Gidaxan aa? Yagayt halaayin
You asked a question? You already know it[*]

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Abstract: This paper is about asking and answering polar questions in Gitksan. We hope that the paper will be useful for Gitksan community members who are (re-)learning their language. There are several different ways to ask a polar question like 'Is it raining?' in Gitksan, and the best way to use depends on the context of the conversation you are in. We show that how you ask a question matters, how you answer it matters, and who you are talking to matters.

Hlisima halaaxdis – You already know this.

Keywords: Gitksan, polar questions, negation

1   Introduction

1.1 Goal of the paper

This paper is about how to ask and answer polar questions in Gitksan. We hope that the paper will be useful for Gitksan community members who are (re-)learning their language.[1]

A polar question is a question that can in principle be answered with a confirmation or a denial. An example is given in (1).[2] The person answering this question could either say that Louise is awake or that she isn't. Note that our example sentences are written first in in the orthography used by many community members (see Hindle and Rigsby 1973), and below that we break the sentence down into smaller parts. For each example we give the initials of the speaker(s) who gave or judged the sentence. We write 'volunteered' when the speaker gave the sentence themselves. If there is no 'volunteered' next to the speaker initials, that means the speaker listened to the sentence and said whether it sounded good or not.

(1) *Gyukst Louise aa?*
    Gyuks=t   Louise=aa?

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[1] For a more formal discussion of Gitksan polar questions, see Matthewson (2025).

[2] Abbreviations: 1/2/3 = first/second/third person, I/II/III = I/II/III series pronoun, ATT = attributive, CN = common noun connective, DEM = demonstrative, FOC = focus, INS = instrumental, LOC = locative, NEG = negative, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, PN = proper noun, PREP = preposition, PROG = progressive, PROSP = prospective, PRX = proximate, Q = polar question, SG = singular, TR = transitive, VAL = valency adjuster.

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wake=PN   Louise=Q
'Is Louise awake?'   (volunteered HH)

This paper is not about content questions, which require different kinds of answers, such as 'I helped Louise' in example (2).

(2) *Naahl hlimooyin?*
    Naa=hl   hlimoo-yi-n?
    who=CN   help-TR-2SG.II
    'Who did you help?'   (Rigsby 1986:303)

There are a few different ways to ask polar questions in Gitksan, which we will talk about below. All polar questions have the marker *aa* at the end of the sentence, as you can see in (1). *Aa* only appears in polar questions; there can be no *aa* in questions like (2). The marker *aa* is pronounced with a rising tone on it (Shamei 2018).

The different ways to ask polar questions in Gitksan have slightly different meanings, and are appropriate in different situations. We will explain these different types of polar question and when it is best to use each type (Section 2). We will also discuss social information related to asking and answering questions in a Gitksan cultural context (Section 3). Before we get to that we will first introduce ourselves, the language, and our different perspectives on the work we do together (Sections 1.2–1.4).

1.2 Who we are

Hector: My name is Hector Hill. I'm 72 years old. I am Gitxsan on my mom's side, and Tsimshian on my dad's side. I'm from our village of Gitsegukla, British Columbia, Canada. I am from the House of WiiSeeks. My hereditary name is Gy'ax (Earthquake/Earth Tremor: It says that I move the earth you walk on).

I learned how to read and write English when I was 45 years old (1995/6) at Vancouver BC, Street Church. I graduated my Two year Diploma in Theology and Missions, and my Three Year Diploma in Pastoral Training in 2001, through First Nations Bible College, Vancouver BC.

After, I was an assistant pastor to Randy Barnetson for a few years and I went and did my upgrading at NEC (Native Education College). Through NEC I went to NVIT for the Chemical Addiction Worker Advanced Diploma, and I graduated from there in 2012.

I graduated my Bachelor of General Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley, 2013. I received my Masters of Education in Educational Administration and Leadership, University of British Columbia, 2021.

I worked as a Christian counsellor at Street Church and helped people who can't read and write English. Through my education and training as a counsellor I was hired as an Addictions Counsellor at Native Courtworker and Counselling Association. I also worked at a Treatment Centre in Kitwangax, BC, Wilp Si'Satxw, Community Healing Centre.

At present I work with University of British Columbia, Linguistics. We are working on preserving the Gitxsan language, our Gitsenimuxw. I retired in 2018, but I'm still working with UBC Linguistics doing Elicitation.

T'oyaksi'y 'Nisi'm (I Thank You All), Gy'ax Hector Hill.

Lisa: I am a sixth-generation New Zealander and a first-generation Canadian. My ancestors were mostly from Scotland and England. I am a linguist who is interested in how languages express

meaning. I have been fortunate enough to work with Gitksan speakers since 2010. Apart from Hector, the speakers I regularly work with in Vancouver are Barbara Sennott, Vincent Gogag and Jeanne Harris. I have also worked with speakers in Gitksan territory including Myrna Aksidan, Frank Benson, Rena Benson, Thelma Blackstock, Perrine Campbell, Phyllis Haizimsque, Herb Russell, Frances Sampson, Jane Smith, Fern Weget, Louise Wilson, and especially Ray Jones.

Two perspectives: Lisa has been researching polar questions in Gitksan for a few years. She asked Hector if he would like to co-author a paper on this topic because he had given her so many insightful comments that had helped her understand the meanings of the different polar question types. While writing this paper, Lisa discovered she had much more to learn – including about things she had never before asked about or thought about.

In this paper we are trying something that is new for both of us, and we know we won't do a perfect job. When we present our perspectives as a speaker of Gitksan and a linguist, we don't speak for anybody else. We welcome any feedback about how material like this can be made more useful for community members.

