

Marking the Unexpected:

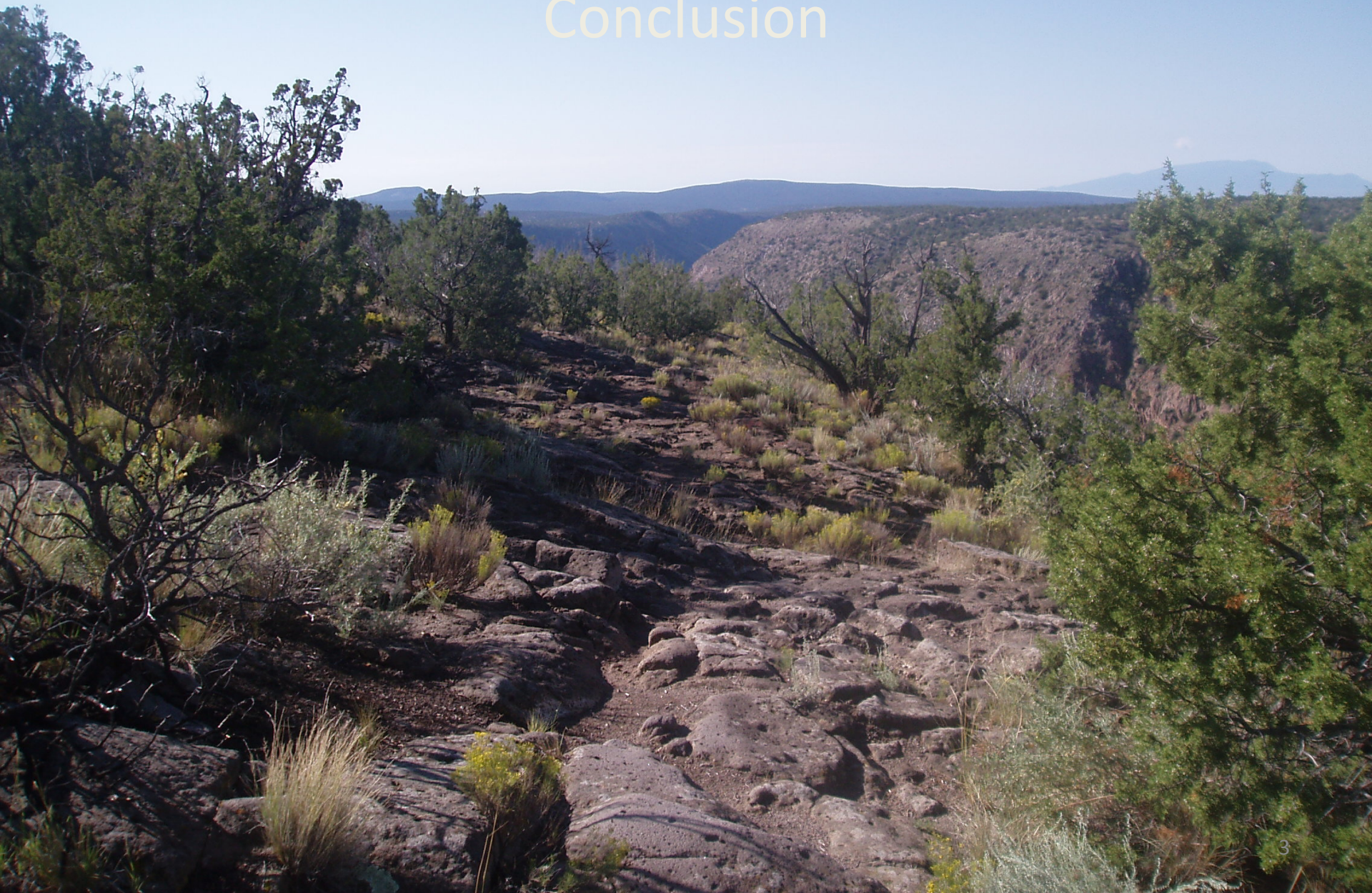
Evidence from Navajo to Support a Meta-discourse Domain

