Where does r come from and what does it tell us about Fort Good Hope Dene morphology?

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University of Toronto  

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In the past 150 years, the Fort Good Hope dialect of Dene (Slavey) has undergone several phonological shifts. I focus on the change of nasals to r, addressing two issues arise. First, not all nasals shift to r in the appropriate environment, and it appears that the factors that determine what shifts are largely non-linguistic, involving frequency. Second, and of interest in terms of the phonology of endangered languages, sometime during the period in which the exposure to and use of English greatly increased, processes have been introduced that strengthen the evidence for a strong word-internal boundary. Athabaskan languages are often thought to demonstrate ongoing polysynthesis, with morphemes becoming more closely bound within the word. In as much as the recently introduced /r/ is involved in strengthening this boundary, it is interesting that greater morphological transparency of this part of the word has evolved rather than the increased morphological opacity that might be expected.

I. Introduction

1. What can we learn about phonology from endangered languages?
   Athabaskan (Athapaskan/Athabascan)
   Mackenzie Valley
   North Slavey/Dene
   Fort Good Hope Dene (FGH)

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Official Languages of the Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories (NWT) is the only political region in Canada which recognizes 11 official languages.

Of these, nine are Aboriginal and belong to three different language families: Dene, Inuit and Cree. Aboriginal languages are most frequently spoken in smaller communities throughout the Northwest Territories.

The Dene languages spoken in the majority of the NWT are part of the Athabaskan family. Included in this group are Chipewyan, Tha, Dogrib, Loopi'ta, North Slavey and South Slavey.

The Inuit languages recognized in the NWT are Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and Inupiaq. In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, 20% of the Inuit population speak either Inuinnaqtun or Inuktitut. The majority of people that speak Inuktitut in the NWT live in Yellowknife.

A small number of people, living mostly in the Fort Smith and Hay River areas, speak Cree. This language belongs to a different linguistic group, the Algonquian family.

Approximately 3% of the population states that French is their first language. The use of French and English is more common in Yellowknife and the regional centres.

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FRENCH is mostly spoken in Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik and Yellowknife.

ENGLISH is spoken throughout the Northwest Territories.

INUKTITUT is mostly spoken in Yellowknife.
2. Observation
A distinguishing characteristic of Fort Good Hope Dene: the use of \( r \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Déliéne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rake</td>
<td>náke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ráyuka</td>
<td>náoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reshe</td>
<td>neshe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rírehła</td>
<td>nínehtła</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruhshe</td>
<td>nuhshe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Questions
a. Where does \( r \) in FGH Dene come from?
b. What is the synchronic status of \( r \) in FGH Dene?
c. What does the phonology of \( r \) in FGH Dene tell us about phonological evidence for polysynthesis?

4. Some answers
a. \( r \) in FGH Dene comes from Proto-Athabaskan nasals (while \([r]\) in other dialects is an allophone of \( d/t \)).
b. Reanalysis has occurred, with both /n/ and /r/ present.
c. Restructuring provides additional evidence for a strong word-internal boundary, ‘undoing’ a cross-boundary effect found in more conservative speech.

5. Organization
a. Where does \( /r/ \) come from?
b. Synchronic patterning
c. Why didn’t all nasals shift?
d. Morphological consequences

II. Where does \( /r/ \) come from?
6. Proto-Athabaskan nasals (all reconstructions from Leer 1996)

\[ (*m) \quad *n \quad *n^v/\eta \]

7. Beginning with an aside: stems
a. Non-nasal environment: Merging of \( *n \) and \( *\eta \) to \( d \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Déliéne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*-naː ga’ ‘eye’</td>
<td>-dá</td>
<td>-dá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*-ni’gvy ‘move hand’</td>
<td>-dí</td>
<td>-dí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋa’vy ‘several die’</td>
<td>-de</td>
<td>-de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋal ‘spill, pour’</td>
<td>-di</td>
<td>-di</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Nasal environment: Merging of *n and *ŋ to n

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Délı̨ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*ne'n' ‘face’</td>
<td>-ŋí</td>
<td>-ŋí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋe'n’ ‘moss’</td>
<td>ŋí</td>
<td>ŋí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋən’ ‘earth, land, ground’</td>
<td>ŋě, -nëně</td>
<td>ŋě, -nëně</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋəŋ’ ‘ten’</td>
<td>-ŋo</td>
<td>-ŋo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Nasals strengthen to oral stops in stem-initial position, non-nasal environment.

