ON SPEAKING TO HIM (COYOTE):
THE DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF THE yi-/bi- ALTERNATION IN
SOME CHIRICAHUA APACHE NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT. This paper concerns the use of the yi-/bi- alternation in a collection of Chiricahua Apache Coyote stories told by Samuel E. Keno to Harry Hoijer in the 1930s. Through a close reading of these texts it is argued that the yi-/bi- alternation acts as a marker of topicality. The bi- third person pronoun indicates a topical object, while the yi- form marks a less topical object. Thus use of the yi-/bi- alternation then is similar to the recent discursive perspectives of McCleary (1989) and Willie (2000) concerning the Navajo yi-/bi- alternation. Thus while earlier investigations (Hale 1973, Witherspoon 1977) posited a Subject Object Inversion based on animacy or agency with respect to the alternation, a discursive focus builds on those insights. One possible application of this may be in understanding Apachean poetics.ª

INTRODUCTION. The goal of this article is to present a discursive assessment of the yi-/bi- alternation in Chiricahua Apache. I argue that the yi-/bi- alternation can be understood as marker of topical objects within a larger discourse. Specifically, this paper expands on Thompson's (1996) discussion of the discursive uses of the yi-/bi- alternation in Apachean and other Athapaskan languages. This paper is concordant with Rushforth's (1991) discussion of the discursive uses of classificatory

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verb stems in Mescalero Apache narratives. Both our works are interested in the uses of linguistic resources within larger discursive contexts. My discussion will be based on the discursive uses of the yi-/-bi- alternation in Coyote Stories.

In Section 1, I describe the third person pronominal system in Chiricahua Apache. In Section 2, I review a number of explanations for the yi-/-bi- alternation in Apachean languages. In Section 3, I present the results of a preliminary survey of the distribution of yi- and bi- in some Chiricahua Apache Coyote stories. In Section 4, I offer a brief conclusion.

1. THIRD PERSON PRONOMINAL IN CHIRICAHUA APACHE. In this section I want to outline the third person markers in Chiricahua Apache. I will discuss the third person subject, object, and possessive forms. I begin, however, with some background on Harry Hoijer and Chiricahua Apache. The Chiricahua Apache live, primarily, on the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico and at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. According to the 1990 U.S. Census there were 279 Chiricahua Apache speakers. However, as with most censuses there is the problem of verifiable information regarding language abilities that are self-reported. People may self-report language ability for non-linguistic reasons or they may over or under state their proficiency. Be that as it may, I think we can agree with Young (1983) when he characterizes the language situation as one of a moribund language. Chiricahua Apache seems to be shifting toward Mescalero Apache (Young 1983). Chiricahua Apache is thus part of a larger trend of Native American languages (and indigenous languages more generally) that are endangered and thus face the real possibility of language death (Krauss 1992).

Chiricahua Apache is a Southern Athapaskan language and is related to Navajo, Mescalero Apache, Western Apache, Jicarilla Apache, Lipan Apache, and Plains Apache. Harry Hoijer conducted the most extensive linguistic work on Chiricahua Apache in the 1930s. Hoijer published articles on, among other topics, the Apachean classificatory verb stem (1945a), the Apachean verb complex more generally (1945b, 1946a, 1946b, 1948a, 1949), the noun in Apachean (1948b), a grammatical sketch of Chiricahua Apache (1946c), a collection of texts in Chiricahua and Mescalero Apache (1938), and a discussion of the relation of the Chiricahua Apache language to Chiricahua Apache culture (1953). More recently, Pinnov (1988) has published, in German, a more complete grammar of Chiricahua based in part on the earlier work of Hoijer. The focus of this paper is on Chiricahua Apache as it was spoken in the 1930s. Much research is required to understand the ways Chiricahua Apache has changed since then.

Harry Hoijer, who was audience and transcriber of the following narratives, was one of the proponents of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see Hoijer 1954). In particular, Hoijer (1948b, 1953) drew on his linguistic analysis of Chiricahua to make claims about the habitual ways that individuals used language—fashions of speaking. Hoijer (1950; Opler and Hoijer 1940) outlined a number of fashions of speaking among the Chiricahua, including polite forms of address, descriptive place
names, and the raiding and warfare vocabulary. Crucial to Hoijer's (1950: 559) work was how "language habits influence sensory perceptions and thought." However, Hoijer never developed a fully adequate description of the language habits of Chiricahua Apache (see Lucy 1992). This paper attempts to add one example of Chiricahua Apache "fashions of speaking".

