

A HL% boundary tone in Athabaskan?

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Organization of this presentation

- Intonation in Athabaskan languages
- Intonation in Witsuwit'en
- Intonation in Tsek'ene
- Comparative remarks and conclusions

Intonation in Athabaskan languages

- Issue: do tonal Ath languages have intonation contours?
- McDonough (2003) 'The Prosody of Interrogative and Focus Constructions in Navajo'. In Carnie, Andrew, Heidi Harley, and MaryAnn Willie (eds.) *Formal approaches to function in grammar: In honor of Eloise Jelinek*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 191-206.
 - noted 'observations by native speaking linguists (Willie p.c., Austin-Garrison p.c.) that Navajo has no tonal intonation'
 - instrumentally studied declarative, interrogative, and focus constructions
 - concluded 'no systematic patterns of intonation can be construed for these utterances'

Other intonation investigations

	declarative	yes/no question	imperative	wh-question	coordination	dependent clause
Slave (Rice 1989)	L%	H%			H-	H-
Tanacross (Holton 2005)	H* L%	H* H%	L* L%	H+L* L%		
Dena'ina (Tuttle and Lovick 2007)	L%					

- Tanacross and Slave are tone languages; syllable-final *ʔ > high tone

Rice, Keren (1989) *Slave Grammar*. Berlin: Mouton

Holton, Gary (2005) 'Pitch tone and intonation in Tanacross.' In Sharon Hargus and Keren Rice, eds. *Athabaskan Prosody*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 249-275.

Tuttle, Siri and Olga Lovick (2007) 'Intonational Marking of Discourse Units in Two Dena'ina Narratives'. *Nouveaux cahiers de linguistique française* 28: 305-316.

Intonation in Witsuwit'en

- Witsuwit'en
 - Spoken in western central B.C.
 - Not a tone language
- Data for this study
 - Sentences from current project (2007-), “Athabaskan Personal Histories of Climate Change in Alaska and Canada”
 - Semi-structured interviews about climate and environmental change in the Bulkley R. area of British Columbia
 - Native speaker interviewer and interviewee

Lillian Morris (interviewer), Mabel Forsythe (interviewee)



Intonation patterns in Witsuwit'en

- Among those identified to date
 - Declarative: L⁰
 - Wh- question: L⁰
 - Extraposition: L⁰ (after extraposed constituent)
 - Coordinated and embedded clauses
 -]L- H⁰[(pitch reset after each clause)

Paralinguistic cues or intonation?

- There are 'those who question whether intonational phonology even exists' perhaps because 'the suprasegmental features that are used in intonation are commonly used in paralinguistic signalling'
(Ladd in press *Intonational Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

Yes/no questions

- Three types of intonation contours identified to date
- Yes/no question syntax
 - rarely, **lic (lec)** occurs sentence finally or medially
 - cf. fixed expression
 - **'Et lic?** 'Is that so?'
that yes/no.Q
 - (does **lic** tend to occur with one intonation pattern vs. another?)

Yes/no questions

- 1. Genuine request for information.
- Intonation: H%.
- Meaning: The speaker has no idea what the answer is and would like to know.

Lillian Morris interviewing Katherine Arsenault

- KA: **Hinstl'a *mustard jar* nedidle tl'a lhok *can* 'ididlegh.**

suddenly

we.2.found and

salmon

we.2.made

'Suddenly the two of us found mustard jars and made our own canned salmon.' (laughing)

Neniwhaalhtis.

'They caught us.'



- LM: **C'izu' sili'?**

H%

good it.became

'Did it turn out good?'

