Assertive questions in Máíhɨ̃ki

[REMOVED FOR ANONYMOUS REVIEW]

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1. Introduction

Intuitions tell us that questions request information. Semantic and pragmatic research tells us that they accomplish a dozen actions besides: requesting confirmation (Bolinger, 1957; Quirk et al., 1975); testing the hearer's knowledge (Searle, 1969); making hedged assertions, directives, and offers (Brown and Levinson, 1987); and pre-informing the hearer, expressing the speaker's outrage, or displaying the speaker's epistemic stance (Koshik, 2005; Heritage, 2012).

How do listeners know which of these actions a question accomplishes? In English, the design of a question -- its syntax, polarity (Koshik 2005, cf. Bolinger 1957), and intonation (Stivers and Rossano 2012, cf. Quirk et al. 1975) -- does not constrain whether it is heard as requesting information. Heritage (2012) therefore argues that hearers understand the actions done by questions primarily from their context and sequential position, not from design. "Assertive questions" (Koshik, 2005), syntactic questions which are heard as assertions, provide a paradigm example for this view of question pragmatics.

While targeted research on assertive questions has been limited to English (Koshik 2002, 2003, 2005; Heritage 2002, 2012), cross-linguistic studies of question-answer sequences (Stivers et al., 2010; de Ruiter, 2012) show that speakers of many unrelated languages use assertive questions in interaction. Linguistic anthropologists, likewise, often highlight the frequency of "rhetorical" questions in their object languages (e.g. Schieffelin 1986; Herring 1991, 264; Brown 1995, 155; Michael 2008, 398).

This evidence positions assertive questions as a plausible universal, and raises two questions for cross-linguistic pragmatics. First: why do speakers of so many unrelated languages use syntactic questions to assert? Second: do assertive questions accomplish the same social actions (beyond their definitional action of informing), or a related set of actions, across languages and cultures?

This paper addresses these questions with data from Máíhɨ̃ki (Tukanoan). In Máíhɨ̃ki, assertive questions -- polar questions read as opposite-polarity declaratives, such as (1) -- are ubiquitous in discourse, providing the conventional means for many interactional ends.

(1)   ARG 177-178

S: *íkì sáímàdʒì. kámà dʒòòkì nà nóágánídʒò.*[1]

íkì	sáí -mà -dʒì	kámà	dʒòò -kì	nà	nóá
alone.M	go -NEG -3SG.NF.FUT.INT	thus	do -SUB.NF	again	guide

-gání -dʒò
-ITER -PL.FUT.INT

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "(We said,) 'Now he (a troublesome visitor) will go alone. Since he did that, we will not keep working as guides (for people like him).'"

IDENTICAL TO: "Now won't he go alone? Since he did that, will we keep working as guides?"

My data come from conversations and narratives gathered in original fieldwork. I employ neo-Gricean pragmatics, especially Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), as the analytic framework, though I also engage some Conversation Analytic concepts.

The paper is organized as follows. §2 provides background about the language and data. §3 then describes the grammatical and sequential properties of Máíhɨ̃ki assertive questions (AQs) in comparison to other syntactic questions. In §4, I examine the distribution of AQs in discourse and show that Máíhɨ̃ki speakers use AQs to accomplish four kinds of social actions. Neither truth-conditional semantic nor sequential principles can describe the class of AQ actions, and I argue in §5 that AQ design must instead be understood as a device for mitigating threats to the speaker's positive face. The face-saving properties of AQs arise from their preference structure, entailing that hearers refer to both preference and face in construal of AQs (§6). §7 considers implications of this account for theories of questions and im/politeness, and §8 concludes.

2. Background

Máíhɨ̃ki (ISO: ore) is a Tukanoan language traditionally spoken by the Máíhuna people, an indigenous group of northeastern Peruvian Amazonia. The language

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[1]All examples are shown in narrow IPA transcription. Citations at the head of each example refer to text names and line numbers in the corpus (§2). Translations labeled "speaker's gloss" are my translations from the speaker's regional Spanish. Translations labeled "Identical to" are my own. In potentially sensitive examples, I have replaced the initials identifying consultants with pseudo-initials and redacted personal names in the text.

The following abbreviations are used: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ADV = adverbial, ALT.FOC = alternative focus, ANA.DEM = anaphoric deictic, ANIM = animate, CLF = classifier, COLL = collective, CONT.FOC = contrastive focus, CPET = centripetal associated motion, DECL = declarative, DEM = demonstrative, DIST = distal, EXCL.FOC = exclusive focus, F = feminine, FUT = future, IDEO = ideophone, IMP = imperative, IMPF = imperfective, INFO = information-structural, INT = interrogative, ITER = iterative, M = masculine, NEG = negative, NF = non-feminine, NMLZ = nominalizer, NSBJ = non-subject, OBJ.FOC = object focus, PART = particle, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, PRED.FOC = predicate focus, PRS = present, PST = past, SEQ = temporal sequence subordinate clause, SG = singular, SUB = temporal overlap subordinate clause.

is seriously endangered, with about 75 speakers living in four widely separated settlements. All Máíhɨ̃ki speakers speak Spanish, though some were monolingual in Máíhɨ̃ki until their twenties.

Data discussed here comes from transcribed and translated recordings of approximately 110,000 words (19 hours) of naturalistic speech in Máíhɨ̃ki, collected primarily by me over 12 months of fieldwork between 2012 and 2015. Because speakers no longer regularly use Máíhɨ̃ki in interaction, the recorded talk is staged, and most treats me as a primary recipient. I respond to this role by contributing questions, receipts, and so on, all in Máíhɨ̃ki, to the recorded discourse. Other documentation of Máíhɨ̃ki includes [REMOVED FOR ANONYMOUS REVIEW].

3. The category of assertive questions

Assertive questions (AQs; Koshik 2005) are a pragmatically defined class of syntactic questions. In Máíhɨ̃ki, AQs are identical to other question types in form (§3.1), but depart from them in referential (§3.3) and sequential (§3.4) properties.

3.1. The syntactic category of questions

In Máíhɨ̃ki, sentential mood is marked on all finite verbs by affixes that also expone subject agreement and tense (Farmer, 2015, 52-54). For some cells of the paradigm, the interrogative and declarative affixes are segmentally identical. Tone maintains the formal contrast between declarative and interrogative in many of these cases, especially in the present and past tenses. In the future tense, however, and for stems which have no high tone affixes, declarative and interrogative forms contrast only in segments or are homophonous.

Polar questions are marked only by inflection, while content questions are marked by inflection and the presence of interrogative pronouns. The language does not display dedicated question intonation, tag questions, or alternative questions. Syntactic questions that are read as assertive are identical in form -- phonology, morphology, syntax, and intonation -- to those read as information-seeking (cf. §3.3).

3.2. Pragmatic categories of questions

Following Koshik's (2002; 2005) studies of non-information-seeking questions in English, I divide Máíhɨ̃ki syntactic questions into two pragmatic categories: information questions and assertive questions. Koshik's distinction between information and assertive questions involves both sequential and referential properties. Sequentially, English information questions make relevant an answer -- that is, a turn with new information -- while assertive questions do not (Koshik, 2005, 39). Referentially, assertive questions are heard as "making...[an] assertion," while information questions are heard as enacting an information request (Koshik, 2005, 2).