Chiricahua Apache is a verb final language (Hoijer 1938, 1946a). In what follows, I will translate the Chiricahua Apache syntax into English syntax. Chiricahua Apache does not code for gender on the third person, nor for that matter in any pronoun (Hoijer 1946c). As Hoijer (1946c) stated, the third person subject is always zero. Thus, the third person subject is marked as a zero on intransitive verbs. For example:

(1) ndi
    he said
    he said.

The third person subject pronoun is also marked as zero on transitive verbs:

(2) shi ndi
    1OPP 3s.said
    He said to me.

The third person object pronoun can be marked as either yi- or bi- and it is this phenomenon that has been described as the yi-/bi- alternation (see Thompson 1996). Thus one can find either:

(3) yi i ndi
    3OPP 3s.say
    He said to her.

(4) bi i ndi
    3OPP 3s.say
    He said to her.

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1In the Chiricahua Apache examples that follow, I use an orthography closely aligned with the current orthography used on the Mescalero Reservation and in the Mescalero Dictionary (see Rushforth et al. 1982). I follow the standard Athapaskan orthography with these distinctions: For vowels I use the following: a = oral; ã = nasal. ñ = high tone; a = low tone. Voiceless alveolar lateral = l. Voiceless velar fricative = x. ñ is a syllabic nasal with high tone. ' is a glottal stop. j = [ j ]; gh = [ gh ]; ch = [ ch ]; and sh = [ sh ]. In updating Hoijer's orthography I have not attempted to represent the phonological changes that have occurred in Chiricahua Apache since Hoijer did his fieldwork in the 1930s. However, this orthography is distinct from the Mescalero orthography in that I retain 'o' orthographically and have not replaced it with 'u' as is done in the Mescalero Dictionary.
Finally, the third possessive form is *bi- (I have not been able to find an alternative yi- form).\(^3\) For example:

(5) bimá  
3POSS.mother  
her mother

(6) bitaa  
3POSS father  
her father

2. EXPLANATIONS OF THE Yi-/Bi- ALTERNATION IN APACHEAN LANGUAGES. The yi-/bi- alternation has a long and distinguished career in the Athabaskan literature (see Thompson 1996 for a review). The alternation was first noted by Ken Hale (1973). Hale (1973) was the first to connect the yi-/bi- alternation in Navajo with Subject Object Inversion (SOI). He further explained SOI by invoking an animacy hierarchy in Navajo. Witherspoon (1977) has also attempted to explain the SOI and the yi-/bi- alternation by invoking a hierarchy based on the notions of speaking, agency, and animacy. Both Hale (1973) and Witherspoon (1977) assume that the yi-/bi-alternation is related to SOI and that this phenomenon can be explained on a sentence or clause level. Hale and Witherspoon give a number of Navajo examples. Here I present, perhaps, the most famous (Witherspoon 1977: 64-65):

(7) hastiin ḥįį yiztal  
man horse it-it-kicked  
the man kicked the horse

(8) *ḥįį hastiin biztal  
horse man it-it-kicked  
the horse was kicked by the man

(9) hastiin ḥįį biztal  
man horse it-it-kicked  
the man was kicked by the horse

(10) *ḥįį hastiin yiztal  
horse man it-it-kicked  
the horse kicked the man

According to Witherspoon (1977), we see the yi-/bi- connected to an animacy (agency) hierarchy, whereby human beings have more agency than non-human animals. For Witherspoon this is connected with agency and for Hale the connec-

\(^3\) A reviewer noted that Western Apache does have a “rare” alternate form of yi-. Willie (2000) points out that there is also a rare alternate yi- form in Navajo.
tion concerns animacy. Neither gives much discussion to the discursive uses that the alternation can have.

More recently, McCreedy (1989) and Willie (2000) have discussed the yi-/bi-alternation in relation to discursive considerations. McCreedy (1989: 476) notes, "when two or more full NPs occur, their ordering is governed by principles of ... topicality." This is quite similar to the argument developed here. Willie (2000: 381) argues that yi-form can be understood as a "nonsubject pronoun ... whose use is controlled by discourse topicality." Again, this argument complements the argument I develop. The Navajo literature is quite extensive and in what follows I will focus primarily on non-Navajo Apachean descriptions of the yi-/bi-alternation (see, however, Uyechi 1990 and Willie 1991). I do this to highlight the relative paucity of work in other Apachean languages concerning this alternation.

