

## NAVAJO SPATIAL TERMS MADE EASIER

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### 1. Navajo Spatial Terms Made Easier

Navajo has a very rich system of words referring to locations. Young and Morgan (1980) list the terms shown in (1): They give six different terms for “here”, four different terms for “there(nearby)” and seven terms for “there”. In addition there are at least two other terms, *‘akwe’é* and *‘akwii* that were not listed by Young and Morgan but are made up of morphemes that they do discuss.

(1) Spatial terms given in Young and Morgan (1980), plus two (in italics)<sup>1</sup>  
“HERE”:

kodi	here (at this location or point in time)
kóq	here, hereabout, this way, around here
kóoní	here, hereabout, around here
kwe’é	here, right here, at this place close at hand
kwii	here (at this place)
kwiidí	here (at this place or point in time)

“THERE (NEARBY)”:

‘aadi	there (close at hand, nearby in space or time)
dzaadi	here(at a nearby location in space)
naghái	there (at a nearby location)
‘akóq	there (a nearby location)
<i>‘akwe’é</i>	<i>(nearby spot)</i>
<i>‘akwii</i>	<i>(nearby place)</i>

“THERE”:

’áadi	there (a remote and invisible location in space or point in time)
ńlááh(ńílááh)	there yonder (invisible, remote)
‘ákwe’é	there

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<sup>1</sup> Young and Morgan arrange the terms according to whether they accept a postpositional enclitic. I have reordered the list to put terms with similar definitions together.

‘ákwii	there (at that place)
‘ákwiiidí	there (at that place or point in time)
‘ákóó	there, thither, through there
ńléidi	there (a distant or remote location, but visible)

Our goal in this paper is to suggest that these terms are actually organized into a quite simple system. We had a number of different motivations for pursuing this goal. First of all, these spatial terms are obviously very confusing to second language learners. No existing Navajo textbook discusses more than a few of these terms. Goosen’s Navajo Made Easier, for example, only introduces three of these spatial terms. Second, the descriptions are not entirely accurate. For example, a location referred to by “ńléidi” does not have to be visible. Third, when native speakers of Navajo speak English, they often struggle to find ways to express the rich array of spatial concepts from Navajo with the impoverished system of English, so we wanted to illuminate the underlying logic of the rich Navajo system. Fourth, it is not clear how the list of terms in (1) fits into the crosslinguistic typology of spatial deictic systems. Finally, serious problems arise when monolingual English speakers fail to understand the additional meanings that may be behind a Navajo word translated as “here’ or there.” For example, in a trial a Navajo-speaking defendant might be asked “Where were you on the night of the crime?” After the interpreter translates the question, the defendant might answer “ńléidi.” The literal translation of this would be “There.” In Navajo it is clear that this word means “Far away” and could not be referring to the crime scene under discussion, but the simple English translation “there” could be taken to mean the defendant was at the scene of the crime.

As we tried to develop more accurate and useful descriptions of these various terms, we discovered that the terms can be organized into a very simple system, organized according to four parameters: 1) whether the term is a demonstrative or an adverb, 2) whether the location referred to is proximate (close to speaker) or non-proximate 3) whether the term refers to a specific spot or a general area, and 4) whether the location referred to is familiar to the addressee (pronominal) or mentioned in the discourse (anaphoric). Our proposal is summarized in (2). This chart does not tell us everything about what a given term will mean in any context. Many aspects of the context will determine how “speaker’s territory”, “familiar to addressee”, etc. are to be understood. We suggest (2) as a characterization of the basic organization of the system of spatial terms.

(2) NAVAJO SPATIAL DEICTIC SYSTEM:

	WORD	DESCRIPTION	LINGUISTIC FEATURES
Spatial Adverbs	ko-	speaker's territory	[+proximate]
	ńíláah	outside of speaker's territory; area familiar to addressee	[-proximate]
Demonstratives	kwe'e/kwii	in this spot	[+proximate] [+spot]
	kóó	in this location	[+proximate] [+area]
	nléí	in that spot/location	[-proximate]
Anaphoric Adverbs	'a- (low tone)	location known or familiar to addressee/in common ground	pronominal
	'á- (high tone)	location established in discourse	anaphoric

We have not included two of the terms that Young and Morgan defined. *Dzaq(di)* is archaic, and no longer used, so we will not consider it to be part of the current system of terms. *Naghái* is a verb, meaning 'walking around'. In any language there are a myriad of expressions of various categories that one can use to describe locations, which are not part of the system of spatial deixis in the grammar. For example, the English system of spatial deixis consists of the expressions shown in (3), although we could further specify person's location as *over there inside, far away, somewhere around here, in the yard, at school, walking around the block, etc.* Therefore, although one might use the verb *naghái* to explain that someone is just "somewhere around," this verb is not specifically a part of the system of spatial terms, so we will set it aside.

