Roti'nikonhrowá:nens - *nahò:ten* and other particles

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1 Introduction

- The question particle *nahò:ten* is usually translated as 'what' and can be used in a variety of different contexts. When it appears in a true *wh*-question, it often co-occurs with the particle *oh* and always appears before the verb, as in (1):

(1) Oh nahò:ten iesá:iats?
     oh nahoten iesa-iat-s
     Q   what   Mpl>2sg-call-HAB
     'What is your name?' (literally: 'What do they call you?')

- Over the summer I spent some time looking at the stories in the *Kanien'kéha Okara'shón:'a* book (Williams, 1976), and I noticed that it can also be used in statements, as in (2). In these cases, it always comes before the verb, and is still usually translated into English as 'what.'

(2) Satiathró:ri   nahò:ten wa'tiatkátho'.
     s-a-ti-athrori   nahoten   wa'-ti-atkatho-'
     REP-FACT-FZDUA-tell.PUNC   what   FACT-FZDUA-look-PUNC
     'They told what they saw.'   (*Rawé:ras Ró:ne'*, Konwatsi'tsaién:ni)

- Finally, it can also be used a bit like 'whatever' in English:

(3) Né: én:keke'   nahò:ten énhseke'.
     ne en-k-ek-e'   nahoten   en-hs-ek-e'
     NE FUT-1sgA-eat-PUNC   what   FUT-2sgA-eat-PUNC
     'I'll eat whatever you're eating.'

- Because *nahò:ten* so consistently appears before the verb, I was curious if it is possible to move it elsewhere in the sentence, and if so whether its meaning would change.

2 Moving *nahò:ten* around

2.1 *nahò:ten* in narratives

- For the following examples, the first line is a sentence from Williams (1976), and I tried to test if moving it would change the meaning of the sentence (for some of these examples, it looks like it does!)

- In some cases, putting *nahò:ten* after the verb is completely unacceptable:

(4) a. Satiathró:ri **nahò:ten** wa'tiatkátho'.
    s-a-ti-athrori nahoten wa'-ti-atkatho-'
    REP-FACT-FZDUA-tell.PUNC what FACT-FZDUA-look-PUNC
    'They told what they saw.'   (*Rawé:ras Ró:ne'*, Konwatsi'tsaién:ni)

  b. *Satiathró:ri wa'tiatkátho' **nahò:ten**.
    s-a-ti-athrori wa'-ti-atkatho-' nahoten
    REP-FACT-FZDUA-tell.PUNC FACT-FZDUA-look-PUNC what
    'They told what they saw.'

- But in this example, *nahò:ten* at the end of the sentence changes its meaning to 'something.'

(5) a. Ne kati' wa'akehiá:ra'ne' tsi **nahò:ten** iaká:wen o'nisténha.
    ne kati' wa'-ak-ehiar-a-'n-e' tsi nahoten iakaw-en o-'nistenha
    NE FACT-FI.A-remember-JR-INCH-PUNC C what FI.P-say.STAT FZSG>FZSG-mother
    'She remembered what her mother said.'   (*Iakotinenioia'ks,* Warisó:se Kaieríthon)

  b. *Ne kati' wa'akehiá:ra'ne' tsi iaká:wen **nahò:ten** o'nisténha.
    ne kati' wa'-ak-ehiar-a-'n-e' tsi iakaw-en nahoten o-'nistenha
    NE FACT-FI.A-remember-JR-INCH-PUNC C FI.P-say.STAT what FZSG>FZSG-mother
    'She remembered what her mother said.'

  c. ?Ne kati' wa'akehiá:ra'ne' tsi iaká:wen o'nisténha **nahò:ten.**
    ne kati' wa'-ak-ehiar-a-'n-e' tsi iakaw-en o-'nistenha nahoten
    NE FACT-FI.A-remember-JR-INCH-PUNC C FI.P-say.STAT FZSG>FZSG-mother what
    'She remembered something her mother said.'
        (**MM Note:** Now it means something specific that her mother said)

- But the acceptability of (5c) is still questionable

- To truly get the meaning 'something', a different word is used, which is a fused form of a different particle and *nahò:ten* (and it still appears before the verb):

(6) Khnahò:tenk iaká:wen nek tsi iah tetsiaké:iahrhe'.
    khnahotenk iakaw-en nek tsi iah te-ts-iak-eiahrh-e'
    something FI.P-say.STAT but NEG NEG-REP-remember-PUNC
    'She said something but she can't remember what.'

- Finally, for this last example the placement of *nahò:ten* did not seem to matter (possibly because it's a part of a string of particles?).

(7) a. Wa'akorihwaióha'   oh ne kén' kwáh **nahò:ten**, sok   ia'eiá:ken'ne',
        wa'-ako-rihw-a-ioha-'   oh ne ken' kwah nahoten   sok   i-a'-e-iaken-'n-e'
        FACT-FI.P-matter-JR-look.for-PUNC oh NE small EMPH what   then TRANS-FACT-FI.A-take.out-INCH-PUNC

        ia'tiontkahthonniónhwe'.
        i-a'-t-ion-tkaht-onnion-hw-e'
        TRANS-FACT-SRFL-FI.A-look-DISTR-CAUS-PUNC
        'She doesn't know exactly what she remembers, so she went outside to think about it.'