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- Good morning!
- Today's goal:

To demonstrate a semantic link between **mirativity** and **contrastive focus** as metadiscourse markers of counter-expectation.
- What's ahead:
 - Mirativity and Focus
 - Navajo *lá*
 - Data & Results
 - Conclusion

Mirativity & Focus | Navajo *lá* | Data & Results | Conclusion



Mirativity

- Marks a proposition as new and surprising irrespective of information source
(DeLancey 1997, 2001; Peterson 2010)
- Usage varies by language
(DeLancey 1997; Aikhenvald 2012)
 - sudden discovery
 - surprise
 - counter-expectation
 - lack of control

Mirativity

- Mirativity as an independent category
(Chafe & Nichols 1987; DeLancey 1997, 2012; Lazard 1999; Aikhenvald 2004, 2012; Peterson 2010 ; Hill 2012)
 - relationship with inferential evidentials
(Aikhenvald 2004; Olbertz 2009)
 - and hearsay markers
(DeLancey 1997; Lazard 1999)

Mirativity

- No formal criteria for category

(Bianchi et al. 2014)

- Overlaps with:

- evidentials

- intonation

- aspect

- discourse markers

- irrealis mood

(Chafe 1995; Johanson 2000; Peterson 2010; de Haan 2012)

Another View of Mirativity

- Miratives arise from pragmatic extensions of other functions (Olbertz 2009)
- Domain-centered semantic spaces (Behrens 2012)
 - mirativity in interaction
 - mirativity and information structure
- Mirativity as sub-set of mediative (Lazard 1999)

Mirativity & Focus

- Focus

(Chafe 1976; Watters 1979; Kiss 1988; Lambrecht 1994; Givón 2001)

- new information related to discourse or topic
- contrast in comparison between two or more candidates