### (3) ENGLISH SPATIAL DEICTIC SYSTEM<sup>2</sup>

	WORD	DESCRIPTION	LINGUISTIC FEATURES
Spatial Deictics	here	speaker's territory	[+proximate] [+deictic]
	there	outside of speaker's territory	[-proximate] [+deictic]
Spatial Adverbs	near	close to (but not in) speaker's territory	[+proximate] adverb
	far	not close to speaker's territory	[-proximate] adverb
Demonstrative Determiners	this/these	referent in speaker's territory	[+proximate] determiner
	that/those	referent outside of speaker's territory	[-proximate] determiner

The main claims of our analysis are summarized in ((4)).

#### (4) Main claims of our analysis:

- a. There are only two distinctions of relative distance.
- b. There are spatial terms that are composed of several distinct morphemes, and these terms are semantically compositional.
- c. Some of the terms are demonstratives and others are adverbs.
- d. The prefixes 'a- and 'á- indicate whether the location being referred to is one that is familiar to the addressee ('a-) or previously established by the speaker in the discourse.

In the following section we will argue that the spatial terms should be analyzed in terms of their component morphemes. Then we will go on to illustrate the semantic contribution of each morpheme and show how the morphemes go together to yield the system we propose.

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<sup>2</sup> We constructed this chart for English. Most linguistic works about spatial deixis take the features of English terms more or less for granted, or just discuss the fact that English has a "two-way" (proximate vs. non-proximate) system, so we have not been able to find a complete feature description of this type in the literature.

## 2. Deconstructing the morphology

Young and Morgan explain that there are enclitics expressing location or direction that may be suffixed to spatial terms. The terms *kodi* and *kwiidi* include the enclitic *di*, “at.” There are a number of such enclitics, including *ji* “toward, up to”, *góó* “to”, *déé* “from,” and these may be attached to any of the spatial terms, making them more specific. The morpheme *ko-* never occurs without an enclitic. All of the other terms may occur either with or without an enclitic.

- (5) *ko-* (needs enclitic) *kwii* here kwe’*é* here kóó in this area  
*kodi* at here *kwiidi* at here kwe’*édi* at here kóó*di* at this area  
*kojí* on *this side* *kwiijí* on *this side* kwe’*éjí* on *that side* kóó*jí* on *the side of*  
*kodéé*’ *from here* *kóódéé*’ *from this area*

<i>nléi</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>nláah</i>	<i>there</i>
<i>nléidi</i>	<i>at there</i>	<i>nláahdi</i>	<i>at there</i>
<i>nléíjí</i>	<i>on that far side</i>	<i>nláahjí</i>	<i>on the side of that place</i>
<i>nléídéé</i> ’	<i>from there</i>	<i>nláahdéé</i> ’	<i>from there</i>

Some combinations do not exist for semantic reasons. For example, *kwii* does not combine with *déé*’ because *déé* presupposes a starting point that is remote from the Speaker and *kwii* means ‘near the Speaker’. As long as the combination is semantically acceptable, any enclitic may combine with any spatial term. Therefore, we will analyze the spatial terms independent of the enclitics. Although *ko-* never occurs without an enclitic, we will treat it as a part of the system of spatial terms with an independent semantic value.

A number of the terms shown in (1) begin with ‘*a-* or ‘*á-*, which seems to be combining with either an enclitic (eg., ‘*aadi*) or another spatial term (eg. ‘*ákwii*). We suggest that the ‘*a-* or ‘*á-* at the beginning of words like ‘*akwii*, ‘*ákwii*, ‘*akóó*, ‘*ákóó*, ‘*aadi* and ‘*áadi* is a prefix. If an enclitic such as *-di*, *-jí*, *-góó*, *-déé* is added to ‘*a-* or ‘*á-*, the vowel lengthens, as is usual for vowel + enclitic combinations.<sup>3</sup>

- (6) When combining with spatial enclitics, short vowels always lengthen.  
 High tone becomes falling tone

‘*a-* + *-di* → ‘*aadi*      ‘*á-* + *-di* → ‘*áadi*

<sup>3</sup> Enclitics generally also cause a high tone vowel to become falling tone, so ‘*áadi* is sometimes written as ‘*áadi*.

