

Final particles I: How to ask a question in Itunyoso Triqui

Linguistics 460/560 - The Structure of Itunyoso Triqui

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I. Theoretical and typological preliminaries

- (1) What is a final particle? A sub-type of discourse marker.
- (2) Discourse markers used in different languages to indicate speech act type, illocutionary force, attitudes towards different propositions, evidentiality, turn-taking strategy, and other pragmatic categories.
- (3) While all languages have discourse markers, there is a strong tendency for languages to indicate pragmatic meanings either at the beginning or end of an utterance.
- (4) *"A fundamental characteristic of discourse markers is that they operate beyond the propositional content of the communication"* (Fox Tree 2010)

"...discourse markers focus on the way communication is negotiated rather than on its content" (ibid)
- (5) Whereas the literature on discourse markers includes a very large set of possible markers in an utterance, *e.g. um, well, you know*, there is a sub-set of heavily grammaticalized particles found in many East/Southeast Asian languages which occur in utterance-final position (Panov 2020).
- (6) The preponderance and complexity of such particles in these languages is often related to the limitations of encoding pragmatic properties via intonation in complex lexical tone languages (Brunelle et al 2012, Sybesma and Li 2007).
- (7) Though such particles are robustly found in East and Southeast languages, i.e. in Vietnamese (Brunelle et al 2012, Brunelle 2016) and in Cantonese (Sybesma and Li 2007), they are also attested in Mande languages (Sherwood 2020), in Niger-Congo languages (Hyman and Monaka 2011), and Otomanguean languages (Bueno Holle 2019).
- (8) In the sentence below in Isthmus Zapotec, it would be ungrammatical with the final *lá*. (Bueno Holle 2019)

¿(ñée) biiyalu laabe lá?
ñee^H bi-uuya=lu' laa=be^{LH} la^H
Q COMPL-see=2SG BASE=3.HUM LA
'Did you see him/her?'

- (9) The example below shows the use of *ma* in Mandarin as a final question particle, the use of *ka* in Japanese as another final question particle (here, a tag question), and the use of *khráp/kâ* in Thai as a gender-specific politeness marker (that doubles as a question particle) - data from Panov (2020).

Mandarin (Sino-Tibetan; China):

tā mǎi fángzi le ma²

3SG buy house **FP FP**

'Did (s)he buy a house?'

(Li & Thompson 1989 [1981]: 239)

Japanese (Japonic; Japan):

Sore dake ka ne

only it **FP FP**

'Only it, right?'

(Alpatov et al.: 464)

Thai (Tai-Kadai; Thailand):

pay nây khráp

go where **FP**

'Where are you going?' (a male asking)'

klàp bân khâ

go home **FP**

(Smyth 2002: 126)

'I am going home.' (a female responding)

- (10) The Thai example is notable because it illustrates that pragmatic meaning may be packaged differently by language - things like politeness or evidentiality or speech act may be combined within the same particle.

II. Methodology

- (12) Itunyoso Triqui has an extensive set of approximately 40-45 final particles which encode many distinct pragmatic meanings in Triqui discourse.
- (13) I've collected a number of here from a corpus of 30 hours of Triqui narratives/conversations and in the process of translating these recordings I've examined their meanings to a limited degree.
- (14) In the process of transcribing/translating, my consultants and I encounter new words or SFPs not in the dictionary. These get added to the dictionary with a temporary type of gloss, but then we investigate them later.

(15) The methods for examining final particles usually involve questions surrounding elicited utterances - often text examples can be overly complex and this makes it hard to determine the meaning.

(16) My translated fieldnotes from 12/20/22, below, on the particle *ka*³⁴.

<u>Final particle</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
kaj5	debe ser /kaj34/ (tono /34/)	'más que se piensa' (Basi tiene certeza) ' <i>more than you think</i> ' (Basileo is certain)

-significa que es más de lo que dices/calculas.

-it means that it is more than you say or more than you've estimated

a Ki3ranj4 Maria toj3 **kaj34** My elicitation - it is grammatical
 perf-buy Maria more final.part
 'María compró más de lo que pensaba en comprar.' Basileo's translation
 'Maria bought more than what she was thinking about buying'

b K-u4nanj4=sij3 **kaj34** My elicitation - grammatical
 perf-run=3m final.part
 'Él corrió más que el otro.'
 'He ran more than the other.'

c K-oh1 ku3man1 **kaj34** My elicitation - grammatical
 pot-hit rain final.part
 'Va a llover más que pensamos.'
 'It is going to rain more than we think'

d Ngo43 rian32 la3riaj3=soh1 **kaj34** si3 na3rij3 rian31=reh1 yu3be32.
 anger face asshole=2s final.part than find.top face=2s final.part
 A colorful text example

'Eres más pendejo que se te apareció.'
 Basileo's translation
 'You are an even greater asshole than it seemed to you'

(17) Note that the sentences in (16a) - (16c) are fairly simple sentences with simple verbs. The fact that these are grammatical allows us to get closer to the meaning of the SFP, even if it is a bit decontextualized.

