

## Video elicitation of negative directives in Alaskan Dene languages: Reflections on methodology

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In this paper, we describe the use of video stimuli for the targeted elicitation of negative directives in Denaakk'e (Koyukon) and Nee'andeegn' (Upper Tanana), two severely endangered Alaskan Dene languages. Negative directives are extremely rare in our previously collected data, yet they exhibit a great variety of forms. Forms further seem to depend on several factors, particularly on whether the prohibited act violates social norms known as *hutlaanee/ijjih*. To better understand the variety of on-record and off-record forms, we created video clips showing activities violating *hutlaanee/ijjih* and activities that are merely foolish or mildly dangerous. After viewing the clips, our consultants were asked to advise the actors as if they were their grandchildren. Their responses were discussed at length with the speakers. The speakers greatly enjoyed this task and produced a great variety of on-record and off-record responses including some unusual linguistic structures. In both languages, off-record expressions were preferred over direct ones, particularly in situations where *hutlaanee/ijjih* was involved. We also identified several conventionalized off-record strategies. The emphasis on *hutlaanee/ijjih* made the task interesting and relevant for speakers. While our stimuli are designed for work with Alaskan Dene, the method can be adapted for cultural contexts around the world.

**Keywords:** negative directives, prohibitives, video elicitation, taboo, Northern Dene/Athabaskan

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we describe a methodology for eliciting negative directive strategies in two severely endangered Alaskan Dene (Athabascan) languages, Denaakk'e (Koyukon; koy) and Nee'aandeeġn' (Upper Tanana; tau). The Dene language family includes around 40 languages. The northern group, comprising around 25 languages, is spoken from western interior Alaska to northwestern Canada, down to Calgary (Alberta) in the South and almost to the Hudson Bay in the East.

Directives, as defined by Searle (1976:11), are "attempts (...) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something." He notes that such attempts can be very "modest" (for example, a yoga teacher's instruction *I invite you to deepen your breathing*) or "fierce" (such as a military command like *Right face!*). Negative directives, conversely, are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something so that a certain state of affairs does not hold. The most conventionalized form of a positive directive is often labeled "imperative", and that of a negative directive, "prohibitive". By uttering a directive, the speaker displays a certain degree of disregard for the hearer's freedom of action, which leads Brown & Levinson (1987) to consider "commanding" "one of the most intrinsically face-threatening speech acts" (p. 191). As a result, many languages have elaborate strategies to avoid uttering (bald, on-record)<sup>1</sup> imperatives and prohibitives, see e.g. Brown & Levinson (1987:140-141) for examples from Tzeltal, or Rushforth & Chisholm (1990) for examples from Bear Lake Dene.

Typologically, prohibitives tend to be non-compositional in that most languages do not form them using the default imperative form plus the standard (declarative) negation marker (van der Auwera, Lejeune, Goussev 2013). Additionally, many languages have several constructions that could be labeled as "prohibitive", some of them clearly conventionalized (van der Auwera & Devos 2012:174). Prohibitives are intrinsically face-threatening in two ways: not only do they impinge on an individual's freedom of action, but they additionally can be interpreted as "expressions of disapproval, criticism, ... and reprimands" (Brown & Levinson 1987:66).

Tuttle & Lovick (2014) and Lovick & Tuttle (2015) identified two challenges for the study of negative directives in Alaskan Dene languages: (1) determining which speech acts do and do not count as attempts to utter a negative directive and (2) understanding why a

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<sup>1</sup> Brown & Levinson (1987:68f.) treat a speech act as "on record" when there is "just one unambiguously attributable intention". An imperative "Sit down!" would count as an on-record directive. They consider a speech act bald when it is done "in the most direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way possible", without mitigation or redress (p. 69). Thus, "Sit down!" would be "bald", on record; "Sit down, please." would be on record, with redress; and "Why don't you sit down." would be off record.

particular form was used in any given context. These challenges were compounded by (3) the rarity of negative directives in the documentary record combined with the fact that both languages are no longer used for everyday communication. In order to increase our understanding of negative directive formation and use, we needed to develop a methodology that would not only yield a greater number of tokens, but also generate a variety of forms produced in a variety of contexts. Of particular importance for the present paper is the distinction between “ethical” and “immediate” negative directives alluded to in Jetté & Jones (2000:303) (see § 2.2).

Appropriate categorization of negative directives requires detailed contextual analysis, including information about the speech act participants and their relationship, the situation of the speech act, the prohibited act itself, the reason why it is prohibited, etc. The development of our methodology was motivated by our desire to have more examples where we have access to this information in order to better understand the influence of *hwtlaanee/ijjih* on prohibitive formation and use.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 contains information on the languages (§2.1), relevant distinctions within negative directives especially in Dene languages (§2.2), and the most easily elicited prohibitive constructions in the two languages (§2.3). Section 3 describes our methodology: our goals are refined in Section 3.1, the videos are described in Section 3.2, and the protocol in Section 3.3. Section 4 offers an evaluation of the methodology; the advantages are listed in Section 4.1, the disadvantages in Section 4.2. These sections are supplemented with numerous examples elicited using this method. We briefly discuss the adaptability of the stimuli to other field situations in Section 4.3. Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Languages

Our study focuses on two languages: Denaakk’e and Nee’aandeegn’, both highly endangered Dene languages spoken by a small number of (mostly) elderly people. Dene languages are polysynthetic and overwhelmingly prefixing. Verbal morphology is often represented using a template such as the one in Table 1 for Nee’aandeegn’.<sup>2</sup> Lexical morphemes are interspersed with grammatical ones throughout the verb word. Since the focus of this paper is not morphology, we provide simplified word glosses containing a

<sup>2</sup> The Denaakk’e template in Axelrod (1993:15) is much more detailed; the major difference to the Nee’aandeegn’ one is that the Distributive and the Incorporate occur in the opposite order.

lexical gloss plus participant and aspectual information, rather than full interlinear glosses.

12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1
Postpositional object	Postposition	Adverbial-derivational	Iterative	Incorporate	Distributive	Pronominal	Qualifier	Conjugation	Aspect/Mode	Subject	Voice/valence marker	Stem	Suffix

Table 4: *Nee'aandeegn'* verbal template

The languages differ with respect to the amount of available description and documentation.

### 2.1.1 Denaakk'e

Denaakk'e (Koyukon) is spoken by several hundred people in the central to western interior of Alaska. There are three dialects: Upper, spoken at Tanana, Rampart, Beaver and Stevens Village; Central, spoken at Koyukuk, Huslia, Ruby and Hughes; and Lower, spoken at Kaltag and Nulato. Central Denaakk'e has the most speakers, and Upper Denaakk'e the fewest, though Lower Denaakk'e is now also spoken by very few people. Denaakk'e is very well documented lexically, with a major dictionary (Jetté & Jones 2000) as well as a learner's dictionary (Jones 1978a). There are several major collections of texts (Attla 1983, 1989, 1990, Jones 1982) and publications dealing with verbal art (Jones & Henry 1976, Jones & Solomon 1978). Numerous learning materials include Thompson, Axelrod & Jones (198Z3) and Jones & Kwaraceius (1997). While there is no published reference grammar of this language, these materials, supplemented by Jetté & Jones (2000), provide considerable grammatical coverage.