Many assertive questions, in English and other languages, could be described in non-technical contexts as "rhetorical questions," and the term "rhetorical question" occasionally appears -- though it is rarely defined -- in linguistic literature, such as Quirk et al. (1975). The label "rhetorical" is misleading, though, since it suggests that the defining property of such questions is that they do not make relevant any response. In fact, Koshik shows, many "rhetorical questions" in English-medium interactions do receive answer-like responses, and the same is true in Máíhɨ̃ki (§3.4). Like Koshik, I therefore avoid the term "rhetorical question" in favor of "assertive question."

3.3. Referential properties of assertive questions

Máíhɨ̃ki assertive questions are defined by two referential properties. First, as in English, AQs are syntactic polar questions, but are heard as assertions. In truth-conditional terms, speakers read them as contributing new, non-presupposed information to the common ground.

Second, and again as in English, AQs undergo pragmatic reversal of polarity. They are formally marked as one polarity, but are read as the opposite polarity. That is, AQs which are syntactic negative polar questions convey positive assertions (2a), and AQs which are syntactic positive polar questions convey negative assertions (2b). AQs which contain a predicate adjective sometimes undergo a different form of polarity reversal involving the scale of the adjective rather than clause polarity. For example, a sentence of the form "Is it small?" may be read "It is big."

(2)   a.   Negative polarity AQ read as positive assertion[2] (BAG 1010)
      O: *dʒì dòìkò kánù tʃìà ɲítù bàì<u>máàò</u>.*

dʒì	dòì	-kò	kánù	tʃìà	ɲítù	bàì	-<u>má</u>
1SG	G0.same.clan.kin	-CLF:F	DIST.DEM:time	still	child	be	-NEG

-<u>àò</u>
-3SG.F.PST.INT

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "At that time my sister <u>was</u> still a little girl."
IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Wasn't</u> my sister still a little girl at that time?"

      b.   Positive polarity AQ read as negative assertion (CES 5)
      T: *dʒì dòìkì ɨ̃́tɨ̀rè dʒòòkɨ̀.*

dʒì	dòì	-kì	ɨ̃́tɨ̀	-rè	dʒòò
1SG	G0.same.clan.kin	-CLF:M	ANA.DEM	-NSBJ	do

-kɨ̀
-3SG.NF.PRS.INT

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "My (classificatory) brother <u>doesn't behave</u> correctly (idiom: lit., do the aforementioned)."
IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Does</u> my brother <u>behave</u> correctly?"

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[2]The negation and interrogative morphology in AQs are underlined here and in all subsequent examples.

Approximately two-thirds of the 448 AQs in my corpus are negative, like (2a), and one-third positive, like (2b). My corpus also contains syntactic Wh-questions which share some of the properties of polar AQs, but they do not fully pattern with the polar questions in either referential or sequential properties. I therefore discuss only polar AQs here.

Three tests -- monolingual paraphrase, translation, and embedding -- demonstrate the unique referential properties of AQs. First, when speakers are asked to paraphrase AQs in Máíhɨ̃ki, they consistently paraphrase them as opposite-polarity declaratives. Second, speakers translate AQs into Spanish as opposite-polarity declaratives (regardless of their level of fluency in Spanish). They never paraphrase or translate AQs as either questions or same-polarity declaratives. And third, speakers find it infelicitous to embed a discourse consisting only of AQs under the verb *hɨ̀kàásá* "ask a question" (lit., "speak-hear"). Likewise, when speakers talk metalinguistically about the meaning of AQs, whether in Spanish or in Máíhɨ̃ki, they do not describe them as questions.[3]

These responses clearly separate AQs from information questions. Speakers translate and paraphrase information questions as questions; do not change their polarity under translation and paraphrase; metalinguistically judge them to be questions; and felicitously embed them under *hɨ̀kàásá*. It is also only AQs, not information questions, that display the sequential properties discussed in §3.4.

Listeners identify questions as AQs exclusively through pragmatic inference. Consultants read syntactic questions presented without discourse context as information-seeking, even if they have previously judged the same sentence, in context, to be an AQ. This indicates that formal properties such as intonation cannot disambiguate the information-seeking and assertive readings of a given question. On the other hand, when I have presented speakers with syntactic questions in full discourse context, I have obtained extremely stable judgments -- stable between speakers and, for the same speaker, on multiple occasions separated by months or years -- of whether a given question is an AQ. Discourse context and the reasoning that follows from it, then, fully disambiguate the information and assertive readings of a given syntactic question.

3.4. The preference structure of assertive questions

One central idea of Conversation Analysis is that some turns make relevant a particular response, or kind of response, from another participant. When a

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[3]These properties raise the question of whether AQs, like declaratives, entail the propositions they convey. For syntactic and pragmatic reasons, the tests which could answer this question cannot be applied in Máíhɨ̃ki. The syntactic properties of questions make the family of sentences test for entailment (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet, 1990, 29ff.) impossible, and all cross-linguistically factive verbs (e.g. *bésɨ́-má* "know" and *kɨ́á* "tell") in Máíhɨ̃ki can take either an information question or a declarative as their complement. Assent/dissent tests are also not applicable, since all assents and dissents in the language can challenge information questions and imperatives as well as declaratives.

speaker makes an offer, for example, her addressee is expected to respond with either an acceptance or a rejection.

Conversation Analysts describe this phenomenon with two concepts: the adjacency pair (Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) and preference (Sacks, 1987 [1973]; Pomerantz, 1978). An adjacency pair is a set of two ordered turns, or pair parts. By definition, the first pair part of an adjacency pair initiates an action, such as an offer, while the second pair part responds to this action, for example with an acceptance (Schegloff, 2007, 13-15). First pair parts "prefer" their second pair parts, meaning that interactants treat as noticeable, and potentially sanctionable, any response to a first pair part other than the corresponding second pair part (Schegloff, 2007, 20-21).

In English, an information question is a first pair part and prefers an informing answer as the second pair part. This preference for an answer over other kinds of responses is an action-type preference (Raymond, 2003). Many English information questions also have a content preference, preferring an answer of the same polarity as the question (Stivers, 2010). Máíhĩ̃ki information questions share both the action-type preference and the content preference of English information questions.

Máíhĩ̃ki AQs, on the other hand, display profoundly different preference structure from other turn types. Like information questions, they are first pair parts. But while information questions prefer answers, AQs instead prefer assents. Specifically, the class of preferred responses to AQs consists of paralinguistic assents such as hums and nods; assent interjections; and modified repeats of the AQ as an opposite-polarity declarative.

Evidence for this action-type preference for assents comes from speakers' responses to AQs in spontaneous discourse, their reactions to hearing AQs in recorded discourse, and their metapragmatic commentary.

First, in conversation speakers often follow AQs, both their own and their interlocutors', with an assent. One prominent type of assent to an AQ in my corpus is an opposite-polarity declarative repeat of the AQ. (3) shows a pair consisting of an AQ and its corresponding opposite-polarity declarative in a monologue.

(3) BAG 772-773
     O: *dòè kíámàkì ɲí. dòè kíáàì.*

     dòè   kíá -<u>mà</u> -<u>kì</u>   ɲí   dòè   kíá
     already 'tell' -<u>NEG</u> -<u>3SG.NF.PRS.INT</u> 3SG.M already 'tell'
     -àì
     -3SG.NF.PST.DECL

     SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "He's already <u>telling</u> (us). [AQ] He already told (us). [DECLARATIVE]"
     FIRST PART IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Isn't he</u> already <u>telling</u> (us)?"

As I discuss below, in informal conversation it is rare for speakers to assent to AQs with a full opposite-polarity declarative like (3). Instead, they typically

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assent with the assent interjection *hɨ̃́ɨ̃* "yes (logical); sure, uh-huh (affiliating backchannel)" or with a paralinguistic assent.