- KA: ***No...***

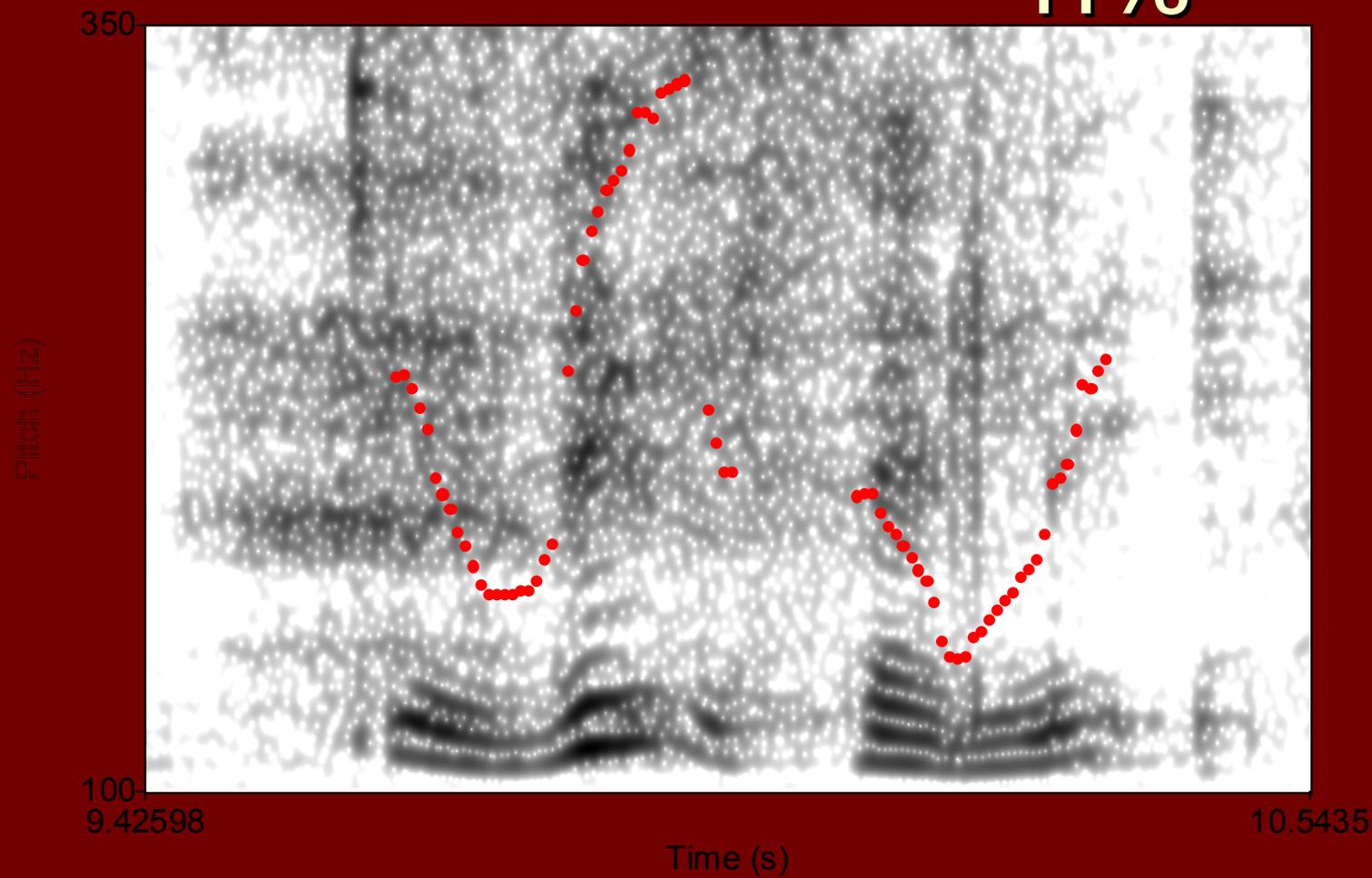
(laughing)



c'izu'

sili'

H%



Another type of yes/no question

- 2. Not too interested
- Intonation: L%
- Meaning: the speaker already knows the answer or is not that interested in the answer). (It's possible that these are not really questions but they are translated that way by speakers.)

Lillian Morris interviewing Katherine Arsenault

- LM: **Sa'on'a'** **tsalhtsë** **uniwhyin**
long.time.ago cranberry you.pl.picked



netakilh witsëh dik'is wik'ëtl'ats?

it'll.snow before or after

(reading) 'A long time ago did you (pl.) pick high-bush cranberries before it snowed or after?'

Gen c'ik'iyizggiz.

here she wrote it

'She wrote it here.'

Tsalhtsë uniwhyin? (pause) Netakilh witsëh tsalhtsë uniwhyin?

L%

L%

cranberry you.pl.picked it'll.snow before cranberry you.pl.picked

'Did you (pl.) pick high-bush cranberries? Did you (pl.) pick high-bush cranberries before it snowed?'