If 'a- or á- is prefixed to *kwii*, *kwe'é*, etc., the vowel does not lengthen, as only enclitics generally trigger vowel lengthening. The meaning of the prefix is combined with the meaning of the word or enclitic it is attached to. We will suggest that 'a- indicates that the location is known by the addressee and that 'á- designates the place as one that has been mentioned in the discourse. In other words, 'a- and 'á- have their own meanings, so that the terms including them are entirely compositional.

If we set aside the enclitics and treat the dependent morphemes *ko-*, 'a- and 'á- as independently meaningful expressions, we can classify the spatial expressions as in (7).

(7) Second Try:	PROXIMATE	NEARBY	REMOTE
(to be revised)	ko-	'a-	'á- (not visible)
	kóó		ńlááh (there yonder, not visible)
	kwe'é		ńléí (visible)
	kwii		

This is obviously simpler than Young and Morgan's list, but it is still not entirely accurate. First of all, neither 'á- nor ńlááh has to be invisible or very far away. For example, a person could say (8) about an area that is visible. For example, if the addressee has just come from the herding area, which is just up the hill in a visible location, one could say this.

- (8) ńláadi na'nishkaadgo      shiníbaal diiltła lá.  
 there-at 1S-herding-COMP 1-tent 2-burn PARTICLE  
 'While I was herding out there my tent burned.' (Young and Morgan 1980:677)

Likewise, one could say (9) about a restaurant right across the street if we have been discussing it and we plan to meet there later.

- (9) 'Áádi nidááh deeshaał.  
 there 2-meeting 1-will go  
 'I'll meet you there.'

Second, a place referred to by ńléí does not have to be visible. One might say (10) with an eyegaze or gesture indicating some location way down the road, over a mountain, too far away to be seen.

- (10) ńléídi shaghan  
 there-at 1-live  
 I live over there

Third, a location referred to with ‘aadi does not have to be particularly nearby. For example, one could say (11) to someone who just flew in from their home state.

(11) Da ‘aadi ‘adinííín-ísh nít’éé’?

Q there hot(weather)-Q was

‘Was the weather hot there?’

Fourth, it is not clear how we could have a compositional analysis under the classification in (7). We would have to say, for example, that ‘ákwe’é and ‘ákwi combine the meanings of remote (‘á-) + not remote (kwe’é/kwi). Finally, even with the classification in (7) we need an explanation of the differences among the various proximate and remote terms.

In the following section, we will show that all four terms *ko-* *kwii*, *kwe’é* and *kóó* are +proximate, designating a location near the speaker. We will claim that they differ whether they are demonstratives or not, and whether they refer to a specific spot or a general area.

### 3. The [+proximate] terms (*ko-*, *kwii*, *kwe’é*, *kóó*)

*Ko-* means “the place where the speaker is.” It always occurs with a postpositional enclitic.

(12) A few examples of *ko-* with postpositional enclitics:

kodi	(at) here
kodéé	from here
kojí	up to this point
kónaa	across here
kóne’	in here

*Ko-* doesn’t necessarily designate a specific spot, it just means ‘at or near the speaker.’ There are two reasons to consider *ko-* to be an adverb and not a demonstrative pronoun or demonstrative adjective. First of all, It can be used without pointing to the location, since it designates the Speaker’s location.

- (13) a. Kodi shaa nínááh.  
here-at me-to 2Subj-come  
‘Come here to me.’
- b. Kodi nibéeso bizis si’á.  
here-at 2-money 3-bag 3-is.sitting  
‘Your purse is over here. (located near speaker)’

c. Phone conversation:

A: Da' niyáázh Hoozdodi naaghá?

B: Nda, kodi naaghá.

No, he is over here (at home) (located where speaker is)

Second, ko- cannot be used to modify a noun.

(14) \*Bob kodi gohwééh bił likan.

Bob here coffee 3-with sweet

Intended meaning: 'Bob likes this coffee'

Although (14) could mean 'Bob likes the coffee here', it cannot have a reading in which kodi modifies the noun gohwééh.

*Kwii* and *kwe'é*, on the other hand, can modify a noun, and are generally used with some sort of gesture indicating the relevant spot. Thus, they are demonstratives. *Kwe'é* is a bit more specific and *kwii* is more general, but they are roughly synonymous. They refer to a specific spot near the speaker.

(15) a. Gohwééh kwe'é niníkaah.

coffee here 3obj.2subj.put(open container)

'Put the coffee here.' (on this specific spot)

b. Naaltsos kwii niníłtsóos.

paper here 3obj.2subj.put(flat flexible object)

'Put the paper here.' (on some spot near me)

(16) Bob kwii/kwe'é gohwééh bił likan.