1.3 The language

One thing we learned when co-writing this paper is how different our two ways to introduce the Gitksan language are. Lisa would write something like:

> "Gitksan" (ISO 639-3 git) is the English name for a continuum of Interior Tsimshianic dialects spoken in the northwest Interior of British Columbia, Canada. There is no endonym for the entire language; instead, each dialect has its own name. A map of Gitksan traditional territory is at https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/gitxsan/. Gitksan is closely related to, and mutually intelligible with, Nisg̱a'a, the other Interior Tsimshianic language.

In Hector's language, however, there is no word for the group of languages that linguists call the Tsimshianic language family, and for Hector the word 'Tsimshianic' does not pick out this group of languages. The word *Ts'imtsenimx̱* refers to the people on the Coast. The term *Sm'algyax,* which is how many people refer to another one of the related languages, for Hector means 'original language' and can include Gitksan or any other Indigenous language. Hector states, "The sm'algyax I use is Gitsegukla."

1.4 Two perspectives on fieldwork

When linguists are trying to find out details about a language – how it is pronounced, how words are built, how sentences are formed, and what things mean – they often do fieldwork. Fieldwork usually consists of asking a fluent speaker of the language questions about how to say things, how to translate things, or whether sentences sound good or not in particular imaginary contexts. Often, to make the contexts more real, the linguist shows pictures that tell a story, so that the speaker can more easily imagine being in that context and what they would say in such a context. We will show examples of these visual stories (called 'storyboards') below.[3]

The linguist's goal is to record, document and analyze the language. As well as recording what speakers spontaneously produce, it is sometimes also important to know what does *not* sound good in the language. So often, the linguist asks questions that can sound strange. From all the

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[3] See Burton and Matthewson (2015) on the storyboard fieldwork technique.

information collected, we make generalizations about what does and does not make a good sentence in the language. The results are used in linguistic papers but also, ideally, we produce results that can be useful for learners of the language.

While writing this paper, we discovered that we have slightly different perspectives on the fieldwork process.

From Lisa's perspective, the work with Hector is always fun and interesting. In the fieldwork sessions, Lisa is the one who is learning. Hector is the expert on the language and he has much knowledge that she does not. The linguist could never know more than the speaker about the language, because the speaker has knowledge that they gained through hearing the language when they were a child. Even if some previous linguist wrote something different, that never means that the current speaker is wrong. Maybe the earlier linguist made a mistake, or the earlier information was about a different dialect, or maybe the language has changed over the years, or perhaps there is simply more than one way to say it.[4]

From Hector's perspective, when Lisa asks Hector things, he has to answer because Lisa is higher in education and knowledge. This is like when a mother asks a child a question, the child has to listen because the mother is the teacher in the family. (The father, aunts and uncles are grouped together as secondary family.) Hector notices that linguists repeat sentences and they try to take out certain words or add something to them. He says, "In my mind and heart I was given the answer a long time ago and now I have to dig around and go back to my Gitxsan thinking before it comes out as English. Would it line up with the answer you have, what I'm giving?"

The feeling Hector has that academic people are 'higher' comes from a lifetime of being 'taught' by k'amksiwaa (white people). For example, when Hector went to the Carnegie Centre to learn to write, he was told that the teacher was right, he was wrong, and he knew nothing. A totally different and much more encouraging message came from one of the Elders. The Elder told Hector, "You know this already. Now you need to see what it is that you know. So I'm gonna show you."

Hector's message to learners of Gitxsan is that you are right. We are not experts, and you are not wrong. Believe in yourself and follow the ways of your people. Memories of good, bad, ugly, and trauma will all come into play for a survivor. But remember the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspect of what you are doing. *Hlisima halaaxdis* – you already know this.

2   The different types of polar questions

2.1 Overview

In (1) above we showed one way to ask a polar question in Gitksan, but there are actually three common ways. Look at the different ways to ask whether it's raining in (3)–(5). All the questions end with *aa.* In (4) the question starts with the negative marker *nee,* and in (5) there is not only *nee* but also the focus marker *dii.*[5]

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[4] Speaking of earlier linguists, Bruce Rigsby studied the Gitksan language extensively and wrote a useful grammar (Rigsby 1986). Basic information about Gitksan questions is discussed in Rigsby's grammar (e.g., p. 296). He did not look deeply into the meaning differences between the different question types, however. Relevant useful information can also be found in Marie-Lucie Tarpent's grammar on Nisg̱a'a (Tarpent 1987; e.g., p. 362), and in Colin Brown's (2024) dissertation on Sm'algyax.

[5] In statements (non-questions), the way to negate something is to use *nee dii* rather than just *nee* alone. Very rarely, just *nee* can be used, but 99% of the time, *dii* is there as well, as in (i).

(i)   *Nee dii yee'y.*

(3) *Yukwhl wis aa?*
    Yukw=hl   wis=**aa**?
    PROG=CN   rain=**Q**
    'Is it raining? / It's raining?'   (volunteered HH)

(4) *Neehl yukwhl wis aa?*
    Nee=hl   yukw=hl   wis=**aa**?
    NEG=CN   PROG=CN   rain=**Q**
    'Is it raining? / Isn't it raining?'   (volunteered RJ)

(5) *Nee dii yukwhl wis aa?*
    Nee=**dii**   yukw=hl   wis=**aa**?
    NEG=**FOC** PROG=CN   rain=**Q**
    'It's not raining? / Is it not raining?'   (volunteered VG)

These different questions mean slightly different things. Lisa's main research question is when, exactly, you can appropriately use each one, and we will try to explain that below.