### 2.1.2 Nee'aandeegn'

Nee'aandeegn' (Upper Tanana) is spoken by fewer than 50 elderly people in eastern interior Alaska and in the Yukon Territory. Of the five dialects identified by Minoura (1994), only three are spoken today (Tetlin, Northway, and Beaver Creek). Lexical resources for Nee'aandeegn' include a learner's dictionary (Milanowski & Jimerson 1975, Milanowski & John 1979) and a lexware file (Kari 1997). There are two collections of narratives (Tyone 1996, David 2017) as well as a partial bible translation (Milanowski &

John 1966, 1975). The first part of a grammatical description of Nee'aandeegn' is slated to appear in Fall 2019 (Lovick to appear). This grammar is based on a (as yet, largely unpublished) corpus of narratives in the Tetlin and Northway dialects comprising about 8,000 utterances, plus fieldnotes. The same corpus forms the basis for our investigations here.

## 2.2 Relevant distinctions in the study of negative directives in Dene languages

Several prohibitive forms are reported for a number of Dene languages, sometimes linked to differences in meaning. Some authors, such as Tenenbaum (1978:114) for Dena'ina or Hargus (2007:372) for Witsuwit'en, do not report meaning differences between different strategies, but others do. According to Morice (1932, Vol. II: 218), Carrier (Dakelh) formally distinguishes prohibitives (before the fact) from reproaches (after the fact).<sup>3</sup> However, the timing of the directive relative to the action is not the only relevant dimension for which differences are claimed. In her description of Slave, Rice (1989:1109) notes a distinction between prohibitives in the imperfective, used to prohibit “ongoing or habitual activit[ies]”, and those in the optative, “used to warn against an action that has not yet begun”. With a different particle, optative prohibitives receive a stronger “must not” interpretation (p. 1110). Lovick (2016:271) reports that Nee'aandeegn' (called Upper Tanana in that paper) formally distinguishes “immediate” negative directives in the Optative that are applicable only to the situation at hand from “general” ones applying to all situations of this type, and which are in the Future (see section 2.3.2 for details of formation.)

Another important dimension is politeness. De Reuse (2006:348) notes a politeness distinction in San Carlos Apache, where prohibitives phrased in the fourth person are “more subtle and polite” than commands in the second person. Rushforth (1985) and Rushforth & Chisholm (1990) note that in Bear Lake, there is a tendency to avoid both positive and negative directives entirely. Field (2001:255) notes additionally that giving (positive and negative) directives in Dene groups “index[es]... solidarity and an intimate relationship”.

A final distinction was raised by Jetté & Jones (2000:303) in their distinction between “ethical” and “momentary” negative directives. The term “momentary” evokes a distinction like the one between “immediate” and “habitual” or “general” above, but “ethical” in

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<sup>3</sup> An anonymous reviewer commented that reproaches are not generally considered a type of negative directive and that the Dakelh forms might contain a counterfactual modal. Without a more thorough understanding of Dakelh, we cannot respond to this comment.

the Dene sense calls on knowledge of the moral system of *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* ‘taboo, forbidden’, which is shared (with different names) among many Northern Dene groups. Most simply put, *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* is concerned with the effects an activity might have on *gholeye* (Denaakk’e for ‘good luck (in hunting), success, potlatch wealth’; Jetté & Jones 2000: 402), and consequently, many aspects of *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* regulate proper behavior regarding hunting (see Nelson 1983 for a detailed study of this in the Denaakk’e area). As pointed out by Guédon (2005, Ch. 3) for the Nee’aandeegn’ area, however, *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* goes deeper than merely a list of hunting regulations; instead, she argues that it is the set of moral guidelines that sets a good Dene person apart from animals or non-Dene humans. Proper behavior, defined as adherence to *hwtlaaneel/ijjih*, is the topic of many ‘puberty narratives’, e.g. Tyone (1996:17–22), David (2017:162–179) and is implicitly taught as part of many traditional stories.

*Hwtlaaneel/ijjih* includes levels of responsibility for self and others that are not always immediately obvious to outsiders and do not always have to do with transgressions that non-Dene people would regard as ethical. Examples (1a, b) are cited by Lovick (2016: 271) as “general” negative directives, but only (1a) is motivated by the system of *hwtlaaneel/ijjih*. A momentary negative directive is given in (1c).<sup>4</sup>

(1) Nee’aandeegn’

- a. *Huxol’ tüh chih k’a tji’íá!*  
 3PL:leg over also NEG 2SG:step:FUT:NEG  
 ‘Do not (sg.) step over men’s legs, you (sg.) may not step over men’s legs!’  
 {UTOLVDN10Jul2603:108}
- b. *K’at’ey nubk’eb butabhéél!*  
 NEG 2PL:like 2PL:speak:FUT:NEG  
 ‘Do not speak your (pl.) language, you (pl.) may not speak your language!’  
 (David 2017:20)
- c. *Sø’ sbch’a’ natqosbha’!*  
 PROH 1SG:from 2SG:SG.go.around:OPT  
 ‘Don’t leave me!’  
 {UTOLVDN10Jul2710:033}

Jetté and Jones (2000:303) note structural differences between negative directives referencing *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* and those that do not. It was this distinction that originally motivated our development of the methodology described in sections 3 and 4.

<sup>4</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: ADVZR–adverbializer, AREAL–areal, CERT–certainty, CT–contrastive topic, CUST–customary, INCEP–inceptive, IPFV–imperfective, ITER–iterative, NEG–negative, NMLZR–nominalizer, O–object, OOC–object in open container, OPT–optative, PFV–perfective, PL–plural, POSS–possessed, PROG–progressive, PROH–prohibitive, Q–question, REFL–reflexive, SG–singular.

As noted above, the various morphosyntactic strategies employed by different Dene languages to express the distinctions vary: some involve differences in mode (imperfective, optative, future); some require the use of particular particles. The distinctions can be related, but note that “ethical” does not entail “general”—the situation triggering an ethical command might require immediate intervention, or an overall dose of advice. We are therefore on the watch for intersecting categories that might confuse our analysis.

## 2.3 Prohibitives in Denaakk’e and Nee’aandeeḡn’

In this section, we describe prohibitives, i.e. constructions dedicated to the expression of negative directives, in Denaakk’e and Nee’aandeeḡn’.

### 2.3.1 Prohibitives in elicitation

We used pairs such as “Chop wood! Don’t chop wood!” to begin the process of mapping forms to functions. The most easily elicited forms used in prohibitives differ between the two languages.