Bob this coffee 3-with sweet

'Bob likes this coffee'

*Kóq* refers not to a particular spot, but to a general area. Without a prefix ('a- or 'á) it means "the area at or near the speaker":

(17) a. Kóq naashá.

here 1subj.walk

'I'm here'

b. Kóq kééhasht'í.

here 1subj.live

'I live here.'

Like *kwii* and *kwe'é*, *kóq* can modify a noun:



- b. *Íléidi shaghan.*  
 there-at my-home  
 ‘I live over there.’

*Nílaáh* is not demonstrative, so it wouldn’t normally be used to request something in a specific spot across the room. However the location it refers to may be either visible or invisible. For example, sentence (22) could mean that the car is in the lot we can see out the window or across campus, or that the car is parked in a lot that is familiar to the addressee but too far away to see. Since *nílaáh* is not demonstrative, this sentence is talking about the general location, not pointing to a particular parking space.

- (22) *Nílaahdi chidí naazí.*  
 car 3-parked  
 ‘The car is parked over there’

Example (23), from Young and Morgan (1980), shows an example in which *íílaadi* is translated as ‘out there.’ The location is outside of the area where the conversation is taking place. The location does not have to be extremely far away, it just has to be a location other than the one in which the conversation is taking place. It can be out of sight, but it also could be, for example, a meadow that is in the distance but visible to the conversants. It must be an area that the addressee is familiar with.

- (23) *Íílaadi na’nishkaadgo shiníbaal diiltá lá.*  
 there-at 1S-herding-COMP 1-tent 2-burn PARTICLE  
 ‘While I was herding out there my tent burned.’ (Young and Morgan 1980:677)

The same sentence could be said with *íléidi*, as shown in (24). The difference is that (24) could be accompanied by a (lip) pointing gesture, whereas (23) would not be accompanied by such a gesture. The location could be out of sight, with the gesture indicating a certain direction, or it could be a distant location within sight. The location in (24) is not necessarily closer or farther away than the location in (23).

- (24) *Íléidi na’nishkaadgo shiníbaal diiltá lá.*  
 there-at 1S-herding-COMP 1-tent 2-burn PARTICLE  
 ‘While I was herding over there my tent burned.’

We speculate that the reason Young and Morgan defined *íléi* as referring to a visible location is that usually locations that can be pointed to (i.e., demonstrated) are in fact visible. However, in a context where a non-visible location can be gestured toward, for example by gesturing toward the direction, *íléi* is appropriate.

Because *níláah* is not demonstrative, it is often used when one does not wish to refer directly to a place, but the place is clearly understood. For example, if a child told a teacher she needed to go to the toilet, the teacher might refer to the toilet with *níláah*.

- (25) child:           Nii’ohgóó shíni’.  
                          ‘I need to go to the toilet’
- teacher:           Hagooshíí, **níláah**góó níni’  
                          ‘OK, go there.’

If the teacher had answered using **níléigóó**, as in (26), the teacher would be directing the child to go to some specific remote location. This response might be appropriate if the teacher wanted to direct the child to go to a far-away bathroom (say, in another building) rather than the closest one.

- (26) teacher:       Hagooshíí, **níléigóó** níni’  
                          ‘OK, go to that place over there’

In summary, both *níláah* and *níléí* refer to a location that is not close to the Speaker. The contrast between the two does not have to do with relative distance. Rather, *níléí* is demonstrative while *níláah* is a spatial adverb. The fact that *níléí* is demonstrative makes it more likely to be used for locations that are visible, because demonstratives involve indicating a particular location, and invisible locations can only be indicated if it’s pretty clear in the discourse what location is meant.

- (27) **Summary of non- proximate terms:**
- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>SPATIAL ADVERB</b> | <b>DEMONSTRATIVE</b> |
| <b>níláah</b>         | <b>níléí</b>         |

## 5. The spatial pronominals (‘a- and ‘á-)

In section 2 we pointed out that some of the spatial terms seem to be composed of prefixes ‘a- and ‘á- plus an enclitic or another spatial term, and we suggested that these terms are semantically compositional. In this section, we examine the possible meanings of ‘a- and ‘á- and propose that the distinction between ‘a- and ‘á- does not have to do with relative distance, as Young and Morgan’s translations of ‘*aadi*, ‘*akóó*, ‘*áádi*, ‘*ákwe’é*, ‘*ákwií*, ‘*ákwiídí* and ‘*ákóó* would suggest. Rather, we suggest that the difference is that ‘a- indicates that the location is familiar to the addressee or part of the common ground, while ‘á- indicates that the location is one that has already been mentioned in the discourse.