From Hector's perspective, a better way to teach someone about how to ask questions would be to take the person outside and ask them what they want to know. He would use the different question forms outside, in the natural way of being, and the learner would learn that way. The linguistic way of talking about these issues is not the natural way of life, not the original way to learn.

However, given that the natural Gitksan way of life and the original way of learning has been damaged or even destroyed by white people, Hector agrees that there is a role for a paper like this that tries to convey the information for learners.

We believe that the differences between the different question-types have to do with **what the questioner thinks the answerer will likely say.** Does the questioner believe the answer to the question will be positive? Or do they have no idea what the answer is? Or, did they expect a negative answer but something has happened to make them doubt that?

Before we start showing examples of questions that are appropriate and not appropriate, it's important to know that the symbol # in front of a sentence means that the fluent speaker does **not** accept the sentence in the given context. The symbol **?** before a sentence means that the sentence isn't perfect, but it's not totally wrong. And **??** is in between **#** and **?**: it means the sentence sounds pretty bad.

We also want to make clear that people from different areas often say things slightly differently. We will give some different versions below so you can see examples from a few areas. (Sometimes, even speakers from the same community can say things differently, depending on who raised them, where they grew up and which house they belong to.) The example sentences have been given by five fluent Gitksan speakers. Vincent Gogag is from Git-anyaaw (Gitanyow) and speaks Giyaanimx̱. Hector Hill and Ray Jones are from Gijigyukwhla (Gitsegukla) and speak Gitsenimux̱. Jeanne Harris and Barbara Sennott are from Ansba'yaxw (Kispiox) and speak Gitxsanimx̱.

    Nee=**dii**   yee-'y.
    NEG=**FOC** go-1SG.II
    'I didn't go.'   (Rigsby 1986:200)

2.2 Questions with just *aa*

When the questioner believes the answerer will **confirm** the sentence being asked about, fluent speakers are most likely to use just *aa* and not *nee* or *nee dii.* An example is shown in the storyboard in Figure 1. Rose sees Bob coming in wearing raingear and holding an umbrella, so she is pretty sure he's going to confirm that it's raining.
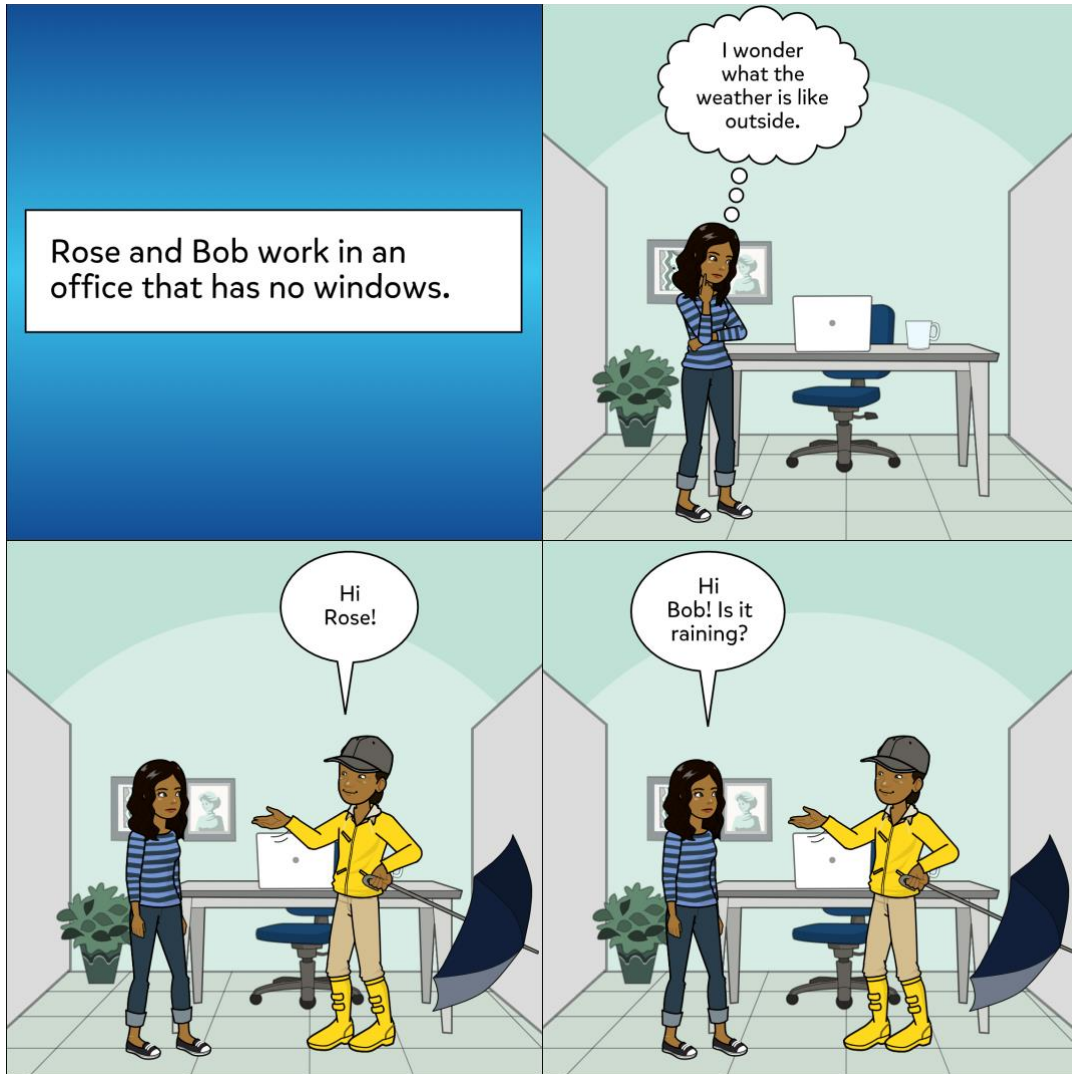

