

Dena'ina Directional System and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis¹

Anth 325

Kenai Peninsula College

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1. Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
 - 1.1. Definition
 - 1.1.1. Strict View: Language determines cognition
 - 1.1.2. Moderate view: language affects or constrains the way speakers of that language think.
 - 1.2. A related idea is that languages expresses attributes of a place.
2. Assignment:
 - 2.1. Do the assignment below and respond to the following questions in a one page reaction paper.
 - 2.2. Would language cause Dena'ina speakers to think of directions and their orientation in space differently from English speakers in Cook Inlet? If there is a difference, do you think it is deep and substantive, or is it just a matter of different words for the same thing and b) do you think it coincides with the strict or moderate view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
3. The Dena'ina directional system includes three and sometimes four pieces of information in a word
 - 3.1. Placename: upstream/downstream etc.in relation to the place you are now.
 - 3.2. Prefix: a sense of distance (far, near)
 - 3.3. Directional root: direction in relation to a river, upstream/downstream etc.
 - 3.4. Suffix: a sense of location (in the vicinity, toward, etc.)
4. General Structure of directional words:
 - 4.1. prefix + directional root + suffix OR
 - 4.2. placename + prefix + directional root + suffix
5. Placenames (referred to as P in the following exercises, substitute one of the following placenames for P)

Kahtnu	Kenai
Ts'eldatnu	Soldotna
Uzintun	Homer Spit
Sqilan Bena	Kenai Lake

or any others from *A Dena'ina Legacy: K'tl'egh'i Sukdu* by Peter Kalifornsky, pp 338-353

¹ This lesson was developed for Anth 371, Dena'ina Language and is modified from *Dena'ina Elnena, Tanaina Country* by James and Priscilla Kari with information from *Dictionary of the Dena'ina Athabaskan Language*, vol. 1. (draft) by James Kari. The complete Dena'ina directional system is more complicated.

6. Prefix

yu-	far, distant
du-	near, intermediate
ts'i-	straight, directly
qu-	next to, adjacent
P+egh-	direction from P (P may be a placename or pronoun)

7. Directional Roots

-ni	upstream
-du	downstream
-t'e	downstream direction used with motion verbs
-neq	upland away from the river (or lake)
-tsen	toward water, toward the lowland
-nun	across

8. Suffix

Ø, no suffix	moving toward
-t	at a specific place
-h	in the general area
-ch'	toward, in that direction

Translate the following:

1. yudut [yu+du+t] far + downstream + at a specific place
2. dudut [du+du+t] near + downstream + at a specific place
3. yuduch' [yu+du+ch'] far + downstream + toward/in that direction
4. duduch' [du+du+ch'] near + downstream + toward/in that direction
5. yunit [yu+ni+t] far + upstream + at a specific place
6. yunih [yu+ni+h] far + upstream + in the general area
7. dunit [du+ni+t]
8. ts'itsench' [ts'i + tsen + ch']
9. yuduh [yu + du + h]
10. dunih [du + ni + h]
11. duni [du + ni + Ø]
12. ts'inun [ts'i + nun]

13. yuneq [yu + neq]

14. duduh [du + du + h]

15. dutsen [du + tsen]

16. dunich' [du + ni + ch']

17. yuneqch' [yu + neq + ch']

In the following the "e" of "egh" drops out according to phonological rules

18. Kahtnu ghnunch' [P+egh+nun+ch']

19. Kahtnu ghnih [P + egh + ni + h]

20. Ts'eldatnu ghdut [P + egh + du + t]

21. Sqilanbena ghdut [P + egh + du + t]