It is interesting to note that ‘a- is homophonous with the indefinite possessive pronoun and ‘á- is homophonous with the reflexive possessive pronoun. In a sense, the meanings of ‘a- and ‘á- in spatial terms are parallel to these pronoun meanings: ‘a- must be familiar to the addressee, just as the referent of a pronoun must be familiar in order to be interpreted, and ‘á- must be coreferent with some location already established in the discourse.

(28) ‘a- is homophonous with the indefinite pronoun:  
           ‘anáak’ee    someone’s eye  
           ‘awoo’                 someone’s tooth

‘á- is homophonous with the reflexive possessive pronoun:  
           ‘anáak’ee         one’s own eye  
           ‘áwoo’         one’s own tooth

‘a- and ‘á- are also homophonous with other morphemes, whose meanings may be related to the spatial meanings:

(29) ‘aadóó            ‘and then’  
       ‘áádóó           ‘and then (longer time after)’  
       ‘aa                ‘to, toward, about’  
       ‘áko               so, so then, then  
       ‘ákóne’           in there (remote and invisible)  
       ‘ákoshą’          Well, so what?  
       ‘ákót’é            it is thus, that’s the way it is

It is possible that these are just cases of accidental homophony, and we do not mean to claim that the meaning every Navajo word is entirely compositional, but the parallels are intriguing.

In the following section will look at the words containing the prefix ‘a-. We will focus primarily on ‘aadi, because the other words differ only in which enclitic they include. Then in section 5.2 we will turn to ‘á-.

### 5.1 The prefix ‘a-

As we mentioned above, enclitics in Navajo trigger lengthening of a vowel at the end of the word that they attach to. Therefore when an enclitic such as *-di* combines with ‘a-, the vowel lengthens and the result is ‘*aadi*.

Although Young and Morgan translate ‘*aadi* as “there, nearby”, the location referred to with ‘*aadi* does not actually have to be nearby. For example, if you are speaking to a friend who

has just flown in from her home city, you could say (30), where *'aadi* refers to her city, even if the city is very far away:

- (30) Speaking to friend who has just come from her home city:  
Da *'aadi* *'adinííín-ísh nít'éé'?*  
Q there hot(weather)-Q was  
*'Was the weather hot there?'*

What makes *'aadi* appropriate here is that the location is one that “belongs to” the addressee. It is her home, and so it is a place that she is very familiar with. By “familiar to the addressee”, we mean that the addressee can easily understand what location is being referred to even if the location has not been specifically mentioned or pointed to.

Although the location referred to by *'aadi* must be familiar to the addressee, it need not be physically closer to the addressee. It can be between Speaker and Addressee, closer to either one or equidistant from both. One could say (31) in contexts where *'aadi* refers to locations in the speaker's territory, closer to the speaker than to the hearer. For example, if the speaker and hearer were at separate desks and the speaker said (31), the speaker might be telling the hearer to put the coffee on the hearer's desk. The location does have to be one that couldn't be referred to with a proximate term, but its basic meaning appears not to have to do with relative distance from speaker or addressee.

- (31) Gowééh *'aadi* ninikaah  
coffee there you.put.it  
*'Put the coffee there.'*

Example (32) also shows that the location need not be physically closer to the addressee than the speaker. This sentence is fine in a context where you're driving by a location that is on the speaker's side of the car, and so closer to the speaker than to the addressee:

- (32) Context: Driving past location that is on Speaker's side of the car:  
*'Aadi shimá yázhí sidá.*  
there my-aunt 3subj.sits .  
*'My aunt is in that place.'*

The fact that you're driving right by makes it obvious to the hearer what place you're referring to, so the place is in that sense known to the hearer. The hearer doesn't necessarily have to have been to the area before.

Similarly, if a place is visible in the discourse but not too far from the speaker and hearer, *'aadi* may be used even if the location is equidistant from the speaker and hearer. For example,

(31) could be used with a glance or pointing motion<sup>4</sup> to tell the hearer to put the coffee on a table right across from the speaker and hearer.

Note that the location denoted by *'aadi* doesn't have to be visible to the person speaking. We saw this in example (30) above where *'aadi* refers to a place far away but familiar to the addressee. Similarly, in a phone conversation someone could use *'aadi* to mean the location of the person being talked to, which would obviously not be visible to the speaker.

(33) Phone conversation:

- A: Da' niyáázh 'aadi naaghá?  
Q your-son there 3subj.walk  
'Is your son there?'
- B: Nidaga'. Kodi naaghá.  
No. here 3subj.walk  
No, he is over here (at home)

In this case, the location is known by the addressee in the phone conversation because it's obvious what area is being talked about. Although the actual physical location may be quite far from the speaker, the place is obviously known by the addressee, since that's where the addressee currently is.