8. Prefix-initial position 1: shifting nasals
To the heart of the matter
a. Proto-Athabaskan *n generally develops as n in Délı̨ne and as r in Fort Good Hope in the non-nasal environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Délı̨ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*nax(ɔ) ‘1, 2 pl. object’</td>
<td>raxe-</td>
<td>naxe- 1, 2 pl. object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nə- gender, assume</td>
<td>re-</td>
<td>ne- qualifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*na’- ‘down, to ground; continuative’</td>
<td>rá-</td>
<td>ná- ‘down, to ground; continuative’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*na- ‘back, again, iterative’ ra-</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>na- ‘back, again, iterative’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nex+ gender, assume</td>
<td>ní-</td>
<td>ní- qualifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*na’- + na- continuative+</td>
<td>nọ- (~rará)</td>
<td>nọ- continuative+ iterative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. *n develops as n in the nasal environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Délı̨ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*nex stative perfective</td>
<td>nɛ-</td>
<td>nɛ- perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nex 2sg subject, object</td>
<td>nɛ-</td>
<td>nɛ- 2 sg subject, object</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Some Proto-Athabaskan *n develop as n.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Délı̨ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*na- ‘around’</td>
<td>k’ína-</td>
<td>k’ína- ‘around’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>ne-</td>
<td>ne- ‘across’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Prefix-initial position 2: invariant nasals
a. Proto-Athabaskan *ŋ generally develops as n in Fort Good Hope and Délı̨ne in the non-nasal and the nasal environment both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Délı̨ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*ŋə- stative perfective</td>
<td>nɛ-</td>
<td>nɛ- perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋə- 2sg subject, object</td>
<td>nɛ-</td>
<td>nɛ- 2 sg subject, object</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Some Proto-Athabaskan *n develop as n.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Athabaskan</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
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<td>*na- ‘around’</td>
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<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>ne-</td>
<td>ne- ‘across’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10. Prefixes, syllable-final position
Nasals develop as nasalization on the preceding vowel syllable-finally.
The stative/perfective, the 2sg. subject, and some of the variable nasals have syllable-final forms, and are realized as nasalization.
11. Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Fort Good Hope</th>
<th>Dénine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nasal environment</td>
<td>Non-nasal environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem-initial</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefix-initial type 1: invariant n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefix-initial type 2a: variant r</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefix-initial type 2b: invariant r</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: invariant /r/ never occurs in the nasal environment.

III. Synchronic prefix patterning

12. A possible synchronic analysis
   a. /n/ invariant [n]
   b. /r/ [n] in the nasal environment and syllable-finally
   c. Diachronic change: Restructuring of prefixes from /n/ to /r/

13. Invariant nasal prefixes (/n/)
   a. The second person singular has two allomorphs, ne- and nasalization.
      ne-                                     nasализация
      ▪ ne-jë        ‘you sg. sing’        ▪ дэ-жэ          ‘you sg. start to sing’
      ▪ ne-t’ë       ‘you sg. cook’        ▪ дэ-тэ           ‘you sg. cook for yourself’
      ▪ we-ne-da     ‘you sg. sit’         ▪ во-да           ‘you sg. optative sit’
      ▪ k’ina-ne-łe  ‘you sg. go around’   ▪ кэй-и-ле        ‘you sg. are going up’
      ▪ ne-tá        ‘your sg. father’     ▪
      ▪ ne-hé         ‘with you sg.’      ▪
      ▪ rá-ne-reyiht’u’l hit you sg.’

   b. The perfective/stative has two forms, ne- and nasalization.
      ne-                                     nasализация
      ▪ ne-zø         ‘it is good’           ▪ ʰи-баъэ         ‘it is rounded, scalloped’
      ▪ gо-сеъ         ‘it (land, river) is small’

The ne- allomorph is very rare in Fort Good Hope; it is very common in Dénine.

   c. The morpheme na- in k’ina- ‘around’ and ne- ‘across’ do not show allomorphy.
      (na- is occasionally realized as nə-, but this does not appear to be common.)
14. Variant prefixes: n~r alternations (/r/)
   Déline Fort Good Hope