(18) From 2021 - 2022 Juergen Bohmeyer and I worked on how to organize the set of final particles better and did some additional, targeted elicitation. However, our findings were a bit difficult to interpret since pragmatic research often requires that you ask a speaker to "think of a context where A and B are true and then you say C." This asks the speaker to do a metalinguistic work. Research on SFPs is ongoing.

III. Triqui final particles

(19) Several dimensions emerge as important in distinguishing between final particles in the language

- a. Speech act (declarative, interrogative, imperative, performative, quotative, etc)
- b. Negation
- c. Evidentiality
- d. Propositional attitude
- e. Shared knowledge / common ground

(20) Certain final particles are very difficult to interpret, but others are easier.

nih⁴	polar question particle
oh¹	content question particle (WH question)
oj¹	questions you already know the answer to
noh¹	repeated question; follow-up question
koh¹	question if the speaker knew but forgot the answer
aj³ / aj⁵	tag question particle used with imperfective/perfective verbs
kaj¹	tag question particle used with potential verbs
ah³ / anh³	negative focus question particle
runj³	reported speech tag question, i.e. 'they say?'
unj⁴ ~ un⁴³	why particle
sah¹	which, used for questioning among items in a list

(21) Unlike English, no change in constituent order is observed with questions, but final particles are usually required (at least with polar questions).

(22) **Polar (yes/no) questions** are typically marked with *nih⁴*.

(23)	Ki ³ -ranj ⁴ =sij ³ cha ³ chunj ⁵	nih⁴?		Ki ³ -ranj ⁴ =sij ³ cha ³ chunj ⁵
	PERF-buy=3M bread	POLAR.PART		PERF-buy=3M bread
	'Did he buy bread?'			'He bought bread.'

(24)	ba ² si ³ ra ⁴¹ =reh ¹	nih⁴?
	exist COMP want=2S	POLAR.PART
	'Is there something that you want?' ~ 'Do you want something?'	

(25)	ka ² hbe ³ k-u ² nun ⁴ =reh ¹	nih⁴?
	POT.able POT-understand=2S	POLAR.PART
	'Do you understand (me)?'	

(26) Typical **content questions** are marked with a final particle *oh¹*, but as we will see, there are three other similar looking particles that also are used for content questions but where the shared knowledge has a different status.

- (27) Content questions require WH-words. Recall that these are compositional in Triqui and formed by combining the word *un*³, meaning something like 'which' with any noun, e.g.

un ³ sin ³	'which thing'	=	'what'	<i>lexicalized</i> [u ³ sĩ ³]
un ³ cchej ³²	'which path'	=	'where'	<i>lexicalized</i> [u ³ tʃeh ²]
un ³ ngwi ³¹	'which person'	=	'who'	
un ³ chu ³ ku ³	'which animal'...			

- (28) WH-words are obligatorily sentence-initial and the sentence-final *oh*¹ usually occurs along with them, as shown below. Occasionally the SFP will be missing if the question is the first among many clauses.

- (29) un³-sin³ ki³-hyaj⁴=reh¹ **oh**¹ (or frequently, r-oh¹)
 what PERF-do=2S CONTENT.Q
 'What did you do?'

- (30) un³-cchej³² ka³hanj²=sij³ **oh**¹?
 where PERF.go=3S CONTENT.Q
 'Where did he go?'

- (31) But what if you are asking a question and you already know the answer? In these contexts you are asking the question and the answer is part of *shared knowledge* instead of knowledge known only to the addressee.

- (32) a. Ki³-ranj⁴=sij³ cha³chunj⁵ nih⁴?
 PERF-buy=3M bread POLAR.PART
 'Did he buy bread?' (Speaker does not know the answer.)
- b. Ki³-ranj⁴=sij³ cha³chunj⁵ **oj**¹? Ki³-ni³?ih⁵ si³
 PERF-buy=3M bread SHARED.INFO.Q PERF-see.1S COMP
- ki³-ranj⁴=sij³ cha³chunj⁵
 PERF-buy=3M bread

'Did he buy bread? I saw that he bought bread.'