- KA: ***About August*** 'its'it'ah.

we do

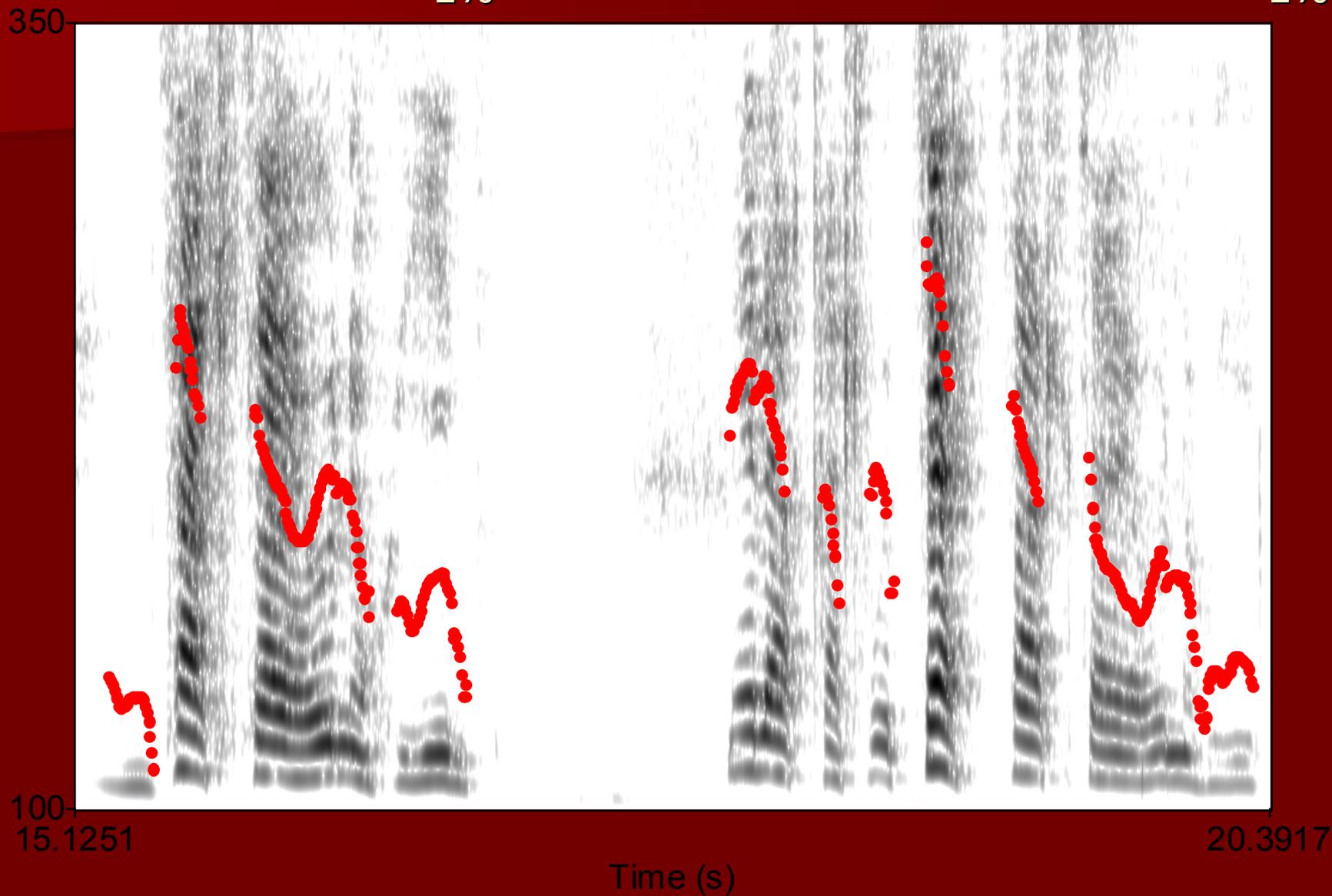
'We did [that] around August.'

tsalhtsë uniwhyin

L%

netakilh witsëh tsalhtsë uniwhyin

L%



Another type of yes/no question

- 3. Response requested
- Intonation: H L%
- Meaning: speaker is genuinely interested in the speaker's response (even if just to confirm what speaker thought)

Lillian Morris interviewing Dan Michell



- LM: **Nts'ëwh dzilh k'it yis ulit--- ulit?**
when mountain on snow it melts
'What time of year does the snow melt on the mountain?'

- DM: *Oh*, **'Elh-, 'elhikhin winewdizigilnikh bidiggit.**
one place I forgot up there
'Oh, [there's] one place I forgot up there.'

