

Triqui pragmatics I: Information structure
Linguistics 460/560 - The structure of Itunyoso Triqui
4/9/24 - 4/11/24
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I. Focus and topic (cf. DiCano et al. 2018)

- (1) Information structure refers to those components of the linguistic system that interlocutors use to negotiate shared knowledge of entities and states in discourse (Lambrecht, 1994).
- (2) Languages utilize different strategies for expressing whether an entity is new/old, topical/focal, or recently identifiable (or not) in the discourse.
- (3) **Focus** refers to “*the speaker’s assessment of the relative predictability or unpredictability of the relations between propositions and their elements in a given discourse situation.*” (Lambrecht, 1994, p. 6).
 - a. *Broad focus*: the entire sentence or predicate conveys pragmatically unpredictable information, e.g. *What's up? Leah came to Buffalo for the eclipse.*
 - b. *Narrow focus*: a single argument or state is pragmatically unpredictable, e.g. *Who came to Buffalo? LEAH came to Buffalo for the eclipse.*
- (4) Languages utilize one of three possible tactics for marking focus: morphosyntactic marking, focus particles, and prosodic marking (Ladd, 2008).
- (5) Additionally, languages like Northern Sotho may mark only pragmatically predictable (non-focal) information via backgrounding and pronominalization, leaving focus entirely unmarked (Zerbian, 2008).
- (6) In many tonal and non-tonal languages, the focused units are marked morphosyntactically. Kalinowski (2015) discusses many morphosyntactic strategies for focus marking across different African language families - almost 1,000 different strategies are used!
- (7) English also uses morphosyntax to mark focus - it's not always prosodic, e.g. It was Mario who thought about this first. **cleft construction**
- (8) There is a stronger tendency for morphosyntactic strategies to be used in tonal languages than in non-tonal languages (Torreira et al. 2014).
- (9) **Topic**: that element of the sentence that is presented as already existing in the discourse and which the rest of the sentence is, in some sense, about. (Trask 1993).

- (10) The notions of *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* are also related, respectively, to the distinction between focused and topicalized constituents.
- (11) Useful for the discussion of Triqui information structure is the idea of a scale of foregrounding/backgrounding - possibly a scale of discourse prominence.
- (12) Focused constituents are obligatorily fronted in Triqui.

Cnan ⁴³	ki ³ -sij ⁴	ku ³ ki ³	Answer to:	Un ³ sin ³	ki ³ -sij ⁴	oh ¹ ?
brother.1S	PERF-arrive	yesterday		who	PERF-arrive	WH.PART
'My brother arrived yesterday.'				'Who arrived?'		

Ki ³ -sij ⁴	cnan ⁴³	ku ³ ki ³	Answer to:	Un ³ sin ³	ka ³ -bin ³	oh ¹ ?
PERF-arrive	brother.1S	yesterday		what	PERF-be	WH.PART
'My brother arrived yesterday.'				'What happened?'		

- (13) This also typically extends to pronouns - they must be fronted but they need a "host" as they are clitics. It is necessary to use the Triqui word for 'self' *ma²han³* and attach the pronoun to these.

- a. Se⁴ ma²hanj⁵ ki³-ranj³, Jwan⁴³ ki³-ranj³ chu³che³²
 NEG.EXIST self.1S PERF-buy, Juan PERF-buy chicken
 'It wasn't *me* who bought (it), *Juan* bought the chicken.'
- b. Se⁴ ma²hanj⁵ kwej³ rian³² chi³nga⁴, ma²han⁴=reh¹ kwej³
 NEG.EXIST self.1S PERF.jump face fence, self=2S PERF.jump
 rian³² chi³nga⁴
 face fence
 'It wasn't *me* who jumped over the fence, *you* jumped over the fence.'
- c. "Tinj⁵ ka²-ne⁴=reh¹ si² k-a²hmin² ma²hanj⁵ oj³. Si²
 Quietly POT-sit=2S because POT-speak self.1S PART.command. Because
 ma²hanj⁵ k-a²hmin² nga¹=sij³ aj⁵" a³taj²=sij³ ni².
 self.1S POT-speak with=3M PART.TAG, say=3M and.
 ' "Sit quietly because *I* will speak. Because *I* will speak with him, eh?" , he says.'

(Line 126, *Derechos de mujeres triquis*; 06/9/2015; Carmen López González and Nieves López Guzmán)

- (14) However, note that in (13c), the focused pronoun occurs *in-situ*, meaning it is in the position where a subject normally occurs (post-verbally). *Ex-situ* focus (pre-verbal position) is only required for full NPs, not pronouns.
- (15) Triqui does not have a morphophonological or phonetic strategy for prosodically-marking a focused constituent, but it *does* have several strategies for marking additional distinctions, in particular *topic* and *disjoint reference*.

- (23) Where does this type of clitic get used? It is specifically used to mark a recently mentioned 3rd person entity - something like an aforementioned entity. It is most often used when there are at least two 3rd person entities that have to be marked - multiple 'hes', 'shes', or 'theys.'
- (24) It may *also* be used to refer to inanimate subjects and to generic entities, e.g. "one might think that..."