                                                                (*Raksotha Raoká:ra'*, Á:nen Kaia'titáhkhe')

     b. Oh ne kén' kwáh **nahò:ten** wa'akorihwaióha',   sok   ia'eiá:ken'ne',
        oh ne ken' kwah nahoten   wa'-ako-rihw-a-ioha-'   sok   i-a'-e-iaken-'n-e'
        oh NE small EMPH what   FACT-FI.P-matter-JR-look.for-PUNC then TRANS-FACT-FI.A-take.out-INCH-PUNC

        ia'tiontkahthonniónhwe'.
        i-a'-t-ion-tkaht-onnion-hw-e'
        TRANS-FACT-SRFL-FI.A-look-DISTR-CAUS-PUNC
        "She doesn't know exactly what she remembers, so she went outside to think about it.'

- In general, it seems like *nahò:ten* after the verb is questionable at best, but is occasionally translated as a *wh*-indefinite when it is moved there.

2.2 *nahò:ten* and negation

- *Nahò:ten* appears at the beginning of a negative question still behaves as a *wh*-word:

Context: *You're teaching, and there's a kid who just isn't getting it. You try to ask them what it is that they're not understanding.*

(8) Nahò:ten iah   tesa'nikonhaién:ta's?
     nahoten iah   te-sa-'nikonh-a-ient-a-'-s
     what   NEG   NEG-2SGP-mind-JR-have-?-STAT
     'What is it that you're not understanding?'

- However in this case, when *nahò:ten* goes between *iah* and *te-*, the question turns into a statement, and *nahò:ten* is translated as 'anything.'

(9) Iah   nahò:ten tesa'nikonhaién:ta's.
     iah   nahoten te-sa-'nikonh-a-ient-a-'-s
     NEG   what   NEG-2SGP-mind-JR-have-?-STAT
     'You don't understand anything at all.'

- Finally, as above, it was the least acceptable to move *nahò:ten* to the end of the sentence.

(10) ?Iah   tesa'nikonhaién:ta's   nahò:ten.
      iah   te-sa-'nikonh-a-ient-a-'-s   nahoten
      NEG   NEG-2SGP-mind-JR-have-?-STAT what
      'You don't understand what.'   (**MM Note:** still a statement, but makes less sense)

3 Bonus: negation and particles (*ne, kati', ki'*)

- Although *iah* and *te-* are both necessary for negation and often occur next to each other, it seems like a lot of particles can be inserted between them and the sentence still works.

- The following sentence is from Mithun (2020), where the focus was on *ki'*, a second position particle that can go in between negation:

(11) Iah   ki' tesewakia'tarorónhne.
      iah   ki' te-sewa-t-ia't-aroron-hne
      NEG {}   NEG-2PLA-SRFL-body-collect-R.PST
      'You guys didn't gather.'   (**MM Note**: ki' is like a little apostrophe: Oh! You guys didn't gather)

- More particles can be added in between the two parts of the negation without a problem:

Context: *talking about how I haven't seen you all in a while, then saying this*

(12) Iah   né: ki' ne tesewakia'tarorónhne.
      iah   ne ki' ne te-sewa-t-ia't-aror-on-hne
      NEG NE {}   NE NEG-2PLA-SRFL-body-collect-R.PST
      'Well, because you guys didn't gather.'

- Below is another sentence from Mithun (2020). In this case, I was curious whether *kati'* could be replaced with *ki'*, since Mithun claims that *ki'* is a reduced form of *kati'*, but it seems like they are not interchangeable in this case.

(13) Né: kati' ken kí:ken tekeníhaton saiakóniake'?
      ne kati' ken kiken tekenihaton s-a-iako-niak-e'?
      NE {}   Q   this   second   REP-FACT-FI.A-get.married-PUNC
      'This is the one who got married the second time?'

                                                    (**MM Note**: *né: kati'* is telling you "this is the one," zooming in)

(14) ?Né: ki' ken kí:ken tekeníhaton saiakóniake'?
      ne ki' ken kiken tekenihaton s-a-iako-niak-e'?
      NE {} Q   this   second   REP-FACT-FI.A-get.married-PUNC
      'This is the one who got married the second time?'
                          (**MM Note**: *ki'* not as good as *kati'*, too many particles, too much zooming in)

- So *kati'* and *ki'* do not look interchangeable as Mithun suggests, but the difference between them is still unclear.

References

Mithun, M. (2020). Discourse particle position and information structure. *Information-Structural Perspectives on Discourse Particles*, 27–46.

Williams, M. (1976). *Kanien'kéha Okarashón:'a*. The University of the State of New York.