In Nee’aandeeḡn’, the most common strategy for the formation of a positive directive is to use a second person imperfective (2a), while elicited prohibitives typically consist of the preverbal particle *sɔ’* plus an optative verb form inflected for second person (2b). Standard negation is achieved by the preverbal particle *k’a(t’eeḡ)* plus a verb form inflected for negative.<sup>5</sup> In (2c), negative inflection on the verb is visible only in the tonal changes compared to (2a) and on the voicing of the stem-final consonant.<sup>6</sup>

(2) Nee’aandeeḡn’

- |    |  |             |                  |               |                       |
|----|--|-------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| a. | <i>Ha’áát</i>                          | <i>tsát</i> | <i>į̄tthèèł</i>  | <i>ch’a.</i>  |                       |
|    | out                                    | wood        | 2SG:chop:IPFV    | FOC           |                       |
|    | ‘Chop (sg.) wood outside!’             |             |                  |               | {UTOLAF13May2804:047} |
|    |  |             |                  |               |                       |
| b. | <i>sɔ’</i>                             | <i>tsát</i> | <i>ɔ̄tthèèł</i>  |               |                       |
|    | PROH                                   | wood        | 2SG:chop:OPT     |               |                       |
|    | ‘don’t (sg.) chop wood’                |             |                  |               | {UTOLAF12Jul1201:009} |
|    |  |             |                  |               |                       |
| c. | <i>K’át’eeḡ</i>                        | <i>tsát</i> | <i>į̄tthéél</i>  | <i>de’...</i> |                       |
|    | NEG                                    | wood        | 2SG:chop:PFV:NEG | if            |                       |
|    | ‘If you (sg.) had not chopped wood...’ |             |                  |               | {UTOLAF12Jul1201:049} |

<sup>5</sup> The form in (2c) is in the Perfective, but negative paradigms exist for all four modes (Imperfective, Perfective, Future, and Optative) in the Alaskan Dene languages.

<sup>6</sup> Although Nee’aandeeḡn’ is a tone language, tone is not indicated in the practical orthography used in this paper, with the exception of (1) and (2).

Comparable expressions in Denaakk'e are shown in (3). Example (3a) is a positive directive using an imperfective verb form inflected for second person. Example (3b) uses the prohibitive particle *nedaakoon* with a non-negative, imperfective verb. In (3c), the verb is in the perfective negative form, and no negative particle is used. Negative morphology in Denaakk'e includes two different conjunct prefixes, depending on mode/aspect, and a suffix *-(l)aa*, often bearing a high rising tone.

- (3) Denaakk'e
- a. *Sobo kkun' netlaak.*  
1SG:for firewood 2SG:chop:IPFV  
'Chop wood for me.' Jetté & Jones (2000:653)
- b. *Nedaakoon tl'edaak kkun' netlaak!*  
PROH1 dark firewood 2SG:chop:IPFV  
'Don't chop wood in the dark!' {Central, EJ, 130530 Notes}
- c. *Kkun' eentlet-dlaa ts'uh...*  
firewood 2SG:chop:PFV:NEG-NEG then  
'If you had not chopped firewood...' {Central, EJ, 130530 Notes}

In both languages, the most easily obtained prohibitive form (2b;3b) is thus non-compositional, i.e. not formed by combining the default imperative form with the standard negation used in declarative clauses (2c;3c).

Although the forms in (2b;3b) are easily elicited, speakers have commented that they are quite rude, which limits their applicability. They do, however, often occur in teaching materials as "classroom expressions" – the sort of commands teachers may use in classroom control.

Along with these productive forms, there also exist commonly used lexicalized expressions for 'be quiet' and 'don't do that'. Denaakk'e examples are shown in (4):

- (4) Denaakk'e
- a. *Daalek!*  
'Hush! Shut up!' Jetté and Jones (2000:399)
- b. *Enaa'!*  
'Don't!' Jetté and Jones (2000:429)

Example (4a) is a frozen (or fossilized) second person singular form of a verb theme 'to refrain from speaking, to be quiet', which is no longer productive. The modern productive forms most closely related to (4a) would be *dodaaleelelek* 'Be quiet (to singular)' or *dodaaluhblelek* 'Be quiet (to plural)' (Jetté and Jones 2000:399). In the contemporary language, *daalek* is best viewed as an interjection.

In our Denaakk'e elicitations, the interjection *enaa'* was fairly common, but was usually combined with other advice to the video actor.



The use of such frozen forms and interjections is more likely to occur with Dene speakers who are rusty in their use of the language, seldom find conversational partners, or are less confident in linguistic work contexts. Their lack of specificity makes these expressions useful substitutes for more specific ones, especially in situations where urgency is involved. In our experience, these forms also surface more when adults are interacting with children, a context in which the power relation is quite asymmetrical, and rudeness is less of a concern than children's safety.

### 2.3.2 A multitude of forms: on-record prohibitives

While the negative directives in section 2.3.1 can be elicited with relative ease, both Denaakk'e and Nee'aandeen' have several additional strategies to form on-record negative directives, in addition to off-record strategies.

Jetté and Jones (2000) provide a wealth of information about prohibitives in Denaakk'e. The particle *nedaakoon* is used with both imperfective and optative verbs. Jetté and Jones say this particle "implies an ethical rather than momentary prohibition" (2000: 303). With the optative or negative optative, *nedaakoon* is also accompanied by the particle *soo'*.

(5) Central Denaakk'e *nedaakoon* with optative or imperfective

a. With optative and *soo'*

*Nedaakoon soo' tleeghoobol yu.*  
 PROH1 PROH2 2SG:SG.go.out:OPT:REL PROH3  
 'Do not go out at any time, you should never go out.'

Jetté & Jones (2000:303)

b. With imperfective

*Nedaakoon kk'oneedoyh.*  
 PROH1 2SG:SG.walk.around:IPFV  
 'You shouldn't be walking around.'

Jetté & Jones (2000:303)

Examples (5a) and (6) both contain another prohibitive particle, *yu*, which occurs with optative verbs with or without *soo'*. It may also co-occur with *nedaakoon*, as in (5a).

(6) Central Denaakk'e *yu* with optative

*Uh dedeghoonee' yu.*  
 DEM 2SG:speak.thus:OPT PROH3

'Don't say that.'

Jetté & Jones (2000:719)

In the Upper dialect, *se'oo'* (*soo'oo* ~ *soo'* in Central Denaakk'e) is used with negative optative mode in negative directives. (The Central variant is used along with *nedaakoon* in (5a), above). Jetté and Jones' (2000:745) examples for this particle can both be inter-

preted as responses to immediate (7a) or general (7b) situations. This morphosyntactic pattern is also found in neighboring Lower Tanana (Tuttle 2009), where it is used for both immediate and general prohibitions.

## (7) Upper Denaakk'e

- a. *Ghusnoon se'oo'.*  
 1SG:drink:OPT:NEG PROH2  
 'Don't let me drink it (by mistake).' Jetté & Jones (2000:745)
- b. *Ts'aabooghoohaal se'oo'.*  
 2SG:speak.out:OPT:NEG PROH2  
 'You should not speak out.' Jetté & Jones (2000:745)

Jetté and Jones' analysis of *nedaakoon* as an ethical-directive marker raises many questions, partly because the accompanying particles present multiple possibilities for dialectal or stylistic complications, but for other reasons as well. One issue is that distinguishing between "ethical" and "momentary" confounds several separate distinctions that we have seen identified in other literature on Dene languages: immediate vs. general, polite vs. less polite, preceding action vs. following action – and ethical vs. non-ethical. Most relevant is the fact that "immediate" and "momentary" seem to go together better than "ethical" and "general". Isolated examples in a dictionary entry do not provide enough context to sort out the differences.

Consider that Jetté & Jones' (2000:303) (5a) and (5b) both contain *nedaakoon*, but while (5a) looks like an ethical directive, (5b) could be interpreted as either general or immediate – although if we had sufficient context to evaluate it, (5b) might be an ethical directive.

There are other questions too: what, if any, is the difference between optative and imperfective forms preceded by *nedaakoon*? Are there other differences between the particles (e.g. stylistic or dialectal)?