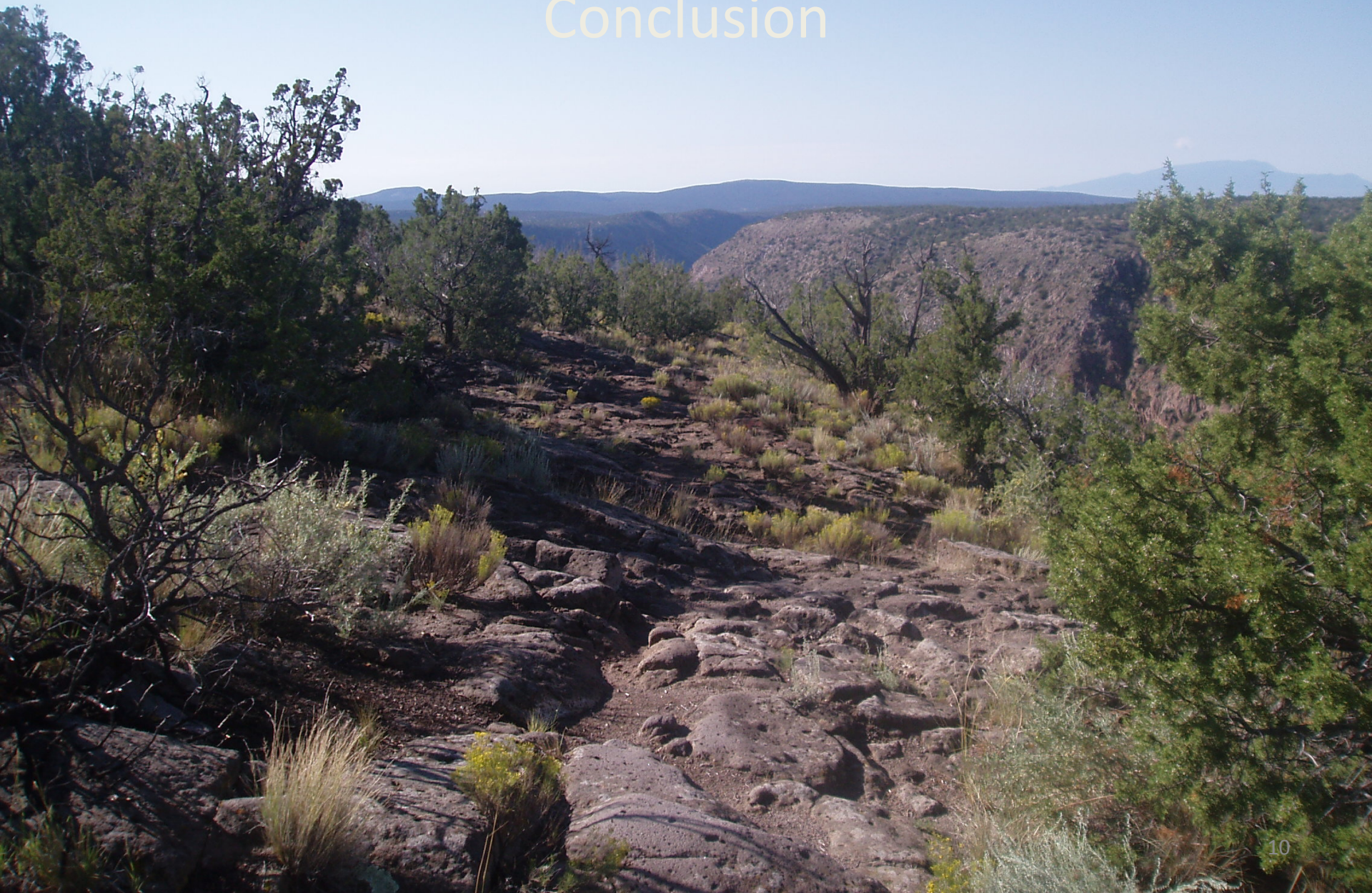
- Contrastive focus

- marks a constituent that contradicts the presupposed alternatives of the conversation participants (Lambrecht 1994; Givón 2001).

Mirativity & Focus

- Relevance of expectation marking (Behrens 2012)
 - Contrastive focus marks part or all of a proposition as contrasting with other expected options
 - Miratives mark a proposition as surprising with regard to general unmarked expectation (Chafe pc)

Mirativity & Focus | Navajo *lá* | Data & Results | Conclusion



Navajo

- Southern Athabaskan
- polysynthetic
- morpho-phonemically complex verbs
- particles have been less studied

(Willie 1996; Holton 2009)



Navajo *lá*

- Particles carry a high functional load in conversation

(Willie 1996; Young & Morgan 1987, 2000)

- pragmatic meaning
 - modality
 - affect
- Two documented functions of *lá*
 - mirative
 - interrogative

Navajo *lá*

1. Mirative usage of *lá*

Díí tsé 'át'éé lá.

díí tsé 'á-t'é lá

DEM rock thus-it.is MIR

'This (I find) is a rock.'

(Young & Morgan 2000:306)

Interrogative *lá*

2. <i>Háájí</i>	<i>lá</i>	<i>íiyá</i>	<i>ńjiń</i>
háá=jí	lá	íi-yá	ní-ji-ní
where=to	Q	3-PFV.go	3.IPFV.say-3a-IPFV.say
‘She says, “I wonder where he has gone,” it is said.’			

(Silentman Nav 014)

