

YES/NO QUESTIONS IN THE YAQUI INDIAN LANGUAGE*

Fernando Escalante
University of Arizona

0. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will analyze two types of interrogative sentence structures in the Arizona dialect of the Yaqui Indian language. The first type of question sentence is the one that is usually answered by heewi 'yes' or e'e 'no', or something similar. The other type is the question that requires information and cannot be answered heewi or e'e. I will discuss the characteristics of each kind of Q-sentence such as intonation, tags, and special particles. Finally I will discuss their differences, what they both have in common, and how they fit together.

1. YES/NO QUESTIONS

Yes/no questions in Yaqui can take several forms which can include one or all of the following categories: intonation changes, the tag hewi 'yes', the "wh-" word haisa 'what'. I will also discuss haisa later when it is used in "wh-" questions. The role of the particles -su and -sa in question formation will also be mentioned briefly.

1.1 Intonation

Given a statement is input, we can formulate a question by raising the contour at the end of the sentence (intonation), symbolized as  in this paper.

- (1) a. Aapo hiaki.
He/she is Yaqui.
- b. Aapo hiaki?
Is he/she Yaqui?

1.2 Tag

We can tag the statement with the word hewi which when used in this question context implies, "tell me, is he or is she not Yaqui?", (give me an answer). Either the tag hewi carries a raising intonation or the statement to which it is attached does so, but not both. A question with the tag hewi is pragmatically more forceful than one

without it. The word heewi has a long e when used as a responsive meaning "yes"; as a tag, the e is short.

- (2) a. aapo hiaki, hewi?
 He/she Yaqui, yes
 He is Yaqui, isn't he?
- b. aapo hiaki, hewi

1.3 The question particle haisa

We can insert the "wh-" word haisa at the front of the statement. Haisa means 'what', however, in yes/no interrogative sentences, haisa is simply a question particle.

- (3) Haisa aapo hiaki?
 WH- he/she Yaqui?
 Is he/she Yaqui?

When the word haisa is used, the Q-intonation is not needed because haisa by itself operates to signal the question.

1.4 Combination of features

We can combine the categories discussed above to form a yes/no question as follows:

- (4) a. Intonation change only.
 aapo hiaki?
- b. Haisa only.
 Haisa aapo hiaki?
- c. Hewi and intonation change.
aapo hiaki, hewi?
 aapo hiaki, hewi?
- d. Haisa and intonation change.
Haisa aapo hiaki?
- e. All three features.
haisa aapo hiaki, hewi?
haisa aapo hiaki, hewi?

Preliminary indications suggest that in order to form a yes/no question in Yaqui, one or more of the preceding features must be present.

Further examples of yes/no questions showing these features and how they co-occur:

- (5) a. Statement.
 Aapo siime.
 He/she leaving
 He/she is leaving.
- b. Intonation change.

 Aapo siime?
 Is he leaving?
- c. Intonation change plus hewi.

 Aapo siime, hewi?
 He leaving yes
 He is leaving, yes?
- d. Question Particle haisa. (Intonation change optional).
 Haisa aapo siime?
 "wh-" he leaving
 Is he leaving?
- e. Intonation change plus haisa.

 Haisa aapo siime?
 Is he leaving?
- f. All features present.

 Haisa aapo siime, hewi
 "wh-" he leaving yes
 Is he leaving, yes?

Other examples.

- (6) a. Statement
 Em mala hoa-po Katek.
 your mother home-at is (locative)
 Your mother is at home.
- b. Intonation change.

 Em mala hoa-po Katek?
 your mother home-at is (locative)
 Is your mother at home?

- c. The tag hewi plus intonation change.

Em mala hoa-po katek, ^{hewi?}
 your mother home-at is (locative) yes
 Is your mother at home, yes?

- d. Question Particle haisa (intonation change optional).

Haisa em mala hoa-po katek?
 "wh-" your mother home-at is (locative)
 Is your mother at home?

- e. Haisa plus intonation change.

Haisa em mala hoa-po katek?
 "wh-" your mother home-at is (locative)
 Is your mother at home?

- f. All features present.

Haisa em mala hoa-po katek, ^{hewi?}
 "wh-" your mother home-at is (locative) yes
 Is your mother at home, yes?