Second, as Máíhɨ̃ki speakers listen to recordings of speech, they often engage in dialogue with the recorded voices. My consultants, in these reflexive dialogues, issued assent and dissent interjections, comments on the speech's emotional valence, and many opposite-polarity declarative repeat responses to AQs. (4) shows an AQ-declarative pair from this context.

(4) SRP 26

T (on recording): *máìrè tèìrè ɨ̃́ɨ̃màrè t́ẽ̂õɲìò.* T (in response): *ɨ̃́hɨ̀.*

Recording: máì -rè tèì -rè ɨ̃́ɨ̃ -<u>mà</u> -<u>rè</u>
Recording: moon -NSBJ one.M -NSBJ be.lying -<u>NEG</u> -<u>1SG.PST.INT</u>
tẽ̂õ -ɲì -ò Response: ɨ̃́ -hɨ̀
one.F -ADV -CLF:F Response: be.lying -1SG.PST.DECL

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: Recording: "I <u>was lying down</u> alone for a month."
Response: "I was lying down."
FIRST PART IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Wasn't I lying down</u> alone for a month?"

Third, the preference of AQs for an assent, and especially for an opposite-polarity declarative response, is metapragmatically highly salient. Whenever I asked speakers to reflect on the meaning of an AQ, whether heard on a recording or produced by me, they volunteered that hearers should respond to the AQ with an opposite-polarity declarative repeat like those in (3) and (4). In their proposed responses, the declarative verb often bore the predicate focus suffix *-ta*, in this context a marker of congruent epistemic stance between speaker and addressee.

Despite speakers' metapragmatic approval of opposite-polarity declarative repeat responses to AQs, and despite their use of such repeats in reflexive dialogue, my corpus of conversation contains no repeat assents to AQs, only *hɨ̃́ɨ̃* assents and paralinguistic assents. These forms of assent always represent the assenting speaker's entire turn -- no other content follows -- and are often fully or partially overlapped by the end of the preceding speaker's turn. This suggests that, although AQs prefer an assent by the hearer, they do not offer him the conversational floor to make that assent. In Conversation Analytic terms, they are not transition-relevance places (Sacks et al., 1974). Only when the conversational floor is empty, as in reflexive dialogue, can the addressee take the floor to issue an opposite-polarity declarative assent to an AQ.

This evidence indicates that Máíhɨ̃ki AQs are primarily a strategy for requesting affiliation. When the speaker (S) issues an AQ, she enacts -- through the preference structure of AQ design -- a request that her hearer (H) produce an assent. In the case that the second pair part is a declarative, it has a referential function, to assert the proposition conveyed by the AQ. Whether it is a declarative or another kind of assent, the second part also has a more powerful interactional function: to mark H's affiliation, in the sense of Stivers (2008),

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with the epistemic and affective stances which underlie S's AQ turn (cf. Koshik 2002, 1866).

It is important to note, against the linguistic literature on negative interrogatives and conduciveness (Bolinger 1957, Romero and Han 2004, a.o.), that in Máíhɨ̃ki this preference for an affiliation token belongs to the pragmatic category of AQs, not the syntactic category of polar questions. Since all syntactic polar questions can be read as either AQs or information questions (§3.3), hearers cannot determine the preference of a question from its syntax alone. This ambiguity distinguishes Máíhɨ̃ki AQs from English tag questions, which enact an affiliation request by virtue of their tag syntax (Moore and Podesva 2009; Stivers 2008, 46).

4. AQs in discourse

Máíhɨ̃ki speakers employ AQs for four core actions: delivering counter-suppositional assertions (§4.1), doing moral evaluations (§4.2), reporting morally controversial behavior (§4.3), and marking epistemic modality (§4.4). This class of actions is a superset of the actions for which English speakers use AQs (§4.3). It cannot be defined in sequential or truth-conditional terms, only -- as I show in §5.1 -- by the presence of threats to the speaker's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

4.1. Counter-suppositional AQs

Koshik (2005: 18) and Heritage (2002) have shown that speakers interacting in American English employ AQs to contest the presuppositions, implicatures, and more general epistemic stances conveyed by recipients. Likewise, Máíhɨ̃ki speakers use syntactic questions read as AQs to challenge previous speakers' epistemic stances. In the extract of conversation in (5), T and C discuss the planned construction of a road to their community, about which they have similar epistemic authority.

(5) AS4 12-21.1

1. C: *dòè dáídʒì?*

   dòè   dáí -dʒì
   already come -PL.PRS.INT

   C: "Are they (i.e. the road-building crew) already coming?"

2. T: *"dòè ráídʒì," ásátʃìkò*

   dòè   dáí -dʒì   ásá   -tʃì   -kò
   already come -PL.PRS.DECL 'hear' -PST.NMLZ -CLF:F

   T: "'They're already coming,' (I've) heard."

3. C: (HIGH PITCH) *tʃìà dáímádʒí*

   tʃìà   dáí -má -dʒí
   'still' come -NEG -PL.PRS.DECL

C: "They're not coming yet."

4. T: *tʃìà dáímàdʒì?*

tʃìà dáí -mà -dʒì
'still' come -NEG -PL.PRS.INT

T: "Aren't they coming yet?"

5. → 1 C: *tʃìà ásá[mádʒí*

tʃìà ásá -má -dʒí
'still' 'hear' -NEG -PL.PRS.DECL

C: "They don't understand (the construction plan) yet."

6. T: [*peɾo*

peɾo
but

T: "But..."

7. → 2 T: (0.3) *ítìhùnàgà* (0.4) *hĩ̀kítà. "ák̀ìnà (.) carretera óídʒì" ĩ́ĩmàdʒì*

ítìhùnà -gà   hĩ̀kà -dʒí   -tà
3PL   -CONT.FOC talk -PL.PRS.DECL -PRED.FOC
ák̀ì   -nà   carretera óí -dʒì
non.indigenous.person -ANIM.PL Sp:*carretera* want -PL.PRS.DECL
ĩ́ĩ -mà dʒì
say -NEG -PL.PRS.INT

T: "However, they *are* talking about it. 'The *mestizos* want the road,' they're saying."
SECOND SENTENCE IDENTICAL TO: "Aren't they saying, 'The mestizos want the road'?"

8. C: *carretera óídʒí ítìhùnà, peɾo [ma-]*

carretera óí -dʒí   ítìhùnà peɾo ma-
Sp:*carretera* want -PL.PRS.DECL 3PL   but ?-

C: "They want the road, but m-"

9. T: *[e-] dèìrà dákì*

[e-] dèì -ɾa   dá -kì
?-   well -EXCL.FOC come -3SG.NF.PST.DECL

T: "E-, he (a government official) came well (i.e. promised money for the road)."

10. → 3 C: (to AUTHOR) *ɲíò mání hĩ̀kì, ká̃ã̀ ɲíàhĩ̀, ítì tʃìà, tʃìà étáràìmáhĩ́*

<div style="text-align: center;">

315 ɲíò   mání   hɨ̀kà -ì   ká̰ã̰   ɲíàhɨ̀   ítì   tʃìà
     3SG.F OBJ.FOC talk -PRS.NMLZ DIST.DEM IMPF.PL ANA.DEM still

     tʃìà étá -ɾàì   -má -hɨ́
     still exit -CPET -NEG -3SG.NF.PRS.DECL

</div>

C: "As for what she's talking about, that, they were...this (thing she's talking about) isn't happening (lit. isn't coming out) yet."