C'ilhggic ndzec dzilh ggī yis bīdik hac'oolic.
(mountain name) mountain that snow between.it it.melts
'On C'ilhggic ndzec mountain the snow melts in the middle.' [between peaks]

'Et 'awet udīlhye lhok witsatadilh so' wighewh 'it'iyh hitnī.
then it's known fish they'll come same time it does they say
'Then they say they know from that that they [fish] are coming at the same time.'

Dzilh k'its c'olic dīnī?
H L
mountain on it usually melts you're saying
'[when does] it usually melt on the mountain you said?'

- LM: **Mi'.**
yes

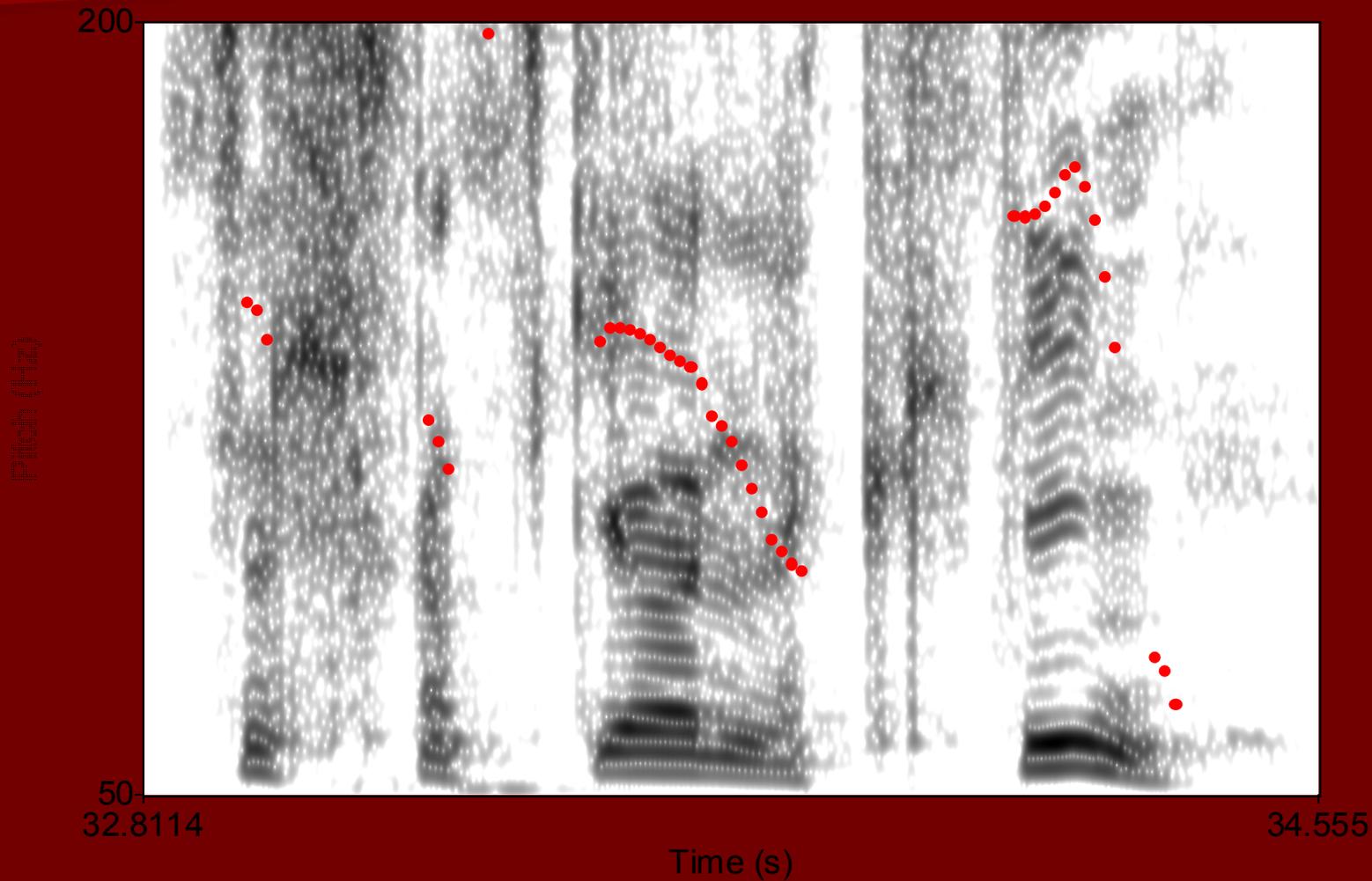
dzilh

k'its

c'olic

dini

H* L%



Lillian Morris interviewing Dan Michell



- LM: **Sa'on'a' dī nit'ay tabī lhay inlī' t'l'a k'ay 'et lic**
long ago this berry really lots there.were and now that yes/no.Q

'awet bilikh we- welew honinlī'.

then some.of.them there are none it.started.to.become

'Long ago there were lots of berries and now some are getting scarce, aren't they?'