- (33) The inclusion of the additional sentence in (32b) demonstrates that having shared knowledge shifts the type of SFP that is used.
- (34) This final particle can also be used in non-question contexts where the speaker is signalling some agreement with the addressee (they have shared knowledge after all).

(35) Nih⁴ u³sin³ a³nin¹ yyaj³² ta³ roh⁴-hya³ raj⁴ **NLG**
 who.knows what blossom flower DEM seem feel.1S

oj¹ o⁴neh⁴.
 SHARED.INFO.Q comadre.Q

'Who knows in what (month) these flowers blossom, it seems to me, comadre?'

(36) Basileo (my consultant) notes that, in the example above (from a text), the speaker (**NLG**) is signalling that she knows the answer to the question but she wants her comadre to answer the question, e.g. while at the doctor's office "And what year were you born, Grandma?"

(37) It is unclear if this is used only to signal shared knowledge or if it is also being used respectfully - it is rude in Triqui culture to speak for someone who is your respected elder.

(38) Nun³ ranh³+raj⁴ ki²-hyaj³ sunh³ a³kwa⁴hnin⁴³.
 NEG happen+want.1S POT-do work.1du today

A³kwa⁴hnin⁴³ ko²hoh² re⁴nte⁴³ oj¹.
 today POT.drink.1DU moonshine SHARED.INFO.Q

'I don't like that we're working today. Today, let's drink moonshine, eh?'

(39) In (38), Basileo notes that a relationship between interlocutors must exist since the speaker is assuming the addressee will be in agreement - the idea of skipping work is a shared sentiment. It is infelicitous to say something like this with someone you do not know.

(40) There is another SFP used if there are *a series of questions being asked* - *noh¹*. Here, in (41), the speaker (NLG) is asking her cousin a series of questions about how her parents managed to feed her family of 14 people.

(41) Ni² a³sah¹ a⁴nun⁴³ chraj³⁼⁵reh¹ nga¹ chu³be³ **noh¹...** [risa]
 And completely reach.limit tortilla=2P with dog REP.Q

'And when your tortillas are used up for even the dog, eh?'

Line 13: NLG, '*Testimonio de su familia grande*'

(42) So, if you answer a question with another question, you use *noh¹*.

(43) **Speaker A:** Taj¹ tu³kwaj⁴=reh¹ ni³kyanj⁵ oh¹?
 how drive=2s Tlaxiaco CONTENT.Q
 'How do you drive to Tlaxiaco?'

Speaker B: Taj¹ tu³kwaj⁴=reh¹ ni³kyanj⁵ noh¹?
 how drive=2s Tlaxiaco REP.Q
 'How do you drive to Tlaxiaco??'

(44) **Juan:** Ki¹-ran¹ ngo² ka³min⁴³ xi³
 POT-buy.1S one car big
 'I will buy a big car.'

Tú: Taj¹ tu²hbe³ oh¹/*noh¹? Un³taj² sa³hanj²
 how expensive CONTENT.Q/REP.Q how.much money
 ni³kaj¹=reh¹ noh¹/*oh¹?
 carry=2S CONTENT.Q/REP.Q

'How expensive is it? How much money are you bringing?'

Juan: Ni¹ka¹ sa³hanj².
 carry.1S money
 'I have money.'

(45) Note that *noh*¹ is infelicitous in an initial question, but *oh*¹ is infelicitous with a follow-up question. It can be used in either content or echo follow-up questions. So, this SFP is specifically sensitive to previous questions in the discourse.

(46) Yet, not all knowledge is exactly shared the same way. What if you knew something but forgot it. You might ask a question in such a way to indicate that it is forgotten knowledge.

(47) What was the name of that film? vs. What was the name of that film again?

(48) In Triqui, you use another SFP - *koh*¹.

(49) Ni² un³ sinj⁵ bin³ sinj⁵ ki³-n-a⁴tuj⁴ rian³²=sij³ ta³
 and which man be man PERF-ITER-enter face=3M DEM

koh¹ mah³?
 FORGOT.Q compadre.Q

'And which man was the man who replaced him again, compadre?'