There have been a number of different kinds of explanations for the yi-/bi-alternation in Apachean languages. I want to now review four specific kinds of explanations with particular reference to non-Navajo Apachean languages. Harry Hoijer (1945b) has provided largely COMPARATIVE descriptions of the yi-/bi-alternation in Apachean languages (even comparative descriptions are, by default, explanations). Hoijer (1945b, 1946c) does suggest that the alternation between yi-/bi- is related to whether or not the subject of the verb is third person or not. According to Hoijer (1945b, 1946c) the bi-form occurs when the subject of the verb is "other than third person." The yi-form is used when the subject of the verb is also third person. However, there are now numerous examples that suggest that this explanation does not hold (see examples below).

Shayne (1982), discussing San Carlos Apache (Western Apache), offers a second explanation. She suggests a SEMANTIC explanation for the yi-/bi-alternation. First, Shayne (1982) argues that yi-is not a pronoun, but rather yi-is a "marker of high transitivity" that indicates that "the entity which gets the credit for the realization of the verb, and the entity which is being talked about, is the agent (399)." The bi-form appears when the agent does not have the necessary control to realize the verb alone, and thus the goal is seen to participate in the event. Shayne (1982) argues that, "if a potent agent is in subject position of a given sentence, yi-must be prefixed to the verb. In all other cases, the prefix must be bi- (400)." In the following example, Shayne (1982) would argue that in (12) the goal aids in the realization of the verb, whereas in (11) the subject is a potent agent (the examples are from San Carlos Apache and are in Shayne 1982: 392).

(11) mé yo’j
   baby him progressive see
   He sees the baby.

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1 I thank a reviewer for pointing me in this direction.
2 According to one reviewer, Shayne's examples are suspect regarding spelling.
(12) mé bo’į
baby him progressive see
The baby sees him.

Sandoval (1984) and Sandoval and Jelinek (1989) offer a third explanation. In discussing Jicarilla Apache, they suggest a syntactic explanation for the yi-/bi-alternation. Sandoval (1984) and Sandoval and Jelinek (1989) posit a number of co-indexing rules. Below I present two examples. The first example is from Sandoval (1984: 172) and is Jicarilla Apache. The bi-form in Jicarilla is sometimes m- (Sandoval 1984). The next example is in Chiricahua Apache and is from a text by Hoijer (1938:25). Note, and this point will be returned to below, that there is an assumption that these sentences can be understood outside of the discourse context from which they may occur.

(13) ch’ekéé yaa’į
girl 3s-3s see
“X sees the girl.”

(14) ch’ekéé maa’į
girl 3s-3s see
“The girl sees X.”

(15) nágo bimáį́ m áyiį́ m ndí ná’a
then 3POSS.mother.RE thus.3OPP 3s.say NE
Then he spoke thus to his mother, they say (18: 25: 12)

(16) nágo bimáį́ m ábiį́ m ndí ná’a
then 3POSS.mother.RE thus.3OPP 3s.say NE
Then his mother spoke thus to him, so they say (18: 25: 13)

For the above examples, Sandoval and Jelinek (1989) have posited a co-indexing rule whereby the bi-form co-indexes the agent and the yi-form co-indexes the patient when there is one Nominal Adjunct to a transitive verb. Both Sandoval (1984) and Sandoval and Jelinek (1989) agree that bi- is the marked form and indicates that the patient argument is in the grammatical relation Subject.

Thompson (1996) notes that many of these previous discussions of the yi-/bi-alternation have conflated two disparate phenomena: namely, that the yi-/bi-alternation is related to Subject Object Inversion. This critique can be applied to Shayne (1982), Sandoval (1984), and Sandoval and Jelinek (1989). Thompson (1996) shows that in Navajo and San Carlos Apache the alternation of yi-/bi- is not directly related to SOI. From Navajo, for example (the following examples are from Young and Morgan 1987 and are used in Thompson 1996: 83), we find:

\[\text{Citations from Hoijer (1938) will be organized in the following way: (Text Number: Page Number: Paragraph Number).}\]
(17) náátsʼiiildzil yinahaazlʼá
rainbow mountain yi-surround
‘Rainbows surround the mountains.’