Weninzin?

H* L%

you.don't.think

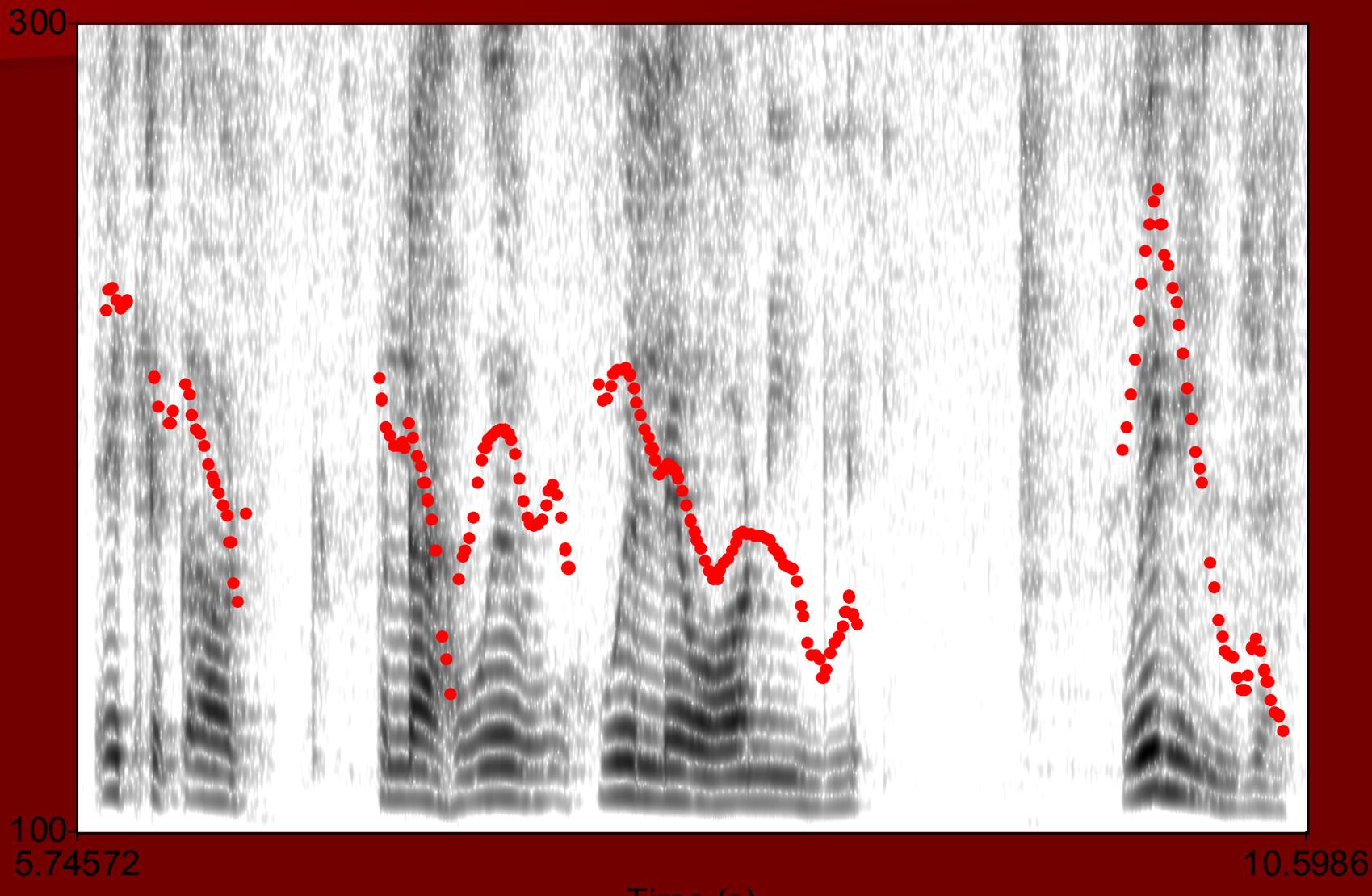
'Don't you think so?'