- (25) toj³ skwe⁴la⁴³ xi³ toj³ man³ ni³ a⁴nin⁴³+raj³ toj³
 more school big more that and think.TOP more
- ni³ na³-ni³hin³ toj³ nu³kwanh³ nej³
 and ITER-know.TOP more word also

'And in those bigger schools, **one** thinks more and one recognizes more words too.'

Line 38, *Derechos de Mujeres Triquis*, 06/9/2015; Carmen López González and Nieves López González

- (26) So far then, we have three unique strategies for marking what would be a topical referent:
- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| a. | be ⁴ + NP | Usually ex-situ | <i>New referent</i> |
| b. | clitic pronoun | In-situ | <i>Subject referent</i> |
| c. | topical clitic | In-situ | <i>Aforementioned referent</i> |

- (27) As it turns out, there is one *more* strategy that Triqui uses and it involves an additional tonal clitic! I have so far just coded this as *emphatic*, but I believe it is only used as a way to mark contrastive topics or *disjoint reference*.

- (28) When a single 3rd person needs to be distinguished from another 3rd person for clarificational purposes in the discourse, it is possible to mark the pronoun with tone /4/ and a final glottal stop, e.g.

sij ³	'he'	sih ⁴	[siʔ ⁴]	'HE'
unj ³	'she'	unh ⁴	[ũʔ ⁴]	'SHE'
nej ³	'they'	neh ⁴	[neʔ ⁴]	'THEY'

- (29) Though related to the pronominal clitics, these pronouns are independent/free - they do not need to attach to a preceding word.
- (30) In the text sample above by Crispin, he previously discusses a hero in the story - *Señor Naseto*. He accompanies the Triquis into the conflict with those from the neighboring Triqui town of San Andrés Chicahuaxtla.

- (31) Sih⁴, ka¹nun¹ sih⁴ ngo²+nu¹kwaj³. Ka¹nun¹ sih⁴
HE, POT.approach **HE** without.fear. POT.approach **HE**
 ta³kan³ yo³hoj⁵ yan³².
 hill land salt

'So *he*, *he* tried to approach (them) without fear. *He* tried to approach the Hill of Salt.'

Line 90 from *Sobre la guerra de San Martin Itunyoso y Chicahuaxtla*, 6/16/15, Crispin Celestino Martínez

- (32) During this discourse, Triqui listeners are evaluating changes of topic, one party of attackers, one party of defenders, and a hero. Since most of the entities here are males, they would otherwise take the equivalent 3M pronoun =*sij*³. Yet, Triqui speakers do not confuse the entities.
- (33) The entity here is clearly the established hero since he is without fear, but he needs to be distinguished from both the attackers and the defenders we see in the previous line (19).
- (34) Now take a look at another context - one you've seen before.

a⁴ⁿgo⁴³ tʃi²ko³ʔo³² ni² ũ¹ʔũ¹ ta³ʔnĩh⁵=sih³ ni² nu¹k^weh¹ ni³ka³²=sih³ βĩ³ ttũh²
 another brother.1S and five child.of=3M and pair.of spouse=3M be eight

'Another of my brothers, his five kids, and their pair of spouses make eight (of us).'
 (from *Line 13; Testimonio de su familia grande; 06/10/2015; Carmen López González*)

- (35) The pronoun =*sij*³ is used to refer to the first set of brothers above, but now that a different set of brothers is identified, *sih*⁴ is used instead.

ni ²	nnin ⁴	ni ²	a ⁴ ngo ⁴³	chi ² ko ³ ho ³²	ni ²	nu ¹ kwej ¹	
and	mother.1s	and	another	brother.opp.1s	and	both	
ni ² ka ² = sih ⁴	ni ²	sa ³ ni ²	ta ³	ba ² ,	ba ²	rian ³²	a ³ toj ¹ =unj ⁴
spouse= 3M.EMPH	and	but	this	exist	exist	face/where	sleep=1.EXCL

'and my mother and another one of my brothers and both of *THEIR* spouses, but there is a space where we (each) sleep.'

Line 14; *Testimonio de su familia grande; 06/10/2015; Carmen López González*

- (36) This type of pronominal marking appears to encode something called *disjoint reference*. With two entities which have the same number and gender marking, it is used to clarify which entity is being referred to, e.g.

"Yeah, even though John never has any money, when he saw Fred at the bakery, he gave him money for pastries."

- (37) When you wish to distinguish one entity from another, this morphology is also used.

An³², sinj⁵ nu¹kwa¹han¹ ka³-bin³=sih⁴ yu³be³².
 Uhuh, *person joining* PERF-be=3M.EMPH then.
 'Uhuh, HE had been the *representative* then.'