(18) náátsʼiiildzil binahaazlʼá
rainbow mountain bi-surround
‘Rainbows surround the mountains.’

Thompson (1996), citing Shayne (1982), points out that San Carlos Apache also has a loose relation between the yi-/bi- alternation and SOI.

Thompson (1989, 1996) has offered a fourth explanation. In looking at a range of Athapaskan languages (including Koyukon, San Carlos Apache, Navajo, and Hupa), Thompson argues for a discursive explanation. Thompson (1989, 1996) argues that the bi- form indicates a marked object within a larger discourse. Thus, bi- indicates a topical object. Thompson (1996: 94) defines topicality along two parameters:

As indicators of topicality, I rely on two notions ... a notion of predictability, the predictability of occurrence of a prefix’s referent as a participant in a stretch of discourse given what has come before, and importance, measured in three ways by a referent continuing participation in the action in a stretch of discourse, by the anthropocentric trait of humanness, and by a story-teller’s use of the referent in the name of the text [emphasis in original].

Thompson (1996: 94) goes on to argue that the “use of the bi- over yi- is linked to importance more than to predictability.” According to him (1996: 97), “the bi-form signals a reversal of relationships in discourse, with a bi-marked object understood as more important in the discourse than the subject of the clause.” He has presented his argument most convincingly in a text-based study of Koyukon.

Thompson (1996) has shown that the relationship between yi-/bi- and SOI is at best loose. This opens up the possibility that the yi-/bi- alternation is not always syntactically motivated, but rather has discursive and pragmatic functions. An advantage of Thompson’s (1996) approach is that it allows one to generate testable propositions, given the definition of topicality, about the distribution of the yi-/bi- alternation in larger discourse. In the next section, I propose just such propositions for a specific genre of Chiricahua Apache narrative.

3. THE Yi-/Bi- ALTERNATION IN SOME “COYOTE STORIES”. I have chosen to examine a corpus of Chiricahua Apache Coyote narratives told by Samuel E. Kenoi to Harry Hoijer. The narratives were told from June 18th to June 25th 1930 on the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico. The motivation behind selecting Coyote

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6A ninth Coyote narrative told by Lawrence Mithlo was also examined from Hoijer (1938). However, there were no examples of the yi-/bi- alternation on the verb of speaking. For simplicity sake I have therefore excluded the narrative from the final tallies because it neither adds nor detracts from the final results. I also have looked at a number of “Foolish People” stories
stories is related to Thompson’s (1996) discussion of topicality and specifically the notion of importance. Recall that Thompson (1996) gives three properties to judge importance, which he deems more closely connected with the yi-/bi- alternation: (1) continuing participation in a stretch of discourse; (2) anthropocentric quality of humanness; and (3) global importance as indicated by an explicit mention of the name of the referent in the title. These stories, known as the genre “Coyote Stories” among the Apache, offer an ideal opportunity to examine the global importance of the referent Coyote. Likewise, Coyote has the anthropocentric characteristics of humanness. I will specifically examine dialogic interactions between Coyote and a Non-Coyote co-participant (hereafter NC). In doing this, I will focus on the local importance of Coyote by contrasting it with a co-occurring NC participant. Let me add that many Coyote narratives are built around the dialogic interactions where Coyote or a NC attempts to deceive the other (see Webster 1999). Thus, these Coyote stories are often about speaking. In this regard, I will restrict my examination to the verb of speaking –ndi ‘say’. I do this because it is the most common verb in these narratives and can be transitive.

It should be clear that this is a preliminary survey of the uses of yi-/bi- in Chiricahua Apache Coyote narratives. I will focus on what I believe is an interesting use of the yi-/bi- alternation, one that concerns the central role of dialogue in these narratives and the repeated use of the verb of speaking –ndi. A more complete analysis would be concerned with all the alternations of yi-/bi- on all the verbs in these narratives. Secondly, I have restricted my survey to the use of the yi-/bi- alternation where one character, Coyote, is clearly globally more impor-

from Hoijer (1938: 35-39). As a genre among the Chiricahua Apache they are known as tsjqizhène bigonide “Stories of the Foolish People,” and hence by the criteria of importance the Foolish People are more globally topical. Only one of the narratives, “Foolish People and the White Men” (Hoijer 1938: 37), told by Sam Kenoi shows an alternation between yi-/bi-. As would be expected, the Foolish People, who are more globally topical, take the bi- form:

daa biil[^pp] ndi[^pp] nà’a
DIST 3OPP to say,3S NE
They (Foolish People) said to them (Foolish People), so they say

On the other hand, the White Men take the less focal or topical form yi-:

daa yiil[^wm] ndi[^pp] nà’a
DIST 3OPP to say,3S NE
They (Foolish People) said to them (White Men), so they say

This fits the general pattern described for Coyote and non-Coyote actors in this paper.

