questions and information questions, and to all types of interrogative particles.)[5] In contrast, the basic

---

[2]The glottal stop [ʔ] is not written in the practical orthography, but I have included it in this thesis.

[3]These interrogative particles are discussed in more detail under sections 5 and 9 in this chapter, and in chapter IV.

[4]The second intonation pattern, a "higher ultima followed by falling," is discussed later under section 7 in this chapter.

[5]The association between interrogative particles and a "slight terminal rise" might be related to the fact that all interrogative particles are ultimately stressed in Yanomám.

intonation pattern of Yanomám declarative statements could be described as a "terminal fall."[6]

Yanomám yes-no and information questions lack the clause-final glottalization typical of non-question statements (Albright 1963:4, Thiele 1990:2). Borgman (1990:66) claims that the same is true for Sanuma, a language closely related to Yanomám.[7]

3. <u>Neutral Yes-No Questions</u>

In Yanomám, neutral yes-no questions have the following characteristics:

1. The proposition is positive.

2. The proposition is followed by the general interrogative particle *tha* (or *si*)[8] or a temporal-evidential interrogative particle.

3. The intonation pattern has a "slight terminal rise."

4. There is no clause-final glottalization.

---

[6]Albright (1963:3) and Tracey (n.d.:29) describe four intonation patterns for declarative statements in the Aykamteli dialect: rising contour, falling-rising contour, mid-rising contour and incomplete contour. Albright (1963:5) states, "The [yes-no] question contour is probably a level-rising contour beginning on a mid pitch and skipping to an extra high on the final or penultimate syllable of the last foot, then falling off." Tracey (n.d.:42) also mentions a question contour, with "intonation rising to an extra high on the ultimate phrase stress," but she does not specify for which type of question.

[7]Ultan (1978:215fn) observes that several languages use "terminal glottalization and/or voicing to mark questions vis-à-vis voicelessness in the corresponding statements." In Yanomám and Sanuma, it is the statements, not the questions, which are so marked.

[8]*si* is a suppletive allomorph of *tha*. It is discussed later under section 5 in this chapter.

These characteristics are illustrated in example (3):

(3) *Hu   tihi*[9] *ke   -layo -m   tha?*
    tree Class fall -Inch -Cmp GenInt
    Did the tree fall?

4. Responses to Yes-No Questions

The response to question (3) could be 'yes,' an affirmation of the

proposition,

(4) *[Ã?ah,]*[10] *[tihi*[11] *ke   -layo -m   -[?].]*
    yes   it   fall -Inch -Cmp -Indic
    Yes, it fell.

or, it could be 'no,' a negation of the proposition,

(5) *[Ma -[?],]*[12] *tihi ke   -n.im -[?].*
    no -Indic it   fall -Neg -Indic
    No, it didn't fall.

Note that the affirmative response in (4) consists of two parts,

each enclosed in square brackets. In formal speech, the whole response

---

[9] *Hu tihi* is the generic term for 'tree' in Yanomám. *Hu* is the specifier and *tihi* is the classifier.

[10] *Ã?ah* is pronounced as [ã'?a]. In the practical orthography, it is written as ã-*ah*. In this thesis, however, I have replaced the hyphen with a glottal stop in order to prevent confusing the hyphen with a morpheme break. The final *-h* is written but not pronounced; it indicates that a glottal stop is not pronounced during the pause after the word.

[11] If the proposition of a yes-no question is repeated in the answer, it is often reduced in complexity. E.g., the noun phrase *hu tihi* 'tree' in question (3) is reduced to just the classifier *tihi* in answers (4) and (5).

[12] The basic meaning of the word *ma* corresponds to the English adverb *no*. In answer to an information question, *ma* has a meaning that is similar to the English pause interjection *uh*. In certain other cases, the word *ma* denotes an emphatic yes. Therefore, because of these ambiguities, the word *ma* cannot stand by itself as a complete answer; the speaker must include additional information to clarify for the listener which meaning of *ma* is intended.

is considered necessary. In informal speech, either the left or the

right part may be omitted. This contrasts with the negative response in

(5) where the right part is obligatory.[13]

There are several other ways to say 'yes' in Yanomám. Imagine

that you are learning to do some task, and you ask someone if you are

doing it correctly, as in example (5),

(6) *Hei   naha tha?*
    this like GenInt
    Like this?

You might get any of the following answers (7)-(9):

(7) *Ã?ai -[?]!*[14]
    yes -Indic
    Yes!

or,

(8) *Awe -[?]!*[15]
    yes -Indic
    Yes!

or,

---

[13]Moravcsik (1971:163-165) breaks down responses into two parts,
affirmators and base statements. An affirmator is the 'yes' or 'no'
word at the beginning of a response. An affirmator can be subclassified
as an affirmator proper or a negator. A base statement is the statement
that follows the affirmator. A base statement can be subclassified as
affirmative or negative.

[14]*Ã?ai!* has the meaning of approval or 'That's right!' or
'You've got it.' In the practical orthography, it is written as *ã-ai*.
In this thesis, however, I have replaced the hyphen with a glottal stop
in order to prevent confusing the hyphen with a morpheme break.

[15]Palimitheli Indians said that *awe* is a dialectal variant used
by people from the Maitá village to the west of Palimi-U. It is also
found as *awei* in the Aikamtheli dialect of Surucucu (Cue 1976:1.1f.), as
awé in the Wakathautheri dialect at Catrimani (Emiri 1981:70),(Emiri
1987:22), and as *awai* in the related Sanuma language (Borgman 1990:73).
According to Stephen N. Anderson (p.c., 1993), a Yanomami man who lives
at the village of Mucujaí claims that men use *awe* and women use *ã?ah*.

(9) *(whistle sound)*[16]
    yes
    Yes!

      Syntactically, (7)-(9) usually occur as complete utterances in speech, whereas the more common *ã?ah* tends to be followed by something else. Phonologically, (7)-(9) are relatively more drawn out than *ã?ah*.

      Other unexpected responses include uncertainty,

(10) *Ya ta   -im -[?]*.
    1s know -Neg -Indic
    I don't know.

or possibility,

(11) *Ya hu hãtho -[?]*.
    1s go perhaps -Indic
    Perhaps I will go.

or supposition,

(12) *Ya pih   ku -[?]*.
    1s inside say -Indic
    I think.

5. *tha* and its Suppletive Allomorph *si*

      The general interrogative particle *tha* is replaced by a suppletive allomorph *si* when it is followed by the third person plural clitic pronoun *=he* in transitive clauses. *=he* is required when the third person plural agent is implicit:

(13) *Xama a   nia -pla -ỳ   si   =he?*
    tapir Class shoot -Inten -Incmp[17] GenInt 3p
    Do they shoot tapir?

---

    [16]The whistle sound referred to here is used only by Yanomami men, not women. It is similar to a wolf whistle, the rising-falling whistle sound that some American men make toward attractive women.

    [17]Where I gloss -ỳ as -Incmp 'incompletive,' Borgman (1990:173, 179) uses the gloss -NONASP 'nonaspectual.'

Compare (13) with (14), which has an explicit third person plural
agent:

(14) *Wãlo pè*   *-n*   *xama*   *a*   *nia*   *-pla*   *-ỹ*   *tha?*
     man   ClassP -Erg tapir Class shoot -Inten -Incmp GenInt
     Do the men shoot tapir?

Note the general interrogative particle *tha* at the end of (14). The
pronoun *=he* may be omitted when the agent is explicit. It may also be
included, as in (15), which thus requires the *si* allomorph of the
interrogative particle:

(15) *Wãlo pè*   *-n*   *xama*   *a*   *nia*   *-pla*   *-ỹ*   *si*   *=he?*
     man   ClassP -Erg tapir Class shoot -Inten -Incmp GenInt 3p
     Do the men shoot tapir?