The location referred to by *'aadi* need not be closer to the addressee either. Sentence (34) can mean that the car is parked in the parking lot of the addressee's dorm, which at the time of speech is the same distance from both addressee and speaker. *'Aadi* is appropriate because parking lot at the addressee's dorm is very familiar to the addressee.

(34) 'Aadi chidí naazí  
there car parked  
'The car is parked in a spot over there.' (eg, the parking lot of the Addressee's dorm)

Our definition of *'aadi* as a location known to the hearer is purposely very general. Strictly speaking, the hearer knows the speaker's location and may know remote locations as well. However, general principles of pragmatics dictate that if the speaker means to refer to a location that could be referred to with *kodi* or *nléidi*, those more specific terms must be used. The result is that *'aadi* is only used for locations that are neither near the speaker nor remote from the discourse location. It wouldn't work to define *'aadi* more specifically as "a location close to the speaker", because such a definition would not capture examples like (8). It also wouldn't work

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<sup>4</sup> In Navajo culture it is considered rude to point, so the speaker might look at the relevant spot, or indicate it by pointing with her lips.

to define it as “a location neither close to nor far from the speaker”, because in the telephone conversation example, the location is very close to the addressee but may be quite far from the speaker. Therefore, we define ‘*aadi*’ as simply “a location known by the hearer,” and assume that pragmatic principles restrict it from being used to refer to locations for which the other terms could be used.

The other words composed of the prefix ‘*a-*’ plus an enclitic also have to do with places familiar to the addressee, and the enclitic specifies whether the place is in a direction, right at a place, up to a point, etc. In (35) for example, the enclitic ‘*-jí*’ means ‘on the side of/in the direction of.’ When combined with ‘*a-*’, you get a word that denotes ‘a place over in that direction that is familiar to the addressee.’

- (35) a. ‘Aají naa’aahóóhai ‘aleeh  
           there rodeo           taking place  
           ‘The rodeo is taking place over there (in that direction).’

When ‘*a-*’ is added to one of the proximate terms, forming ‘*akóó*’ / ‘*akwii*’ / ‘*akwe’é*’, the place designated is nearby (proximate) and familiar to or identifiable by the addressee. Thus, these terms retain the proximate meaning of ‘*kóó*’ / ‘*kwii*’ / ‘*kwe’é*’, and the prefix simply adds its own meaning of ‘familiar to the addressee.’

- (36) ‘*aadi*                                   at a place known by hearer  
       ‘*akwii*’/‘*akwe’é*                 specific spot known by hearer  
       ‘*akóó*                               area known by hearer

- (37) ‘Akóó chaha’ogóó mósí yázhí ałhosh.  
       ‘a+area shade    kitten    3-sleeping  
       ‘The kitten is sleeping there in the shade.’

- (38) ‘Akwii chidí nininíbaas.  
       ‘a+spot car 2-park  
       ‘Park the car here/there ‘(in the spot Addressee can easily identify)

In this section we have argued that words prefixed with ‘*a-*’ refer to a location that is familiar to the addressee. In this sense it is similar in meaning to ‘*nílaáh*’. We suggest that the difference between ‘*a-*’ and ‘*nílaáh*’ is that ‘*nílaáh*’ is the non-proximate term for referring to areas, that is, the non-proximate version of ‘*kóó*’, while ‘*a-*’ is unmarked for proximity. Consider the different ways of referring to a parking space shown in (39).

- (39) a. ‘Akwii chidí nininíbaas.  
 ‘a+spot car 2-park  
 ‘Park the car here/there ‘(in the spot Addressee can easily identify)
- b. ‘Akóó chidí nininíbaas.  
 ‘a+area car 2-park  
 ‘Park the car here/there ‘(in the area Addressee can easily identify)
- c. ‘Aadi chidí naazí  
 there car parked  
 ‘The car is parked in a spot over there.’ (eg, the parking lot of the Addressee’s dorm)
- d. Nílaahdi chidí naazí.  
 car 3-parked  
 ‘The car is parked over there’

(39)a and b would be appropriate if you were driving around looking for a parking space and had arrived at an appropriate place. (39)a tells the addressee to park in the parking space we are at right now.<sup>5</sup> (39)b means “park in this general area (say, on this level or in this parking lot)”. Both (39)c and (39)d refer to locations other than the one that the speaker and addressee are currently at. (39)c refers to a particular spot familiar to the addressee, such as a parking space in the parking lot of the addressee’s dorm, whereas (39)d refers to an area, such as outside of the building where the conversation is taking place or somewhere in the area of the addressee’s dorm.

