QUESTION WORDS IN YAWA

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Kata-kata pertanyaan dalam bahasa Yawa

Pertanyaan-pertanyaan informasi dalam bahasa Yawa, salah satu bahasa Papua, menunjukkan beberapa ciri yang menarik. Kata-kata tanya untuk kata 'siapa' dan 'apa' memiliki bentuk-bentuk varian menurut kesesuaian genus dan bilangan, dan juga dipengaruhi oleh topikalisasi. Bentuk-bentuk untuk kata 'mengapa' menunjukkan kesesuaian subyek. Ada pula kata tanya serba guna, yaitu kata *ruwi* yang bisa berarti 'siapa', 'apa', 'yang mana', 'di mana' atau 'ke mana'.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the structure of questions in Yawa,[1] a Papuan language spoken on Yapen Island off the north coast of Irian Jaya. Yawa shares some of the typical characteristics of other Papuan languages. Like the vast majority of these languages, Yawa has SOV word order. This order is not rigid, and, as will be seen later in this paper, in certain types of questions the object precedes the subject. Oblique objects, such as indirect or benefactive objects, normally follow the verb. Topicalisation is common and may result in different word orders.

Most of the better known Papuan languages belong to the Trans-New Guinea Phylum (TNGP) and have certain features in common, one in particular being complex verb morphology. Yawa does *not* belong to this phylum and has only a modest amount of verb morphology. Also unlike most TNGP languages, Yawa has no switch-reference system.

Another distinctive aspect of Yawa is that there are ergative features, although they are quite weakly developed. There is a class of pronouns that occurs only as the subject of transitive clauses, where the occurrence of one of these pronouns is obligatory; the pronoun occurs even when there is an explicit noun phrase as subject. Further, there is verb agreement with the object in transitive clauses and verb agreement with the subject in most intransitives, but there is a handful of intransitive verbs which have "object-like" verb agreement. These features mean Yawa has ergative morphology, albeit quite weakly developed (see Linda K. Jones 1986a).

There are three major types of interrogative structures in Yawa: polarity ('yes-no') questions, alternative questions and information questions. Of these, the information question is of particular

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interest because of the many variations possible in Yawa, and because of the interesting features they display.

2. POLARITY QUESTIONS

Polarity questions are used to seek confirmation or disconfirmation of a proposition. The most frequent method of forming a polarity question is to attach the clitic *e* sentence-finally. (There is rising intonation on the final syllables of the question.)

(1) *Weti ny` anamu mamo nikija-e?*[2]
so your wife TOP sleep-Q
So is your wife sleeping?

(2) *Ndaovana gwaravainto-e?*
you.marry long-Q
Have you been married a long time?

3. ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

The fullest pattern for an alternative question consists of two or more alternatives, in which each alternative is terminated by the disjunctive particle *rako* 'or' *(ndako* after a consonant*)* and the final alternative is terminated by the polarity question clitic *e*. (The intonation rises on each of the non-final alternatives and there is a quick rise-fall-rise contour finally.)

(3) *Winyamo najowo nanen kakaije mi njoran ndako,*
you.TOP your.leg side left TOP hurt or
najowo nanen kove mi njoram-e?
your.leg side right TOP hurt-Q
Does your left leg hurt or your right leg?

The simplest type of alternative question is one in which there are really only two alternatives, with the second being the negation of the first. In Yawa this is expressed by using simply the negative word *joena* as the second alternative, followed by the polarity question clitic *e*.

(4) *Kawinta maruge maje rako joena-e?*
in.a.moment rain fall or not-Q
Is it going to rain shortly or not?

4. INFORMATION QUESTIONS

Information questions are the most interesting type in Yawa. In many languages there is an inventory of question words, such as in English *who, what, when, where, how much, how* and *why,* and in Indonesian *siapa, apa, kapan, di mana* or *ke mana, berapa, bagaimana* and *kenapa* or *mengapa.* A list of question words could be drawn up for Yawa, too: *arepi* 'who', *animaisyemi* 'what', *nanduirati* 'when', *ruwi* 'where', *ruwimaisya* 'how much', *-are ruwi* 'how' and *be animaibei* 'why'. However, the Yawa list would be very incomplete because most of the forms in the list have a number of variants. To include all the variants would make the list

excessively long. A better way is to instead describe the factors controlling these variants. There are at least six such factors.