C and T's discussion of the construction project begins before (5), when T
320 claims that work on the road will begin soon. C reacts with a question (line 1) and T responds with evidence for her previous assertion (line 2). When C contradicts T with a declarative (line 3), T replies with a syntactic negative question (heard by her as an information question), which C answers with another negative declarative (arrow 1).

325 T responds to C's second negative declarative with a sequence of a positive declarative and an AQ (arrow 2). In the first unit of the turn, a declarative, she provides evidence in favor of her epistemic stance, which is that the road will be built, against C's. In the second unit, an AQ, she adds further evidence for this stance with a direct speech report. T's AQ, like her initial declarative,
330 is incongruent with C's larger epistemic stance that the road will not be built. Yet T's claim in line 7 is also logically compatible with all of C's assertions, and it makes a weaker assertion than her previous declarative turn (line 2).

Does the AQ in line 7 represent, then, a challenge by T to C, or a backdown by T? Both the turn's design and C's response indicate that this AQ is spoken and
335 heard only as a challenge. The initial pronoun of T's turn in line 7 is marked with the clausal contrastive focus suffix *-ga*, and the declarative verb, with the predicate focus suffix *-ta*. T's use of contrastive and predicate focus in the first unit of her turn indicates that she is asserting the truth of her own epistemic stance in contrast to C's, and there is no evidence for a backdown from this
340 position in the second, AQ unit. Moreover, C treats T's AQ as a challenge to her own stance. In line 8, C attempts to object to T's turn with a modified repeat (which closely resembles an opposite-polarity declarative assent to the AQ, but ends with the Spanish loanword *pero*). She is cut off, though, as T interjects another piece of evidence for her stance (line 9). Following this interruption, C
345 abandons the exchange with T and addresses me, metapragmatically criticizing T's contributions (arrow 3).

T's use of an AQ to deliver her contradiction of C in (5) is reminiscent of news interviewers' use of negative interrogatives to contradict their interviewees' epistemic stances (Heritage 2002, 1435, citing Clayman and Heritage
350 2002). In addition, much as English speakers can challenge the truth of a preceding turn with an AQ (Koshik, 2005, 18), Máíhɨ̃ki speakers also use AQs to challenge presuppositions, implicatures, and other non-asserted content of preceding turns, as in (6).

(6) SAY 367-390, constructed dialogue in narrative

355   a. After narrator's relative K killed herself, labor patron J arrived to investigate. He asks K's relative M:

<div style="text-align: center;">10</div>

J: *ígè néèkì* [pers.name] *űkáméáhȍ?*

ígè néè -kì   [pers.name] űká   méá -hȍ

why   -SUB.NF pers.name   serve.drink kill -PFV.INT

"Why did you kill K by causing her to drink (poison)?"

b. M replies:

M: *ígè néèkì* [pers.name]*re dʒì űkádʒì?*

ígè néè -kì   [pers.name] -re   dʒì űká   -dʒì

why   -SUB.NF pers.name   -NSBJ 1SG serve.drink -1SG.FUT.INT

M: "Why would I cause K to drink (poison)?"

((21 lines omitted))

c. K's other relatives defend themselves, then J's brother G says to J:

G: *ígè néèkì mì kámà dʒòòkì? ɲíàkò ǐkò úkúhȍ*<u>*màào*</u>.

ígè néè -kì   mì kámà dʒòò -kì   ɲíàkò ǐkò

why   -SUB.NF 2SG thus do   -2SG.NF.PRS.INT IMPF.F alone.F

úkú -hȍ -<u>mà</u> -<u>ào</u>

drink -PFV -<u>NEG</u> -<u>3SG.F.PST.DECL</u>

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "Why are you doing that (making accusations)? She <u>drank</u> it alone."

SECOND SENTENCE IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Didn't she drink</u> it alone?"

In J's initial content question, (6a), he presupposes the truth of the proposition that his addressee, M, poisoned the deceased woman. In (6c), G contests this utterance in two ways: first with a Wh-question, which reproves J for doing an unmotivated accusation, then with an AQ, which challenges the presupposition of (6a) that M killed K. With the AQ, G also aligns himself with the epistemic stances of K's relatives, who (in the omitted lines) have just characterized K's death as a suicide, and of M, who in (6b) uses a Wh-question to challenge the same presupposition of (6a).

Máíhĭki speakers sometimes deliver counter-suppositional AQs in the same turn as criticism of the addressee's non-linguistic behavior, as in (6c). Nevertheless, counter-suppositionals primarily challenge logical content -- the truth of a prejacent epistemic stance (5) or presupposition (6) -- rather than behavior. This logical orientation contrasts with the affective orientation of the two AQ types which I next consider.

4.2. AQs and moral evaluation

Heritage (2002: 1439) observes that English-speaking news interviewers often use negative interrogative design to introduce "propositions that evaluate the interviewee's conduct, or that of superiors, allies or friends in critical, negative or problematic terms." Koshik (2005: 1863) similarly finds that teachers deliver negative evaluations of student writing through syntactically positive AQs.

Like the English speakers whose talk Heritage and Koshik examine, Máíhĭki-speaking interlocutors also do moral evaluations of others' behavior with AQs.

In (7), the speaker reports her speech to her brother-in-law immediately following the death of her sister, the man's wife. She does not report any speech by the addressee preceding or following this self-quotation.

(7) AS2 72-76, constructed dialogue in conversation
C: *nà dʒékòrè hɨ́ɑ́rè bááhɨ̀̃. tèò bàiko, óíhàdʒè. dòè húníhó̃ dʒì dòìkò, húníhò̃màgò kɑ́̃ò̃.*

nà	dʒékò	-rè	hɨ́ɑ́	-rè	báá	-hɨ̀̃	tèò	bàì
again	other.F	-NSBJ	find	-SEQ	have.kin	-IMP	one.F	exist

-ko	óí	-hàdʒè	dòè	húníhó̃	dʒì
-3SG.F.PRS.INT	'be.sad'	-FUT.NMLZ	already	die	1SG

dòì	-kò	húníhò̃	-mà	-gò	kɑ́̃ò̃
G0.same.clan.kin	-CLF:F	die	-NEG	-3SG.F.PST.INT	DIST.DEM:F

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "Find and take another wife. She is not the only (woman). One should not be sad. My sister already died, she has died."
IDENTICAL TO: "...Is there (only) one woman (in the world)? Should one be sad? My sister already died, hasn't she died?"

C designs the first sentence of her self-quotation in (7) as an imperative, the fourth as a declarative, and all of the remaining three sentences as AQs. Of the AQs, two -- *tèò bàìkò* "she is not the only (woman)" and *húníhò̃màgò kɑ́̃ò̃* "she died" -- convey non-modalized assertions. The middle AQ, *óíhàdʒè* "one should not be sad," is a deontic modal assertion. While turns of this form can display an epistemic stance, the deontic modal here is flanked by sentences which primarily display C's affective stance. It therefore enacts a reproof, a statement to C's addressee that his grief is morally inappropriate. The surrounding AQs, *tèò bàìkò* and *húníhò̃màgò kɑ́̃ò̃,* provide an account for this reproof and the preceding directive, *nà dʒékòrè hɨ́ɑ́rè bááhɨ̀̃* "find and take another wife." This account is necessary because C's turn condemns the addressee's activity of grieving, and because it violates the Máíhuna norm of avoiding talk about the recently deceased.