Figure 1: Raingear storyboard (adapted from Gunlogson 2008:104)

When Gitksan fluent speakers were shown this context, they translated Rose's question using just *aa,* as shown in (6). Most of the speakers did not like to use *nee* in this context, as shown in (6) and by the comments they gave. It's also not good to use *nee dii* here, as shown in (6).

(6) *Context: Raingear storyboard*

a. *Yukwhl wis aa?*
    Yukw=hl   wis=**aa**?
    PROG=CN   rain=**Q**
    'Is it raining?'   (volunteered BS, HH, RJ, VG)
b. #*Neehl wis aa?*
   #**Nee**=hl   wis=**aa**?
   NEG=CN   rain=**Q**
    'Is it raining?'   (BS, HH, RJ)

Comments on versions of (6):
"I wouldn't say that. You don't need the *neehl.* [(6)] is good, perfect." (BS)
"No. If he didn't have the raingear the question would be ok." "If he walks in with an umbrella
and rain clothes, that would be a silly question." (HH)
"I'm laughing. Unless you had a shower in your clothes ... *Neehl* is 'Is it?'" (HH)
"It'd be weird." (RJ)

c. #*Nee dii wis aa?*
   #**Nee**=**dii**   wis=**aa**?
   NEG=FOC   rain=**Q**
    'Isn't it raining?'   (BS, JH, HH)

Comment on (6): "If he comes in soaked and with an umbrella then it's an improper question."
(HH)

Here is another context where the questioner is pretty sure the answerer is going to confirm
their idea. In the storyboard in Figure 2, Bob believes that Mary has had a haircut because he notices
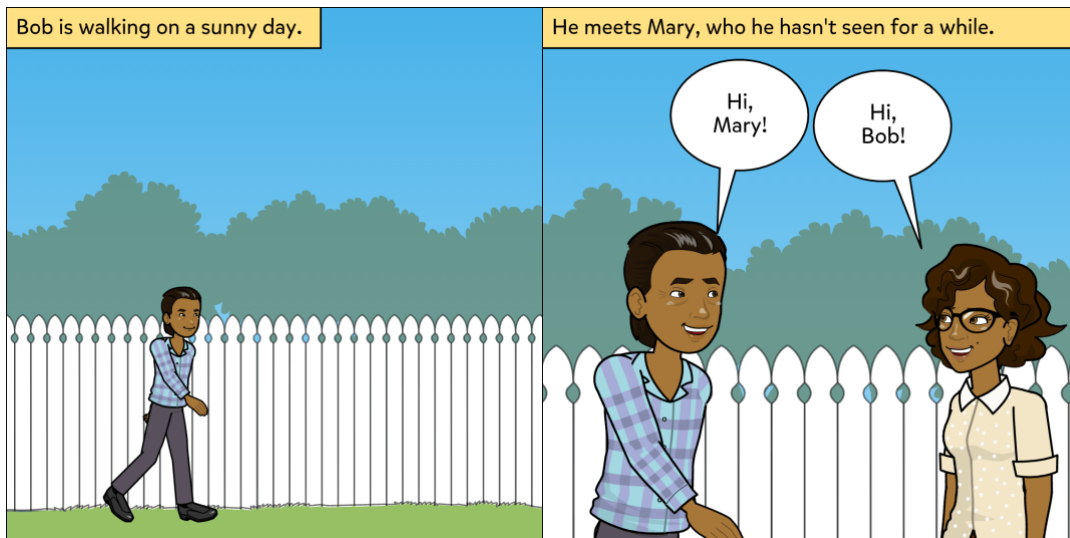her hair is shorter than usual.

Figure 2: Haircut storyboard (adapted from Gunlogson 2008:104)

Speakers usually prefer to use a question just with *aa* in the haircut scenario. In (7) we show two ways to ask the question just with *aa*. (Remember that often, speakers from different areas have slightly different ways to say things. It doesn't mean that one way is wrong and one way is right.) Examples (7) show that adding *nee* to the questions makes them worse in this context. And (7) shows that using *nee dii* is not appropriate.

(7) *Context: Haircut storyboard*

    a. *K̲'ojinhl gesin aa?*
        K̲'oj-in=hl   ges-in=**aa**?
        cut-2SG.II=CN   hair-SG.II=**Q**
        'You cut your hair?'   (volunteered HH)

    b. *(Oo,) k̲'otshl ges 'niin aa?*
        (Oo,) k̲'ots=hl   ges   'niin=**aa**?
        oh   cut=CN   hair   2SG.III=**Q**
        'You cut your hair?'   (volunteered BS, JH)

    c. # *Neehl k̲'ojinhl gesinaa?*
     # **Nee**=hl   k̲'oj-in=hl   ges-in=**aa**?
      NEG=CN   cut-2SG.II=CN   hair-SG.II=**Q**
      'Did you cut your hair?'   (HH)

    d. **?** *Neehl k̲'otshl gesxwin aa?*
     ? **Nee**=hl   k̲'ots=hl   ges-xw-in=**aa**?
      NEG=CN   cut=CN   hair-VAL-SG.II=**Q**
      'Did you cut your hair?'   (BS, JH)