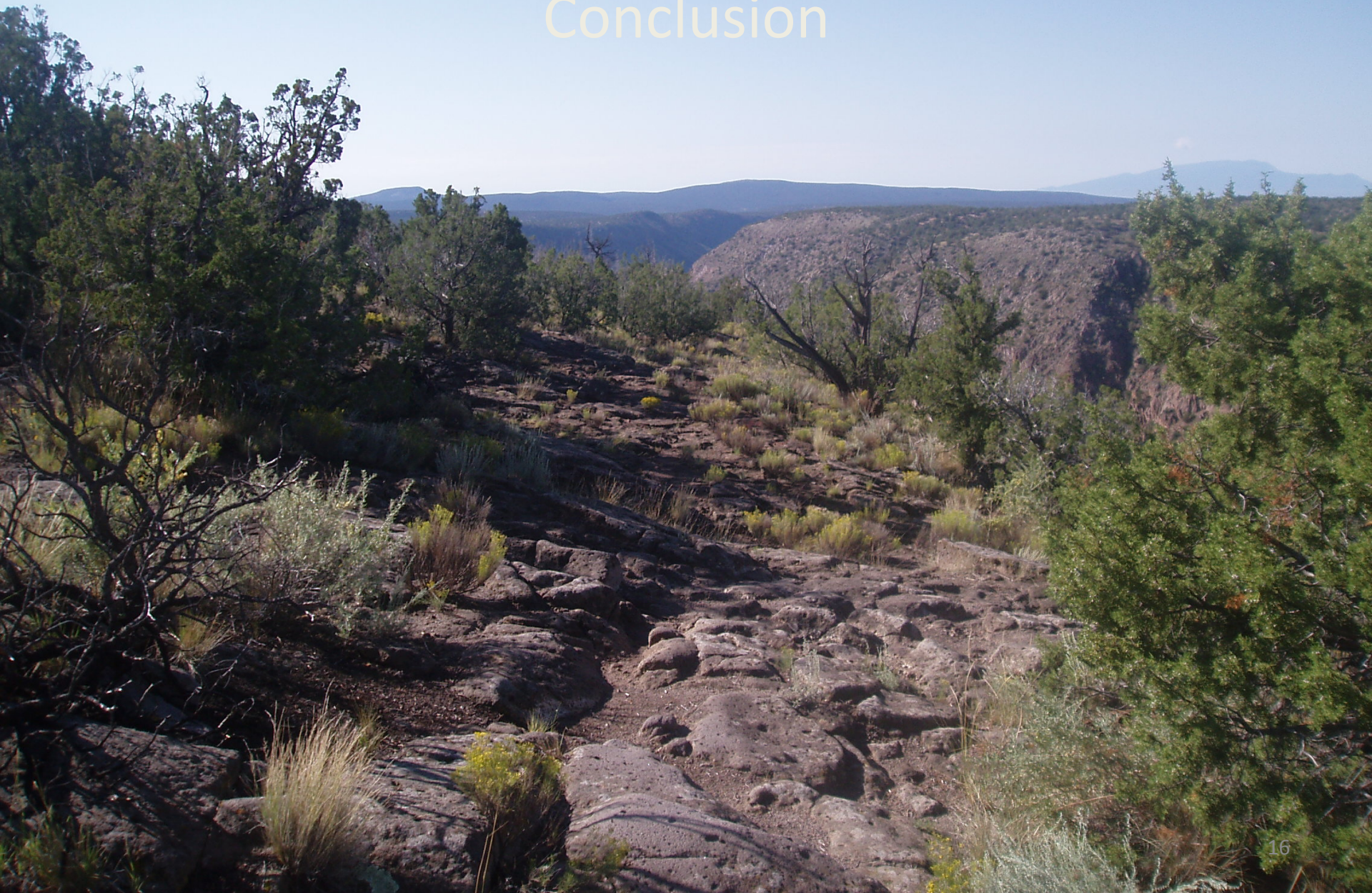


Navajo Conversation Corpus (Mithun ed 2015 NSF-DEL project
0853598)

Navajo *lá*

- Navajo has two polysemous *lá* enclitics
 - mirative
 - contrastive focus and interrogative
- Meta-discourse counter-expectation markers
 - different pragmatic overtones arise from usage

Mirativity & Focus | Navajo *lá* | Data & Results | Conclusion



Data

- Navajo Conversation Corpus
(Mithun ed 2015 NSF-DEL project 0853598)
 - 50,000 words
 - 21 dialogues with *lá*
- Navajo narratives (courtesy of Marianne Mithun)
 - 25 narratives with *lá*
 - Transcribed into intonation units
(Chafe 1979; Du Bois et al. 1993)