The AQs in (7), then, are affectively like but logically unlike the counter-suppositional AQs in (5) and (6). Like counter-suppositionals, moral evaluation AQs like those in (7) enact criticism of the addressee. Unlike counter-suppositionals, though, moral evaluation AQs convey propositions which all participants acknowledge as true -- everyone in the discourse excerpted in (7) is acutely aware that the speaker's sister is dead. Moral evaluation AQs are therefore "challenges" only in the sense that they enact negative evaluations of the recipient's (usually non-linguistic) conduct. AQs of this kind are common in scolding, mockery, and non-directive criticism, as well as in hostile directives like (7).

The epistemic status of AQ propositions represents an important difference between the use of AQs in Máíhɨ̃ki and in the English conversations studied by Heritage (2002) and Koshik (2002, 2005). In Heritage and Koshik's data

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extracts, negative evaluations designed as AQs always involve epistemic asym-
metry between the interlocutors. News interviewers' negative interrogatives
simultaneously criticize the interviewees and offer propositions which they
are known not to believe (Heritage, 2002). Teachers' AQ-designed evalua-
tions critique writing on the basis of norms to which their students do not have
access (Koshik, 2002). In Máíh̃ki moral evaluation AQs, on the other hand,
the AQ's propositional content is often accepted by all participants, as in (7).
Participants differ only in their affective response to the AQ proposition and
its implicatures.

A further difference in moral evaluation AQs relates to the target of the
evaluation. While American and British news interviewers use AQs specifically
to introduce criticism of interviewees and their "superiors, allies, or friends"
(Heritage, 2002, 1439), Máíh̃ki interlocutors employ AQs not only to criticize
hearers and their friends, but also to criticize distant third parties -- people who
are neither discourse participants nor closely associated with participants.

(8) provides an example of an AQ used in a negative moral evaluation of
one such distant third party. Here, T and C discuss the fact that C's brother-in-
law, the same man addressed in (7), violated local clan exogamy norms when
he remarried after his wife's death.

    (8)   AS2 104-108

       1. T: *dʒékéhùnà, déíbàɨ̀* (..)

          dʒéké -hùnà déí   -bàɨ̀
          other -COLL clan.name -CLF:clan

          T: "(It should be) other people, *déí* clan people..."

       2. C: (HIGH FALLING HUM)

       3. T: *ídʒébàɨ̀, kámà hɨ́ɑ́rè bâɨtà. ɨ́gè néékɨ̀dè? ɨ́ ódʒì bàɨmákɨ̀* =

          ídʒé   -bàɨ̀   kámà hɨ́ɑ́ -rè báá   -dʒì
          clan.name -CLF:clan thus   find -SEQ have.kin -PL.PRS.DECL

          -tà   ɨ́gè nééè -kɨ̀   -dè ɨ́
          -PRED.FOC what do   -3SG.NF.PRS.INT -INFO 3SG.M
          ódʒì   bàɨ̀ -má -kɨ̀
          ódʒò.clan.man be -NEG -3SG.NF.PRS.INT

          T: "*ídʒé* clan people, yes, we (i.e. *ódʒò* clan people) find them and
          take them as spouses. What is he doing? He <u>is</u> an *ódʒò* man."
          FINAL SENTENCE IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Isn't</u> he an *ódʒò* man?"

       4. T: [*kímà ɲíòrè báádʒì?*] *kɑ́ɑ̀ gùàhɨ̀*

          kímà ɲíò -rè báá   -dʒì   kɑ́ɑ̀   gùà
          how 3SG.F -NSBJ have.kin -3SG.NF.FUT.INT DIST.DEM be.bad
          -hɨ̀
          -3SG.NF.PRS.DECL

T: "How is it appropriate for him to take her as a wife? That's bad."

5. C: [*h*ɨ̋ɨ̂ (HIGH FALLING HUM)]

hɨ̋ɨ̂
PART

C: "Yes."

In T's negative evaluation in (8), she does the central assertion of her argument -- that the man belongs to the same clan as his new wife -- with the AQ *í ódʒì bàìmákì* "he is an *ódʒò* man" (line 3). T's use of AQ design to make this claim cannot reflect either epistemic or affective conflict between the discourse participants. In the epistemic domain, all participants know that the man is *ódʒò* (clan memberships are indisputable public information), and C and T's relationships with him give them equal access to and epistemic authority for that proposition. In the affective domain, both of T's interlocutors are on record, before the AQ, as affiliating (Stivers, 2008) with her negative affective stance toward the man and aligning with her display of this stance. C signals alignment by repeating two of T's negative evaluative turns preceding the extract, and affiliation by issuing the paralinguistic affiliation token transcribed as HIGH FALLING HUM in line 2. I likewise align and affiliate with T's talk by issuing the Wh-question *kímà tíɲérè dʒòòkì [pers.name]?*, "why is Y behaving so badly?," preceding the extract.

Although T's contributions in (8) do a strong negative evaluation, they are not "hostile" to her interlocutors, even by proxy. Moreover, Máíhɨ̌ki speakers also conventionally employ AQs to issue compliments, especially in describing material wealth. While such compliments are not hostile, they threaten the recipient's negative face because they can be heard as requests (Brown and Levinson 1987, 66, cf. Pomerantz 1978). This suggests an account of moral evaluation AQs not as displays of hostility, *contra* Heritage (2002), but as a device for introducing propositions which threaten the face of either an interlocutor or a third party (§5).

4.3. AQs and morally controversial reports

We saw in §4.2 that Máíhɨ̌ki speakers employ AQs to deliver and account for moral evaluations, especially negative evaluations. Similar uses of syntactic questions have been described for English conversation by Heritage and Koshik, on polar questions, and Moore and Podesva (2009), on tag questions; for Kaluli child-directed speech by Schieffelin (1986); and for litigants' talk in Tzeltal by Brown (1995: 155). In all of these cases, the status of the discourse as an evaluation is made explicit at or before the AQs.

Máíhɨ̌ki speakers, on the other hand, begin to issue AQs long before the discourse becomes explicitly evaluative. When speakers report morally controversial conduct -- behavior which they approve of, but which others in the community reject -- they design many of their utterances as AQs, as in (9).

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(9) SVC 204-206, monologue

S: *dʒì ɑ́ɔ́ kòkòkò nà gánàbì. ítʃí<u>màà</u>è* [pers.name] *dʒìrè áròsè,* (0.6) *kɑ́ɑ̀
dáàkò ɑ́íkò nánìhǒ<u>màrè</u>.*

dʒì ɑ́ɔ́ kòkò -kò nà gánà -bì ítʃí -<u>mà</u>
1SG food cook -SUB.F again earn.money -1SG.PST.DECL give -<u>NEG</u>

-<u>àì</u> [pers.name] dʒì -rè áròsè kɑ́ɑ̀ dáà -kò
-<u>3SG.NF.PST.INT</u> pers.name 1SG -NSBJ rice DIST.DEM bring -SUB.F

ɑ́í -kò nánì -hǒ -<u>mà</u> -<u>rè</u>
eat -SUB.F come -PFV -<u>NEG</u> -<u>1SG.PST.INT</u>

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "(While traveling with Z's group,) I earned money as
the cook. Z <u>gave</u> me rice, and taking that and eating (it), <u>I came back</u>
(here)."

IDENTICAL TO: "...Didn't Z <u>give</u> me rice? Taking that and eating (it),
<u>didn't I come back</u>?"