6. Openness and Bias

Yes-no questions can be subclassified as to being open or non-open
(biased).

Unseth (1981:1) explains, "Open questions give no indication as to
which answer is expected. Non-open questions indicate which answer the
speaker expects, either positive or negative." That is to say, a non-
open question is a leading question.

Sadock and Zwicky (1985:180) explain further "... most langugages
have what Moravcsik (1971) calls BIASED questions, questions that a
speaker uses to express his or her belief that a particular answer is
likely to be correct and to request assurance that this belief is
true...many languages therefore have a three-way distinction among yes-
no questions: neutral yes-no questions, those biased in favor of a
positive answer, and those biased in favor of a negative answer." This
three-way distinction occurs in Yanomám.

7. **Positively-Biased Yes-No Questions**

In Yanomám, positively-biased yes-no questions have the following

characteristics:

1. The proposition is positive.

2. The proposition is not followed by the general interrogative

   particle *tha* (or *si*) or a temporal-evidential interrogative

   particle.

3. The intonation pattern has a "higher ultima followed by

   falling."

4. There is no clause-final glottalization.

A question which has these characteristics is non-open and

positively-biased; the listener is expected to affirm the positive

proposition, as in examples (16)-(17):

(16) *Pei nỹ   e   ku   -a?*
     Spec mother 3sPoss exist -Dur
     His mother is living?

(17) *[Ã?ah.] [E   ku   -a   -[?].]*
     yes   3sPoss exist -Dur -Indic
     Yes, she is.

The intonation pattern of a positively-biased yes-no question, a

"higher ultima followed by falling," shares the "slight terminal rise"

of a neutral yes-no question and the "terminal fall" of a declarative

statement:[18]

---

[18]I thank Irma Thiele for providing the intonation contours
which are shown here. They are based upon her memory and impressions.
More precise contours would have required the testing of native Yanomám
speakers with special electronic sound-measuring equipment. The crucial
point that I wish to make here is that the three intonation patterns are
different.

(18) *Pei nỹ   e   ku   -a   tha?* (neutral yes-no question)
     Spec mother 3sPoss exist -Dur GenInt
     Is his mother living?

(19) *Pei nỹ   e   ku   -a   -[?].* (declarative statement)
     Spec mother 3sPoss exist -Dur -Indic
     His mother is living.

(20) *Pei nỹ   e   ku   -a?* (positively-biased yes-no question)
     Spec mother 3sPoss exist -Dur
     His mother is living?

Examples (18)-(20) are distinguished not only by these different intonation patterns, but also by the inclusion or omission of the general interrogative particle *tha* (or *si*), and by the surrounding speech context.

8. Negatively-Biased Yes-No Questions

In Yanomám, negatively-biased yes-no questions have the following characteristics:

    1. The proposition is negative.

    2. If an interrogative particle follows the proposition, then the
       intonation pattern has a "slight terminal rise."

    3. If no interrogative particle follows, then the intonation
       pattern has a "higher ultima followed by falling."

    4. There is no clause-final glottalization.

A question which has these characteristics is non-open and negatively-biased; the listener is expected to affirm the truth of the negative proposition:[19]

---

[19]Ultan (1978:218) refers to "the truth value inference of the anticipated reply." A negatively-biased question expects a reply which has a negative truth value inference.

(21) Wa hu -im   tha?
      2s go -Neg GenInt
      You won't go?

(22) [Ã?ah,] [ya hu -im -[?].]
      yes   1s go -Neg -Indic
      Yes, I won't go.

A questioner may omit the general interrogative particle *tha*, and use the other yes-no question intonation pattern, a "higher ultima followed by falling." Such questions are also negatively-biased, but the expectation of affirmation of the proposition is stronger:[20]

(23) Wa hu -im?
      2s go -Neg
      You are not going?

(24) [Ã?ah,] [ya hu -im -[?].]
      yes   1s go -Neg -Indic
      Yes, I am not going.

Notice that the listener responds in (22) and (24) with the word *ã?ah* 'yes,'[21] and then affirms the negative proposition.

9. Permission Yes-No Questions and Negative Requests

In Yanomám, permission yes-no questions are apparently positively-biased; the listener is expected to affirm the proposition, i.e., to grant the request.

Some pragmatic arguments support this reasoning:

1. A person who makes a reasonable request expects, or at least

   hopes, that the listener will say yes.

---

[20]This stronger expectation correlates with the redundant indications of bias. Besides the negative proposition, there is also the omission of *tha*, and the non-neutral question intonation pattern.

[21]Moravcsik (1971:173-176) lists seventeen other languages which have a similar "reverse" pattern of affirmators and negators.

2. Permission yes-no questions always have emotionally-charged responses (i.e., exclamations, commands, or prohibitions). Sentiments are stronger when denying a request than when granting it. Intense feelings correlate more with biased questions than with neutral ones.

In Yanomám, permission yes-no question have the following characteristics:

1. The proposition is positive.

2. The proposition is followed by the permission interrogative particle *xa*.[22]

3. The intonation pattern has a "slight terminal rise."[23]

4. There is no clause-final glottalization.

These characteristics are illustrated in example (25):

(25) *Ya lo -ki xa?*
     1s sit -Ref PermisInt
     Can I sit down?

The response could be affirmative,

(26) *[Ã?ah,]* *[Wa lo -ki -[?]!]*[24]
     yes   2s sit -Hort -Indic
     Yes, sit down!

or negative,

---

[22]*Xa* is an interrogative particle which is used to request permission. It never occurs together with the general interrogative particle *tha*, nor with any other interrogative particles. All of these particles are mutually exclusive.

[23]This is contrary to regular positively-biased yes-no questions which have an intonation pattern of a "higher ultima followed by falling." The characteristics of permission yes-no questions are quite similar to those of neutral yes-no questions.

[24]Albright (1963:5) describes the command intonation pattern as: "mid on the first syllable and high on all other syllables."

(27) [*Ma -[?],*] *wa lo -n mai -[?]!*
no -Indic 2s sit -Hort not -Indic
No, don't sit down!

The next dialogue has an even stronger negative response:

(28) *Wa tiki -li xa?*
2s prick -Ref PermisInt[25]
Can I give you an injection?

(29) [*Ma -[?],*] *kuop -[?]!*[26] *Ya a pexima -im -[?]!*
no -Indic no!! -Indic 1s it want -Neg -Indic
No, no way! I don't want it!

Note that permission yes-no questions can be responded to with a positive hortative statement as in (26), a negative hortative statement as in (27), or an exclamatory statement as in (29).

A permission yes-no question and a hortative statement can also occur in the opposite order:

(30) *Wa lo -ki -[?]!*
2s sit -Ref -Indic
Sit down!

(31) *Ho, ya lo -ki xa?*
oh 1s sit -Ref PermisInt
Oh, I should sit down?

In Yanomám, after hearing a hortatory statement such as (30), it is a culturally appropriate response to restate the content as a question with the permission interrogative particle *xa*, as in (31). In this case, however, the questioner does not really expect an answer to

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[25]Where I gloss the suffixes *-ki*, *-li*, and *-pi* as -Ref 'referential,' Borgman (1990:186-195) uses the gloss -FOC 'focus' for change focus.

[26]The interjection *kuop*, like *ma*, also means 'no,' but it is stronger (Cue n.d.:8.3, Santiago 1992a:24) and less polite.

the question, because the answer is already clearly known. The question
is used rhetorically here as an echo question.[27]

The permission interrogative particle *xa* cannot occur with a
negative proposition. Such a combination is considered to be
ungrammatical. However, Yanomám has other constructions which function
as negatively-biased requests.