Lovick (2016:271) finds clearer evidence for a distinction in Nee'aandeegn' between "immediate" and "general" prohibitions. Immediate prohibitions involve the form described in Section 2.3.1 (8a). The general strategy involves the standard negation marker *k'a(t'ee)* and a negative verb form inflected for second person in the future mode (8b).

## (8) Nee'aandeegn'

- a. *Sq' shinqljidn!*  
 PROH 2SG>1SG:be.afraid:OPT  
 'Don't (sg.) be afraid of me!' {UTOLVDN11Aug0802-030}
- b. *Huxol' tüb k'a tji'ia!*  
 3PL:legs over NEG 2SG:step:FUT:NEG  
 'Don't (sg.) step over [men's] legs!' {UTOLVDN10Jul2603:108}

In addition to the on-record prohibitive constructions identified in Jetté and Jones (2000:203) and Lovick (2016:271), Tuttle & Lovick (2014) and Lovick & Tuttle (2015) report several off-record negative directive strategies for each language; examples will be given in Section 4.

### 2.3.3 Avoidance of on-record prohibitives in Dene

Several authors note that direct (positive as well as negative) directives are often avoided in Dene languages. Rushforth (1985:38) for example observes: “Bear Lake values provide a context within which it is desirable to avoid performing directives at all [...]. Given that Sahtuó’ine do perform directives, however, consider the utterances exemplified here from the perspective of an individual who normally wishes to avoid the impression of directing another’s actions.” Rushforth & Chisholm (1990) report similar observations in their more extensive study. Guédon (2005:162) briefly notes that her Nee’aandeg’n consultants usually did not correct her behavior. This can be linked to the strategy of “non-intervention” identified by Scollon & Scollon (1979:187–189), which safeguards the individual’s self-respect (Scollon & Scollon 1981:101). Field (2001:255) notes that directives in several Dene languages are used only between individuals with a close relationship.

Tuttle & Lovick (2014) report on the relative scarcity of negative vis-à-vis positive directives in Lower Tanana and Nee’aandeg’n as well as in Denaakk’e. Lovick (2016) finds that in her narrative corpus of Nee’aandeg’n, positive directives outnumber negative ones by a ratio of 5:1. She discusses the motivations for avoiding direct prohibitives, noting that to utter a prohibitive constitutes an act threatening both the negative and positive face of the addressee (p. 273). Exceptions from this avoidance of prohibitives are situations where one addresses someone whose knowledge of proper behavior is incomplete (p. 277) or in situations of immediate danger (pp. 279-280).

### 2.3.4 Gathering examples of prohibitives

Research on prohibitives, or directives in general, is usually done in one of two ways. One is to investigate large corpora in one’s own language or one in which one has good competence (this was done e.g. by Ervin-Tripp 1976, Craven & Potter 2010, Curl & Drew 2012 on English, by Van Olmen 2010 on Dutch, or by Velea 2013 on Romanian). This allows the researcher(s) to rely to some degree on their own intuitions in disentangling the many factors that influence the choice of a particular form in a particular context (note however that this reliance on their own intuition is rarely addressed explicitly). Alternatively, such work can be based on the observation of natural interactions coupled with discussion of

particular examples (e.g., Rushforth 1985 or Rushforth & Chisholm 1991 on Bear Lake, Field 2001 on Navajo), taking a more ethnographic approach typical for “outsiders”.

In our specific field situations, neither approach was feasible. There are no conversational corpora of Alaskan Dene comparable to those of English, Dutch or Romanian. Lovick (2016) argues in favor of using narrative corpora in the study of directives. This approach works well for positive directives, which are relatively common in narrative text; the rich context in narratives facilitates interpretation of factors such as the relation between speaker and addressee, the urgency of the task, the greatness of the imposition, and so on. Yet this approach has a major drawback as well: as outsiders to the language community, we cannot rely on our ability to correctly identify off-record ways of uttering a prohibitive and thus can assume that many of them simply pass us by. Additionally, this approach does not allow us to get more examples. The ethnographic approach, however, is not possible since these languages are no longer spoken by non-elders.

The *Koyukon Athabaskan Dictionary* (Jetté & Jones 2000) represents a kind of corpus, because it draws on examples from many sources. Its organization allows searching by both meaning and form. Because it contains data collected in the early 20th century when the language was commonly spoken and analysis done at that time by Jules Jetté, it is a useful reference especially at the beginning of a study, providing suggestions for re-elicitation and discussion. However, as seen above in (5)-(7), the lack of context can lead to problems of correct interpretation and analysis. The dictionary’s structure can also make it difficult to distinguish between dialect differences and differences within a particular variety of the language, since individual examples are not sourced. Our experience with variation within Alaskan Dene languages suggests that we could easily be misled by relying too much on this resource, or others comparable to it, for analysis.

We initially attempted to increase the number of negative directive tokens by direct elicitation, but speakers quickly got bored with this task and responded mechanically with the forms described in §2.3.1 above (see also Louie 2015 on the dangers of inducing boredom in consultants). When queried as to whether they would ever actually use such forms, they often responded that they would not, since they sounded quite rude. This approach did not increase our understanding of the semantico-pragmatic nuances associated with direct and indirect negative directives.

We determined that in order to better understand their use, we needed to elicit forms in a way that would allow us to (1) correctly identify direct and indirect negative directives, (2) know why a particular event is undesirable and should not be actualized, (3) have more naturalistic examples for analysis. We show in the following sections how using video stimuli brings us closer to achieving these three goals.

### 3 Video elicitation

#### 3.1 Goals

##### 3.1.1 Goal 1: Correct identification of forms

While identification of bald, on-record prohibitives in both languages is relatively straightforward (by searching texts for prohibitive markers), correct identification of less direct negative directives can be much more challenging, as demonstrated in (9).

- (9) a. Central Denaakk'e, response to placing a cup at the edge of the table  
*Huḡboyeneeghaaleeneek.*  
 2SG>AREAL:be.mindful.of:IPFV  
 'Know what you (sg.) are doing; be careful.' {EJ, 140501}
- b. Lower Denaakk'e, response to shaking a pop can<sup>7</sup> and offering it to an unsuspecting victim  
*K'eyetaatmen'.*  
 INDEF>3SG:make.crazy:INCEP:PFV  
 'Something is making him crazy; he is being a nuisance.' {EJ, 14050}
- c. Nee'aandeeḡn', response to pulling out a chair from under someone  
*Edzee! Nis'q̄' d̄j̄d̄j̄' xab ch'a d̄j̄d̄j̄!*  
 goodness how 2SG:do:PFV for FOC 2SG:do:IPFV:NMLZR  
 'Goodness! How are you (sg.) doing what you're doing!'  
 {UTOLAFMay0807:009}

All of the utterances in (9) were considered by speakers to be negative directives, yet none of them are formally prohibitives: they do not contain the prohibitive particles *nedaakoon*, *yu* or *se'oo'* (Denaakk'e) or *sp'* (Nee'aandeeḡn') nor is negative polarity marked elsewhere in the clause; they are not in the optative mode; only two are directed at the person who did something wrong (9a, c), and (9c) is (formally at least) a question.

This formal variety of negative directives poses a severe challenge for us; without extended discussion of individual examples, it is difficult to determine whether and under which circumstances it could be used. By using stimuli illustrating undesirable behavior, and by asking speakers to advise the actors, we were able to eliminate some of the unclarity involved here.