(Line 45; *Sobre la guerra de San Martín y Chicahuaxtla*; 06/16/2015; *Crispin Celestino Martínez*)

- (38) sa³nto¹ ba² ta³-ne³² tsih¹ sinj⁵ **nanh⁴** si³si²
 Santos! exist POSS'D-water sweet man **DEM.EMPH** if
- sno³ho³² **sih⁴** ka²che² **sih⁴** ta¹hninj¹ unj⁵?
 man **3M.EMPH** POT.walk **3M.EMPH** son.VOC 1S.VOC

'Holy moley! *That* man will have (a lot of) soda if *he* is the man that will walk (serve in political office), my son.'

Line 7, *Cómo le da palabras a las autoridades*, 10/10/14, Marcelino Hernández Bautista.

- (39) If the root tone is upper register, it is replaced with high level tone /4/ and a glottal stop is appended to the right edge (replacing any final glottal consonant). However, only the final syllable tone of lower register tone roots (/1, 2, 32, 31/) is replaced with tone /4/, identical to the topical 3rd person mentioned above (examples to follow).

Non-emphatic		Emphatic	
nan ³	this (proximal)	nanh ⁴	<i>this</i> (prox)
ta ³	this (discursive)	tah ⁴	<i>this</i> (disc)
=sij ³	'he'	sih ⁴	<i>he</i>
=unj ³	'she'	unh ⁴	<i>she</i>
=nej ³	'they'	neh ⁴	<i>they</i>
=chuj ³	'animal (pron)'	chuh ⁴	<i>animal</i> (pron)
chu ³ be	'dog'	chu ⁴ beh ⁴	<i>Dog</i>
cha ³ to ³	'rabbit'	cha ⁴ toh ⁴	<i>Rabbit</i>

- (40) This emphatic marking is extended to contexts where a noun might refer to a character in a story, e.g. "The Rabbit" as opposed to a generic rabbit.
- (41) These are still apparently topical, it seems, but this is obviously a new category having to do with distinguishing among similar entities within a set. Triqui is very careful to make such distinctions.
- (42) And just in case things were not complicated enough, it turns out that you can apply the morphology above to *verbs* when the subject is either of unknown gender or inanimate, but either needs to be disambiguated from another entity or is not being backgrounded.

- (43) a. ka³-hnah³=sij³ b. ka³-hnah⁴
 PERF-come=3M PERF-come.EMPH
 'They came' 'They came'
- c. ka³-hnaj³
 PERF-come.TOP
 'They (mentioned) came'
- (44) a. ka²-hnah²=sij³ b. ka²-hnah²⁴
 POT-come=3M POT-come.EMPH
 'They will come' 'They will come'
- c. ka²-hnaj²⁴
 POT-come.TOP
 'They (mentioned) will come'
- (45) Ni³taj² si³ **bah³⁴** (ba³²) roh⁴ ba³² Culiacán yoj³², o⁴nej⁴.
 NEG.exist COMP exist.EMPH like exist Culiacan PERS.EVID comadre.1S
 'It (living in Yurécuaro) is not similar to being in Culiacán, my comadre.'

Line 66, *Cómo se cuidó a sus niños trabajando en Sinaloa*, 6/14/15, Elena Eugenia Martínez

- (46) Yya¹³ a³manh³ ni² ngo² ko³no³ho³² ni²hin³-ih⁴ ka³hanj²
 when rain and at.once be.cooked PL.EMPH PERF.go
- Yya¹³ chi⁴hninj⁴, ki³-na³bin³ nu¹kwa¹-ah³ ni² oh³⁴ ru³ne³²
 when be.clear PERF-become hard.EMPH and hit/give.EMPH bean/blister
- ta³koh⁴. Binh⁴ sinj⁵ ni²ki³ ka³hanj².
 foot.1DU. be.1DU person poor/indigenous perf.go.

'When it would rain, then **they** (our leather sandals) would be cooked/tender. When it was clear, **they** would get hard and **(they) give** us blisters on our feet. We have been poor, indigenous people.'

Lines 26 - 27, *Sobre el tiempo de hambruna*, 10/10/14, Marcelino Hernández Bautista

- (47) In the example above, the elder speaker is discussing the ways in which people suffered during a famine in the Triqui region. The process of making your own sandals from bull leather is difficult and these types of sandals are uncomfortable to wear because they can give you blisters.
- (48) In sum, you *must* be maximally clear to distinguish between pronominal entities in Triqui discourse while still using pronouns.

- (49) In English, we might just decide to re-use full NPs, but that does not seem to be a strategy that is utilized much in Triqui - once a full NP is used, it gets pronominalized throughout the conversation.
- (50) Four unique strategies for marking what would be a "topical":
- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------------|--|
| a. | be ⁴ + NP | Usually ex-situ | <i>New referent</i> |
| b. | clitic pronoun | In-situ | <i>Subject referent</i> |
| c. | topical clitic | In-situ | <i>Aforementioned/inanimate referent</i> |
| d. | emphatic clitic | In-situ | <i>Disambiguated/inanimate referent</i> |
- (51) This makes tracking information structure and referents in Triqui discourse very interesting but also quite challenging.

References

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