In certain social contexts, a negatively-biased question functions
as a polite request form:[28]

(32) *Wa thë hÿpÿ -im tha?*
    2s it give -Neg GenInt
    You won't give it?

(33) *[Ãʔah,] [ya thë hÿpÿ -im -[ʔ].]*
    yes   1s it give -Neg Indic
    Yes, I won't give it.

By stating a request as a negatively-biased proposition (32), the
speaker indicates that he expects the listener to turn down the request,
but nonetheless, he still hopes that the request might be granted. The
listener can affirm the negative proposition, i.e., turn the request
down, without feeling awkward and without offending the questioner.

A negatively-biased question can include a hortative construction,
paralleling a simple command:

(34) *Ya lo -n mai tha?*
    1s sit -Hort not GenInt
    I should not sit down?

(35) *[Ãʔah,] [wa lo -n mai -[ʔ]!]*
    yes   2s sit -Hort not -Indic
    Yes, don't sit down!

---

[27]Cf. Radford (1988:463) example (7).

[28]Moravcsik (1971:176) notes that negative questions can be used
as polite requests in Japanese and Korean.

Here is another example:

(36) *Yalo ya a   nia -pla -n   mai tha?*
      game 1s Class shoot -Inten -Hort not GenInt
      I shouldn't shoot the game?

(37) *[Ã?ah,] [wa a   nia   -pla -n   mai -[?]!]*
      yes   2s it shoot -Inten -Hort not -Indic
      Yes, don't shoot it!

Note that the negative hortative construction *-n mai* 'don't' in questions (34) and (36) is identical to the negative hortative construction in statements (35) and (37), respectively. The prohibition means a denial of the request.[29]

10. Alternative Questions

Alternative questions are also referred to as alternative choice questions or a multiple choice questions.[30] An alternative question asks "which of two or more alternative propositions is true" (Langacker 1972:188). It often expects a 'yes' or 'no' response, but a much wider range of responses is possible,[31] depending upon which constituents in the propositions are focused upon.[32]

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[29]In contrast, a permission yes-no question (which has the permission interrogative particle *xa*) is a positive proposition. To affirm it is to grant the request.

[30]Linguists disagree on how to classify alternative questions. Givón (1990:783) considers alternative questions to be "a variant of yes-no questions." Langacker (1972:188) claims the reverse is true, that a yes-no question is a reduced form of an alternative question.

[31]Ultan (1978:211) refers to this range as the "parameters of expected response."

[32]E.g., note that the questions and responses in this section actually focus more on the dichotomous 'work' or 'play' rather than on a simple 'yes' or 'no.'

Alternative questions have the following structural formula: X or Y [, or Z? ...]? The questioner presupposes that only one of the propositions is true. The listener answers the question by saying which one of the alternative propositions is true.

In Yanomám, there is no morpheme which corresponds to the English coordinating conjunction *or* for joining alternative propositions.[33] Nonetheless, it is possible to convey a similar meaning by presenting the various propositions in serial form: X? Y? [Z? ...].

(38a) *Áihɔ   a   kīa -ỳ   tha?*
      brother-2sPoss Class work -Incmp GenInt
      Does your brother work?

(38b) *A   īlia -mu tha?*
      3s play -Inv GenInt
      Does he play?

If the proposition (38a) were true, the answer would be,

(39) *[Ma -[ʔ],] a kīa -ỳ   -[ʔ].*
     no -Indic 3s work -Incmp -Indic
     No, he works.

An alternative, more emphatic response would be,

(40) *[Ma -[ʔ],] a īlia -mu mi -[ʔ]. A kīa -ỳ   -[ʔ].*
     no -Indic 3s play -Inv not -Indic 3s work -Incmp -Indic
     No, he doesn't play. He works.

If the proposition (38b) were true, the response would be the same except that the verbs would be interchanged:

(41) *[Ma -[ʔ],] a īlia -mu -[ʔ].*
     no -Indic 3s play -Inv -Indic
     No, he plays.

or, the alternative, more emphatic response,

---

[33]Moravcsik (1971:112) uses the terms disjunctive connective and conjuncts.

(42) *[Ma -[?],] a kĩa -ỹ   mi -[?]. A ĩlia -mu -[?].*
     no -Indic 3s work -Incmp not -Indic 3s play -Inv -Indic
     No, he doesn't work. He plays.

In Yanomám, the listener responds to an alternative (serial)
question by negating the false proposition, and then affirming the true
proposition. Both a short response form and a long response form are
possible. In the short response forms (39) or (41), the false
proposition is implicitly negated and then the true proposition is
affirmed. In the long response forms (40) or (42), the false
proposition is explicitly negated and then the true proposition is
affirmed. This is the reason why the long form is more emphatic.

11. Focus in Yes-No Questions

Givón (1990:713) discusses the concept of contrastive focus and
its effect on yes-no questions. He notes that the verb or verb phrase
is normally focused upon in a neutral proposition (Givón 1990:712).
Later, he contrasts a neutral yes-no question with a focused yes-no
question which has a different focused element (Givón 1990:784-785). He
points out that this focus can be marked by contrastive stress, word-
order, or morphology (Givón 1990:785).

It is important to note that contrastive focus is important not
only in questions, but also in the answers to those questions. Often, a
focused constituent is stressed more emphatically in the answer than it
is in the question.

In the preceding section on alternative questions, an example was
given of two serial yes-no questions, (38a) and (38b). Note that the
juxtaposition of the two propositions serves to contrast and narrow the

focus on the verbs *kĩaỳ* 'work' and *ĩliamu* 'play.' These words receive added emphasis via stress.[34] In the answers (39)-(42), these verbs are stressed; in the long answers (40) and (42), the latter verb is emphasized more than the former. When the negative morpheme *mi* occurs, it (the *mi*) receives even more stress than the verbs do.

An optional constituent in a question naturally attracts special focus. This is especially true of negative morphemes such as *mi* which are diametrically opposed to something else:

(43) *Aho   po   a   namu   mi   tha?*
2sPoss machete Class be.sharp not GenInt
Is your machine not sharp?

(44) *[Ã?ah,] [a namu   mi -[?].] [A pusi   -[?].]*
yes   it be.sharp not -Indic it be.dull -Indic
No, it's not sharp. It's dull.

Notice the negative morpheme *mi* in (43) and (44). *mi* is stressed in question (43), but it is stressed even more in the answer (44). Some speakers add still more contrastive focus by restating the proposition a second time, with an antonym taking the place of the *mi* and the constituent it modifies, as in (44) where *pusi* 'dull' is equivalent to *namu mi* 'not sharp.'

The following dialogue (Thiele 1990:11.3) illustrates contrastive focus on a temporal oblique:

(45) *Hena   tehe āi   -hō   a   hu kõ   -ima -ỳ   tha?*
morning when brother -2sPoss Class go again -Dir -Incmp GenInt
Is your brother coming again tomorrow?

(46a) *Ma -[?], hena   tehe a hu -im -[?].*
no -Indic morning when 3s go -Neg -Indic
No, he will not come tomorrow.

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[34]In Yanomám, stress is a variable combination of increased pitch, loudness, and length relative to other clause elements.

(46b) "*Yutu   ha ya hu kõ   -ima -ỹ̄   -[ʔ]*."
      long.time in 1s go again -Dir -Incmp -Indic
      "In a long time, I will come again."

       ỹ̄   naha a ku -ma   -[ʔ].
       preceding like 3s say-Cmp -Indic
       Like that he said.