Data

	Narrative	Conversation	Total
Tokens	36	511	n=547
	7%	93%	

Frequency of *lá* by genre

Data & Methods

- annotated for:
 - position in clause
 - function
 - interrogatives
 - miratives
 - counterexpectation, realization, surprise, and sudden discovery (Aikenvald 2012)
 - contrastive focus
 - reported speech
 - lexicalized phrases

Results

Function	Tokens	Percentage
Interrogative	169	40%
Mirative	114	27%
Reported Speech	61	14%
Focus	54	13%
Lexicalization	23	5%
Total	n=421	100%

Tokens of *lá* by function

Interrogative *lá*

3. *Parker lá éí haahoolyé?*

Parker *lá* éí haa=hoo-l-yé

Parker *Q* DEM what=3.N.CLF-IPFV.call

‘How was it you say Parker?’

(Chee Nav 001)



Mirative: Discovery

4. *‘Ákoshíj hatł’aaj’ée’ shíj náázdláád lá.*
‘Áko=shíj ha-tł’aaj’ée’ shíj náá-z-dláád lá.
so=perhaps 3-pants perhaps up-3-PFV.tear **MIR**
‘So his pants were torn.’

(Silentman Nav 014)



Mirative: Realization

5. *Áko ayóo nantʼa lá.*

ʼáko ʼayóo nanitʼa lá.

so very it.is.difficult **MIR**

‘So it turns out that it’s very challenging.’



(Chee Nav 002)

Mirative: Counter-expectation

6. H: *Ni[zhóní lá]!*

it.is.good MIR

'It is great!'

M: *[áko aoo'í],*

'So yes,'

M: *[áko éí],*

'so that'

H: *[Doo áná]hoot'i' da lá áko.*

NEG challenges NEG MIR so

'So there are no challenges then.' (Chee Nav 021)



Mirative: Lack of control

7. *Naa'ayííláá* *lá* *jiń.*

naa'ayíí-lá lá ji-ní.

over.3-PFV.pass.out MIR 3a-IPFV.say

'He passed out drunk.'

(Silentman Nav 014)



Reported Speech

8. *Nít'éé'* X *áníi* *lá,*

nít'éé' á-níi *lá*

then thus-3.IPFV.say

'Then X thus said,'



(Chee Nav 016)

Contrastive Focus

9. “Neeznáá **lá** shimá” ní jń.

neeznáá **lá** shi-má ní ji-ní

ten **FOC** my-mother 3.IPFV.say 3a-IPFV.say

‘He says, “Ten, my mother.”’

(Silentman Nav 014)



10. *Díkwíí* *lá* *um,*

how.much Q

‘How much?’



Díí *lá* *béeso* *doo* *da* *oh,*

DEM FOC money NEG NEG oh

‘This money no oh.’