Comment on (7): *"Yeah, he could say that. But he doesn't have to say neehl."* [corrects to (7)] (BS)

e. # *Nee dii ḵ'otshl gesxwin aa?*

| # **Nee**=**dii**	ḵ'ots=hl	ges-xw-in=**aa**?
NEG=FOC	cut=CN	hair-VAL-SG.II=**Q**

'Did you not have a haircut?' (volunteered in different context BS, JH)

Comment on (7): "No, I wouldn't say that. *Nee dii* is no." [corrects to (7)] (BS)

So far we have been looking at contexts where the questioner expects the answerer to answer with a confirmation. Another feature of the contexts so far is that the questioner themselves was fairly neutral until just before they asked the question. In the raining case for example, Rose was in an office without windows and she had no clue about the weather until she saw Bob in his raingear. Next we will look at what happens if the questioner expects the answerer to confirm, but the questioner is also surprised because they had thought the answer was going to be 'no'.

In this case, fluent speakers still use *aa* and no *nee* or *nee dii,* but they tend to add the marker *ḵ'ap* or *ap,* which is an emphasis word meaning something like 'really' (called 'verum' by linguists; see Matthewson 2021). (Whether a speaker uses *ḵ'ap* or *ap* depends on the dialect. Gyeets (west/downstream) speakers tend to use *ḵ'ap* and Gigeenix (east/upstream) speakers tend to use *ap.*) Hector says that when the person asking a question uses *ḵ'ap/ap,* that tells the other person that she or he knows the answer already. Sometimes a question with *ḵ'ap/ap* is used to see if the other person was looking at what she or he was saying.

A scenario where *ḵ'ap/ap* is appropriate is shown in Figure 3 When Bob asks his question, Rose has already basically given him the answer: she's going to the party. But previously Rose had made it seem like she wouldn't be going, so in his question he expresses his surprise.
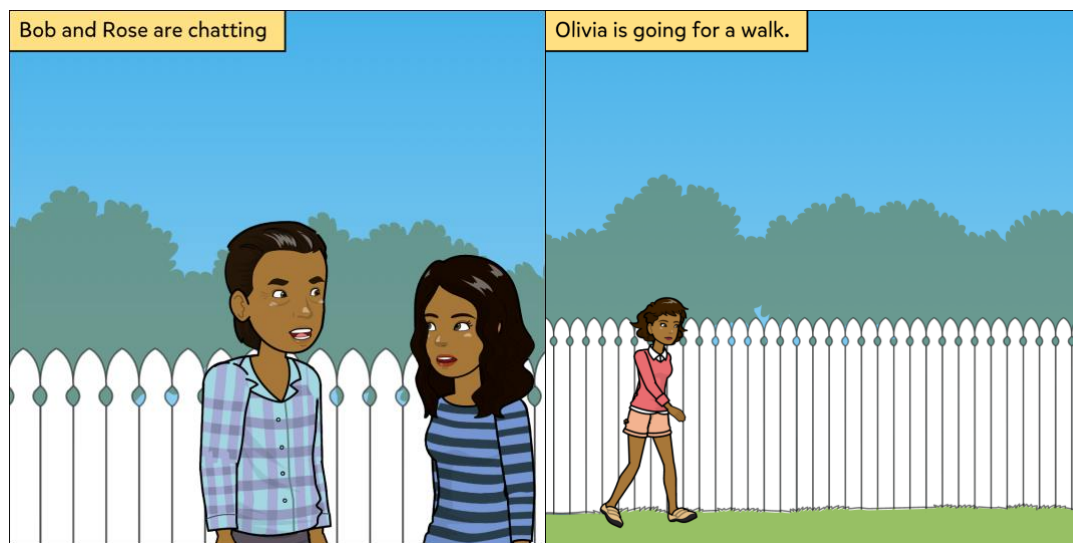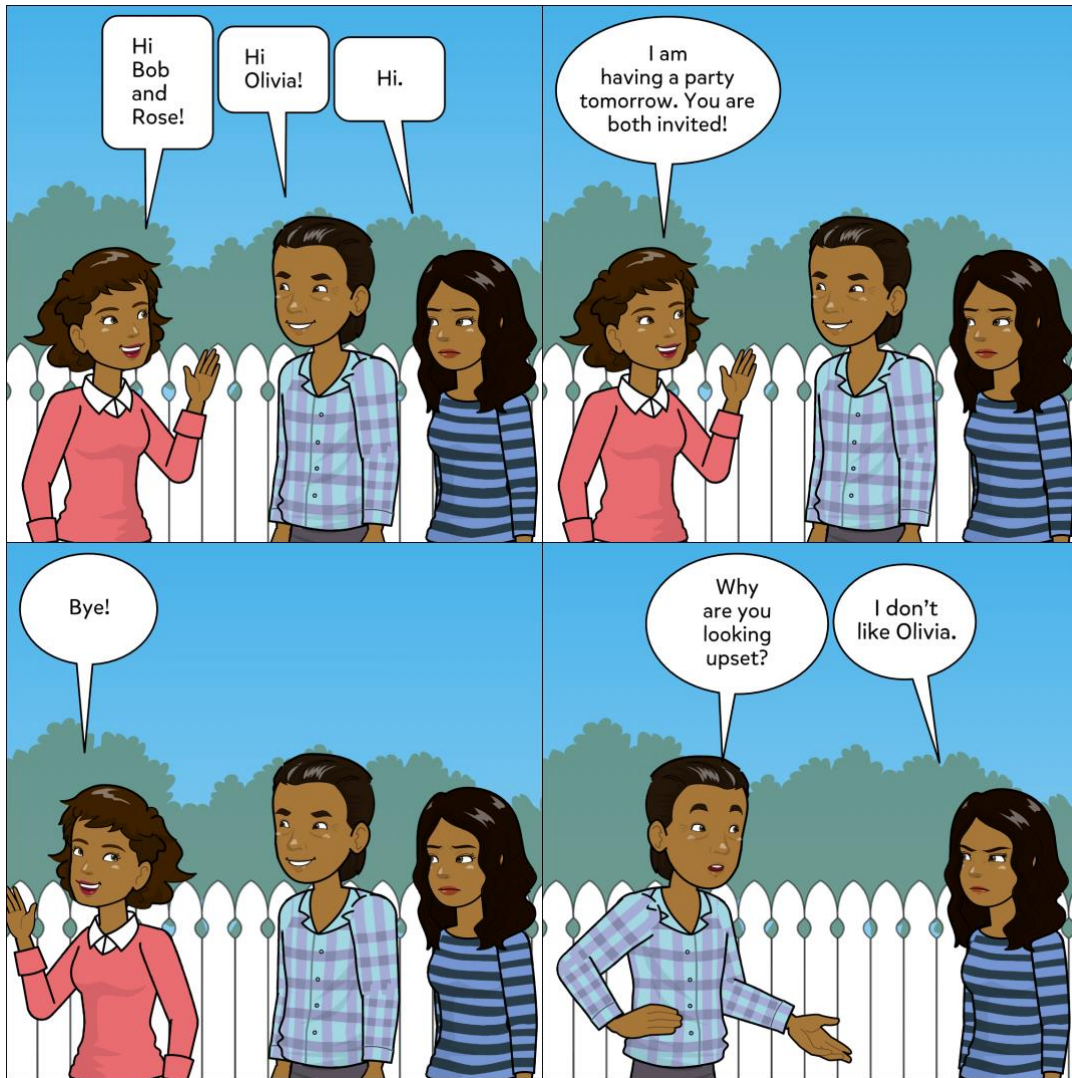
Figure 3: Olivia's party – really? storyboard