<sup>7</sup> The elder responds to the combination of actions – the secret shaking and the offering. The third-person response requires a conversational ally; in our sessions, the linguist often served in this capacity. We have observed this form of directive often in field situations.

### 3.1.2 Goal 2: Knowing why an event is undesirable

Negative directives are uttered to indicate that the speaker views a certain event as undesirable (van Olmen 2010). However, both the degree of the undesirability and its causes may play a role in shaping the directive itself: if a person is about to injure themselves or endanger another person by a careless action, a different form might be chosen than if a person does something mildly foolish that is unlikely to have severe consequences. Actions violating *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* are considered to be intrinsically more undesirable than those that result merely in physical discomfort and may be expressed differently (Jetté & Jones 2000:303); hence we targeted the distinction between these two kinds of actions. By determining beforehand which video clips depicted *hwtlaaneel/ijjih* actions and which did not, we were able to see how this distinction is reflected in the choice of directive.

### 3.1.3 Goal 3: More (and more naturalistic) examples

Matthewson (2004) and Burton and Matthewson (2015) argue in favor of using storyboards to control semantic context, but we decided to use video instead for two reasons.

First, we wanted to record immediate reactions to undesirable activities. Directives are by their very nature interactive, and we are of the opinion that interpreting a fundamentally static object such as a storyboard does not result in a spontaneous response similar to that given in a real-life situation.

Second, presenting our material in the form of one or several storyboards risked boring our consultants. Such a storyboard would have by necessity featured a young person doing many things wrong, and a wise older person correcting her ways—this is possibly not the most exciting storyline.<sup>8</sup> Speakers likely would have figured out quickly what we were targeting, which could have resulted in boredom.

Using video allowed us to present the material in a way that facilitated a spontaneous reaction while at the same time being entertaining enough to avoid boredom.

## 3.2 Description of video stimuli

### 3.2.1 Content

The stimuli feature activities that fall into two categories: activities that should not be done because they are *hwtlaaneel/ijjih*, and activities that should not be done because they

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<sup>8</sup> There are actually several traditional stories that feature a ‘stupid boy’ who violates many taboos and only learns proper behavior after facing harsh consequences, but it did not seem to be respectful to duplicate this type of story.

are foolish or mildly dangerous.<sup>9</sup> A list of activities is given in Table 3.

<i>hwtlaanee/ijjih</i>	Not <i>hwtlaanee/ijjih</i>
Man sits blocking doorway, woman steps over him	Woman walks barefoot in snow
Man throws coat on the ground, woman steps over it	Woman puts tea cup at edge of table
Woman moves a man's belongings	Man drinks out of another person's water bottle
Woman grabs a man around the wrist	Person pretends to stick fork into power outlet
Man is too close to young women	Man pulls chair out from under woman, woman falls
Women scratch their heads using their hands (rather than special implement)	Man runs with scissors
	Man walks into a wall while texting
	Man shakes pop can before offering it to woman

Table 3: Activities in video clips

This list was designed in the following fashion. Taboo activities were selected by the authors, based on their knowledge of Alaskan Dene culture as expressed in the 'puberty narratives' e.g. by Tyone (1996) or David (2017). Non-taboo activities were suggested by the student-actors in the clips. They include things that people have to tell their children not to do (like going out in the snow without shoes, sticking a fork in an outlet, running with scissors) and things that careful people don't do (like putting a teacup too close to an edge) as well as things that we don't do because we have learned they might make us sick (like sharing a water bottle.) Texting while walking is a foolish modern habit that we might, or might not, speak to one another about. The pop can scenario and the pulling out of the chair are childish bullying actions that we believed would elicit strong reactions.

As one anonymous reviewer pointed out, some of the non-taboo activities could potentially lead to physically dangerous situations, which could cause a sense of urgency in the person responding to the situation. We want to stress here that some of the taboo activities potentially lead to spiritually dangerous situations, which are not viewed as intrinsically less harmful.

<sup>9</sup> For obvious reasons, we chose not to act out seriously dangerous activities.

### 3.2.2 Actors

The actors in the video clips were all students in Lovick's field methods class in Winter 2013. We did not act out these activities ourselves since we should not be seen performing *butlaaneel/ijjib* activities: some have polluting consequences that could impact consultants' desire to continue working with us. Also, we are no longer young enough to be easily reprimandable, which would likely have restrained the speakers' choice of expression.

Lovick, whose son turned six in spring 2013, asked the parents of his friends to let them participate in video clips similar to those we eventually produced, but did not succeed in obtaining parental consent.<sup>10</sup> Thus, choosing university students who are able to consent on their own behalf, but young enough to be reprimandable, struck us as a suitable compromise.

There were three women and two men; all of them are of Euro-Canadian descent. Both the gender of the actors and their ethnicity merit brief discussion.

As can be seen in Table 1, many of the taboo activities are sensitive to the gender of the actors. In traditional Dene culture, different behavioral rules apply to men and women and the same behavior might be mildly reprehensible for a person of one gender, but utterly unspeakable for a person of the other. One video clip featured a woman sitting in a doorway and a man stepping over her. When we played this to speakers, they were mildly concerned about the woman blocking the way but not too upset about the man stepping over her. When the roles were reversed, however, the reaction was quite different; speakers gasped audibly over both infractions. Thus, it was important to pay attention to the gender of the actors in the videos.

Related to this point is the need for unambiguous gender identification, specifically regarding hair length. In rural Alaska, the dress code for women does not differ significantly from that for men, but hairstyles do: most men wear their hair short, most women wear theirs long. One of the female actors had relatively short hair, which led to some confusion among the speakers.

While we had anticipated that the ethnicity of the students—none of them could be mistaken for Alaska Natives—would raise methodological problems, it turned out to be a boon. Generally, individuals in their 20s are expected to 'know their taboo', i.e. not to behave in a fashion that violates *butlaaneel/ijjib*. Because of the importance of *butlaaneel/ijjib*, it is taught from the cradle, and even young children are expected to adhere to it. The actors' ethnicity served as an explanation of their ignorance of proper behavior: as white people, they simply could not be expected to know that a woman should never grasp a

<sup>10</sup>The resistance to Lovick's suggestion was astonishing in its force and, interestingly, gendered. Parents of boys tended to be amenable to the idea of their child's participation, while parents of girls were adamantly opposed and, in some cases, downright offended, even after the exact nature of the activities was described to them.



man around the wrist or that a man should keep his distance from young women.

### 3.2.3 Setting

The setting for all video clips was the First Nations University of Canada. Most of the clips were recorded in the classroom, some were recorded in the atrium or just outside the building. These non-traditional surroundings, like the cast, were the result of time and human-power constraints, not clever planning. In fact, the creation of the videos was a spontaneous decision following many discussions of possibilities, a let's-try-this-why-not idea. The classroom setting is, however, less than ideal: the lighting is poor and the background is cluttered. For our elderly consultants, this made it harder to identify the activities shown in the videos. Our location also was a constraint for the activities shown in the videos. It is for example considered taboo to touch or step over the dog harnesses that another person has laid out prior to hitching up dogs to a sled, but dog harnesses, like many other traditional tools or garments that would have given our videos more verisimilitude, were not available.