Southern Athapaskan terms abound as well. Among Navajo the narratives can be referred to as mgiij jooldloshi hene ‘Coyote, the one who trots’ (Benally 1994). I recorded a similar form during research with Navajo poets. Indeed, at least one Navajo consultant reduced Coyote narratives to jooldloshi ‘the one who trots.’ Among Western Apaches, Coyote stories are known as ma’ highaالي nagoldi e’ ‘to tell of Coyote’s travels’ (Basso 1991).
tant than the other character, NC. A more detailed analysis would look at all the uses of the yi-/bi- alternation for all the characters in the narrative and potentially would be able to generate a hierarchy of discursive topicality. This hierarchy would be discourse dependent because the global importance of, say, Coyote, may not be reflected in non-Coyote Stories where Coyote may appear.

We can now turn to suggesting two reasonable propositions given the notion of topicality and importance discussed by Thompson (1996):

**Proposition 1:** Given that Coyote is globally important and has the anthropocentric qualities of humanness, we can suggest that Coyote will have high topicality. Therefore, we would assume that Coyote should take the bi- object form in the verbs of speaking. The bi- object form will indicate that Coyote is the marked form and is more important than the subject of the clause.

This proposition entails a second proposition:

**Proposition 2:** Given that NCs are globally less important than Coyote, they will tend to take the yi- object form on the verb of speaking. Thus they have the unmarked object form.

I say tend in the above proposition because NCs, potentially, can be elevated in topicality due to local importance. However, according to Thompson (1996), it is suspected that the reverse cannot hold, i.e. that Coyote can be demoted in importance. Rather the best that can be said is that a second character (NC) can be elevated to equal topicality as Coyote and that this increase in topicality for the NC will be indicated by a shift in yi- to bi-. Whether or not Coyote can be demoted in local importance remains an open question, however, for future research.

I now present the results of the survey of uses of yi- and bi- on the verb of speaking –ndi in the eight Coyote narratives told by Sam Kenoi to Harry Hoijer. In all, thirty-one examples were found. There were no examples of two co-occurring NPs with the yi-/bi- constructions. This, it should be noted, contrasts with McCready’s (1989) discussion concerning the co-occurrence of two NPs in Navajo discourse examples. In her case, she is clearly discussing instances where two NPs are present. That is not the case here. And yet, I would argue, the alternation still functions as topical markers.

I begin with the yi- forms. Recall that the yi- object marker should indicate NCs and not Coyote. In fact, this is exactly what we find. Coyote never takes the yi- form in the verb of speaking –ndi that I have examined. The yi- form does occur in a number of different kinds of clauses. First, there are the clauses where the yi-form occurs alone. The decision as to whether or not the yi- form refers to NC or Coyote is based on contextual information (i.e. the interchange of dialogue or following information where one character or another responds to the quote). Most of the following examples, those with the yi- form alone, occur after a quotation. Thus, Coyote is speaking to the NC. The narrative enclitic is a familiar feature in these narratives and often acts as a line-indicating marker (see Webster 1999). I
have used subscripts to keep track of the subject and object: subscript c = Coyote; subscript nc = Non-Coyote.

(19) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to him, they say. (11:18: 6)

(20) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to him, they say. (15: 21: 2)

(21) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to him, they say. (16: 22: 2)

(22) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to him, they say. (16: 22: 2)

(23) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to him, they say. (18: 25: 2)

(24) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to him, they say. (18: 26: 23)

(25) yii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} go
\begin{tabular}{ll}
3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{SE} \\
\end{tabular}
As he (Coyote) said to him. (15: 21: 2)

(26) daayii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
DIST.3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to them, they say. (17: 22: 2)

(27) daayii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
DIST.3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to them, they say. (17: 22: 3)