Line 21: WCM, 'Historia de autoridades que se murieron en la presidencia'

- (50) In this text, the speaker (WCM) knew the answer to who replaced the last town president/mayor, but does not recall it at the moment.
- (51) There is another, good example of this but it reveals a plot point in our text we're working on!
- (52) **Tag questions** are often also formed by *tags*, e.g. *right? isn't that so?* For tag questions in Triqui, either *aj*³ or *aj*⁵ are used. I believe that they are simply allomorphs conditioned by the preceding word's tone:
- aj*⁵ [afi⁵] occurs after a preceding /43, 4, 5/ tone (upper register)
 - aj*³ [afi³] occurs elsewhere.
- (53) ka³hanj²=nih²=sij³ nga¹=nej³ **aj**³?
 PERF.go=PL=3S with=3P TAG.Q
 'They went with them then?'
- (54) ni² chanh¹ u²rua⁴³ baj³ a⁴nanj⁴=neh⁴=**aj**⁵?
 and pretty very go.3TOP weave=1P.INCL-TAG.Q
 'What we weave is very pretty, eh?'
- (55) The tonal conditioning is observed in the person marking too, but this is a hypothesis that needs to be explored further.
- (56) Just like tags in English, *aj*³ can be used in non-interrogative contexts too, though I'm not sure if this is something like English 'eh?'
- (57) cha² ngo² na³to³² ra⁴³=reh¹ Speaker A
 POT.eat one banana want=2S
 'You're going to eat a banana.' ~ 'You want to eat a banana'
- anh³ chaj¹ **aj**³ Speaker B
 Yes POT.eat.1S TAG.Q
 'Yes, I will eat (it).' ~ 'Yes, I will eat it, eh.'
- (58) Note that the tag question SFP *aj*^{3/5} is only used with imperfective or perfective verbs. When we use a verb in the potential aspect, we must instead use **kaj**¹ for irrealis states (contexts where the tag does not reflect possible shared knowledge?)
- (59) ka³hanj¹=reh¹ ni³gyanj⁵ ku³ki³ aj⁵/*kaj¹
 PERF.go=2S Tlaxiaco yesterday TAG.Q/IRR.TAG.Q
 'You went to Tlaxiaco yesterday, eh?'
- (60) ka²hanj²=reh¹ ni³gyanj⁵ a³hyoj³ kaj¹/*aj⁵
 POT.go=2S Tlaxiaco tomorrow IRR.TAG.Q/TAG.Q
 'You will go to Tlaxiaco tomorrow, eh?'

(61) As it turns out though, *kaj*¹ is more general than that. It is used to mark tag questions for which there is just no certainty. So, using *nih*⁴ 'who knows' can permit it to be used with perfective verbs.

(62) nih⁴ a³si² k-a³bi³²=sih⁴ ka³han³²=sij³ nih⁴ kaj¹
 who.knows if PERF-leave=3M.EMPH PERF.go=3M who.knows IRR.TAG.Q
 'Who knows if he went away, eh?'

(63) There is a separate set of tags for questions involving *negative focus*. The SFP *ah*³ is used here. There is an allomorph of this - *anh*³ - that is used when the preceding vowel on the preceding word is nasalized.

(64) se⁴ xwan⁴³ ki³-ranj⁴ **anh**³?
 not Juan PERF-buy NEG.TAG.Q
 'It wasn't Juan that bought (it)?'

(65) ttaj⁵ ni¹ko³ ngo² ma³ka²ra², ttaj⁵ toj³ ttaj⁵ (NLG)
 be.above many one hand.measure, be.above more be.above
 rianj³ si³raj³ **ah**³
 face.3TOP seems NEG.TAG.Q

'There are a few hand measures across it, I think even more, right?'
 (Person estimating how long thread has to be for a huipil design.)

(66) The example in (65) does not seem to be a negative question, but this sentence is part of a larger exchange between two women where they are discussing how to set up a *telar* for traditional weaving. As is very typical for Triqui speakers, they are coming up with an explanation together, so there is a lot of verification of information between them. The sentence above is from a younger woman who is leading the interview/discussion but she is also deferring to the expertise of the older woman in knowledge of traditional weaving. So, we could surmise that some **uncertainty** is expressed by the speaker.

(67) If we examine what the following sentence is, we find some evidence for this hypothesis. The older speaker responds with an exact quantity here and uses another final particle, *yu*³*be*³², which is used as a general evidential for marking confidence as to the truthhood of the assertion.

ngo² ma³ka²ra² ni² ya⁴kwa⁴han⁴ ra³ha³ ba³² rian³² ru³hnun⁴ (CMC)
 one hand.measure and another.four hand be on huipil
 che¹he¹ ta³ **yu**³**be**³²
 long DEM CONF.EVID

'Una medida de mano y otros cuatro manos están en ese huipil largo pues'
 'One hand measure and another four hands again on that long huipil then.'

(68) So, is *ah*³ possible even when the interlocutor feels *doubtful* without any overt negation expressed? This is so far unclear but this could be investigated in the corpus further.