In hindsight, a different location and more planning might have given us better footage. However, the fact that these spontaneously recorded and imperfect videos resulted in some excellent data should reassure researchers who may be deterred from this form of stimulus creation by worries about production quality.

## 3.3 Procedure

Our procedure consisted of the following steps: priming, showing the videos and asking for responses, and discussing the responses.

During field work sessions, we initiated conversations about *hwtlaanee/ijjih* in order to prime consultants to think about forbidden and non-forbidden activities.

We then showed the video clips to consultants on our laptop screens. Since all consultants are elderly and some have poor eyesight, we let them watch the clips as many times as they wanted to ensure that they were able to identify what was going on. We then gave the following instruction: "Imagine that these young people are your grandchildren. How would you advise them in your language?" We chose this vague instruction on purpose to allow the consultants to freely choose the form of their response: addressing the young person or another person present (e.g. a spouse or the linguist); scolding, admonishing, or questioning; being gentle or forceful; getting upset or staying composed and so on. We reminded speakers several times throughout each session to imagine themselves (and us) witnessing the situation shown in the video clips. In this fashion, consultants were encouraged to respond verbally in whatever way they found appropriate to each situation.

We also took care to discuss the speakers' responses with them. This sometimes took place at the same time as collecting the responses, sometimes after all responses had been collected. This depended to some degree on the speaker; some wanted to proceed quickly with the next video, while others preferred to discuss their responses as they went.

The data described in the following section was collected from five speakers over four interviews. Three speakers speak the Northway dialect of Nee'aandeegn', one speaker the Lower dialect of Denaakk'e, and one speaker Central Denaakk'e.

## 4 Evaluation of the methodology

### 4.1 Advantages

#### 4.1.1 Immediate reactions

All elders we asked to participate greatly enjoyed the task and participated enthusiastically. All responded freely, with meta-commentary directed at the researcher but also with numerous utterances directed at the people in the videos. Slight discomfort was caused by some of the taboo violations. We had anticipated this concern however, and were able to alleviate these concerns by pointing out that white Canadian university students in an urban setting have very different taboos than a young person from an Alaskan village. We also explained that we had informed the students of the taboos (and their consequences), and that they had volunteered to participate. These discussions sufficiently addressed the concerns voiced by the speakers, and we proceeded with the elicitation as planned.

#### 4.1.2 A plethora of forms

Leaving the choice of response entirely up to the speaker unsurprisingly led to very unpredictable data. Examples (10) and (11) illustrate this point using the reactions of two different Denaakk'e speakers to the same video, where a woman grasps a man around the wrist (a severe violation of *hutlaanee/ijjih*).

(10) Lower Denaakk'e (addressing woman)

- a. *Nedaakoon* *uhts'e* *dent'aa*.  
 PROH1      that.way      2SG:act.thus:IPFV  
 'Don't do that.'      {PC, 140404}
- b. *Hoozoonts'e* *edeghononeeltaayh*.  
 well      2SG>REFL:have.respect.for:IPFV  
 'Have respect for yourself.'      {PC, 140404}

- (11) Central Denaakk'e
- a. *Doyeł'aan nuġb tleenoyeedeggodlee'?*  
 why away 3SG>3SG:drag.off:PFV:Q  
 'Why did she drag him away?' {EJ, 140501}
- b. *Eey to dont'aanh?*  
 DEM FOC 2SG:do.what:IPFV  
 'What are you doing?' {EJ, 140501}

The speaker in (10) addresses the transgressor directly with an on-record prohibitive (10a) and an admonition (10b), while the speaker of (11a) addresses the linguist with a question about the woman's behavior—with the assumption, presumably, that the woman would be able to hear the question—before inviting the addressee to reflect on their behavior (11b). This latter strategy is a very common approach across all speakers.

Another common strategy is to suggest alternative behavior using an imperative. Example (12) is part of Mrs. Avis Sam's response to the video where a woman moves a man's pack and then sits down in his seat. Mrs. Sam begins by stating her intended message in English and only switches to Nee'aandeeġn' in (12c):

- (12) Nee'aandeeġn'
- a. I'm trying to figure out "Don't do that, the man sits."  
 b. I would tell her that:  
 c. *Ch'idānh tab dadhijidab.*  
 different.place among 2SG:SG.sit:IPFV  
 'Sit in a different place.'

Even though Mrs. Sam starts out by explicitly stating that she wishes to express an on-record prohibitive ("don't do that"), she then produces an off-record one. This strategy is common in Denaakk'e as well (13).

- (13) Lower Denaakk'e [to woman stepping over clothing]  
*Mu'oo nodetegbeebot eebu.*  
 3SG:around 2SG:SG.walk:FUT in.vain  
 'You could have walked around it (but didn't.)' {PC, 140404}

Another common strategy is to appeal to group membership, custom, Dene values, or *hwtlaanee/ijjih*. Example (14) is the response to a woman stepping over a man who sits blocking the doorway.

- (14) Central Denaakk'e
- a. [addressing the woman]  
*Hwtl'aanee!*  
 'Taboo!' {EJ, 140501}

- b. *Ndaa en bedeenledo!*  
 somewhere away 2SG:SG.sit.beside:IPFV  
 ‘Move over a little!’ {EJ, 140501}

Generally, we notice that speakers are reluctant to utter on-record prohibitives in particular in situations where *butlaanee/ijjih* is violated. This is illustrated in Mrs. Barnes’ (Nee’aandeeḡn) quite elaborate response to the clip where a young man enters the room and throws his coat on the floor. A young woman then comes, sighs, and steps over it. Both acts are severely taboo: one needs to treat one’s belongings with care and may not toss them on the floor where they might obstruct others; and women may not step over anything belonging to a man. When Mrs. Barnes viewed this clip, she produced some shocked laughter. A portion of her response is given in (15).

- (15) Mrs. Sherry Barnes, Nee’aandeeḡn’
- a. [addressing the woman]  
*Nahsbyign eek eeniign ay du’*  
 down.there coat 3SG:classify.fabric:IPFV:NMLZR 3SG CT  
*qbchuut tl’aan habnogn da’ybniiḡn diaa.*  
 2SG:handle.fabric:OPT and upland 2SG:move.fabric.up:OPT PRTCL  
 ‘You should take his coat lying on the ground and move it up there.’
- b. *Dii xab ch’a utüh tidbji’ia tl’aan ni’ijhaaḡ?*  
 why FOC 3SG:over 2SG:step:INCEP:PFV and 2SG:arrive:IPFV:PROG  
 ‘Why did you step over it when you got there?’
- c. *K’at’eeḡ dineb eegn’ tüh tab’üü binay hqot’eb!*  
 NEG man coat:POSS over 2PL:step:FUT:NEG 3PL:say:IPFV:NMLZR CERT  
 ‘They certainly say that you (pl.) may not step over mens’ coats!’
- d. *Isbyiit ch’a bitelnay.*  
 there FOC 3SG:remember:INCEP:PFV:NMLZR  
 ‘He should remember that.’
- e. [turning to the man]  
*Nän du’! Dii xab ch’a haskeb k’eb ch’a nii’ijdaak*  
 2SG CT why FOC chief like FOC 2SG:arrive:ITER:IPFV:CUST  
*tl’aan hashyuugn nts’q’ ch’ijteegn?*  
 and down to 2SG>INDEF:handle.PLO:IPFV:CUST:NMLZR  
 ‘And you! Why do you come back in here like you’re chief  
 and throw stuff on the ground?’
- f. *Dii xab haskeb ndihnay?*  
 why chief 1SG>2SG:say:IPFV:NMLZR  
 ‘Why should I call you chief?’