(28) daayii\textsubscript{nc} ndi\textsubscript{c} ná’a
\begin{tabular}{ll}
DIST.3O\textsubscript{PP} & 3s.say \textsubscript{NE} \\
\end{tabular}
He (Coyote) said to them, they say. (18: 26: 17)

In (25), -go is the subordinating enclitic. In (26-28) daa- is the distributive prefix and modifies the third person yi- object and thus marks it as a plural. This form can be prefixed to both the yi- and bi- forms (see Hoijer 1946c). For example:
(29) daaabiił ndi ná’a
   DIST.3OPP 3S.say NE
He said to them, they say.
They said to him, they say.
They said to them, they say.  (17: 24: 18)

As Hoijer (1945b: 202) points out, “in all other cases (i.e. when the subject is any person but the first and second person singular and the object any person but the first and second person singular), the distributive prefix may modify the subject pronoun, the object pronoun, or both.” The ambiguity that arises in (26-28) as to whether the distributive modifies the subject, object or both must be distinguished contextually.

I will now present the examples where the yi- form occurs with a NP.

(30) tsé‘í₃ nc yiil₃ nc ndiₜ c ná’a
    rock.RE 3OPP 3S.say NE
He (Coyote) said to the rock, they say.  (14: 20: 6)

(31) dlóó’yeí₃ nc daayiil₃ nc ndiₜ c ná’a
    prairie dog.RE DIST.3OPP 3S.say NE
He (Coyote) said to the Prairie Dogs, they say.  (17: 23: 9)

(32) dlóó’yeí₃ nc daayiil₃ nc ndiₜ c ná’a
    prairie dog.RE DIST.3OPP 3S.say NE
He (Coyote) said to the Prairie Dogs, they say.  (17: 24: 14)

(33) dlóó’yeí₃ nc daayiil₃ nc ndiₜ c ná’a
    prairie dog.RE DIST.3OPP 3S.say NE
He (Coyote) said to the Prairie Dogs, they say.  (17: 24: 21)

In (30-33), -i is a relative enclitic that refers to “things, actions, and collectivities” (Hoijer 1946c: 84).

In the above examples (19-28, 30-33) we have seen two general patterns of the use of the yi- form. (1) In examples (19-28) we see yi- standing alone without a NP. The interpretation of the zero third person subject and yi- third person object must be based on contextual information, i.e. what has come before and what comes after. (2) In (30-33), we see yi- and a NP. The NP is the object in these clauses, thus, borrowing the term from Sandoval (1984), the yi- form seems to co-index the NP as the object of the clause. However, in all fourteen occurrences across eight Coyote narratives told over eight days, the yi- form on the verb of speaking –ndi refers to NC, regardless of the syntactic function of that NC. The yi- form on the verb of speaking –ndi never refers to Coyote. Thus the yi- form is predictable as referring to NCs. It is one thing, then, to say that the yi- form co-indexes the NP as the subject patient. However, this does not explain why, over eight narratives, NCs consistently take the yi- form on the verb of speaking –ndi. Thus, I have ar-
gued that while the yi- form may co-index the NP as the object, the NP is predictable given discursive considerations of topicality and importance.

I now present the bi- forms. Many of the bi- forms are part of what I would term the Apachean quotative couplet. In the quotative couplet there is an introductory verb of speaking (marked with a special prefix á- ‘thus’) followed by the quote, which is then followed by another verb of speaking (lacking the prefix). Thus, for example, we find:

(34) indaañ ñc ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a “...” biíl ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    white people.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE 3OFP 3S.say NE
    The White People spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say: “...” They
    said to him (Coyote), they say. (11: 18: 3)

(35) indaañ ñc ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a “...” biíl ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    white people.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE 3OFP 3S.say NE
    The White People spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say: “...” They
    said to him (Coyote), they say. (11: 18: 5)

(36) tséíñ ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a “...” biíl ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    rock.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE 3OFP 3S.say NE
    The Rock spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say: “...” He said to him
    (Coyote), they say. (14: 20: 8)

The relative enclitic -ní is used to refer to persons. There are also a number of examples that have a NP (as do the beginnings of 34-36) but lack the closing of the quotative couplet.