4.1 GENDER AND NUMBER AFFECTING THE FORM OF QUESTION WORDS

The gender and number of the referent determine the question words for 'who' and 'what' in Yawa. Number also affects the question word 'how much'. For example, the neutral form of 'who' is *arepi,* but if the referent is known to be feminine the form changes to *aremi.*

Compare (5) and (6).

NEUTRAL (any gender or number)

(5) *Arepi poroto no Manatanen?*
who go(MAS) to village.name
Who went to Artanen?

FEMININE SINGULAR

(6) *Aremi wanya wato?*
who (FEM) woman over.there
Who is that woman over there?

The number of the referent may also affect the form of the 'who' question word. Compare the form *arepi* in (5) above with *are nawi* in (7) below.

PLURAL

(7) *Wanya bavinsanaiveye noa mare jajorami,*
woman pregnant until going.to labour

weamo are nawi wo raeranande ramu
CONJ who PL they care.for.her so.that

ndantuna kobe?
she.gives.birth well
When a pregnant woman goes into labour who are the ones who will take care of her so she gives birth okay?

Likewise there are variants in Yawa for the 'what' question word. The neutral form is *animaisyemi,* which is feminine singular, but there are marked forms for masculine and for plural. For example, compare the neutral form *animaisyemi* in (8) with the specifically masculine form *animaisyepi* in (9).

NEUTRAL

(8) *Animaisyemi so?*
what this
What's this?

MASCULINE SINGULAR

(9) *Animaisyepi sopa no warave?*
what (MAS) jump LOC there.out.at.sea
What's jumping out there in the ocean?

The question word for quantity in Yawa, *ruwimaisya* 'how much', does not change in form for gender. But for number there may be agreement, if the approximate number of the anticipated answer is known. When the number is known to be a few or several, then *ruwimaisya nai* is used, as in (11). When the number is known to be plural, *ruwimaisya nawi* is used. But when the number is altogether unknown, then the neutral form *ruwimaisya* is used, as in (10).

QUANTITY UNKNOWN

(10) *Nya arikainye ruwimaisya?*
your children how.many
How many children do you have?

QUANTITY KNOWN TO BE SEVERAL (MORE THAN ONE, LESS THAN MANY)

(11) *Anane wawe ruwimaisya nai nyo yamavun*
sago container how.many DU you sell.them
no Ivate mansaijewe?
LOC Biak to.them
How many containers of sago did you sell to the Biak people?

4.2 SYNTACTIC POSITION AFFECTING THE FORM OF QUESTION WORDS

The position of the question word within the sentence also affects its form. For 'who' and 'what' question words there are topicalised forms, which occur initially, versus non-topicalised forms, which occur in the usual syntactic position for that constituent. The topicalised form of 'who' is *arepi* (neutral), while the non-topicalised form is *are*. Examples (5), (6) and (7) all have topicalised forms of 'who'; (12) has the non-topicalised form *are* (which is uninflected for number or gender).

NON-TOPICALISED

(12) *Karepa po are anepata?*
name he whom is.hitting.him
Whom is Caleb hitting?

The same type of difference prevails for 'what'; *animaisyemi* is topicalised, but *animaisye* is not.

4.3 TIME AFFECTING THE FORM OF QUESTION WORDS

There is no tense in Yawa. Just as in Indonesian, when the speaker wishes to indicate the time, he does so by adding a time expression to one of the sentences in his discourse. However, whether something happened in the past or is yet to happen in the future can affect time question words in Yawa. The neutral form is *nanduirati* which can mean either past or future time.

UNMARKED TIME

(13) *Nanduirati Susterija nde no Urusibori?*
when nurse she.come LOC village.name
When did the nurse come to Rosbori?
or When will the nurse come to Rosbori?

However, if the speaker wishes to make it clear that past time is intended in his question, then the form *nanduijapi* must be used. If he wishes instead to imply future time, then the form *nanduirati umba* must be used.[3] Compare the preceding example with the following two.

PAST TIME

(14) *Nanduijapi Dortiusa kakai?*
when(PAST) name die
When did Dortius die?

FUTURE TIME

(15) *Nanduirati umba nyomane moronto?*
when(FUTURE) then boat go
When will the boat go?

4.4 ALTERNANT FORMS FOR QUESTION WORDS

In some cases there are simply alternant forms for a question expression. For example, there are two different ways of forming 'how' questions in Yawa – compare (16) and (17). Note, however, that *either* form for 'how' could be used in either sentence, with the same basic meaning.