   **n-achievement situation aspect**
   oral environment: r
   a. te-\(\mathbf{n}\)-ya te-\(\mathbf{r}\)-ya ‘I went into water’
      oral environment: r
      te-\(\mathbf{n}\)-\(\mathbf{e}\)-\(\mathbf{n}\)-ya te-\(\mathbf{r}\)-\(\mathbf{e}\)-\(\mathbf{n}\)-ya ‘you sg. went into water’
      nasal environment: n
      te-\(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{j}\)-ya te-\(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{j}\)-ya ‘s/he went into water’
      oral environment: r
   b. níldodé-\(\mathbf{n}\)-h-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a ríldodé-\(\mathbf{r}\)-h-t\(\mathbf{a}\) ‘I arrived laughing’
      nasal environment: n
      níldodé-\(\mathbf{n}\)-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a ríldodé-\(\mathbf{n}\)-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a ‘you sg. arrived laughing’
      syllable-final environment: nasalization
      níldo-d-\(\mathbf{\epsilon}\)-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a ríldo-d-\(\mathbf{\epsilon}\)-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a ‘s/he arrived laughing’

   **n- ‘qualifier’ (‘conjunct’ prefix)**
   oral environment: r
   c. \(\mathbf{n}\)-h-she \(\mathbf{r}\)-h-she ‘I grow’
      nasal-environment: n
      \(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{j}\)-ye \(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{j}\)-ye ‘you sg. grow’
      oral environment: r
      \(\mathbf{n}\)-ye \(\mathbf{r}\)-ye ‘s/he grows’

   **ni- ‘terminative, to the ground’ (‘disjunct’ prefix)**
   oral environment: r
   d. ni-\(\mathbf{n}\)-h-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a rí-\(\mathbf{r}\)-h-t\(\mathbf{a}\) ‘I arrive’
      nasal environment: n
      ni-\(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{j}\)-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a rí-\(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{j}\)-t\(\mathbf{a}\) ‘you sg. arrive’
      \(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{i}\)-t\(\mathbf{l}\)a \(\mathbf{n}\)\(\mathbf{i}\)-t\(\mathbf{a}\) ‘s/he arrives’
      varies with oral environment: r
      rí-hê-t\(\mathbf{a}\) ‘s/he arrives’

15. Invariant prefixes: class 3 prefixes (/\(\mathbf{r}\)/)
   a. The nasalized environment is never present.
      Déline \(\mathbf{naxe}\)- Fort Good Hope raxe-‘1/2 pl. non-subject’

16. Synchronic analysis (morpheme-initial consonants)
   /n/: invariant [n]
   /\(\mathbf{r}\)/: [n] in nasal environment; [\(\mathbf{r}\)] in non-nasal environment
IV. An historical excursus: timing of the shift
17. Timing of the shift – historical developments ~1876 - ~1920

1876: Petitot (dictionary); 1920’s: Fang-Kuei Li (word list)

Petitot 1876 1920’s/current
‘klo yanêchié ‘cultiver’ t'l'o rehshe ‘I grow grass’
na-délinlin ‘chute’ râdéyili ‘waterfall’
natsézé ‘chasse’ rats’ezé ‘hunt’
nâta ‘chiminer’ râyêhda ‘I walk along’
nonta ‘chiminer, 3e pers’ nôda ~räyêda ‘s/he walks along’
nâ-néli’u ‘coudre’ râ’erêlu ‘I sew’
nâtl’a ‘courir’ rââla ‘I go (fast)’

ne ‘tu’ ne- ‘you sg.’

18. A new question: restructuring and invariant nasals
Why do n’s remain? Why didn’t all n’s at Petitot’s time become r’s?

19. A(n) (im)possible (?) historical account of prefix development: *n vs. *ŋ?
   a. Possible development
      *n > n~r  *ŋ > n
   b. Stem-initial *n and *ŋ merge. Prefix-initial *n generally develops as n/r and
      *ŋ as n, but there are *n that are realized as invariant n, suggesting that an
      account of variant vs. invariant n is not based on their historical source.
   c. No evidence exists that these nasals were differentiated at the time of
      Petitot.
   d. Conclusion: The nasals had likely merged by the time of Petitot’s dictionary.

V. Other diachronic changes: restructuring and invariant nasals
20. Invariant n’s 1: perfective/stative restructuring of the paradigm

Overall loss of the syllable-initial environment for the perfective/stative

Délîne Fort Good Hope Petitot
ne-chá / neh-chá hî-shá / heh-shá ‘it is big’ / ‘I am big’ intcha
ne-tsélë / neh-tsélë hî-sélë / heh-sélë ‘it is small’ / ‘I am small’ intsélë
ne-ká hî-ká ‘it is wide’
ne-ghalë hî-ghalë ‘it is narrow’ inkwalé
hijore ‘s/he is short’
hîbâre ‘it is rounded’
hîkône ‘it is bright, shiny’
hît’ale ‘it is flat’ inttâlé
hîhxó ‘be no good, moldy’ inxun
hîgule ‘be narrow and round’
hîch’île ‘be sharp-pointed’
hishone ‘be soft, bushy’
hiwéne ‘be spotted, pimply’
hits’òle ‘be greasy’
hilege ‘be slippery’
hifene ‘be stiff, thick’
hiki ‘be heavy’
cf. ne-zo ne-zo ‘it is good’ nézin