(8) *Context: Olivia's party – really? storyboard*

    a. *Dim ḵ'ap hukws 'niin go'ohl liligets Olivia haa?*

Dim	**ḵ'ap**	hukws	'niin	go'o=hl	liliget-s	Olivia=**haa**?[6]
PROSP	**VERUM**	go	2SG.III	LOC=CN	feast-3.II	Olivia=**Q**

        'Are you really going to Olivia's party?'   (volunteered VG)

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[6] The question marker *aa* is sometimes pronounced *haa, yaa* or *naa* when the word before it ends in a vowel.

b. *Oo, dim ap yee 'niin goohl paatiis Olivia aa?*

Oo,	dim	**ap**	yee	'niin	goo=hl	paatii=s	Olivia=**aa**?
oh	PROSP	**VERUM**	go	2SG.III	LOC=CN	party[-3.II]=PN[7]	Olivia=**Q**

'Are you really going to Olivia's party?'　　　　　　　　(volunteered BS)

c. *# Oo, ap nem dii yeen goohl paatiis Olivia aa?*

# Oo,	**ap**	**ne**m=**dii**	yee-n	goo=hl	paatii=s	Olivia=**aa**?
oh	**VERUM**	**NEG**+PROSP=**FOC**	go-2SG.II	LOC=CN	party[-3.II]=PN	Olivia=**Q**

'Are you really not going to Olivia's party?'　　　　　　　　(BS)

Comment on (8): "No no, *ap nem dii,* that means not going … Are you not going?" (BS)

Another example is given in (9). A good way to ask the question is to use *aa* and *ḵ'ap/ap.* It's not good to use *nee* or *nee dii.*

(9) *Context: Betty is talking to her husband Adam about their mutual friend Charlie. Charlie is known to sometimes pretend to be sick to get out of working.*

B:　　*Siipxwt Charlie.*
　　　Siipxw=t　Charlie.
　　　sick=PN　Charlie
　　　'Charlie is sick.'

A1:　*(Oo,) ḵ'ap/ap siipxw 'nid aa?[8]*
　　　(Oo,) **ḵ'ap/ap**　siipxw　'nid=**aa**?
　　　(oh)　**VERUM**　sick　3.III=**Q**
　　　'Is he really sick?'　　　　　　　　(volunteered BS; accepted HH)

A2: # *Ḵ'ap neehl siipxwd aa?*
　# **Ḵ'ap**　　**nee**=hl　siipxw-d=**aa**?
　　VERUM　**NEG**=CN　sick-3.II=**Q**
　　'Is he really sick?'　　　　　　　　(HH)

A3: #/? *(Oo,) ḵ'ap/ap nee dii siipxwd aa?*
　#/? (Oo,) **ḵ'ap/ap**　**nee**=**dii**　siipxw-d=**aa**?
　　(oh)　**VERUM**　**NEG**=**FOC**　sick-3.II=**Q**
　　'Is he really not sick?'　　　　　　　　(BS, HH, JH)

Comment on (9)A3: "No. You would say that if she said he's not sick." (BS)

(10) Another set of cases for questions with just *aa* (this time without *ḵ'ap/ap*) is when the speaker is beyond surprised – they outright disbelieve the positive answer – but they still think the answerer will answer positively. In (10), for example, the mother is not even

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[7] The 3.II pronoun is often elided; these elided pronouns are marked inside square brackets only on the gloss line.