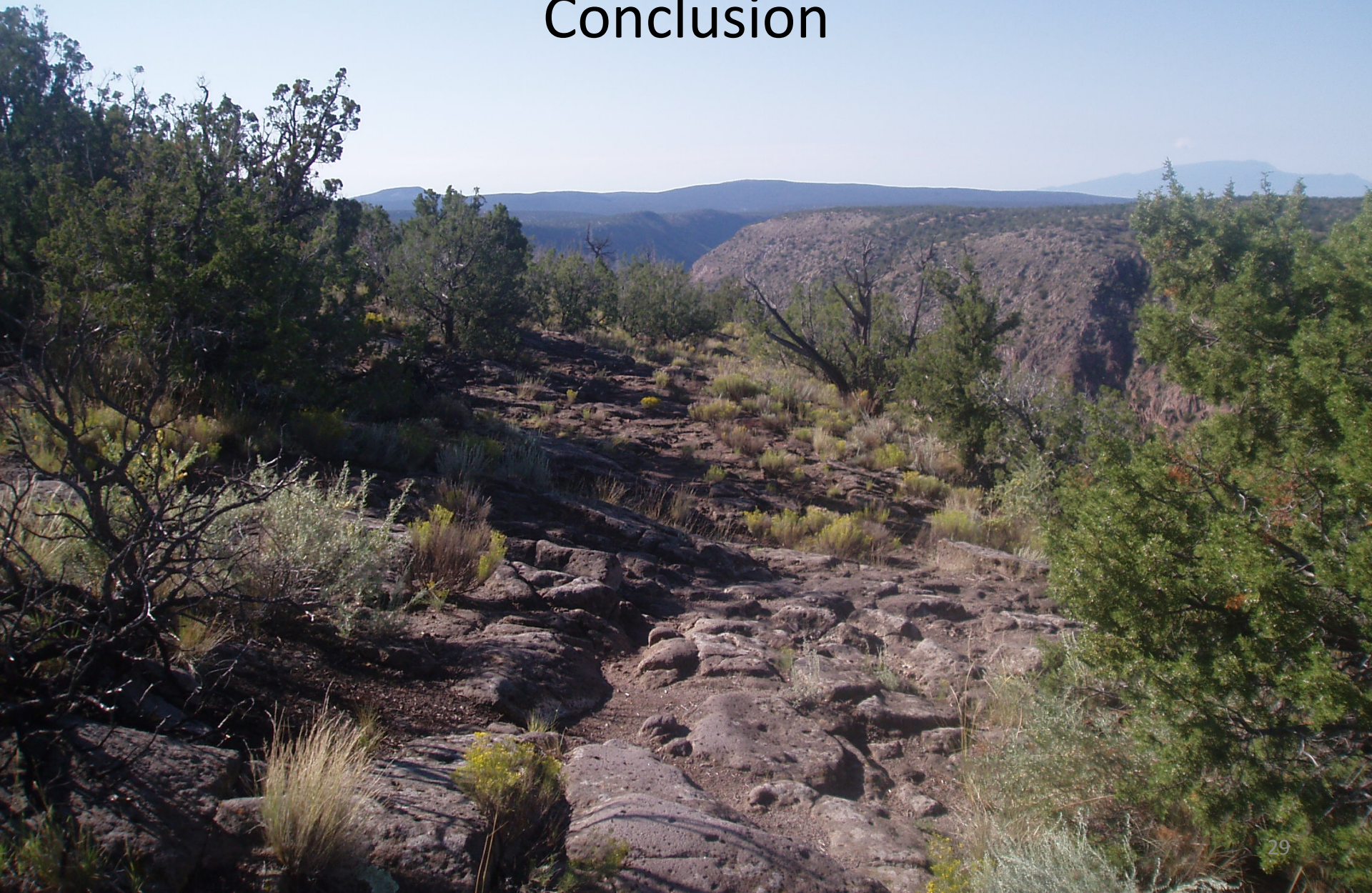
Kóó *dabikáá’ó* *át’éeé* *lá.*

here on it.is MIR

‘It is on here.’

(Chee Nav 016)

Mirativity & Focus | Navajo *lá* | Data & Results | Conclusion



Comparative Athabaskan

- Likely cognates

- W. Apache *lāā* (de Reuse 2003)

- surprise

- Hare *lɔ* (DeLancey 1997)

- inferential

- Slave *lɔɔ* (Rice 1989)

- uncertainty

- Sarcee *-là* (de Haan 2008)

- inferential

- Dena'ina *tu* (Holton & Lovick 2009)

- hearsay

- Possible source inferential form (de Haan 2008)

Conclusions

- Two polysemous Navajo *lá* enclitics:
 - interrogative and contrastive focus
(Schauber 1975)
 - mirative
- Expectation marking is a salient domain in Navajo

Conclusions

- Results
 - add to growing literature on mirative markers
 - relationship to information structure
- Contrastive focus and mirativity should be considered within domain of expectation marking

Thank you | Ahéhee'.



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