(37) nágo gólizhnichéí ñc ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    then beetle.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE
    Then the Beetle spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say. (15: 21: 3)

(38) nágo gólizhnichéí ñc ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    then beetle.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE
    Then the Beetle spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say. (15: 21: 5)

(39) ma’íshódích’ízhéí ñc ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    rock lizard.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE
    The Rock Lizard spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say. (16: 22: 5)

(40) nágo bigha’ísdzání ñc ábiil ñc ndi ñc ná’a
    then 3POSS.wife.RE thus.3OFP 3S.say NE
    Then his wife spoke thus to him (Coyote), they say. (18: 26: 18)

A third pattern of the bi- form occurs with the fourth person subject pronoun ji-.
(41) bi'teji ndi ná’a
3OPP 4s say NE
One said to him (Coyote), they say. (11: 19: 14)

(42) bi'teji ndi ná’a
3OPP 4s say NE
One said to him (Coyote), they say. (14: 20: 1)

(43) bi'teji ndi ná’a
3OPP 4s say NE
One said to him (Coyote), they say. (14: 20: 3)

In the next example (44), there is the third person object form bi-, the fourth person subject form ji-, and a NP (Coyote).

(44) ma’yeña bi'teji ndi ná’a
coyote.RE 3OPP 4s say NE
One said to the Coyote, they say. (16: 22: 4)

In examples (34-44), Coyote has consistently taken the bi- form. However, there are three final examples where the bi- form refers not to Coyote but to the NC, in particular Beetle.

(45) nágo ma’yeña abiit ne ndi ná’a “...” biit ne ndi ná’a
then coyote.RE thus 3OPP 3s.say NE 3OPP 3s.say NE
Then the Coyote spoke thus to him (Beetle), they say: “...” He (Coyote) said to him (Beetle), they say. (15: 21: 3)

(46) nágo ma’yeña abiit ne ndi ná’a
then coyote.RE thus 3OPP 3s.say NE
Then the Coyote spoke thus to him (Beetle), they say. (15: 21: 6)

Notice that Coyote takes the -i relative enclitic (used for actions, things, and collectivities) when he is the Subject of (45-46) and the -n relative enclitic (used for persons) when he is the Object (44). The relative enclitic specifies that the noun is the same noun that has occurred earlier in the discourse. It means the aforementioned ‘Coyote’ or ‘Rock’, for example. It differentiates them according to whether the noun is a ‘person’ or ‘actions, things, and collectivities.’ Thus in examples (31-33) a group of prairie dogs takes the -i form and in (36) the rock also takes the -i. However, Rock Lizard (39) takes the -n form. I am unsure why the alternation occurs in this instance as well as with Coyote.

In Table 1 I summarize the results of the preceding examination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>yi-</th>
<th>bi-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coyote</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.
Table 1 helps us clarify my two earlier propositions. The revised propositions are as follows:

**Proposition 1:** Coyote, as the more globally important actor, will be more likely to take the bi- form.

**Proposition 2:** The yi- form will more likely be used for NCs who are less topical.

These two propositions are borne out in the examination of the object forms used on the verb of speaking -ndi.

However, we still have the three bi- forms used with the NC Beetle. I believe the use of the bi- form can be explained via the notion of local importance and the strategic and poetic use of the bi- form to indicate an elevation of Beetle’s topicality and importance in the discourse. First, the title of the narrative is “Coyote and Beetle” (Hoijer 1938: 21). Unfortunately, Hoijer gives no indication if this title was supplied by Chiricahuas or was Hoijer’s title. If his Chiricahua consultants provided the title, then we can suspect that Beetle is also of equal global importance. However, Beetle begins the narrative with the yi- object form (see examples 20 and 25 from the same narrative). A second point is that the switch to the bi- object form comes when Coyote is responding to Beetle’s deception. Below I present the exchange. Note, however, that when Coyote is stating that he will eat Beetle, Beetle takes the unmarked yi- form. Yet, once Coyote begins responding to Beetle, Beetle takes the marked bi- form.

(47) nágó ma’yéf ‘ándi ná’a:
Then Coyote spoke thus, they say:

“‘ik’ah hishanágó naashá,” yiil₃ ndi₃ ná’a.
“I eat only fat in order to live,” he said to him, they say.