- g. *Haskeb lab dji't'eb ha'!*  
 chief NEG 2SG:be:IPFV NEG  
 'You're nothing like a chief!'
- h. *Haskeb iin k'a hoo' bidjiign!*  
 chief PL NEG thus 3PL:do:IPFV:CUST:NEG  
 'Chiefs don't do that sort of thing!'
- i. *Nts'qa' dji'di' cb'a hashyugn nts'q' t'eeey*  
 how 2SG:do:PFV FOC down ADVZR  
*n'eeegn' tleegn natijiteegn?*  
 2SG:coat:POSS dirty 2SG:move.PLO.down:INCEP:IPFV:CUST:NMLZR  
 'How do you do that, throwing your dirty coat around here?'
- j. *Hashyugn ts'exeeey iin natetdeegn*  
 on.ground women PL 3PL:walk.around:IPFV:CUST:NMLZR  
*hiitüb ti'üb nts'qa' binijithänb?*  
 3PL>3SG:over step:INCEP:IPFV how 2SG:think:IPFV  
 'Are you thinking about the women walking around here about to step over it?'
- k. *Dineb tleegn ubte' nijithän?*  
 man dirty 1SG:be:OPT 2SG:want:IPFV:NMLZR  
 'Do you want to be a bum?' {UTOLAF14May0807:033-046}

The whole response to this video clip comprises 18 utterances, yet not one of them is a prohibitive—in spite of the fact that the speaker is clearly upset with both participants. In addressing the woman, Mrs. Barnes uses a variety of strategies: she suggests an alternative course of action with a positive directive (15a), encourages the woman to reflect on her behavior (15b), and appeals to group membership (15c). Importantly, she assigns some responsibility for the woman's transgression to the man (15d): he should know better than to put her at risk of such behavior.

When she turns to the man (15e), she becomes even more forceful, suggesting that he might think that normal rules might not apply to him because of his (fictitious) elevated status as chief, but immediately calling that into question as well (15f). She points out that with his behavior he has not displayed any of the properties expected of a chief (15g, h); he has not considered the implications of his actions for women sharing the same space (15j) and instead has thrown his 'dirty coat' (15i) around like a 'dirty man' (15k) — an epithet usually translated as 'bum', typically reserved for the mythical Wolverine and other despicable creatures (cf. Lovick 2012). This choice of words clearly reflects just how upset Mrs. Barnes is, yet not a single prohibitive is uttered. In the Nee'aandeegn' data,

prohibitives occurred only when the transgression had nothing to do with *hwtlaanee/ijih*, as for example (16):

(16) Nee'aandeeḡ' (Northway, Mr. Roy Sam)

*Ogn shyüb hqōt̥i, s̥' kee eedänb ti'yushya'.*  
outside snow AREAL:be:IPFV PROH shoe without 2SG:SG.go.out:OPT

'There's snow outside, don't go outside without shoes.' {UTOLAF14Nov2407-001}

It should be noted, however, that even in situations where mild danger was involved, the Nee'aandeeḡ' speakers preferred indirect approaches. After watching the clip where an individual places a cup full of hot tea precariously on the edge of a table, Mr. and Mrs. Sam commented that this was dangerous especially when kids were present. Mrs. Sam then produced the imperative form (17):

(17) Nee'aandeeḡ'

*Naxat tuut̥ij̥t̥ nadalt̥bek nadaat'at noo d̥ibkq̥q̥!*  
that cup 3SG:OOC.fall:FUT 3SG:spill.down:FUT middle 2SG:handle.OOC:IPFV

'That cup will fall, [the tea] will spill down, put it in the middle!'

On another occasion, Mrs. Sam and I talked about how young children always seem to be drawn to the woodstove. When I asked what she would say to her great-grandson (then about four) in that situation, she uttered a lexicalized prohibitive followed by a warning in (18a) but suggested the warning without a prohibitive in (18b) as another option:

(18) Nee'aandeeḡ'

a. *Dadh̥ij̥day! Naxat kon' deek'an'!*  
2SG:do:IPFV:NEG that fire 3SG:burn:IPFV  
'Don't do that! The fire is burning!'

b. *Elok! Naxat t̥ij̥t̥'iah!*  
hot! that 2SG:burn:FUT  
'It's hot, you might get burnt!'

{UT Notebook #5, p. 72}

*Dadh̥ij̥day* 'don't do that, stop doing that' is an archaic morphological negative that is attested only with one other verb: *dadh̥ij̥n̥q̥y* 'shut up, stop talking'.<sup>11</sup> These forms are rude, appropriate only when addressing children or (in jest) between friends. Even in a situation involving grievous bodily harm and a small child, however, Mrs. Sam was adamant that (18b) was just as good as (18a).

In our observations of English-language interactions, we notice the same trend against

<sup>11</sup> Both forms can also be pluralized; first and second forms inflected in this fashion no longer exist, cf. Kari (1993) and Lovick (to appear).

on-record negative directives (see Field 2001 for a discussion of how traditional interaction strategies may be maintained in the contact language).

#### 4.1.3 Careful discussion

Another advantage of this method was that it led to thoughtful discussion of the chosen forms, without which we might misinterpret utterances. Example (19) is the reaction by Dr. Eliza Jones to the young man pulling the chair out from under a woman sitting down:

- (19) Central Denaakk'e  
*Nedaats'e kk'ohoo'oyh nuḡhūnee!*  
 how 3SG>AREAL:do:IPFV DEM  
 'How he does things, that one!' {EJ, 140501}

Taken out of context, this utterance could be interpreted by an English speaker as an affectionate comment. Instead, the speaker was adamant that it expresses strong disapproval.

Variations in levels of politeness were also explained; for example, Denaakk'e *en bedeenledo* 'move over a little' in (14b) is a gentle nudge toward providing room for another person. The rough comment *k'eyetaatmen* 'something's making him crazy, he's being a nuisance' in (9b) is not so polite. Dictionary entries for these expressions do not include such shades of meaning.

Many of the discussions we had around the videos and their commentary revolved about the notion of *butlaanee/ijjih*. Explanations of this system sometimes sound to outsiders as if they are rules primarily aimed at girls and young women. This unbalanced viewpoint may be due to the fact that many linguistic consultants in Alaskan Dene are female, and thus better informed on constraints on female behavior. Most previous researchers in Dene linguistics, on the other hand, have been males brought up in North American colonial culture, where behavior rules for women are much stricter than for men. The result could be an over-emphasis on rules for women and girls. Yet the responses to the video where a woman steps over a man's coat were overwhelmingly directed at the man, not at the woman. An example from Nee'aandegn' was given in (15); (20) contains one from Denaakk'e.