[8] When different speakers used different words, we use the symbol '/' to indicate the options.

asking whether the floor is clean; she knows it's not. But she thinks the child will say the floor is clean, since he already stated that. *Context: A mother asks her child to clean the floor, and he does a really bad job before announcing himself to be done. The mother says to the child:*[9]

Saksxwhl ha'niiwan/ha'niiwen tun aa?
Saks-xw=hl   ha-'nii-wan/ ha-'nii-wen   tun=**aa**?
clean-VAL=CN   INS-on-sit.PL/INS-on-sit.PL   DEM.PRX=**Q**
'This floor is clean?'   (volunteered HH, VG)

There is one last type of context where questions are made with just *aa,* no *nee* or *nee dii.* This context seems quite different from the other ones we showed so far: it's when the questioner knows for sure that the statement contained in the question is true, and they also know that the answerer does not know the answer to the question, and they are implicitly asking a slightly different question. This might sound complicated, but an example will hopefully make it clear. Look at the scenario in Figure 4.
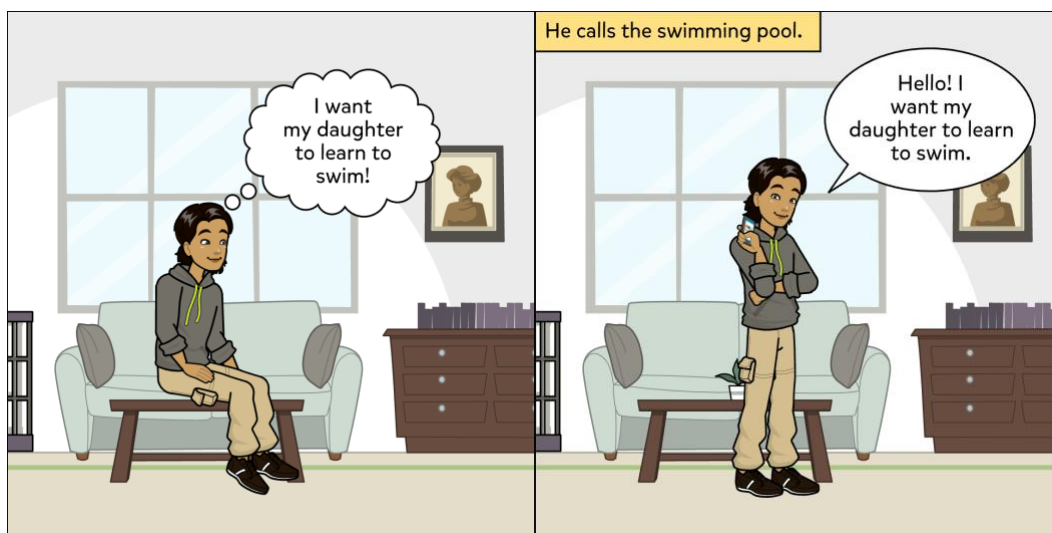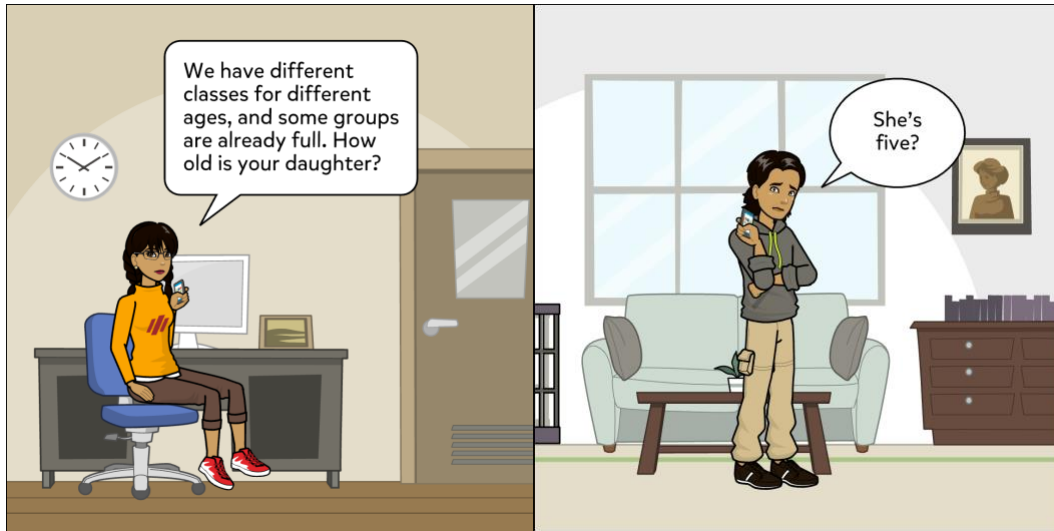
Figure 4: She's five? storyboard (adapted from Goodhue 2024:955)

In this scenario, the questioner knows perfectly well that his daughter is five, and the person he is talking to has no idea how old she is, so he is definitely not asking her whether it's true that his daughter is five. In English, we would raise the intonation of our voice here to make it sound like a question. By the rising intonation, the father gets across his uncertainty about whether there will be room for his daughter in swimming class, given that she is five.

In contexts like this, you can use a question with *aa,* as shown in (11). If *nee* is added, it will be interpreted as the father asking the pool worker whether his daughter is five – so it is no longer appropriate in this context.

