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## Interrogative Strategies in the Higgi Language

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### **Abstract**

*The study aims at examining the questioning strategies of the Higgi language. The Higgi language belongs to the Chadic language family. It displays the nature and appearance of question strategies in the Nkafa dialect of the Higgi language. The data for the study was collected through the use of the observation method and also the use of the native speaker intuition method. It was discovered in the study that, interrogation strategies in the Higgi language can be applied using interrogatives and also through the use of some question strategies such as intonation, Wh-questions which is about eight in number in the Higgi language and the word order.*

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**Key Words:** *interrogative strategies, questions, Higgi, language, Chadic, intuition*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Interrogative has to do with questioning or question asking. Questions can do more than just measuring what one knows. It can challenge and engage one appropriately, as effective questions stimulate peer discussion and encourage people to explore and refine their understanding of key concepts. Questioning strategies serve as stimuli for learner of a Foreign Language (FL) such that it is recommended at the initial stage of a classroom lesson. With the questioning strategies, learners would be able to retain new words, structures and concepts which they have been taught (Brown, 2001). Generally, interrogatives are questions, just as Huang, Chung, Shih and Chen (nd) state that, interrogation is the “concepts or sentences for asking questions or making inquiries,” and that interrogation constructions have played a central role in the development of modern syntactic theory. It combines the problems of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. They further state that, true or false interrogatives and Wh-word interrogatives, are made to ask for factual information, ask for relationship, ask for opinion and choosing options, are regarded as the basic types.

The Higgi language is a minority tribe from Adamawa state, in Northern Nigeria, which belongs to the Biu mandara group of Chadic languages. The Higgi natives are equally called Kamuə, meaning people that live on the mountains. It has about eight dialects ((Samaila, 2004 & Mohrlang, 1972).As it is with other languages of the world, it is rich linguistically, yet, it is not fully tapped. It uses various strategies to make enquiries or ask questions.

### **2.0 Universal Question Strategies**

Interrogation is obtained in all languages of the world as it is universal. In world languages, there are six basic strategies for creating questions or near question situations as identified by Chisholm et al (1984). These include: intonation, pronouns or adverb or wh-questions, word order, tag or question tag, embedding a question and non-question. Meanwhile, five categories of interrogative sentences have been identified in French by Vinay (1968) among

which are: the syntactic inversion, the intonation, the interrogative pronominal phrases, interrogative morphemes and inter-negative sentences.

In French language, there are four (4) ways of forming interrogatives; these are: using the intonation which is important in French interrogatives. The raising of the voice at the end of a statement in French indicates question. The other form of forming interrogation in French is by inverting the verb (parlez) and subject (vous), as in parlez-vous? A hyphen is used between the verb and the subject. The third way is Est-ce que, which is a phrase used in front of a sentence to make it a question, the same way it is with the use of 'Do' in English. The fourth and the last way of forming an interrogative in French is by adding the tag n'est-ce pas? to the end of the sentence. This is just like the negative –isn't it?, doesn't it? in English.

The French interrogative vocabulary is by using question words such as:

Où => where? Quand? => How? Pourquoi? => why? Combien de? => How much? Que? /Qu'est-ce que? => What? (as the subject). Where Quel (masculine singular) / Quels (masculine plural) / Quelle (femine singular) / Quelles (femine plural) + noun => what? /which? (see Fannami & Onietan, 2007 and Etienne, 2015).

In Kucapungan Rukai according to Chen (1999) as cited in Chen (nd) three types of interrogatives are exhibited; which are nominal, adverbial and verbal. All these differ in their morphology, syntax and semantics. All verbal interrogatives are able to undergo nominalization irrespective of their inherent transitivity, except for a-“why”. The nominalized interrogatives of Rukai can be said to be mixed nominals, as they both exhibit nominal and verbal characteristics (Chen, nd).

Kanuri language been a tonal language, uses tone and interrogative words which are only two out of the six strategies identified by Chisholm et al (1984). The tone according to Cyffer (1991) in Fannami and Onietan (2007) distinguishes into high, low, falling, mid and raising tone. While the interrogatives in Kanuri language is characterized by variety of interrogative words/suffix which consider interrogative suffix, marker, word and interrogation without using interrogative element ( Fannami and Oietan, 2007).

In English language, there are different strategies of asking questions or strategies of demanding for an answer to something. Quirk et al (1985) states that the major classes of questions can be grouped into three categories: the yes/no questions which are those that expect affirmation or negation such is asking open-ended questions, the wh-questions where reply is expected and then those that expect a reply of one or two or more options presented in the question which are alternative questions.