The first-position temporal obliques *hena tehe* 'tomorrow' and *yutu ha*

'in a long time' are contrastively focused because they are optional

elements in their respective clauses and because of the special

phonological stress which they receive.

The next dialogue is a fragment of a transcribed tape recording.

Two men are beside a fire inside a Yanomami hut. One of the men has a

clean hammock and does not want it to be soiled by soot or smoke. He

personally does not like to be too close to the hot fire either. This

man speaks with the other man about where he should hang his hammock:

(47) *Wakè yopi ya pexima -im -[ʔ]*.
     fire hot 1s want   -Neg -Indic
     I do not want to be by the hot fire.

     Mỹamo   ha ya yã   -o   -[ʔ].
     middle Loc 1s hang -Punct -Indic
     I'll sleep in the middle (of the hut).

The other man questions him,

(48) *Mỹamo ha wa yã   -ki tha?*
     middle Loc 2s hang -Ref GenInt
     You'll sleep in the middle (of the hut)?

The first man replies,

(49) *Ãʔah, mỹamo ha ya yã   -o   -[ʔ]*.
     yes   middle Loc 1s hang -Punct -Indic
     Yes, I'll sleep in the middle (of the hut).

Immediately after the first man makes the statement (47) that he will

sleep in the middle of the hut, the second man repeats the same

proposition as a focused yes-no question (48). The first-position

locative oblique *myamo ha* 'in the middle' is contrastively focused because it is an optional element in the clause and because it receives special phonological stress. The question is used rhetorically here as an echo question.[35]

12. Indirect Questions

According to Thiele (1990:11.3), indirect discourse, strictly speaking, does not occur in Yanomám. This includes indirect questions.

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[35]Cf. Radford (1988:463) example (3).

CHAPTER III

INFORMATION QUESTIONS

1. Definition

A second major category of interrogatives is called information
questions (Croft 1990:168, Sadock and Zwicky 1985:179, Ultan 1978:213),
content questions (Phinnemore 1989:4, Unseth 1981:24), question-word
questions (Borgman 1990:66, Sadock and Zwicky 1985:179), specification
questions (Langacker 1972:188), wh-questions (Crystal 1991:379, Givón
1990:714), and x-questions (Lyons 1977:757).

An information question is used to "ask for the further
specification of some constituent" (Langacker 1972:188). According to
Radford (1988:463), "the speaker is requesting information about the
identity of some entity in the sentence."

2. Information Question Devices

A variety of devices are used to code Yanomám information
questions including an interrogative word and particles, interrogative
intonation patterns, and the lack of clause-final glottalization. These
devices distinguish questions from corresponding statements.

All Yanomám information questions use the interrogative word *wỹti*,
which occurs in sentence-initial or sentence-medial position. The
general interrogative particle *tha* or a temporal-evidential

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interrogative particle (discussed in chapter IV) may follow the

proposition:

(1) Wɨ̀ti wa tha -ỳ   tha?
    Wh   2s do -Incmp GenInt
    What are you doing?

(2) Wɨ̀ti wa tha -ỳ?
    Wh   2s do -Incmp
    What are you doing?

The same two interrogative intonation patterns which are used in

yes-no questions are also used in information questions. Their

distribution in information questions is also determined by the same

syntactic criteria: When a proposition is followed by an interrogative

particle, it has a "slight terminal rise," as seen in example (1); when

a proposition is not followed by an interrogative particle, it has a

"higher ultima followed by falling," as seen in example (2).[1]

Yanomám information questions, like yes-no questions, lack clause-

final glottalization (Albright 1963:4, Thiele 1990:2).

3. Focus in Information Questions

The concept of contrastive focus was explained and discussed under

section 11 in the previous chapter on yes-no questions.

Contrastive focus also plays an important role in information

questions. Croft (1990:170) states:

> In information questions, the questioned element is the fore-
> grounded piece of information by virtue of its being the focus of
> the question, and the other information is frequently presupposed.
> Likewise, answers to information questions are generally focus
> constructions as well...

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[1]Bloomfield (1933:92) describes similar intonation patterns for
English questions.

Givón (1990:793) gives a clear explanation about focus in wh-
(information) questions:

> WH (or 'constituent') questions are used typically when the speaker
> and hearer share the knowledge of a proposition -- it is
> presupposed or backgrounded -- but the speaker does not know one
> element in the proposition. That missing element may then be
> considered the *focus* of the WH question. It can be the subject,
> object, verb, predicate, adverb, indirect object, time, place,
> manner, reason, etc. In principle, any case-role -- nominal,
> oblique or adverbial -- specified by the grammar may be placed
> under interrogative focus.

Yanomám uses a number of strategies to focus on certain

constituents in information questions:

1. Use of the interrogative word *wyti*.[2]

2. Fronting of the interrogative word *wyti*.[3]

3. Emphasis via special phonological stress.[4]

4. Use of optional constituents within the proposition, e.g.,

    negative words and suffixes, antonyms, obliques, etc.

4. Interrogative Word *wyti*

Information questions, Langacker (1972:190) says, "can normally be

identified by the presence of a special question word, like *who* or *why*

in English."

Yanomám differs from many other languages in regards to such

interrogative words:

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[2]The speaker indicates such focus by asking an information
question rather than a yes-no question.

[3]Fronting of *wyti* is discussed under section 7 in this chapter.

[4]In Yanomám, stress is a variable combination of increased
pitch, loudness, and length relative to other clause elements.

1. It has only one interrogative word, *wỹti*.[5]

2. *wỹti* is used only in questions, never in statements.[6]

3. *wỹti* cannot stand by itself as a complete utterance.[7]

Yanomám information questions can be classified according to two basic syntactic structures:

1. Structures with *wỹti*

2. Structures with *wỹti pi*

5. <u>Structures with *wỹti*</u>

Wỹti occurs as an interrogative phrase all by itself when the verb or action is questioned. In question (3), *wỹti* functions as the direct object of the verb *thama* 'did':[8]

(3) *Wỹti wa tha -ma?*[9]
Wh   2s do -Cmp
What did you do?

(4) *Ma -[?], ya ahe -o hu -ima -m -[?].*
uh -Indic 1s visit -Punct go -Dir -Cmp -Indic
Uh, I came to visit.

The interrogative word *wỹti* is followed by postpositions such as *ha, ham,* and *naha* when certain oblique case roles (e.g., time, place, or manner) are questioned. Since Yanomám has only the one interrogative

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[5]Most languages have a variety of interrogative words.

[6]In English, interrogative and relative words are identical.

[7]Borgman (1990:71-72) cites an example in Sanuma, a closely-related language, of *witi* (Sanuma spelling) being used alone as a complete utterance. I have not observed this in Yanomám.

[8]The usage of unmodified *wỹti* occurs only with this verb.

[9]From Thiele (1990:1). The dialogue in examples (3) and (4) is one of several standardized greeting and reply formulas in Yanomám.

word *wɨti*, it uses the strategy of combining other morphemes such as these into an interrogative phrase introduced by *wɨti* in order to express more specific meanings.

In example (5), *wɨti* functions as the object of the goal postposition *ham* 'to.' This construction is a goal oblique:

(5) *Wɨti ham him a   hu -ma   tha?*
    Wh   to dog Class go -Cmp GenInt
    Where did the dog go?

(6) *Maɨ   u   ham him a   hu -ma   -[ʔ].*
    river Class to dog Class go -Cmp -Indic
    The dog went to the river.

In question (7), *wɨti* functions as the object of the locative postposition *ha*. This construction is a locative oblique:[10]

(7) *Wɨti ha olu kɨk   ku -o   -m   tha?*
    Wh   Loc snake Class be -Punct -Cmp GenInt
    Where was the snake?