(69) We have already seen that Triqui pragmatics are sensitive to whether information is quoted or not. If the tag question involves reported speech, a different SFP is used - *runj*³.

(70) Taj¹³ ku¹hnaj¹=sij³ a³taj²=sij³ **runj**³?
 like.so be.called=3M say=3M REPORTED.TAG.Q
 'He's called that, they say?'

(71) Ni² nga¹³ a³hninj⁵=nej³ yu³hbej³ le⁴ra⁴³ **runj**³? **NLG**
 And when insert=3P thread fine.thread REPORTED.TAG.Q
 'And when would they insert the fine thread, would one say?'

Context: Speaker (NLG) is eliciting information from an older speaker about older weaving customs. So, the older speaker is reporting what used to happen.

(72) *Why* questions involve a unique final particle *un*⁴³.

(73) a³taj¹=reh¹ sta³hanj³ sti⁴la⁴³ **un**⁴³
 say=2S language Spanish WHY.Q
 'Why are you talking in Spanish?'

(74) But like most of the SFPs here, it has an extended use as a type of emphatic question. In the context below in (75), the speaker (NLG) is asking her aunt to tell the story of the sun and the moon well and to explain the different characters.

(75) Un³ yu³hunj² bin³=unj³ oh¹? Na²tah²=reh¹ be³be⁴he⁴ **NLG**
 what woman be=3F CONTENT.Q POT.tell=2S well/good
 na²tah²=reh¹ yu³be³². Un³ yu³hunj² bin³=unj³ **un**⁴³
 POT.tell=2S CONF.EVID what woman be=3F WHY.Q

'What woman is she? Tell it, tell it well then. What woman is she!?'

(76) Just as the particle *noh*¹ is sensitive to repeated questions, a special particle *sah*¹ is used when *questioning choices among a list of items*.

(77) un³ sinh³ bin³ oh¹? sinh³ cha¹na¹ nih² sinh³ sno⁴ho⁴³ **sah**¹?
 what child/person be CONTENT.Q? child female or child male CHOICE.Q
 'What is the child? A girl or a boy?'

(78) Another term for this is an *alternative question*. Note that after the *which* question in (79), the speaker (NLG) offers an alternative and completes the question with *sah*¹.

- (79) Taj¹ k-a¹toh¹ **beh¹?** Un³ kwi³ ka³-bin³ nunh³ **NLG**
 how POT-say.1DU really? which day PERF-be be.dressed.1DU
- ma²han³ nan² **nih⁴?** A³si² ta¹ ba³² ngo² ki³hyanj³
 IT DIR POLAR.Q or until exist one party
- nun³² cha¹ngoh¹ ma²han³ **sah¹?**
 be.dressed really.1DU it CHOICE.Q

'How/what would we say really? On which day was it that we were dressed in it (the long huipil)? Or until there was a party we would dress in this?'

Line 61: NLG, *Cómo se prepara huipiles anteriores*

IV. Discussion

- (80) Apart from the 11 particles mentioned already, there are at least an additional 32 or so. Within these, there are a few *more* question particles that I do not yet understand.

beh¹ synonymous with *oh¹* ?
 runh⁴/runj⁵ similar to runj³, but unclear in its use

- (81) What dimensions seem to be encoded in question SFPs? All the speech acts here are *interrogative*, so this is left unmentioned.

Particle	Speech act sub-type	Aspect	Information perspective	Polarity	Assumptions about who knows the info	Presupposition
nih ⁴	polar:neutral	any	neutral	positive	listener knows	new
oh ¹	content	any	neutral	positive	listener knows	new
oj ¹	polar:neutral	any	neutral	positive	speaker knows	shared knowledge
noh ¹	content	any	neutral	positive	listener knows	new
koh ¹	content	any	neutral	positive	speaker <i>knew</i>	previously shared
aj ³ /aj ⁵	tag	realis	neutral	positive	speaker can know	new
kaj ¹	tag	irrealis	neutral	positive	speaker can not know	new
ah ³	tag	any	focus-sensitive	negative	listener knows	new
runj ³	tag	any	neutral	positive	reported speech	new
un ⁴³	polar:emphatic	any	neutral	positive	listener knows	new
sah ¹	content	any	neutral	positive	listener knows	prior mention:list

- (82) These dimensions seem to capture the differences, but extended uses are not immediately clear. Notions like doubt and certainty also need to be included in the set of dimensions. For instance, *oj¹* and *aj³* each express greater certainty than *nih⁴/oh¹* and *kaj¹* do. These reflect evidentiality. My encoding of this feature is not great so far (see "assumptions about who knows"), but standard categories are hard with questions.

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