(9) is drawn from a narrative most of which concerns a political argument
between S and several other voices, including Z, a powerful outsider. In the ar-
gument, narrated to me as constructed dialogue, S and her allies defend their
choice to reside outside traditional Máíhuna territory, while Z and his allies
demand that they either return to traditional lands or lose access to valuable
resources. At the close of the dispute, S portrays Z as backing down and align-
ing with her stance. She then comments on Z's other interactions with Máíhuna
people, ending with (9).

Although S's economic cooperation with Z, as reported in the two AQs in
(9), never becomes the subject of overt evaluation in the narrative, her report
of that behavior is perilous in the larger context. The hostility of the preced-
ing constructed dialogue suggests that others in the speech community would
criticize S, or perhaps already have, for cooperating with Z. S herself seems
ambivalent about the decision as well, displaying a strongly negative stance
toward Z in the rest of the narrative, and turning away from negative evalua-
tion only in (9).

Speakers use AQs much like (9) to report controversial behavior by third
parties, ill-wishes, and wishes which oppose widely circulating ideologies (for
instance, wishes to decline prestigious paid work in favor of agriculture). These
controversial report AQs oppose an affective stance which is salient but has not
yet surfaced in the discourse. Counter-suppositionals and evaluations of H, by
contrast, oppose a stance which some participant has already displayed.

4.4. AQs and epistemic modality

Negative polar questions can be read as positive assertions of epistemic
possibility in English (Bolinger, 1957; Heritage, 2012), German (Büring and
Gunlogson, 2000), Tseltal (Shklovsky, 2011), Tzeltal, and Tamil (Brown and
Levinson, 1987, 136). Negative polar questions also generate implicature-like
epistemic modal meanings in Modern Greek, Spanish, Bulgarian, and Korean
(Romero and Han, 2004).

Máíhɨ̃ki speakers take the relationship between polar interrogative syntax and epistemic modality a step further. In the language, AQ design is the sole conventional means for conveying both epistemic possibility (10) and epistemic necessity (11).

(10) FEN 36-37, quasi-monologue
E: *hànà ɲíô ɨ́hɨ́ɾè hɨ́ɑ́ɾè kátò sáímàdʒò Íkìtù, o Mazán. bésɨ́dʒɨ́ kɑ́dàɾì.*

hànà ɲíò ɨ́hɨ́ -ɾè hɨ́ɑ́ -ɾè kátò sáí -mà
now 3SG.F husband -NSBJ look.for -SEQ DIST.DEM:place go -NEG
-dʒò Íkìtù o Mazán bésɨ́ -dʒɨ́
-3SG.F.FUT.INT place.name Sp:*o* place.name not.know -PL.PRS.DECL
kɑ́ -dàɾì
DIST.DEM -CLF:place

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "Maybe, to look for a husband, <u>she</u> (speaker's daughter) <u>will go</u> to Iquitos or Mazán. We don't really know."
FIRST SENTENCE IDENTICAL TO: "Now, to look for a husband, <u>won't she go</u> to Iquitos or Mazán?"

(11) VI2 225-226, traditional narrative
P: *"ágákòtà 'dʒíbàgò."' ásákò títàɾàìkò, sì! "hàkòbì, kéè ágámàkò ɲíàkò."*

ágá -kò -tà dʒíbàgò ásá -kò títà
call -3SG.F.PRS.DECL -PRED.FOC my.daughter 'hear' -SUB.F wake.up
-ɾàì -kò sì hàkò -bì kéè ágá -mà
-CPET -3SG.F.PRS.DECL IDEO my.mother -ALT.FOC DIST.DEM call -NEG
-kò ɲíàkò
-3SG.F.PRS.INT IMPF.F

SPEAKER'S GLOSS: "(The woman said,) 'She's calling out, "Daughter!"' Hearing (that), she got up, bam! (She said,) 'My mother <u>must be calling</u> (me) from over there!'"
FINAL SENTENCE IDENTICAL TO: "<u>Isn't my mother calling</u> (me) from over there?"

Linguistic context in (10) requires that the AQ *sáímàdʒò* "she will go" be read as a statement of epistemic possibility. E follows the AQ with the hedge *bésɨ́dʒɨ́* "we don't know"; issues several more epistemic hedges subsequently (not shown); and uses the local Spanish adverb *de repente* "maybe" in his gloss of the AQ. The AQ design is the only element of the initial sentence in (10) which can convey a marked epistemic value. It establishes an epistemic contrast between this sentence and the surrounding discourse, which is constructed with future declaratives rather than AQs.

Likewise, linguistic context in (11) shows that the AQ in the final sentence conveys epistemic necessity. The character who utters the AQ knows, from a conversation earlier in the narrative, that she will hear her mother calling, and has just heard a distant voice addressing her as *dʒíbàgò* "my daughter."

The daughter's AQ, *hàkòbì kéè ágámàkò ɲíàkò* "my mother must be calling me from over there," represents the only conclusion compatible with this knowledge -- that is, the AQ proposition is epistemically necessary. The speaker's Spanish translation, employing an epistemic necessity construction with the future tense, further supports the necessity reading.[4]

The use of AQs to make epistemic modal assertions distinguishes Máíhɨ̃ki from the languages cited at the opening of this section in two ways. First, all other languages which are described as having epistemic modal AQs also have other grammatical constructions that convey epistemic modality, such as affixes, adverbs, particles, or full modal verbs. Máíhɨ̃ki, on the other hand, has no epistemic modal or evidential resources other than perception verbs. Epistemic modality can only be conventionally conveyed by AQ design. Second, the polar question literature does not treat negative polar questions as potentially conveying either possibility or necessity. The ability of Máíhɨ̃ki AQ design to convey both epistemic modal values may reflect that the design does not participate in a scale with other epistemic modal strategies (Deal, 2011).

5. The meaning of AQ design

As the data in §4 shows, Máíhɨ̃ki speakers use AQ design for many interactional and grammatical ends: challenging the truth of a previous turn (§4.1), making a moral evaluation (§4.2), gesturing toward a controversial affective stance (§4.3), and marking epistemic modality (§4.4). The multiplicity of actions done by AQs is real for speakers as well as for the analyst. Speakers surround epistemic modal AQs (but not others) with perception and cognition predicates, and treat moral evaluation and counter-suppositional AQs (but not others) as "angry."

This flexibility raises two questions for semantic and pragmatic analysis of AQ design. Does AQ design convey a single meaning in all of the contexts in which it appears? And if so, how do hearers reason from its invariant meaning to the particularized meanings described in §4?

In this section, I begin by demonstrating, in §5.1, that AQ design in Máíhɨ̃ki is indeed monosemous: it is a device for mitigating threats to S's positive face. Although I follow Brown and Levinson (1987) in assuming the universality of positive and negative face wants, I argue that Brown and Levinson's treatment of AQ-like constructions as negative politeness is inappropriate for Máíhɨ̃ki AQs, which are not oriented toward H's face. §5.2 then shows that the facework properties of Máíhɨ̃ki AQs arise from their preference structure -- not from their syntax (*contra* Brown and Levinson 1987: 136) or status as conventional (Terkourafi, 2005, 2008).

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[4]Many Tukanoan languages have elaborate evidential systems (Barnes, 1999), and one might argue that the AQ design in (10) and (11) conveys indirect evidentiality rather than epistemic modality, as access to the AQ proposition is indirect in both cases. Epistemic AQs are also felicitous, however, in reports from direct experience. This suggests that epistemic AQ design primarily conveys the reliability of the AQ proposition, not its evidential value.