“xah nishghal,” yiil₃ ndi₃ go hich’ísízí ná’a.₈
“I’m going to eat you right now.” As he said to him, he stood next to him, they say.

nágó gólizlnchínéí₄₁ ábiil₄ ndi₄ ná’a:
Then the Beetle spoke thus to him, they say:

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₈One reviewer noted the shift to hi- in this example. I am unsure why the shift occurs. Hoijer (1938: 78-79) described it as a “peg element.” Hoijer (1938: 79) gives the following examples of how this works in transitive verbs:

hishbéezh
hi- -sh- -béezh
PEG 1s to boil
I boil it.
"ftséda, haastuí doodaaníndi! koyá ndiiítáhyá iyáaxee daajindi' iyéshtsá.
"Wait, old man, don’t say anything, I am listening to what some [people] are saying there underground."

nágo ma'yeí, 'ábiít, ndí né ná'a:
Then Coyote spoke thus to him, they say:

"xah! iyáadaajindi shílgúndi! 'ándeeda nishghal, 'biít, ndí né ná'a.
"Hurry, tell me what they are saying. When you have told me, then I will eat you."
he said to him, they say.

nágo gólishnlinchéí, 'ábiít, ndí né ná'a:
Then the Beetle spoke thus to him, they say:

"aashjxáné ts'é hík'eeschánní dákkogo hádaashdighaál, daaajílxe daajindi hišts'á."
"Right now they are going to look for someone who has defecated on a rock over there. Sounds like they saying they are going to kill him."

nágo ma'yeí, 'ábiít, ndí né ná'a:
Then the Coyote spoke thus to him, they say:

"hásá, ftsé, dá'jjshí shiba'shindá, 'aghace iyáá'ást'enní'jí baamánshdá."
"Well, wait. Wait right here for me. I'm going back over there for something that I left."

One possible explanation for the use of the bi-object construction with Beetle NC is to suggest that it indicates an elevation in (local) importance of Beetle in this narrative. In this respect, the shift indicates—because it is consistently used only for Coyote in these narratives—that Beetle’s words are important because Coyote is responding to them. In the clauses that Coyote responds to Beetle, Beetle has the bi-marked form. This seems to indicate not just a reversal whereby the bi-marked object is more topical than the Subject but that the bi-marked object has

nishbéezh
ni- -sh- -béezh
2o 1s to boil
I boil you.

I am unclear why there is a shift to hi-. It does seem to hold the spot of the third person object in the above example. More work needs to be done on the function of hi-. Likewise, I have not discussed the fourth person alternation that occurs in Southern Athabaskan languages. That topic lies outside the narrow scope of this paper. Uyechi (1990) provides a useful analysis of the fourth person alternation in Navajo. Again, more work needs to be done.
been elevated from a heretofore yi- marked object to the same local importance as
the more globally important Coyote. This seems to be a poetic (Jakobson 1960)
use of the yi-/bi- alternation—that is, it calls attention to the form of the message.
Note, however, that Coyote, concomitantly, does not lose importance—for Coy-
vote retains the bi- form throughout the exchange.

4. Conclusion. In this paper I have attempted to outline an interpretation of the
yi-/bi- alternation in Chiricahua Apache discourse. Specifically, I have been con-
cerned with Coyote narratives and the alternation of yi-/bi- on the verb of speaking
–ndi. Following Thompson (1996), I have argued that the yi-/bi- alternation has a
discursive function that indicates the relative importance of the object to the sub-
ject. I have argued that the bi- form indicates, in the Coyote narratives I have
examined, that the object is more important than the subject of the clause given
the larger discourse. Thus I proposed that Coyote, who is globally important, would
take the bi- form. The data conforms to this proposition. On the verb of speaking
I analyzed, Coyote never took the yi- form, rather Coyote took the bi- form, thus
indicating that, even when the object, he was more topically important than the
subject NC. However, I also suggested that the yi-/bi- alternation could be poeti-
cally productive (in the Jakobsonian sense). Thus, NCs could be elevated in terms
of local importance given the context of a stretch of discourse. This was shown
with the example of Beetle and Coyote.

Future work, investigating a multitude of genres in Chiricahua Apache and other
Apachean languages, may reveal the poetic and creative uses that can be activated
by the yi-/bi- alternation. It seems plausible, given McCready (1989) and Willie
(2000), that both Navajo and Chiricahua Apache use the yi-/bi- alternation to track
third persons. A focus, then, on the discursive uses of the yi-/bi- alternation may
reveal the ways that narrators can achieve or thwart expectations implied through
the use of topical objects. A serious study of Chiricahua Apache and Southern
Athabaskan poetics demands such intimate attention.

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