- DM: **'Et 'igegh.**
that it happened
'That has happened.'

'et lic 'awet bilikh we- welew honinli'

weninzin

H* L%



Witsuwiten yes/no question intonation summary

- Three types of yes/no questions
 - L⁰% I'm not that interested in the answer.
 - H⁰% I really don't know; tell me
 - H*L⁰% You really need to answer this question, even if just to confirm what I think I know.

Intonation in Tsek'ene

- Tsek'ene
 - Spoken in northern interior B.C.
 - A tone language
 - Syllable-final *? > low tone (two surface tones)
- Data for study of intonation (Hargus 2008
"Intonation in Kwadacha." Presented at Dene Languages
Conference, Cold Lake AB.)
 - Sentences from texts and interviews (1999-)
 - Most produced by Mike Abou

Mike Abou (left), Louie Tomah (right)



Intonation patterns in Tsek'ene

- Declarative, wh-questions, morphologically formed yes-no questions: H* L%
 - H* links to leftmost H tone syllable of verb (up-stepping lexical H)
 - If word-final syllable of sentence is H, L% creates falling tone on final syllable
- Yes/no questions: H%
 - H% replaces word-final L tone

sq...-ìì uncertainty

- 'maybe, might'
- Semantic opposite of assertion evidential
la
- 'variants': **sa, dèsq, kòòsq**
- **-ìì** used after consonant-final verbs
– 0 after vowel-final verbs

Tsek'ene sq

- Probably reduced form of
 - 'isq/'usq "I don't know"
- Compare
 - Deg Xinag **esren'** "I don't know"
 - Koyukon (LC) **aasoo** "I don't know, perhaps,"
dubitative (Jette, Jules and Eliza Jones 2000. *Koyukon Dictionary*. Fairbanks: ANLC.)

Uncertainty tune

- HL%
 - aligned with right edge of verb stem
 - prefix stem
- H L
- Uncertainty contour required in sentences with **sq** and variants
- Intonation per se? HL% not attested at right edge of S with extraposed phrase.

HL%: L replaces H stem tone

■ **Yìnònè** *Mary* **la** **k'ànusta**. 

across certainty I.see.her

'I (definitely) see Mary across there.'

■ **Yìnònè** *Mary* **so** **k'ànusta**. 

across uncertainty I.see.her

'That might be Mary I see across there.'

HL%: H does not replace L prefix
tone; HL created

■ 'Uyii la dàna dèt'ẹ. 

that certainty money 3s.has

'That guy (definitely) has money.'

■ 'Uyii so_q dàna dèt'ẹ. 

that uncertainty money 3s.has

'That guy might have money.'

'Uyii sɔ dàna dèet'è.