- (20) Central Denaakk'e [addressing man]  
 a. *Nedeeloyee ghoyeneeghaaleeneek.*  
 2SG:clothes 2SG:take.care:IPFV  
 'Take care of your clothes.' {EJ, 140501}  
 b. *Nedaakoon nonḡuḡh buts'e buteetdeyhtl.*  
 PROH1 out.there to 2SG:toss:IPFV:CUST  
 'Don't just throw things out there.' {EJ, 140501}

Although the woman's action is wrong, the man created the situation that caused it, and thus bears the bulk of the responsibility.<sup>12</sup>

Last of all, discussion revealed some information of anthropological (rather than linguistic) interest; while for example the female speakers thought that walking barefoot in the snow was either foolish or dangerous, Mr. Roy Sam reminisced with a chuckle about when he and his friends would stand barefoot in the snow to see who was the toughest.

#### 4.1.4 Unusual constructions

An additional point in favor of our methodology is the fact that we recorded a number of examples of constructions or lexical items that are rare in narrative text but occur more frequently in interactive settings. In linguistic situations like that of Alaskan Dene, this is an unexpected boon: as these languages are no longer used in daily interactions, recording such constructions or lexical items poses a challenge. The excerpt in (15) above is remarkable not only for the rich variation upon the same theme, but also contains instances of otherwise very rare constructions and lexical items. As already alluded to above, *tleeen* is only rarely used, and instances of its use as a swear word (such as 15i, k) are extremely uncommon. Another interesting construction is the negation in (15g). Negation in Nee'aandeeen' is usually expressed by the negative particle *k'a(t'ee)* plus a negative-inflected verb form (cf. (2c)). Neither of these is present in (15g); the discontinuous particle *lab...ha'* combines with a positive verb form. The resulting semantics are quite different, as shown by the comparison of (15g), repeated here as (21b) with (the standard negated) (21a):

(21) Nee'aandeeen'

- a. *K'at'ee* *haskeb* *djiit'ay*.  
 NEG chief 2SG:be:IPFV:NEG  
 'You (sg.) are not the/a chief.' {UT Notebook #5, p. 69}
- b. *Haskeb* *lab* *djiit'eb* *ha'*  
 chief NEG 2SG:be:IPFV NEG  
 'You (sg.) are nothing like a chief!' {UTOLAF14May0807:039}

<sup>12</sup> This male perspective is also apparent in the following excerpt from *The lesser blessed*, a novel by Tł̥chq̓ (Dene) author Richard Van Camp:

"Pussy," scoffed Johnny, "taking off your shoes at a house party. What a putz." He dropped his jacket on the floor on top of a small shelf that held boots. I hissed and hung it up. My mom never allowed anyone in our house to drop a jacket or a hat. If you do and a woman steps over your clothes, that's it. You're done for: bad luck and you'll never get a moose. I hung it up for him and carefully hung mine up too.

Like I said, I'm Dogrib: I gotta watch it. (p. 32)



The ordinary negation results in a negative, neutral-value assertion: you are not the chief, someone else has that role. Example (21b) is much stronger: not only are you not chief, you have none of the characteristics associated with a chief. This emphatic negation is quite rare; the whole corpus contains about twenty tokens, two of which occur in this recording.

The responses to the video clips also featured a rather high density of interjections, which are also rare in narrative corpora. Thus, the use of video clips featuring taboo activities facilitated the collection of data types that are otherwise underrepresented in our corpora.

## 4.2 Disadvantages

### 4.2.1 Insistence on a verbal response

The most concerning drawback of our approach was our insistence on a verbal response, as the most appropriate response to a severe violation of *hwtlaanee/ijjib* would be non-verbal. Ms. Christina Edwin, a Denaakk'e learner from Tanana, observed for example: "You can tell by the way [the Elders] look at you what you should be doing." Mrs. Avis Sam, a Nee'aandeegn' speaker from Northway, noted, "You don't have to use words, you know. You just use your eyes."

This is something we need to bear in mind as we continue our investigations. A person who 'knows their taboo', who knows how to behave properly in the traditional way, should not need verbal reminders—and in numerous interactions with speakers and their extended families, we have never heard such reminders. Our video elicitation method helps us with the elicitation of negative directives and increases our understanding of semantico-pragmatic nuances affecting their variation, but we must remember that the preferred response to any transgression is non-verbal, which cannot be captured by our methods.

### 4.2.2 Impossibility of eliciting negative directives before the activity takes place

This point is related to the previous concern. Our chosen method results in speakers responding to transgressions after the fact. Negative directives are however often uttered before the activity takes place. The challenge in eliciting this type lies in creating materials that unambiguously suggest that a particular activity is about to be undertaken. This is possible with something like walking barefoot into the snow, but much harder with an activity such as throwing a coat on the floor. Thus, this method is not very well suited to the elicitation of negative directives before the fact.

In a similar vein, we were not able to elicit responses to physically dangerous situations, since we could not simulate, for example, a student stepping out in front of an on-coming vehicle without actually endangering both the student and the driver.<sup>13</sup>

### 4.3 Adaptability to other field situations

We believe that this method could easily be adapted to other field situations. Due to our focus on the cultural notion of *butlaanee/ijjih*, it is likely that new clips will have to be produced, if this is the researchers' intention. Since other groups are likely to have different taboos, we recommend extensive consultation with community members and/or cultural or linguistic anthropologists working in the same area.

## 5. Conclusions

The use of video stimuli to elicit negative directives in Alaskan Dene languages has proven fruitful in several respects. It produces a great variety of responses, both on- and off-record, to situations represented in videos. In both languages, off-record expressions were preferred over on-record ones, particularly in situations where *butlaanee/ijjih* was involved. We were able to identify several conventionalized strategies, such as querying the motivations for the activity and making alternative suggestions, which will allow us to search for these strategies in the documentation of the two languages.

Application of this methodology seems well-suited to the kind of problems we encountered in researching negative directives: the multiplicity of forms contrasted with the infrequency of their use in narrative, and the lack of context in documentary forms such as dictionaries. Since the forms truly cannot be sorted without knowing the context, provision of a consistent set of contexts is one way to decrease the number of potential variables. This methodology would be appropriate, therefore, for work on any part of a grammar where context is particularly important.

Ancillary benefits of this approach include the fact that the detailed discussions deepened our understanding of traditional and non-traditional, or Anglo-American, norms for behavior. The spontaneity of responding to moving imagery resulted in the documentation of constructions that are underrepresented in our current corpora. Last but not least, this method was very enjoyable for elders and field workers alike.

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<sup>13</sup> One anonymous reviewer suggested using footage from action films or creating videos using puppets. Both are excellent ideas that we will explore in future fieldwork.

Drawbacks of this methodology include the impossibility of eliciting negative directives before an undesirable activity takes place, and in particular urgent warnings of physical danger. Additionally, several individuals commented that verbal responses, especially in response to cultural transgressions, are often dispreferred.

There are still many ways in which our stimuli could be improved, both with respect to the depicted situations and with respect to production values, including casting, location and lighting.

Overall, we find the addition of video stimuli to the tools we can use in fieldwork to have positive results. Compared with other forms of prepared elicitation material (storyboards, wordlists, games, or tasks), video may take a longer or shorter time to create, depending on production quality and amount of prior consultation with consultants familiar with relevant linguistic behavior. Tools for its creation are now commonplace, as decent quality video can be created with smartphones. As with other stimuli, a particular piece of video may produce results other than expected, or work variably with different consultants. However, video elicitation seems especially well adapted to situations where control of context needs to be balanced with spontaneity of response.

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