## 5.2 The prefix ‘á-

As we pointed out above, a location referred to with a term that includes ‘á- does not necessarily have to be remote and invisible. In example (9) ‘áadi could be used to refer to a restaurant right across the street, in plain view. We propose that á- means “established in the conversation.” The location referred to by á must be one that has already been mentioned or discussed. The location will generally be remote from the location of the conversation because if it were a close location established in the conversation, pragmatics would dictate that the more specific *kodi* or *‘aadi* must be used. The place referred to with á - is not necessarily any farther away than a place referred to with *nléí*. The difference is just that á can be used only if the place is one that has been specifically established in the conversation.

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<sup>5</sup> ‘*akwii* is more appropriate than just *kwii* because the speaker is not actually in the spot. The spot is proximate to the discourse location but still must be identified by the addressee.

For example, in sentence (40) the first clause introduces Tséyi as a location, and then ‘*ááii*’ refers to that location.

- (40) Tséyigóó nisiikai, dóó ‘*áájí* diné dabaghan lá.  
 C de C we went and there people live surprise  
 ‘We went to Canyon de Chelly and discovered that people live up/out there.’

Although in this sentence ‘*áájí*’ does refer to a location that is remote, we do not think that ‘*á-*’ means “remote.” Locations referred to with ‘*á-*’ are often remote because if the location were visible the speaker could use a more specific term. If you’re referring to a place right in front of you, you can use *kwe’é* and look at or touch the place, and if you are referring to a place that is familiar to the addressee you can use ‘*aadi*’. Pragmatic principles dictate that the most specific available term be used. Using ‘*á-*’ is a way of making distinctions among places which cannot be pointed to and which are not necessarily familiar to the addressee. However, a location referred to with ‘*áádi*’ need not be any farther away than a location referred to with ‘*aadi*’.

As with ‘*a-*’, we believe that the terms containing ‘*á-*’ are compositional

- |      |                     |   |
|------|---------------------|---|
| (41) | <i>áadi</i>         | this place we’re talking about                      |
|      | <i>ákwii/ákwe’é</i> | this specific place established in the conversation |
|      | <i>ákqó:</i>        | this area established in the conversation           |

As we mentioned above, if ‘*á-*’ meant “remote”, it would be surprising to find it combining with the proximate terms *kwii*, *kwe’é* and *kqó* because the meanings would seem to be contradictory. However, if ‘*á-*’ means “already introduced in the conversation”, then we can see why one use of *kwii*/*kwe’é* is when referring to the area where the conversation is taking place. The area is near, and is already introduced in (in fact is the very location of) the conversation. For example, if a person is walking in a certain area, s/he could say to a companion

- (42) *Ákwii tó nílí.*  
 here water 3.flows  
 ‘The river flows through here’

The speaker would not use *kwii*, *kwe’é* or *kqó* for this situation, because the river is not right in or near the location of the speaker, but it is in or near the location of the conversation. *Kwii*, *kwe’é* or *kqó* would imply that the location is closer to the speaker than to the addressee. *ákwii/ákwe’é/ákqó* means it’s not just in the speaker’s territory, but in the territory of the conversation.

This example shows that *ákwii* is not properly defined as “remote”, since it can be used to refer to the current location of the speaker and addressee. When used to refer to an abstract location, *ákwii/ákwe’é* may seem to refer to a remote location, but if we consider examples like ((42) carefully, we see that the proximate (i.e., near speaker) meaning of *kwii/kwe’é* is preserved in *ákwii/ákwe’é*. The reason these have been treated as “remote” is because they cannot be used to refer to a place near the speaker that hasn’t been mentioned, but is just being pointed to. (43)a and b cannot be used to indicate a place right near the speaker, which she is pointing to.

- (43) a. ??Gohwééh ákwe’é niníkaah.  
Put the coffee here.  
b. ??Naaltsoos ákwii niníłtsóós.  
Put the paper here.

However, another common use of *’áádi*, *’ákwii* and *’ákwe’é* is when giving directions or looking at a map, and the sentences in (43) could be used in such a context. For example, if the speaker was pointing to an architectural drawing and indicating where a delivery of coffee or paper was to be placed, these sentences would be fine. In such cases *’áádi*, *’ákwii* and *’ákwe’é* refer to the locations under discussion. Sentence (44) could be used if we were looking at a map and I was indicating which crossroads I would meet you at. Similarly, (45) can be used to say that the car parked in the spot we are talking about, or in the spot I’m pointing to on a map, and (46) can mean that Mary lives where the conversation is taking place or in the place we’re talking about and possibly pointing to on a map.