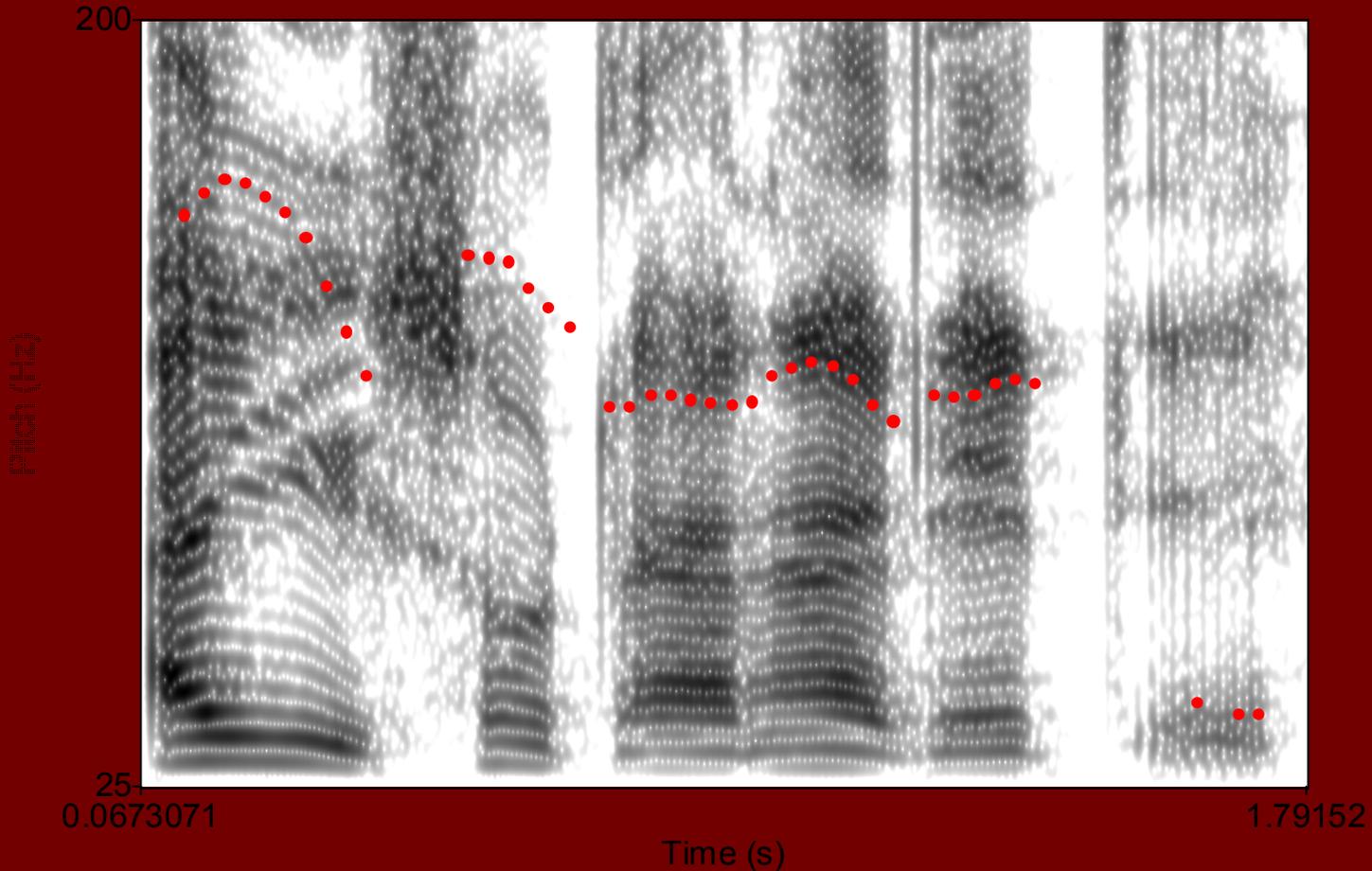
lexical

H H H L H L H



intonational

H L%



Tsek'ene summary

- L⁰: declarative, wh-, yes/no Q
- H⁰: yes/no Q
- HL⁰: uncertainty

Comparative remarks

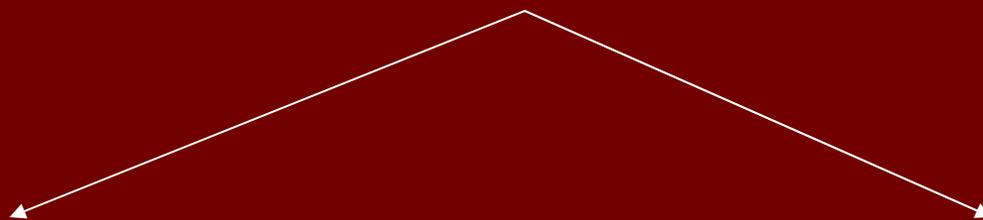
- HL tunes in both languages
 - Witsuwit'en
 - H*L% intonation: response request
 - Tsek'ene
 - HL%: uncertainty

Reconstruction and historical change

Proto-Athabaskan

H*L% Yes/noQ

(response request?)



Wit

H*L% Response request

Tsek'ene

HL% uncertainty

Proto-Athabaskan

*V_ɕVn(ʼ) "I don't know"

Wit

Tsek'ene

sq...HL%
uncertainty

'isq/'usq
"I don't know"

How did **sq** come to be associated with HL in Tsek'ene?

- Possible answers to yes/no question
 - yes
 - no
 - I don't know etc.
- Changes in Tsek'ene
 - $V_{\text{sq}}V_n(?)$ "I don't know" > **sq** uncertainty
 - response request $H^*L\%$ > uncertainty $HL\%$

Residual puzzles

- Tsek'ene **sq** does not occur in questions. Why not?
- HL uncertainty contour possibly restricted to right edge of verb. Why?
- What is historical source of **-ìì** used with **sq**?



Conclusion

- Confirmation/refutation/refinement of this scenario will depend on further research on intonation in Athabaskan languages

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