21. Invariant n’s 2: more restructuring?
The initial n- of na- in k’ína- is regarded as morpheme-internal.
   This is a guess. In this dialect, k’í- does not appear independent of na-.
   Historical evidence points to similar restructuring, with non-grammatical morphemes being reanalyzed as a stem plus suffix.
Proto-Athabaskan Dene (generally)
*tó-nəł ‘bucket’ (water-pour) têni, tene ‘bucket, pail’
*da-ne ‘person’ déne ‘person’

22. The changes summarized
Phonological analysis
   /n/ /r/
Morpho(phono)logical factors
   Restructuring of perfective/stative in third person forms from ne- to i-
   Restructuring of k’í+na to k’ína

VI. Historical questions
23. Questions
   a. What triggered the change of the nasals to r?
   b. Why do some prefix-initial nasals from Petitot’s time escape restructuring?
      In particular, why is the second person singular invariantly nasal?

24. What triggered the change?
   a. Stem-initial strengthening of nasals to stops in non-nasal environment (7)
      This occurred in both Fort Good Hope and Délı̨nę.
   b. Oralization of onsets in a non-nasal environment
      This occurred only in Fort Good Hope.

25. Why do some prefix-initial nasals escape restructuring?

26. Review: patterning of invariant nasals
   a. Second person singular subject
      Always nasal: syllable-initial [n], syllable-final nasalization
   b. Second person singular direct object, possessor
      Always n-, in an onset
   c. ne- ‘across’: rare; I can’t find the reconstruction for this.
27. Review: patterning of variable nasals
   a. Type 1: achievement, iterative
      \( n \)- in syllable-initial position in nasal environment
      nasalization in syllable-final position
      \( r \)- otherwise
   b. Type 2: qualifier, conservative terminative
      \( n \)- in syllable-initial position in nasal environment
      \( r \)- otherwise
      These do not appear in syllable-final position.

28. Review: invariant \( r \)
   Never in the nasal environment; never in syllable-final position.

29. Review: restructuring of the perfective/stative (adjectival verbs)
   The perfective ceased to occur syllable-initially, with one exception (\( nez \) 'it is good') (20)
   In Petitot, the prefix has the form \( hi- \) rather than \( ne- \): the change occurred before \( n \) shifted to \( r \).

30. The issue then is the second person singular, and why it escaped restructuring.
   Subject: \( ne- \sim V \)
   Other grammatical roles: \( ne- \)
   Why isn't this \( re- \sim \) nasalization, as with other prefixes?
   A possibility: frequency/robustness of the oral vs. nasal environment?

31. With prefix-initial /r/, nasality has a syllable domain.
   Nasal in nasal environment; oral elsewhere.

32. Assumption
   A prefix has a single (underlying) form (no allomorphy), all other things being equal.

33. Second person singular: nasal environment appears to be more common (based on counts of dictionary entries and on text counts).
   a. Subjects appear to be more common than objects and possessors.
   b. An overwhelming number of verbs have nasalization in the imperfective; all have nasalization in the optative; I haven't done the right counts to know what is more common in the perfective.
   c. The nasal environment is probably more common for the second person singular.

34. Variable \( n \)'s: oral environment in 1 sg, 1 pl, 2 pl; depending on morphological factors, in 2 sg and 3. Only the oral environment occurs in the optative.
   The oral environment, the environment for restructuring, is more common.
VII. Morphological consequences: Effects of the introduction of /r/ on the morphology

35. A basic introduction to verb morphology
   disjunct (lexical) – conjunct (functional) – stem

36. Differentiating disjunct and conjunct prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disjunct (#)</th>
<th>Conjunct (+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonological shape</td>
<td>'minimal': CV, CVC, CVCV</td>
<td>'subminimal': CV, where V is default vowel; C, VC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Overall, lexical meanings</td>
<td>Overall, functional in content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sg. subject (imperfective)</td>
<td>ne- after disjunct</td>
<td>nasalization after conjunct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form of optative (activity class; 1sg, 2sg subject)</td>
<td>wo-</td>
<td>u-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*s situation aspect, 1sg, 2sg subject</td>
<td>w-</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution of VV sequences</td>
<td>consonant epenthesis</td>
<td>vowel deletion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone raising</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone displacement</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37. Nasalization crosses the disjunct boundary (#) in Deline and other dialects.
   a. Stative/perfective
      'o-t’e /a#n-t’e/                                   'she, he, it is’
      cf. ’a#heh-t’e                                    ‘I am’
   b. n situation aspect
      ní-tła /ní#n-tlä/                                    ‘she, he, it arrives’
      cf. ní#neh-tlä                                     ‘I arrive’
      nínō-da /ní#na#n-da/                                  ‘she, he, it arrives back’
      cf. ní#na#neh-da                                     ‘I arrive back’