'HOW': *-are ruwimaisy*

(16) *Anane mamo raporar-are ruwimaisy?*
sago TOP split.it-(how) how
How is a sago log split?

'HOW': *beare ruwimaisy*

(17) *Beare ruwimaisy umba vatane po ugey aubaisy?*
how (how) then person he pig kill.it
How does a person get a pig?

There are four alternant expressions for 'why' in Yawa. There appears to be no semantic difference between them. The four forms are *beare ruwiji(rati), beare ruwimaisyi, be animaibai(rati)* and *animaisye mi beamo.*

FOUR FORMS FOR 'WHY' IN YAWA

(18) *Beare ruwijirati Efraimija po yane so rave?*
Beare ruwimaisyi
Be animaibeirati
Animaisye mi beamo
why name he fence this make.it
Why is Efraim making this fence?

4.5 SUBJECT AGREEMENT AFFECTING THE FORM OF QUESTION WORDS

An interesting feature of all four of the expressions for 'why' in Yawa is that they manifest agreement with the subject in both number and person. The agreement is marked with a prefix on one of the words of the interrogative phrase. The word to which the prefix is attached always has the copula root *be,* thus *be, beare* ('be-MANNER'), *beamo* ('be-TOPIC'). The null prefix indicates masculine singular, as in (18) above. The other prefixes are *m-* feminine singular, *wim-* second

singular, *wuri-* second dual, *wa-* second plural, *i-* third dual and *u-* or *m-* third plural. Example (19) shows third person feminine singular agreement and (20) shows third dual agreement.

'WHY': THIRD FEMININE SINGULAR AGREEMENT WITH SUBJECT

(19) *Animaisye mi mbeamo Serpiaja mo ama yavare randamisy?*
why 3.FEM.be.TOP name she her house destroy.it
Why did Serpia destroy her house?

'WHY': THIRD DUAL AGREEMENT WITH SUBJECT

(20) *Ibe animaibeirati Pietijape Bartazarpe ije no so?*
3.DU.be why name.and name.and they.two.come LOC here
Why did Piet and Bartazar come here?

4.6 AMBIGUITY BETWEEN CERTAIN QUESTION WORDS

The semantic range of certain of the Yawa question words is quite broad, broader than their glosses in individual sentences might indicate. The supreme example of this is *ruwi* which is discussed in some detail in section 5. Here we will simply examine *beare ruwimaisy* and closely-related forms such as *beare ruwijirati.* As was seen in (17) above, *beare ruwimaisy* means 'how, in what manner?' But in (18) we saw that the same form means 'why, what is the explanation?' These are not mistakes. It so happens that *beare ruwimaisy* means *both* 'how' and 'why'. It is ambiguous. The answer obtained might be reason, purpose, means, method, instrument or manner. It has a broad semantic range.

While *beare ruwimaisy* and *beare ruwijirati* are semantically broad, in actual usage their meanings are usually quite precise. This is because the semantics and pragmatics of the question help shape the answer. Thus, in (21) a 'how' reading is much more natural to be asking than 'why', while the reverse in true for (22).

'HOW' READING

(21) *Sarmona beare ruwijirati po mandokaije apusiyoe?*
name be how he shark catch.it
How did Sarmona catch the shark?

'WHY' READING

(22) *Yancea beare ruwijirati bauname joen?*
name be why marry not
Why hasn't Yancea married yet?

5. *ruwi:* ALL-PURPOSE QUESTION WORD

Sadock and Zwicky (1985:184) state that it is theoretically possible for a language to get by with a single morpheme for all information questions, which would gloss as 'what?'. 'All or nearly all information questions would involve periphrasis *(what person?* for 'who?', *at what time?* for 'when?', etc.).' They say, however, that they know of no such language.

The morpheme *ruwi* in Yawa almost appears to fit this description although, as is clear from the preceding discussion, it is not at all the case that this is the *only* question morpheme in Yawa. At the same time, however, the morpheme *ruwi* has a surprisingly wide range of usage and may by itself be

used to question 'who', 'what', 'which', 'when' and 'where'. With the addition of the suffix *maisy*, it may be used to ask 'how much/many'. Or with the addition of the copula *beare*, it may be used to ask 'how' and 'why'.