(8) *Maɨ   u   ha olu kɨk   ku -o   -m   -[ʔ].*
    river Class Loc snake Class be -Punct -Cmp -Indic
    The snake was at the river.

When-questions are complex in Yanomám; lacking straight-forward means, there are a variety of circumlocutory ones, e.g., question (9) inquires about the departure time according to the position of the sun. *xɨ* is the classifier of *polim xɨ* 'sun.' The interrogative phrase functions as a locative oblique, but employs the goal postposition *ham*:

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[10]In the Palimi-U dialect, the goal postposition *ham* is gradually replacing the locative postposition *ha* in environments like this. Years ago, this usage would have been considered nonstandard and ungrammatical. Since then, it has become more accepted, and is now the norm. This neutralization might be partly motivated by speech contact with outsiders who did not perceive the distinction between *ha* and *ham*, and who used *ham* in both contexts. In Parimi-U, *ha* is still used in other constructions (e.g., indirect object, source and advantage), but it is becoming archaic in locative phrases.

(9) Wy̆ti ham xĬ   kua   tehe, wamak aahy̆ly̆?[11]
    Wh   to Class be-Dur when 2p   leave
    Where will the sun be when you leave?

(10) XĬ   oxe   tehe, yamak aahy̆ly̆ -[?].
     Class young when 1p   leave -Indic
     We will leave early in the morning.

In question (11), wy̆ti functions as the object of the postposition

naha 'like,'[12] and the entire interrogative phrase functions

semantically as a manner oblique:

(11) Wy̆ti naha a aahy̆ly̆ -m?
     Wh   like 3s go   -Cmp
     How did he go?

(12) Opisin a aahy̆ly̆ -m   -[?].
     slowly 3s go   -Cmp -Indic
     He went slowly.

Question (13) is similar to question (11) in that wy̆ti functions

as the object of the postposition naha, but the interrogative phrase

with naha functions semantically as a quantity oblique:[13]

(13) Wy̆ti naha lākam   thok noa   ku -a?
     Wh   like hammock Class payment be -Dur
     How much does a hammock cost?

(14) Lākam   thok noa   kohip   mahi -[?].[14]
     hammock Class payment be.strong very -Indic
     A hammock costs a lot.

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[11]From Cue (n.d.:7.1).

[12]naha occurs elsewhere in statements, not just in questions.

[13]Examples (13) and (14) are nonactive clauses. (13) has the
copula kua; (14) does not. The word order of the two clauses is
different: in (13) it is complement, subject, copula; in (14) it is
subject, complement.

[14]The Yanomami view payments as if they were on a continuum
somewhere between the two extremes of strong and weak. It takes a great
deal of work and time for a Yanomami to make a hammock. A hammock from
civilization also has great value.

Question (15) is a similar example of a *wyti* interrogative phrase

functioning as a quantity oblique, but in addition, it illustrates how

Yanomám can use a strategy of circumlocution to indirectly express

certain meanings (e.g., 'how long?'):

(15) *Maitha pè   ha wa pyly -o   tehe,*
     Maitá ClassP Loc 2s live -Punct when
     When you lived with the Maitás,[15]

     wyti naha xilikap pei =p ku -o   -m?
     Wh   like Pleiades Spec =p be -Punct -Cmp
     how many Pleiades were there? (How many years did you live with the
     Maitás?)

(16) *Polakai xilikap kyp   ku -o   -m   -[?].*[16]
     two   Pleiades ClassD be -Punct -Cmp -Indic
     There were two[17] Pleiades.[18] (For one year.)

6. Structures with *wyti pi*

     The interrogative word *wyti* is generally followed by *pi* when

certain case roles (e.g., subject, indirect object, direct object,

possessor, instrument, cause, purpose, source, advantage, accompaniment)

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[15]The Maitás are Yanomami Indians who inhabit the Putu and Xalop
villages located some distance to the west of Palimi-U.

[16]Example based on Cue (n.d.:15.4).

[17]Yanomám numbers include nonexistent, one, two, many, and very
many, all of which are relative, not necessarily exact. Also, the
Yanomami count inclusively, including the present, whereas we count
exclusively, excluding the present. Thus, it is usually necessary to
subtract at least one unit to arrive at a figure which is equivalent to
a calculation based upon our method of counting.

[18]The Pleiades is an open or galactic cluster of stars in the
constellation Taurus, which appears and disappears on a yearly cycle.
Hence, counting the Pleiades refers to the number of years, not the
number of stars in the cluster.

are questioned.[19] Like *wỳti*, *pi* is found only in information questions, not in statements.[20] Other morphemes follow *wỳti pi* to express specific meanings.

In question (17), the interrogative phrase *wỳti pi a* functions as the subject of the verb *tokulayom* 'fled':

(17) *Wỳti pi a   toku -layo -m?*
     Wh   Class flee -Inch -Cmp
     Who/what fled?

(18) *Hwama   a   toku -layo -m   -[?].*
     visitor Class flee -Inch -Cmp -Indic
     The visitor fled.

In question (19), the interrogative phrase *wỳti pi yalo pei a* functions as the subject of the verb *kuom* 'was.' The insertion of the noun *yalo...a* 'game' narrows the focus to a finite set of animals. Adding the specifier *pei* narrows the focus even more, and indicates a specific, known member of that set:

(19) *Wỳti pi yalo pei a   ku -o   -m?*
     Wh   game Spec Class be -Punct -Cmp
     What kind of game was it?
     (Lit., What specific game thing was it?)

(20) *Xama   a   ku -o   -m   -[?].*
     tapir Class be -Punct -Cmp -Indic
     It was a tapir.

In question (21), the interrogative phrase *wỳti pin* functions as the subject of the verb *walem* 'ate.' The ergative marker *-n* is attached to *pi*:

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[19]Borgman (1990:67-68) classifies Sanuma examples of *pi* or *pili* under two categories: Questions regarding persons, and Questions regarding a thing or activity.

[20]Borgman (1990:67-68) glosses the Sanuma *pi* or *pili* as -PRTCLZR 'particularizer.'

(21) *Wỳti pi -n yalo yā̀hi a   wa -le -m   tha?*
     Wh   -Erg game meat Class eat -Ref -Cmp GenInt
     Who/what ate the game?

(22) *Him a   -n   yalo yā̀hi a   wa -le -m   -[?].*
     dog Class -Erg game meat Class eat -Ref -Cmp -Indic
     The dog ate the game.

In question (23), the instrument is being questioned, and the interrogative phrase *wỳti pi thèn* 'with what thing' functions as the instrument of the verb *niaplalem* 'shoot':[21]

(23) *Wỳti pi thè -n   yalo wa a   nia -pla -le -m?*
     Wh   Class -Erg game 2s Class shoot -Inten -Ref -Cmp
     With what did you shoot the game?

(24) *Xalaka -n   yalo ya a   nia -pla -le -m   -[?].*
     arrow -Erg game 1s Class shoot -Inten -Ref -Cmp -Indic
     I shot the game with an arrow.

In question (25), the indirect object is being questioned, and the interrogative phrase *wỳti pi e ha* functions as the indirect object. (The classifier *a* becomes *e* in this case.)[22]

(25) *Wỳti pi e   ha po   wa a   hỳpỳ -ke -m?*
     Wh   Class Loc machete 2s Class give -Ref -Cmp
     To whom did you give the machete?

(26) *Kihi wā̀lo e   ha po   ya a   hỳpỳ -ke -m   -[?].*
     that man Class Loc machete 1s Class give -Ref -Cmp -Indic
     I gave the machete to that man.

Why-questions in Yanomám are complex. There are many different ways of asking why, depending upon the context. Two are illustrated here. Question (27) looks backward to determine the reason for

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[21]The ergative marker is also used to flag instrumentals.