38. This appears to be the historical situation
   Leer *?ɔ=nt’e                                   ‘it is’

39. Strengthening of the disjunct boundary in Fort Good Hope

40. Tonal phenomena: Verb stem tone shift in Fort Good Hope Dene
   Dénélèh                                    Fort Good Hope
   nे’a                                       né’a                                     ‘you sg. eat’
   ’edehtl’é                                   ’edéhñlí’é                                 ‘I write’
   nats’é                                      ráts’e                                    ‘she, he, it drinks another’
41. When the tone shifts to a preceding conjunct, an extra high tone (’; tone raising) results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yēhk’ē</th>
<th>yēhk’ē</th>
<th>‘she, he, it shot it’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>níyečchú</td>
<td>ríyečchū</td>
<td>‘she, he, it placed it’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42. But when the stem tone shifts to a preceding disjunct, an extra high tone is not created.

| názé | ráze | ‘she, he hunts’ |

43. When tone shifts to a disjunct, further tone shifts occur (tone displacement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bek’éhdí</th>
<th>bék’éhdi</th>
<th>‘I keep him/her/it’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nánaze</td>
<td>raráze</td>
<td>‘she, he hunts again’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lénadlá</td>
<td>léradla</td>
<td>‘she, he tears in two again’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. Nasalization does not cross the disjunct boundary (#) in FGH Dene today, while it does in other dialects (37). A vowel is inserted to carry the nasalization, and [h] to provide an onset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>’a-hē-t’e</th>
<th>’a#n-t’e/</th>
<th>‘she, he, it is’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>’a-hēh-t’e</td>
<td>‘I am’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rí-hē-ňa</td>
<td>rí#n-ňa/</td>
<td>‘s/he arrives’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>rí-reh-ňa</td>
<td>‘I arrive’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rí-no-da ~ ríra-hē-da</td>
<td>rí#ra#n-da/</td>
<td>‘s/he arrives back’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>ríra-reh-da</td>
<td>‘I arrive back’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45. Changing times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Petitot</th>
<th>Li</th>
<th>current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nonta</td>
<td>nóda</td>
<td>(nóda) ~ráyeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antté</td>
<td>’ọt’e</td>
<td>’ahēt’e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46. What is going on?

a. Strong evidence for the disjunct boundary across the area, strengthened in Fort Good Hope through the patterning of tones.

b. In Délíne, nasalization ‘crosses’ the disjunct boundary.

c. Introduction of /r/ in Fort Good Hope

d. Assumption: Uniformity of expression

e. ‘Unravelling’ of more complex phonology

f. Consequences for ongoing polysynthesis

Perhaps correlated with the introduction of /r/, the disjunct prefixes become less phonologically bound to the verb than previously, with nasalization no longer crossing it.
VIII. Summary

47. Déline and Fort Good Hope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mid 1800's</th>
<th>early 1900's</th>
<th>late 1900's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 sg.</td>
<td>nɛ-~y</td>
<td>nɛ-~y</td>
<td>nɛ-~y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stative</td>
<td>ɛ-</td>
<td>ɛ-</td>
<td>ɛ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable n~r</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>n~r</td>
<td>n~r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjunct</td>
<td>nɛy-</td>
<td>nɛy-</td>
<td>nɛy-~rɛhɛ-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. Trajectories and blocking
   a. Merging of PA *n and *ɛ (pre-Petitot)
   b. Restructuring of adjectival verbs (pre-Petitot)
   c. Restructuring of /n/ to /ɛ/ in prefixes (oral environment)
      Possible trigger: general oralization of onsets
   d. 2sg. escaped restructuring: nasal environment is more common
   e. Those that shifted: oral environment is more common
   f. Frequency/robustness appears to play a role in blocking restructuring
   g. Consequence (?) of restructuring: strengthening of disjunct boundary,
      ‘undoing’ an overall trend in the region towards greater polysynthesis

References


Li, Fang-Kui. Hare file slips.