### 3.0 The Higgi Question Strategies

These are ways in which questions manifest in Higgi language. These differ from language to language. The following determine or state the nature of a statement made in Higgi language whether it is an interrogative or just a statement. The Higgi language has different ways or strategies for asking questions. These strategies include:

a) Interrogative marks: These are words that show interrogative/question in Higgi language. Some of these words are such as –ná?, -ré?, -ndá?, -wé? Which are all marked with rising tone and they stand as dependent morphemes to mark questions as seen below:

- |            |                  |                      |
|------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1) -ná? => | Hándá ná?        | Is it/ that true?    |
|            | kó ngèna hyá ná? | Have they given you? |

- |             |                |                                 |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 2) -ré? =>  | Káré?          | Where is it?                    |
|             | Kánàré?        | Where are you?                  |
| 3) -ndá? => | Nà ndá?        | Where to? /where are you going? |
| 4) -wé? =>  | Ké nàtá nà wé? | Haven't you seen it?            |

**b)** Intonation: it is incredibly important in Higgi interrogatives. The rise in voice at the end of a statement indicates that it is a question. The Higgi language is tonal, and has a rising intonation in questions, especially the key words that signal question, such as in those below:

- 1) Ké nàtá nà ná? => Have you (neuter gender singular) seen it?
- 2) Ká hyá ré? => Where are they?
- 3) Áwà kù hyá ná? => Did they say no? /Have they said no?
- 4) Ké sèké yé wé? => Haven't we come?

In the above sentences, ná, ré and wé all signal that the statements made are questions as the tone rises at the end of the statements.

**c)** The Wh-question strategy: these are the question forms that are asked using the wh-interrogative words such as: who, whose, whom, which, what, how, why, where and when as applied in the English language. Grebenyova (nd) states that, all Slavic languages have all Wh-phrases and are fronted. Such class of question strategy in Higgi language can be presented as:

- 1) Wá mdí? => Who is there?  
Wá mdí hánkè? => Who is at home?  
Wá mdí vé yè 'i? => Who do you (neuter gender plural) want?
- 2) Ngàwá? => Whose?  
Ngàwá yá ré? => Whose house is this?  
Ngàwá kélí? => Whose dog is this?
- 3) Tsámá? => Which?  
Tsámá màlè ngé ré? => Which one is your wife?  
Tsámá tsá vé nà 'i ré? => which one do you (neuter gender singular) want?
- 4) Wá? => What?  
Wá kùnà? => What do/did say?

Wá tlé ngé ré? => What is your name?

5) Tsémá? => How?

Tsémà nà ré? => How are you?

Tsémà pàrà njé ré? => How does he look like?

6) Vàwá? / Tǎburéwá? => Why?

In the above statements, *nà* -you (singular) and *yǎ* - (plural) are used inter-changeable depending on the reference in context as one is singular and the other a plural. The context therefore separates them. Meanwhile, the use of '*yǎ*' in a certain context could mean '*yes*', but in this this case, it is not to mean '*yes*'. The two words in item 6 are used inter-changeably (*i* and *ii* below) as none of them has any special meaning from the other. One chooses the other leaving the other one is only a matter of choice.

i. Vàwá/Tǎmburéwá má hyá 'ì nà ré? => Why don't they like you (neuter gender singular)?

ii. Vàwá/Tǎmburéwá ndámá nà sǎkǎ ré? => Why won't you (neuter gender singular) come? or why didn't you come?

7) Vómá? => When?

Vómá sǎkǎ nà ré? => When did you (neuter gender singular) come?

Vómá nàtá ré? => When did you (neuter gender singular) see it?

8) Ká? /Kǎmá? => Where?

The two interrogatives in item 8 above can be used inter-changeably, because they all mean the same thing, it is only a matter of diction.

i. Ká/Kǎmá mama ràngǎ ré? => Where is your mother?

ii. Ká/Kǎmá fèyè nà ré? => Where did you keep it?

**d)** Word-order: This is concerned with the arrangement of words in sentence(s) to pass message appropriately and accurately. It is all about syntax of a language, which may or may not be of the same arrangement as that of ordinary or normal sentence construction. Farsi's word order according to Grimes (2002) in Christina and Patrick (2007) is SOV but it still allows some few alternatives. The syntactic structure of Wh-questions and echo questions are identical segmentally, while yes/no questions are segmentally identical to declaratives (Christina & Patrick, 2007). The Higgi word order is that of Subject, Verb, Object (SVO) in normal sentence construction, as in:

Yírá                      jílí                      yà.  
I (S)                      going/go (V)      home/house (O)

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I am going home.

But as far as interrogative in Higgi language is concerned, the syntax or word order may differ from the SVO normal sentence construction to such as adjective/adverb, object, subject (AOS) as in:

1) Ká yà yè ré?  
A O S  
Where house/home your (pl)?  
**Gloss:** Where is your house?

2) Ká mé ré?  
Where we ?  
**Gloss:** Where are we?

3) Wá wsí 'i nà ré?  
What thing/property want/like you (sgl)?  
**Gloss:** What do you want?

#### 4.0 Conclusion

It has therefore been discovered that, the Higgi language has different or various ways of forming its interrogatives. One can therefore use intonation, as in French by raising the voice on the last letter of the statement to indicate question. One can equally use the wh-questions, which are as common in Higgi language as they are other languages of the world, whether major or minor; also, the order of the interrogatives in the Higgi language also differ from the normal sentence construction. Therefore, the nature of its word order indicates that a statement is a question in Higgi language. It is also worth noting that, it is not basic to have a raising voice/tone on the last word of the sentence when the wh-questions are used or applied.

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