5.1. AQ design as S-oriented facework

The AQ contexts described in §4 do not share syntactic, information-structural, or truth-conditional semantic features. Just as only inference can identify a syntactic question as an AQ (§3.4), we can understand the invariant meaning of AQ design only through the social valence of the information which AQs convey. In all AQ contexts, the proposition expressed by the AQ creates a potential threat to S's positive face. By "positive face," I mean S' want for others to think of her actions as good. Máíhĩki speakers have, of course, other relational wants and motivations, but it is this form of quality face (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, 540) which motivates the use of AQs.

I begin with counter-suppositional AQs like (5) and (6). In counter-suppositionals, S contradicts a known or inferred belief of H. Immediately, the counter-suppositional damages H's positive face by evaluating his epistemic stance as false. Less immediately, S's display of disregard for H's face creates a threat that other participants, ceasing to cooperate in maintaining S's face, will contradict S in turn. This secondary threat comes to fruition in the last lines of (5). There, when one speaker issues a counter-suppositional AQ, her addressee first contradicts her, then abandons the exchange in favor of metapragmatic criticism of her stance.

Moral evaluations of H, such as (7), set in motion a similar chain of threats. When S does an negative affective evaluation of H's behavior or stance, she wounds H's positive face at once. With a positive evaluation, she threatens H's negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 66). In either case, S's non-cooperative behavior toward H then exposes her to metapragmatic reproof by other participants for her impolite contribution. Hs may say of the impolite S *tŏ́ bábékò hĩ̀kàkò* "she speaks inappropriately, deceptively" (as at HUM 115) or ask her *ĩ́gè néèkò mì hádʒé hĩ̀kàkò?* "why are you mocking (him/her)?" (HUM 118). The secondary threats to S here are the same as in counter-suppositionals. Only the basis of her initial threat to H differs.

Taken alone, counter-suppositional and moral evaluation AQs might lead us to categorize Máíhĩki AQ design as an off-record device for doing face-threatening acts toward H (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 145). Yet an analysis of Máíhĩki AQ design as negative politeness has two flaws. First, counter-suppositional and moral evaluation AQs are not heard as more polite₁ (Watts, 1992) than declaratives. Speakers regularly introduce reports of these types of AQs with highly emotional speech verbs, such as *óí* "be sad, say something with strong emotion," *góò* "be angry, say something angrily," and *t̃sé* "withhold (an object), say something to obstruct (another person)." Second, negative politeness cannot account for speakers' use of AQ design in moral evaluations of third parties, morally controversial reports, and epistemic modal assertions, which do not implicate the face of H. Ss do not use AQs for these actions to shield H's face, but to mitigate threats to their own positive face from general politeness and truthfulness principles.

To begin, moral evaluations of third parties, such as (8), necessarily threaten the face of that third party. When S evaluates the behavior of a third party, she exposes herself to criticism by Hs for her disregard of the face of the evaluation

referent. This threat of criticism does not necessarily arise from the stances of actual Hs. For instance, T designs her negative evaluation in (8) as an AQ even though she knows that her Hs share the stance it conveys. Rather, the threat to S face associated with third-party evaluations arises from a general politeness principle -- assumed to be active in Máíhuna society, if not universally -- which prescribes that Ss should maintain the face of all Hs and referents.

When S reports actions or wishes on which her stance opposes that of others in the community, as in (9), she likewise runs the risk that H, adopting the more widely circulating opposite stance, will respond to her with criticism. In this case as in third-party evaluations, S attributes to H a stance that circulates in the community but which H himself has not previously expressed in the discourse. The stance attributed to H may be particularized -- one held by known people in S's network and taking as its object S's specific past actions, as in (9) -- or may be a very general stance about appropriate behavior and wishes. The ubiquity of AQ design in ill-wishes (in elicitation my consultants found the AQ *ɨ́kò húnɨ́hɵ̀màdʒò* "may she die alone!" shocking, but the declarative equivalent totally unacceptable) likely responds to such a generic pro-politeness$_1$ stance.

This leaves us with the most "grammatical" action done by AQs, marking of epistemic modality. I propose that Máíhɨ̃ki speakers hold and project onto all Hs a stance, parallel to Grice's (1975) Maxim of Quality, that speakers should not make contributions which are untrue or for which they lack evidence. One reflex of the truthfulness principle is that, as in many languages, Máíhɨ̃ki speakers adorn claims about past events which they did not themselves experience with epistemic and evidential hedges (e.g. "I didn't see it"). When S introduces a proposition for which she has weak epistemic authority, she therefore anticipates two possible kinds of non-cooperative response from H. H may challenge the logical truth of S's claim, or he may challenge S's authority to make the claim (and such challenges are ubiquitous in Máíhuna interactions, regardless of language). Either response damages S's positive face.

On this analysis, Máíhɨ̃ki speakers use AQ design for one core pragmatic purpose: to mitigate secondary threats to their positive face associated with the AQ proposition. For AQs which do intrinsic face-threatening acts toward H, such as counter-suppositionals and moral evaluations of H, the threat to S's face arises from her display of disregard for H. In other AQ types, S anticipates that H will challenge her on the AQ because it is poor in quality, for epistemic modality; because it threatens the face of a third party, for third-party evaluations; or because S's affective stance toward the AQ proposition is contextually controversial, for controversial reports.

5.2. Leveraging preference structure

The face-shielding properties of AQs arise, for Máíhɨ̃ki speakers, from the construction's preference structure. Recall from §3.4 that AQs make relevant an act of affiliation by H to the stance which S displays in the AQ, whether done by the assent interjection *hɨ̃̂ɨ̃*, as in lines 3-5 of (8), or by a modified repeat of the AQ as an opposite-polarity declarative, as in (5). Speakers leverage this preference structure to mitigate threats to their positive face. When S designs a

turn as an AQ rather than the equivalent declarative, she coerces H to issue the preferred, affiliating response rather than a dispreferred, threatening criticism of her contribution.

In counter-suppositionals and moral evaluations of H, the preference structure of the AQ design indexes a request for H to back down from his previous epistemic stance or behavior and align with S's stance. This request is the reason that Máíhɨ̃ki speakers treat such AQs as angry (§5.1) and as reproofs to H, rather than as preserving his positive face. In other AQ contexts, the preference structure indexes a less oppositional request for H to align with S's affective or epistemic stance ex nihilo. If H cooperates and gives the preferred response, S has successfully excluded from the interaction the stances, salient in the community or made relevant by general cooperative principles, which compete with her stance and threaten her. Table 1 summarizes this analysis.

Table 1: Contexts and face threats associated with AQs

AQ context	Parties threatened	Source of threats	Preferred response action
Counter-suppositional	S, H	S challenges truth of H belief; H may defend	H backs down from epistemic stance, aligns with S's
Moral evaluation of H	S, H	S disregards H face; H may defend	H backs down from behavior/affective stance, aligns with S's
Moral evaluation of third party	S, third party	H may defend third party (general politeness principle)	H aligns with S's affective stance
Morally controversial report	S	H may condemn reported behavior and/or report (aligning with locally relevant affective stance)	H aligns with S's affective stance
Epistemic modal	S	H may challenge truth or authority for AQ proposition (general truthfulness principle)	H aligns with S's epistemic stance

6. Reasoning from preference structure

When Máíhɨ̃ki listeners hear a syntactic question, I posit, they make a series of three inferences to identify the action which S intends the question to accomplish. These three inferences relate to (a) what kind of next turn S's turn makes relevant; (b) for AQs, whether S's design of her turn responds to H's own stance or to other factors; and (c) again for AQs, whether S's design conveys an epistemic or an affective evaluation of the lexically expressed proposition.