[22]The interrogative phrase *wỳti pi e ha* is ambiguous. It can mean 'to whom' (indirect object), 'from whom' (source), or 'for whom' (benefit). The correct meaning must be determined from the surrounding context.

something, in this case, the cause of the other person's anger. It is

retrospective:

(27) *Wỳti pi thè   ha, wa hixiu?*[23]
     Wh   Class Loc 2s be.angry
     Why are you angry?

(28) *Wa hu mao -m   yalo,   ya hixiu   -[?].*
     2s go not -Cmp because 1s be.angry -Indic
     Because you didn't come, I am angry.

Question (29) looks forward to determine the purpose of something,

in this case, the purpose of the father's leaving. It is prospective:[24]

(29) *Hwa   -ho   -n, wỳti pi pei a   tha -m   ayo   -m?*[25]
     father -2sPoss -Erg Wh   Spec Class do -Cmp leave -Cmp
     Why did your father leave? (lit., ... left to do what?)

(30) *Hwa   -n yalaka =p   lèka -m ayo   -m   -[?].*
     father-Erg fish   =ClassP fish -Cmp leave -Cmp -Indic
     My father left to go fishing.

In question (31), the interrogative phrase *wỳti pi* functions as

the focused complement of the equative copula *kua*. The subject (*pei u*

wāh 'the river's name') indicates the general class, and the complement

(*wỳti pi* 'what') the specific member:

(31) *Wỳti pi pei u   wāh ku -a   tha?*[26]
     Wh   Spec Class name be -Dur GenInt
     What river is it? (lit., What is the river's name?)

(32) *Palimi u   pei u   wāh ku -a   -[?].*
     Parima river Spec Class name be -Dur -Indic
     Its name is Parima (Uraricuera) River.

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[23]From Cue (n.d.:11.2).

[24]I thank Cheryl J. Jensen for bringing to my attention the
difference between cause and purpose why-questions.

[25]From unknown source.

[26]From Thiele (1990:3.4).

In summary, *wyti* is not followed by *pi* when the verb or certain oblique case roles (e.g., location, goal, manner, quantity) are questioned; *wyti* is generally followed by *pi* when other case roles (e.g., subject, indirect object, direct object, possessor, cause, purpose, source, advantage, accompaniment) are questioned.[27]

7. Optional Fronting of *wyti pi*

In Yanomám, when a constituent which normally occurs in sentence-medial position is questioned, part of the interrogative phrase may be fronted. However, it is more common for fronting not to take place.

In questions (33) and (34), the direct object is being questioned, and the interrogative phrase *wyti pi pei thè* functions as the direct object. In question (34), the entire phrase is found in preverbal position. In question (33), however, the phrase has been split up: *wyti pi* has been fronted while *pei thè* has remained behind in preverbal position.

(33) *Wyti pi thuè -n   pei   thè   loxi -pla   -le -m?*
     Wh   woman -Erg Spec Class peel -Inten -Ref -Cmp
     What did the woman peel?

or, more commonly,

(34) *Thuè -n,   wyti pi pei thè   loxi -pla   -le -m?*
     woman -Erg Wh   Spec Class peel -Inten -Ref -Cmp
     What did the woman peel?

(35) *Thuè -n   nax   kok   loxi -pla   -le -m   -[?].*
     woman -Erg manioc Class peel -Inten -Ref -Cmp -Indic
     The woman peeled the manioc roots.

---

[27]I say "generally" because *pi* is sometimes omitted, as in examples (39) and (40) later in this chapter.

It is also possible to front one conjunct in a conjoined phrase.
Conjoining in Yanomám is done by attaching *xo* or its short form *=x* to
each conjunct:

(36) *Wãlo =x   hia =x   kỹp   hu -ma -[?].*
      man =also youth =also ClassD go -Cmp -Indic
      The man and the youth went.

It is possible to question one of the conjuncts without fronting
it, as in (31),

(37) *Wãlo =x,   wỹti pi ai   xo   kỹp   hu -ma?*
      man =also Wh   other also ClassD go -Cmp
      The man and who else went?

or, less commonly, the questioned conjunct can be fronted:

(38) *Wỹti pi ai   xo   wãlo =x   kỹp   hu -ma?*
      Wh   other also man =also ClassD go -Cmp
      Who else besides the man went?

The classifier *kỹp* indicates that examples (36)-(38) have dual subjects.
In (37)-(38), the accompaniment is being questioned, and the
interrogative phrase *wỹti pi ai xo kỹp* functions as the accompaniment.
In (37), the entire phrase is found in preverbal position. In (38), the
phrase has been split up: *wỹti pi* has been fronted while *ai xo kỹp* has
remained behind in preverbal position.

8.   Interrogative Particle *tha*

The general interrogative particle *tha* often occurs in information
questions, but only in mutual exclusion with temporal-evidential
particles.[28]

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[28]Temporal-evidential particles are discussed in chapter IV.

In yes-no questions, the use of *tha* is one factor which determines whether a question is neutral or biased. This is not the case in information questions, where *tha* appears to occur in free variation:

(39) *Hei, wỹti po   pei e   tha?*
     this Wh   machete Spec 3sPoss GenInt
     Whose machete is this?

or,

(40) *Hei, wỹti po   pei e?*
     this Wh   machete Spec 3sPoss
     Whose machete is this?

Another example:

(41) *Wỹti wa tha -ỹ   tha?*
     Wh 2s do -Incmp GenInt
     What are you doing?

or,

(42) *Wỹti wa tha -ỹ?*
     Wh 2s do -Incmp
     What are you doing?

Ultan (1978:228) explains that yes-no question particles (such as the Yanomám general interrogative particle *tha*) can be an optional, redundant marker of interrogation in information questions:

> Logically, one would expect to find QPs only in YNQs, since INQs by definition already contain at least one clearly marked interrogative device (one or more QWs). As a comment on redundancy in language it is worth noting that the odds are practically even for this kind of situation...

Givón (1990:788) makes a similar statement:

> The less frequent use of the question morpheme in WH- questions is perhaps understandable from the fact that WH- questions are already well-marked by interrogative pronouns. Only in a few languages, all with *bound* question morphemes, is the general question morpheme obligatory in WH-questions.

I do not know if pragmatic factors (such as formality or politeness) influence the presence of *tha*.

CHAPTER IV

TEMPORAL-EVIDENTIAL PARTICLES IN QUESTIONS

1. Temporal-Evidential Particles

Yanomám has special temporal-evidential particles which are used
in questions in place of the general interrogative particle *tha* and the
permission interrogative particle *xa*.

The temporal component expresses present time (right now), recent
past (within the last twenty-four hours, approximately), and remote past
(more than twenty-four hours ago, approximately).[1]

The evidential component expresses personal testimony or witness.
In the case of interrogative particles, it assumes that the listener
personally witnessed or experienced the thing in question. In the case
of non-interrogative particles, it claims that the speaker personally
witnessed or experienced the thing in question.

Temporal-evidential particles can occur in yes-no questions and in
information questions, but they cannot occur together in the same clause
with other interrogative particles. Most questions take the
interrogative temporal-evidential particles, but some types take the
non-interrogative ones.

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[1]The division between recent past and remote past is only
approximate, not exact. Some overlap can occur.

37

2. Temporal-Evidential Particles in Yes-No Questions

The following examples demonstrate the use of temporal-evidential particles in neutral yes-no questions and responses. These questions have interrogative particles and have a "slight terminal rise."