1.5 Word order and question formation

In many languages changes in word order are involved in question formation. For example, in English subject-AUX-inversion is a feature of yes/no questions. In this section, I will show that in Yaqui, changes in constituent order play no part in yes/no question formation. Yaqui is a verb final language and the order of subject and object is free.

- (7) a. s o v
 Juan Maria-ta biichak.
 John Mary-OBJ saw
 John saw Mary.

- b. o s v
 Maria-ta Juan biichak.
 Mary-OBJ John saw
 John saw Mary.

Sometimes the subject may be extraposed to a sentence final position:

- c. o v s
 Maria-ta biichak Juan.
 Mary-OBJ saw John
 John saw Mary.

However, the following word order in a transitive sentence is ill-formed:

- S V O
- d. Juan biichak Maria-ta.

This word order (object following the verb) is excluded in either a statement or a question.

I conclude that word order plays no role in yes/no question formation in Yaqui. To summarize: the verb is typically last; the subject may be moved to sentence final position, but the object cannot. Subject movement is allowed in both statements and questions.

2. THE CLITIC -su IN QUESTIONS

There is a clitic -su whose function I have not fully determined. It occurs in statements and in both yes/no and "wh-" questions. There are many problems remaining in the analysis of -su. I will begin with -su in yes/no questions.

2.1 Second position -su (yes/no questions)

- (8) a. Aapo siika.
He left.
- b. Aapo-su siika.
Because, (since) he left.
- (9) a. Aapo lottila.
he tired
He is tired.
- b. Aapo-su lottila.
because (since) tired
Because he is tired.

Examples (8b) and (9b) suggest that -su is a conjunction or subordinating particle. However -su apparently does not serve to link clauses. Now consider the following:

- (8) c. Aapo-su siika?
he-su left
Did he leave?
- (9) c. Aapo-su lottila?
he-su tired
Is he tired?

Examples (8c) and (9c) are simple yes/no questions; the notion "because, since" is no longer present. The question particle haisa and the tag hewi (or both) may also be added to yes/no questions with -su. Note that second position -su alone can never serve to form a question; the rising contour must be present, as shown in examples (8b) and (9b).

The contrast shown in (8b) vs. (8c) and (9b) vs. (9c) is not present when the subject is a noun, rather than a pronoun. Compare:

- (10) a. Juan siika.
John left.
- b. Juan-su siika.
John left.
- c. Juan-su siika?
Did John leave?
- (11) a. Jose hiaki.
Joe is a Yaqui.
- b. Jose-su hiaki.
Joe is a Yaqui.
- c. Jose-su hiaki?
Is Joe a Yaqui?

Examples (10b) and (11b) do not have the 'because' or 'since' meaning shown in examples (8b) and (9b); they are just statements.

The following examples will show that -su is a second position particle in yes/no questions.

- (12) Em mala-su hoa-po katek?
your mother-su home-at is (locative)
Is your mother at home?
- (13) Aapo-su hiaki?
He/she-su Yaqui
Is he/she Yaqui?
- (14) a. Juan-su Maria-ta biichak?
John-su Mary-ta (Object marker) saw
Did John see Mary?
- b. Maria-ta-su Juan biichak?
Marh-OBJ-su John saw
Did John see Mary?

The sentence below is ill-formed.

- c. *Juan Maria-ta-su  biichak?

2.2 Sentence final -su ("Wh-" questions)

If -su is attached to the verb, and therefore is in sentence final position, the resulting construction is not a yes/no question, but a "wh-" question. Compare (15) with (14) above.

- (15) Juan Maria-ta biichak-su?
What if John saw Mary?

When -su is in sentence final position, the question contour is optional, and the resulting "wh-" question always has the "what if--" interpretation. The "because-" interpretation that second position -su has in a statement with a pronominal subject is never present. Compare:

- (16) a. aapo-su siika.
Because he left.
- b. aapo-su  siika?
Did he leave?
- c. aapo siik-su?
What if he left?
(rising contour optional)
- (17) a. aapo-su ye'eka
Because he danced.
- b. aapo-su  ye'eka?
Did he dance?
- c. aapo ye'eksu?
What if he danced?
(rising contour optional)

Sentence final -su as opposed to second position -su, may serve alone to form a question.