First, as soon as H identifies S's turn as a syntactic polar question, he must determine whether it is an information question or an assertive question, or in other words, whether it makes relevant an informing answer, or an assent. Heritage (2012) has shown that this inference is trivial in most interactional

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contexts. Just in the case that S has previously treated H as occupying a position of greater epistemic authority on the content of her question, H interprets the question as an information question, that is, as selecting H to produce a turn with new information (Heritage, 2012, 4). Otherwise, H interprets S's syntactic question an AQ. Since the question's polarity does not constrain the possible readings (§3.3), it is irrelevant to this step of construal (cf. Heritage 2012, 24).

Once H has categorized a syntactic question as an AQ, he immediately recovers its truth-conditional meaning, which is the same as that of its preferred response. H can then begin to reason about the non-truth-conditional information conveyed by the AQ from those pragmatic attributes of AQ design which are constant across contexts. These are the preference structure and a generalized implicature, arising from the preference structure, that S desires H's affiliation with the AQ proposition.

If H has previously displayed an epistemic or affective stance toward the AQ proposition opposing S's stance -- that is, if H knows that he would back down by issuing the preferred response -- he infers that S is requesting his affiliation in order to mitigate a potential threat arising from his stance. If H has not displayed a stance relevant to the AQ proposition, he infers that S is requesting his affiliation in order to mitigate a threat generic to all Hs. This threat could arise from a locally salient stance opposing S's stance toward the AQ proposition, or from the general truthfulness and politeness principles.

To disambiguate the source of such generic threats, H refers to world knowledge, the lexical content of the AQ (such as the subject person), and S's claimed epistemic territory. AQs which convey information that is potentially subject to affective controversy will be read, modulo the extent of S's epistemic territory, as doing moral evaluations or controversial reports, while AQs which convey affectively neutral information will be read as marking epistemic modality. Because S expects all competent Hs to make these inferences -- even if they are unlikely to engage in a dialogue with S -- AQ design is, though fundamentally dialogic, felicitous in both dialogue and monologue.

7. AQs and theories of politeness

The view proposed in §§5-6 differs from the treatment of AQ-like constructions in the pragmatics literature in several ways. I therefore now compare my analysis to several current approaches to questions as facework devices, beginning with Politeness Theory and ending with contemporary views of politeness as rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2004).

I have argued here that AQs in Máíhĩ̃ki primarily shield S's positive face. Politeness Theory, on the other hand, describes questions as polite$_1$ because they protect H's negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 145). Similarly, Leech (1983, 132-134) writes that questions are polite$_1$ because they outperform declaratives on the politeness maxims of generosity and tact. These negative politeness analyses account well for questions used to accomplish countersuppositionals, requests, and other acts that threaten H's face. Yet they cannot

explain why questions are also used to do actions irrelevant to H's face, such as epistemic modal assertions and (in Máíhĩ̄ki) controversial reports. To capture these question types as politeness$_2$ phenomena, our analysis must refer to S's face as well.

Brown and Levinson (1987, 145) additionally claim that syntactic questions are more polite$_1$ than referentially equivalent declaratives because of their syntax. Since questions do not assert, they argue, they "impose" on H less than semantically assertive constructions (cf. also Ide 1982, 383). This predicts that question syntax is categorically more polite$_1$ than declarative syntax. But in fact, AQs are less polite$_1$ than declaratives in Máíhĩ̄ki (§5.1), and some English AQs are much less polite$_1$ than equivalent declaratives -- consider the expression *Do you think I was born yesterday?*, or the hostile AQs studied by Heritage (2002). My analysis avoids this incorrect prediction by dislocating the source of the facework properties of questions from syntax, which is constant between more and less polite$_1$ questions, to preference structure.

Since Brown and Levinson, many scholars have developed theories that view convention, rather than the management of particularized face threats, as the source of politeness$_1$. These include Ide's (1989; 1992) *wakimae* or discernment politeness; Terkourafi's (2005; 2008; 2015) frame-based approach to politeness; and Haugh's (2003; 2007) hearer-centered theory of politeness as implicature. The contrast between more and less conventional linguistic means for a given action likely plays a role in Máíhĩ̄ki listeners' construal of AQ design (§6). Yet conventionality, in these theories, is a static property of forms in contexts. They do not explain why a particular grammatical construction is selected as the conventional strategy for an action -- here, why the AQ actions in §4 are done with syntactic questions. Understanding why a construction becomes conventional in politeness requires a theory of the relationship between a turn's grammar and the "relational work" (Locher and Watts, 2005) it accomplishes. This relationship crucially involves sequential properties, including preference.

Finally, Spencer-Oatey's influential work has depicted linguistic politeness$_2$ as one among many strategies for "rapport management" (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, 2004), and proposed sociopragmatic interactional principles as the infrastructure for rapport management (Spencer-Oatey and Jiang, 2003). AQs sit easily in the rapport theory of politeness, for they protect face by managing an overt signal of rapport -- H's display of affiliation with the AQ turn. This reflects a broader strength of the rapport view. Because this approach views politeness as oriented to the relation between S and H, rather than the face or relational wants of just one party, it encompasses behavior that manages face but is not polite$_1$, such as AQs, as well as H-oriented polite$_1$ behaviors.

8. Conclusions

This paper has examined assertive questions (AQs), polar questions which convey opposite-polarity assertions, in conversation and narrative in the Tukanoan language Máíhĩ̄ki. Although Máíhĩ̄ki AQs are syntactically questions, they are

pragmatically treated as assertions (§3.3) and make relevant a display of H's
affiliation, not a turn with new information (§3.4). While speakers use AQ design to contest others' epistemic stances and to mark epistemic modality, they also employ the construction to introduce propositions which are epistemically certain but affectively contested (§4). I therefore treat AQ design as a grammatical device which, because of its preference structure, mitigates threats to the speaker's positive face (§5). In construal of AQs, Hs refer to this preference as well as to syntax, discourse context, and world knowledge (§6).

My account of the close relationship between the preference and facework properties of AQs motivates the cross-linguistically common use of assertive questions in terms of the similarly cross-linguistic and -cultural need for Ss to maintain positive face (§7). These findings also support two broader conclusions about the relationships between morphosyntax, preference structure, and pragmatics. First, Heritage (2012) has argued that English listeners reason from the projected epistemic states of participants, not primarily from syntax, in construing turns as questions or assertions. I show here that, in construal of syntactic questions, Máíhɨ̃ki listeners refer to preference, as well as to epistemic states and other aspects of grammar and context, to derive secondary implicatures of interrogative design. Knowledge of preference, then, is as crucial to understanding AQs as knowledge of syntax and lexicon (cf. DuBois 2014).

Second, this data illustrates that speakers do not need to have dedicated grammatical resources that denote intersubjective properties of an utterance, such as its affectively contested status, in order to develop a conventional linguistic strategy for conveying such meanings. The lexicon of Máíhɨ̃ki does not contain grammaticalized predicate markers of affective, epistemic, or evidential status, like the evidentials of other Tukanoan languages or the speaker-oriented adverbs of English. Yet Máíhɨ̃ki speakers have just as conventional a means of conveying the intersubjective properties of their utterances as do speakers of those languages. They simply encode them through question syntax -- a strategy grounded in preference structure and understood by inference -- rather than through the entailments of particular morphemes.

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