The temporal-evidential interrogative particle *ku'la*[2] in question (1) expresses present time. There is no corresponding non-interrogative particle in the responses (2) and (3) because Yanomám lacks such a morpheme:[3]

(1) *Oxe   thei a   ia -ỹ   ku'la?*
    young Dim Class eat -Incmp Evid:Pres:Int[4]
    Is the baby eating now? (You are witnessing it.)

The response could be affirmation,

(2) *[Ã?ah,] [a ia -ỹ   -[?].]*
    yes   it eat -Incmp -Indic
    Yes, it is eating.

or negation,

(3) *[Ma -[?],] a ia -ỹ   mi -[?].*
    no -Indic it eat -Incmp not -Indic
    No, it is not eating.

The temporal-evidential interrogative particle *ku'ha* in question (4) expresses recent past. The corresponding non-interrogative particle *ku'pan* occurs in responses (5) and (6):

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[2]Stress is not marked in the practical orthography. However, since syllable stress is an important factor in the discussion which follows, in this chapter, I use a vertical stroke ' to mark primary stress on the temporal-evidential particles.

[3]There is a logical explanation for this gap in the language: In present time, a temporal-evidential particle is usually unnecessary because the listener is there and can personally see or hear the facts.

[4]Where I gloss *ku-* as Evid 'evidential,' Borgman (1990:165-166) uses the gloss -WIT 'witnessed.'

(4) *Oxe   thei a   ia -y̌   ku'ha?*
    young Dim Class eat -Incmp Evid:RecPast:Int
    Did the baby eat recently? (You witnessed it.)

The response could be affirmation,

(5) *[Ã?ah,] [a ia -y̌   ku'pan   -[?].]*[5]
    yes   it eat -Incmp Evid:RecPast -Indic
    Yes, it ate recently. (I witnessed it.)

or negation,

(6) *[Ma -[?],] a ia -y̌   mao*[6] *ku'pan   -[?].*
    no -Indic it eat -Incmp not Evid:RecPast -Indic
    No, it did not eat recently. (I witnessed it.)

   The temporal-evidential interrogative particle *kupe'le* in question

(7) expresses remote past. The corresponding non-interrogative

particle *ku'pele* occurs in responses (8) and (9):

(7) *Oxe   thei a   ia -y̌   kupe'le?*[7]
    young Dim Class eat -Incmp Evid:RemPast:Int
    Did the baby eat remotely? (You witnessed it.)

The response could be affirmation,

(8) *[Ã?ah,] [a ia -y̌   ku'pele.   -[?]]*[8]
    yes   it eat -Incmp Evid:RemPast -Indic
    Yes, it ate remotely. (I witnessed it.)

or negation,

(9) *[Ma -[?],] a ia -y̌   mao ku'pele   -[?].*
    no -Indic it eat -Incmp not Evid:RemPast -Indic
    No, it did not eat remotely. (I witnessed it.)

---

   [5]*ku'pan* has a suppletive allomorph *kan*. This short form occurs
in place of *ku'pan* after these suffixes: *-ki, -pi, -li, -layu, -liu,* and
-hy̌ly̌.

   [6]*mi* negates present time; *mao* negates past time.

   [7]Some Yanomami people use the dialectal variant *ku'pe* in place
of *kupe'le* within questions.

   [8]*kupe'le* and *ku'pele* have suppletive allomorphs *ku'le* and
'kule, respectively. These short forms occur in place of the long forms
after these suffixes: *-ki, -pi, -li, -layu, -liu,* and *-hy̌ly̌*.

The following examples illustrate the use of temporal-evidential particles in positively-biased yes-no questions and responses. These questions have non-interrogative particles and a "higher ultima followed by falling."

There is no present tense form because Yanomám lacks a present temporal-evidential non-interrogative particle.[9]

Question (10) illustrates the recent past. It uses the non-interrogative particle *ku'pan*, rather than the interrogative particle *ku'ha* like the neutral yes-no question (4) does:

(10) *Pè ia -y̌   ku'pan?*
      3p eat -Incmp Evid:RecPast
      They ate recently? (You witnessed it.)

(11) *[Ã?ah,] [pè ia -y̌   ku'pan   -[?].]*
      yes   3p eat -Incmp Evid:RecPast -Indic
      Yes, they ate recently. (I witnessed it.)

Question (12) illustrates the remote past. It uses the non-interrogative particle *ku'pele*, rather than the interrogative particle *kupe'le* like the neutral yes-no question (7) does:

(12) *Pè ia -y̌   ku'pele?*
      3p eat -Incmp Evid:RemPast
      They ate remotely? (You witnessed it.)

(13) *[Ã?ah,] [Pè ia -y̌   ku'pele   -[?].]*
      yes   3p eat -Incmp Evid:RemPast -Indic
      Yes, they ate remotely. (I witnessed it.)

The following examples illustrate the use of temporal-evidential particles in negatively-biased yes-no questions and responses. These questions can have interrogative particles and a "slight terminal rise."

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[9]It is possible to convey a similar meaning (minus the notion of witness) in a positively-biased question by substituting temporal adverbials for a temporal-evidential interrogative particle.

Question (14) illustrates the present tense:

(14) *Pè ia -ỳ   mi ku'la?*
     3p eat -Incmp not Evid:Pres:Int
     They aren't eating now? (You are witnessing it.)

(15) *[Ă?ah,] [pè ia -ỳ   mi -[?].]*
     yes   3p eat -Incmp not -Indic
     Yes, they aren't eating. (I am witnessing it.)

Question (16) illustrates the recent past:

(16) *Pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'ha?*
     3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RecPast:Int
     They didn't eat recently? (You witnessed it.)

(17) *[Ă?ah,] [pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'pan   -[?].]*
     yes   3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RecPast -Indic
     Yes, they didn't eat recently. (I witnessed it.)

Question (18) illustrates the remote past:

(18) *Pè ia -ỳ   mao kupe'le?*
     3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RemPast:Int
     They didn't eat remotely? (You witnessed it.)

(19) *[Ă?ah,] [pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'pele   -[?].]*
     yes   3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RemPast -Indic
     Yes, They didn't eat remotely. (I witnessed it.)

Negatively-biased questions can also have non-interrogative particles and a "higher ultima followed by falling." Such questions have a stronger expectation of affirmation of the proposition.[10]

This question form does not occur in the present tense.

Question (20) is an example of the recent past. It is similar to question (16), but conveys a stronger expectation of affirmation:

(20) *Pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'pan?*
     3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RecPast
     They didn't eat recently? (You witnessed it.)

---

[10]This stronger expectation correlates with the redundant indications of bias. Besides the negative proposition, there is also a non-interrogative particle instead of an interrogative particle, and the non-neutral question intonation pattern.

(21) *[Ă?ah,] [pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'pan   -[?].]*
     yes   3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RecPast -Indic
     Yes, they didn't eat recently. (I witnessed it.)

Question (22) is an example of the remote past. It is similar to question (18), but conveys a stronger expectation of affirmation:

(22) *Pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'pele?*
     3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RemPast
     They didn't eat remotely? (You witnessed it.)

(23) *[Ă?ah,] [pè ia -ỳ   mao ku'pele   -[?].]*
     yes   3p eat -Incmp not Evid:RemPast -Indic
     Yes, they didn't eat remotely. (I witnessed it.)

3. <u>Temporal-Evidential Particles in Information Questions</u>

Temporal-evidential interrogative particles can also occur in information questions.

Question (24) employs the present temporal-evidential interrogative particle *ku'la*. Response (25) lacks a corresponding non-interrogative particle:

(24) *Wỳti ha him a   ku -a   ku'la?*
     Wh   Loc dog Class be -Dur Evid:Pres:Int
     Where is the dog now? (You are witnessing it.)