It should be noted that this is accomplished completely without periphrasis in most instances. That is *ruwi* means 'who' in (23) and (24) *without* the addition of a morpheme such as 'person' (e.g. 'what person'). Likewise *ruwi* means 'what' in (25), and in (26) it means 'which'. Further, in (27) it means 'when' *without* the addition of a morpheme meaning 'time' (the morpheme *rati* here could be added in any of the other sentences as well – it is a politeness marker frequently used in questions). Finally, in (28) *ruwi* means 'where' *without* the addition of a morpheme meaning 'place'.

ruwi MEANING 'WHO'

(23) *Ruwi pi nyo awaino nya `nuja?*
who TOP you call.him your older.sibling.same.sex
Who do you call 'older brother'?

ruwi MEANING 'WHO'

(24) *Arikainye ruwi pi wato?*
child who TOP over.there
Who is that child over there?

ruwi MEANING 'WHAT'

(25) *Nya tame mi ruwim?*
your name TOP what
What is your name?

ruwi MEANING 'WHICH'

(26) *Unari kampono ruwija umba udea?*
their.place village which then they.come
From which villages have they come?

ruwi MEANING 'WHEN'

(27) *Ruwirati umba ny` anaisye raisy?*
when then your food eat.it
When will you eat?

ruwi MEANING 'WHERE'

(28) *Isakija pi ruwi?*
name TOP where
Where is Isaac?

It is evident that the semantic readings of 'who', 'what', 'which', 'when' and 'where' are derived partly from the constituent structures which the morpheme *ruwi* enters into. For example, in (23) *ruwi* is topicalised and is the direct object, which would narrow the meaning of *ruwi* to either 'who' or 'what'. The semantics of the question force the 'who' reading over a 'what' reading. Similarly, in (27) *ruwi* occurs initially and is immediately followed by *umba*, a time word meaning 'then'. Since this is the normal position for a time expression, *ruwirati umba* is interpreted as a unit filling this position, which then gives the 'when' reading. And in (28) *ruwi* occurs finally, the position for a locative. This of course pushes a locative reading on the question word.

ruwi may be suffixed with *maisy*. By itself *ruwimaisy* generally means 'how much/many'. In conjunction with the copula morpheme *beare* it may change to either 'how' or 'why'.

ruwi MEANING 'HOW MANY'

(29) *Yakopa `pa somuntije mote ruwimaisya?*
name his citrus tree how.many
How many citrus trees does Jacob have?

ruwi MEANING 'HOW'

(30) *Beare ruwimaisy umba vatane po ugey` aubaisy?*
be how then person he pig kill.it
How does a person kill a pig?

ruwi MEANING 'WHY'

(31) *Beare ruwimaisy Obeda seo to no Serui?*
be why name he.go.up he.to LOC town.name
Why did Obed fly to Serui?

Thus we see that the morpheme *ruwi* in Yawa is a very fruitful interrogative word. It functions as an all-purpose question word and may be used to ask any type of question. There are, of course, other interrogative words that are more specific. But the existence of the question morpheme *ruwi,* which may ask all types of questions in Yawa, is an important fact for the theory of universals, in that it substantiates what was hitherto just a theoretical possibility.

NOTES

1. The Yawa language is a Papuan language and has been classified as a stock-level isolate in the Geelvink Bay Phylum, a minor phylum restricted to a small section of the north coast of Irian Jaya (Anceaux 1961; Wurm 1975). It is spoken by approximately 6000 speakers in more than two dozen villages throughout central Yapen Island. There are a number of dialects (Larry Jones 1986). The dialect described in this paper is that spoken on the north coast by the villages of Rosbori, Ariobu and Artanen, as well as by Ambaidiru in the centre of the island. Data were collected over the period of time 1984 to 1987 during extended village stays. I acknowledge the help of the following Yawa speakers: Efraim Karubaba, Seth Paay, Domingus Kapanay, Borden Paay, Sopia Rumansara and Dortius Rumansara (since deceased).

2. The phonology of Yawa has been described in Linda K. Jones 1986b. That paper describes a different dialect from the one studied in this paper, but the phonological differences are slight. The main difference is that the dialect in this paper has an additional phoneme /v/. It also appears morphologically richer.

   The examples in this paper do not show full morphological detail. The word glosses give some indication of the morphology, but only those morpheme breaks pertinent to the discussion are shown.

Abbreviations used in the examples are:

`	contraction	MAS	masculine
CONJ	conjunction	PL	plural
DU	dual	Q	question
FEM	feminine	TOP	topicalisation
LOC	locative		

3. Actually, if the time interval into the future is anticipated to be quite short (say a half-day or less), then these future forms are not acceptable as they imply a more distant future time. For short times into the future, *ruwirati umba* must be used.

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