(44) ‘Áadi nidááh deeshaał.  
‘I’ll meet you there.’

(45) ‘Áadi chidí naazí  
there car parked  
‘The car is parked in that spot we are talking about.’

(46) Mary ákwé’é bighan.  
‘Mary lives here where we are now or are now talking about’

When we give directions or use a map we are of course talking about locations that are remote from the location of the conversation. However, giving directions involves constructing a mental model and imagining oneself following them to get to the relevant place. Within a mental model of the location being described in this example, *ákwii* means “the place were we now are abstractly”. So it still means “location already mentioned, which is here in the mental model we are discussing.” This is just like the meaning of *ákwii* in sentence (42): It refers to the current location of the conversational participants, although the reference is to abstract location within

the mental model of the directions rather than to the actual current physical location of the speaker or hearer.

## 6. Conclusions

We have argued that the system of spatial terms in Navajo is organized according to an elegant system of oppositions between proximate vs. non-proximate, spot vs. area and established in the discourse vs. familiar to the addressee. We hope that this analysis will make the spatial terms easier for teachers to explain. Now that we can see the meaning contribution of each morpheme and word, we can imagine ways to begin by teaching simple terms and gradually progress to the more complex terms. For example, teachers could begin by teaching *kwe'é* and *kwii*. Then *níléi* and *nilááh*, explaining the difference between a demonstrated location and a location familiar to the addressee. Later, the teacher could introduce *kóq* and *ko-*, and explain the difference between area vs. general location. Finally, (in a rather advanced course) the teacher could introduce the prefixes *'a-* and *'á-* and the words formed with them.

We also hope that our analysis will show Navajo translators and those working with them that it is very important to make sure that the English translation of Navajo spatial terms include all of the features of meaning expressed by the Navajo words. This applies also to those working with Navajo speakers of English, since Navajo speakers often do try to find ways to express a richer array of spatial distinctions than those encoded by English terms. Non-Navajos probably do not pick up the distinctions that a Navajo person may be trying to express in English, which means they may be ignoring subtle aspects of meaning that would seem obvious to another Navajo person.

Our analysis also has implications for the analysis of spatial terms in other languages. Although the Navajo system is obviously more complex than the English system, we are claiming that the complexity does not involve different degrees of distance from the speaker and/or addressee. According to Anderson and Keenan (1985), when the spatial system of a language has more than two distinctions (near vs. far), the additional distinctions usually involve relative distance. However they do cite several languages whose spatial systems make reference to whether the location is previously mentioned. Hausa is the only language they describe as having a system that specifically encodes “the one previously mentioned,” but they cite two others where the term translated as “farther” can also be used to refer to previously mentioned location.

(47) Hausa	wánnàn	this(new)
	wácàn	that (new)
	wánnán	the one previously mentioned
	wácán	that other (mentioned) one

Southern Sotho	moo/mona	close to speaker
	moo/mono	farther ← <b>also used to refer to places previously mentioned</b>
	mane/mola	quite far
Sre (spoken in Vietnam)	dɔ	near speaker
	dɛn/gen	near hearer
	nɛ	not close to Sp and H together
	hɔ	remote/out of sight <b>(or the one we were talking about)</b>
	da'	comparatively farther

It would be interesting to explore whether there are other languages that have spatial terms which distinguish locations mentioned in the discourse but which have been incorrectly analyzed as having to do with relative distance.

Finally, our analysis clearly underscores the importance of the participation of Navajo speakers as linguists, not just as language consultants. This analysis was developed in a summer seminar sponsored by the Navajo Language Academy. The seminar leader (Speas) is a non-Navajo linguist, and the class participants were Navajo teachers who were interested in Navajo grammar. The topic of spatial terms was decided on by the class participants, since it is an area that Navajo teachers often have trouble explaining. The seminar leader began by preparing materials based on Young and Morgan's assumption that the Navajo system expressed various degrees of distance from the speaker. The Navajo-speaking participants began with intuitions about what each term means but they were unsure how to go about expressing these intuitions. We quickly discovered that the materials based on Young and Morgan's assumption had to be discarded. Then, as we developed clearer descriptions of what the terms mean, we discovered that there is a very elegant underlying system. Since this system differs in fundamental ways from the spatial systems of more familiar languages, it is not clear that a non-Navajo linguist just working with a language consultant would ever ask the questions that would lead to the correct analysis.

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