(25) *Ki   ha him a   ku -a -[?].*
     there Loc dog Class be -Dur -Indic
     The dog is over there.

Question (26) employs the recent past temporal-evidential interrogative particle *ku'ha*. Response (27) has the corresponding non-interrogative particle *ku'pan*:

(26) *Wỳti pi wa =t   wa -ỳ   ku'ha?*
     Wh   2s =Class eat -Incmp Evid:RecPast:Int
     What did you eat recently? (You witnessed it.)

(27) *Naxi   ya hik wa -ỳ   ku'pan   -[?].*
     cassava 1s Class eat -Incmp Evid:RecPast -Indic
     I ate cassava bread recently. (I witnessed it.)

Question (28) employs the remote past temporal-evidential

interrogative particle *kupe'le*. Response (29) has the corresponding

non-interrogative particle *ku'pele*:

(28) *Wỳti ham wa hu kupe'le?*
    Wh   to 2s go Evid:RemPast:Int
    Where did you go remotely? (You witnessed it.)

(29) *Kolo   ham ya hu ku'pele   -[?].*
    downriver to 1s go Evid:RemPast -Indic
    I went downriver remotely. (I witnessed it.)

CHAPTER V

YANOMÁM INTERROGATIVES AND LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS

1. General Remarks

A number of linguistic researchers, in examining diverse language data, have postulated certain language universals or tendencies. In this chapter, I compare my findings about Yanomám interrogatives with universals which have been claimed for interrogatives in general.

2. Greenberg's Universals

Greenberg's (1966:80-83) universals 8-12 deal with questions. Universals 8-10 make claims about yes-no questions, and universals 11-12 mainly about information questions.

> *Universal 8.* When a yes-no question is differentiated from the corresponding assertion by an intonational pattern, the distinctive intonational features of each of these patterns are reckoned from the end of the sentence rather than from the beginning.

This is also true for Yanomám. Declarative statements and yes-no questions in Yanomám are differentiated by the terminal contours of their intonation patterns, as we saw in Chapter II.

> *Universal 9.* With well more than chance frequency, when question particles or affixes are specified in position by reference to the sentence as a whole, if initial, such elements are found in prepositional languages, and, if final, in postpositional.

This is true for Yanomám. Yanomám yes-no interrogative particles are always sentence-final, and Yanomám is a postpositional language.

Universal 10. Question particles or affixes, when specified in position by reference to a particular word in the sentence, almost always follow that word. Such particles do not occur in languages with dominant order VSO.

This is not applicable. Yanomám yes-no interrogative particles always occur in sentence-final position following the verb phrase, and Yanomám is SOV, not VSO.

Universal 11. Inversion of statement order so that verb precedes subject occurs only in languages where the question word or phrase is normally initial. This same inversion occurs in yes-no questions only if it also occurs in interrogative word questions.

This is true for Yanomám. The verb phrase always follows the subject of the clause in Yanomám. The order of the verb phrase and subject is not inverted in questions. This is to be expected since question words are not normally initial.

Universal 12. If a language has dominant order VSO in declarative sentences, it always puts interrogative words or phrases first in interrogative word questions; if it has dominant order SOV in declarative sentences, there is never such an invariant rule.

This is also true for Yanomám. Yanomám has SOV basic word order, and wh- interrogative phrases are not obligatorily fronted.

3. Ultan's Universals

Ultan (1978:211-248) compares the interrogative systems of 79 languages. He expects (1978:216) "to find some correlations between Greenberg's basic order types (1963) and certain Q-features [question features], particularly those relevant to constituent order."

Yanomám has the following basic order types:[1]

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[1]Cf. Ultan 1978:216-217 for distribution percentages of the 79 languages which served as the sample for Ultan's study.

1. SOV basic word order in active transitive clauses

2. Postpositions predominant

3. Nominal possessor precedes possessed noun

4. Head noun precedes attributive adjective

In the abstract to his paper, Ultan (1978:211) makes two claims
which Yanomám confirms:

> In information-question[s,] inversion question words are almost
> always sentence-initial in SVO and VSO languages, while in SOV lan-
> guages there is a tendency to maintain neutral declarative order.[2]

> [Yes-no] Question particles are usually sentence-initial or -final,
> the latter especially in SOV languages.[3]

Ultan (1978:219-220) found fifteen yes-no question intonation
pattern types which he classified into eight basic types. In Yanomám,
yes-no questions which are followed by an interrogative particle best
fit the type 1a: "slight terminal rise." Yes-no questions which are not
followed by an interrogative particle best fit the type 5a: "higher
ultima followed by falling." Information question intonation patterns
in Yanomám follow these same generalizations.[4]

Yanomám also appears to confirm the following claims which Ultan
(1978:231-232) makes about SOV languages:

> There is a slight tendency for QPs [yes-no question particles] to
> occur with higher pitch or prominent stress in SOV languages.

> QWs [information question words] tend to occur with higher pitch or
> prominent stress in languages of all basic order types. This
> tendency is somewhat more marked in SOV languages.

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[2]Cf. Ultan 1978:222-223,229,231 for a more detailed statement.

[3]Cf. Ultan 1978:227-228,232 for a more detailed statement.

[4]These intonation patterns are tentative findings, and their
accuracy needs to be verified with electronic sound-measuring equipment.

While languages of all basic types may have INQ-inversion
[information question inversion], SOV languages are less likely
than others to have it; they tend more to retain the basic
constituent order of simple declarative sentences in INQs
[information questions].

QWs [information question words] tend to occur in sentence-initial
position in languages of all types; the ratio in favor of this is
approximately three to one. However, the ratio in SOV languages is
only about one to one.

Most QPs [yes-no question particles] occur in sentence-initial (or
enclitic to the initial constituent) or in sentence-final position.
QPs [yes-no question particles] almost always occur finally in SOV
languages and show a greater tendency to occur initially in other
types.

Ultan (1978:215fn), citing certain observations made by Greenberg,

points out that several languages use "terminal glottalization and/or

voicing to mark questions vis-à-vis voicelessness in the corresponding

statements." In Yanomám and Sanuma, it is the statements, not the

questions, which are so marked. Although this is the opposite of what

Greenberg observed, there is a broader generalization; in some

languages, glottalization functions like intonation to mark the

difference between statements and questions.

In short, Yanomám confirms many of the language universals and

language tendencies which Greenberg and Ultan have proposed for

interrogative systems. It also presents a new variation on Greenberg's

observation that some languages employ terminal glottalization as an

interrogative device.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Various devices are used to code Yanomám yes-no and information questions including an interrogative word and particles, interrogative intonation patterns, and the lack of clause-final glottalization. These devices distinguish questions from corresponding statements.

Contrastive focus may be expressed by special phonological stress, and in information questions, by the use of the interrogative word *wýti* and wh-fronting. Optional elements such as negative words and suffixes, antonyms, obliques, etc. naturally attract focus.

Yes-no questions can be neutral, positively-biased, and negatively-biased. Two other yes-no question forms also occur: permission yes-no questions, and alternative yes-no questions (in serial form). Mutually exclusive interrogative particles occur with yes-no questions. These are three types: general, permission, and temporal-evidential. The general interrogative particle *tha* questions the truth of the whole proposition. The permission interrogative particle *xa* requests permission to execute the proposition. The temporal-evidential interrogative particles express both tense and source of information.

Information questions use the information question word *wýti* or the phrase *wýti pi* to request more information about a specific part of the proposition. Other constituents such as postpositions *ha, ham,* or

48

naha, ergative marker *-n*, etc. can follow the question word *wýti* to express more specific meanings. The general interrogative particle *tha* and temporal-evidential interrogative particles can optionally occur with the question word *wýti* in information questions.

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