When -su is attached to a noun it has a locative meaning and is used to form a "wh-" question as in the following examples:

- (18) a. mala-su?
Mother-su
Where is mother?
- b. ču'u-su?
Dog-su
Where is the dog?

- c. Maria-su?
 Mary-su
 Where is Mary?

In these questions no intonation change is required, the raising contour is optional.

When -su is attached to a pronoun, as opposed to a noun, no locative interpretation is possible.

- (19) a. Inepo-su?
 I-su
 and me?
 or
 What about me?
- b. empo-su?
 You (singular)-su
 and you?
 or
 What about you?
- c. Aapo-su?
 he/she-su
 and him?
 (etc.)
- d. Itepo-su?
 we (us)-su
 and us?
- e. Eme-su?
 You (Plural)-su
 and you?
- f. Bempo-su?
 They (them)-su
 and them?

In these questions also the intonation change is optional.

3. Other "wh-" word questions ("ha-words")

I will not give a complete analysis of "wh-" word questions in Yaqui here. I only want to show how they differ from yes/no questions in the language. The following list of Q-words in Yaqui function like "wh-" words in English. Q-word questions do not require a raising contour but they do require a Q-word. Where possible, morpheme by morpheme glosses are given; for some "wh-" words, this is not possible at present.

- (20) a. habee?
Who?
- b. habee im weama?
who here about
Who is around here?

When the second vowel in habee is short, it means "somebody".

- c. habe im weama
somebody here around
Somebody is around here.
- (21) habe-sa
Who is it?

The clitic -sa which appears in (21) also occurs with many other "wh-" words, as shown in the following examples.

- (22) haisa
What?
(*hai- alone does not occur).
- (23) haisa empo teak?
what you name
What is your name?

In Section 1 above, I showed the function of haisa in yes/no questions. With a rising contour, haisa is a question particle, as in the following:

- (24) haisa empo a etapok?
WH- you it opened
Did you open it?
(Yes/no question)

With a statement intonation, and where an object is present in the clause, haisa may mean "how"?.

- (25) haisa empo a etapok?
How you it opened
How did you open it?
(Wh- word question)
(no rising contour, stress on haisa.)
- (26) haisa-ula?
What's the matter?
- (27) haisuntuko?
(haisa + intoko)
What and
So what?

- (28) a. haisaakai
Why?
- b. haisaakai empo siika?
why you left
Why did you leave?
- (29) a. haiki
How many?
- b. haiki uume panim
those bread
How many (loaves of) bread are there?
- (30) a. haiki-sa
How much? (How many)
- b. haiki-sa uume panim
those bread
How much is that bread?
- (31) haikim
(haiki + im)
how many + plural
How many?
- (32) haikim-hia
how many sounds
What time is it?
- (33) a. haksa
Where at?
- b. haksa empo ko'kole?
you hurt
Where do you hurt?
- (*hak - does not occur alone.)
- (34) a. hakun(sa) (~ hausa) 'where to'
- b. hakunsa empo siika?
where to you going
Where are you going?
- (35) a. hakun vetana(-sa) 'where from'
- b. hakunvetana empo weeye?
where from you coming
Where are you coming from?

- (36) a. hak'wo(-sa) 'when'
 b. hak'wo te sakah'aane?
 when we go-do-will
 When will we go?

The clitic -sa that appears in some "wh-" questions need not appear on the "wh-" word itself; it may attach to the end of the first constituent, as follows:

- (37) haisa-hita kari-sa beatek
 which house-sa burned
 Which house burned?
- (38) habe-ta kari-sa beatek
 who-POSS house-sa burned
 Whose house burned?

This is not a complete list of "wh-" words in Yaqui but is intended to show something of the structure of "wh-" questions in the language.

4. CONCLUSION

In this brief presentation I have shown the differences between yes/no questions and Q-word questions and have identified their properties. At this point in time I will not formulate any other tentative conclusions or present any earth-shattering revelations about the Yaqui language due to my inexperience and limited skills in linguistic analysis.

NOTE

*This paper is based on my own speech. I am a native speaker of the Arizona dialect of Yaqui and a first-year graduate student in Linguistics at the University of Arizona.