(11)   *Context: She's five? storyboard*

   a.   *Xwsdinshlguuhlxwd aa?*
           Xwsdins-hlguuhlxw-d=**aa**?
           five-child-3.II=**Q**
           'She's five?'   (volunteered HH)

   Comment about (11): "You know it, and you're saying it out loud." (HH)

   b. # *Neehl xwdinshlguuhlxwd aa?*
      # **Nee**=hl   xwdins-hlguuhlxw-d=**aa**?
          NEG=CN   five-child-3.II=**Q**
          'Is she five?'   (volunteered not in this context; HH)

   Lisa: "Can you start it with *nee* in this context?"
   Hector: "No, no. That means he doesn't know anything about his daughter."

2.3 Questions with *nee* and *aa*

When do fluent speakers use *nee* in polar questions? There are a couple of types of scenario.

220

The first scenario where questions with *nee* are a good choice is when the questioner has no prior belief about whether the answer will be positive or negative, and there is also no evidence in the context about what the answer will be. In other words, these are very neutral contexts.

In the storyboard in Figure 5, the questioner probably has no idea what the weather is like in her friend's town, and he also hasn't given her any clues because they just started the conversation. The most usual way for the speakers to make the question is to start it with *nee,* as shown in (12).

Figure 5: Phone sunny storyboard (Büring and Gunlogson 2000:8)

(12)   *Context: Phone sunny storyboard*

    a.   *Neehl goymaxhl hloxws aa?*
             Nee=hl   goymax=hl   hloxws=**aa**?
             NEG=CN   bright[-3.II]=CN   sun=**Q**
             'Is it sunny?'   (volunteered RJ)

b. *Neehl ts'atxwhl hloxs go'on aa?*
    Nee=hl   ts'atxw=hl   hlo<u>x</u>s   go'o-n=**aa**?
    NEG=CN   shine[-3.II]=CN   sun   LOC-2SG.II=**Q**
    'Is it sunny where you are?'   (volunteered BS)

c. **#?** *Ts'atxwhl hlo<u>x</u>s go'on aa?*
  #? Ts'atxw=hl   hlo<u>x</u>s   go'o-n=**aa**?
     shine=CN   sun   LOC-2SG.II=**Q**
     'Is it sunny where you are?'   (BS, JH)

Comments on (12):
"She could, but it wouldn't be proper or correct … It's alright, but it's not correct." (BS)
"Like a half sentence, but I think it's ok." (JH)

d. **#** *Nee dii ts'atxwhl hloxs aa?*
  # **Nee**=**dii**   ts'atxw=hl   hlo<u>x</u>s=**aa**?
    NEG=**FOC**   shine=CN   sun=**Q**
    'Is the sun not shining?'(volunteered BS in different context; rejected in this context)

Comment on (12): "It's negative, is the sun not shining?" (BS)

Another neutral context is given in (13). Note that we are calling this context 'neutral' even though the teacher who is asking the question knows the answer. The point is that when making test questions, the questioner tries to convey no bias one way or the other (i.e., no clues to the students about what the answer might be). So they use a form that is totally open about what the answer is. Here we see that it is fine to start the question with *nee,* as in (13). It's also okay to just use *aa,* as in (13). It's not appropriate to use *nee dii,* as in (13), because that changes the meaning.

(13) *Context: Question on a test in school.*[10]

a. *Neet/Neehl guphl smaxhl suusiid/gwisiid aa?*
    Nee=t/hl   gup=hl   smax=hl   suusiid/gwisiid=**aa**?
    NEG=3.I/CN eat[-3.II]=CN bear=CN   potato=**Q**
    'Do bears eat potatoes?'   (volunteered BS, HH, JH, RJ)

b. *(Oo,) gubihl smaxhl suusiid/gwisiid/sgusiid aa?*
    (Oo,)   gub-i=hl   smax=hl   suusiid/gwisiid/sgusiid=**aa**?
    (oh)   eat-TR[-3.II]=CN bear=CN   potato=**Q**
    'Do bears eat potatoes?'   (volunteered BS, HH, VG)

c. **#** *Nee dii(t) guphl smaxhl gwisiid aa?*
  #**Nee**=**dii**(=t)   gup=hl   smax=hl   gwisiid=**aa**?
    NEG=**FOC**(=3.I) eat[-3.II]=CN bear=CN   potato=**Q**
    'Don't bears eat potatoes?'   (HH)

---

[10] Adapted from AnderBois (2019:124).

Comment on (13): "Right now there's food for the bear: fish, berries, potatoes and other food. The only thing that the bear's eating now is the fish and then everybody looks and says "Oo, [(13)]." They're curious; he's not eating the potatoes. In that context that would work." (HH)

Another example of a neutral context is bureaucratic forms. Example (14) shows that the most preferred form of the question contains *nee* but not *dii*. A question with just *aa* is also acceptable, but the speaker's comment in (14) suggests that when you ask it this way, the question isn't completely neutral about the answer. (The question mark in brackets means that the sentence is sometimes accepted and sometimes judged as not very good in this context.)

(14)   *Context: On a health insurance form[11]*

    a. (?) *Naks/neks 'niin **aa?***
      (?) Naks/neks   'niin=**aa**?
        spouse   2SG.III=**Q**
        'Are you married?'   (volunteered HH; accepted BS, JH)

Comment on (14)a: "That gives him or her the opportunity to say, "Yeah, I'm married to …" and then the name … It opens the door to say yes or no, even though you know they're married." (HH)

    b.   **Nee**=hl   naks-in=**aa**?
        NEG=CN   spouse-2SG.II=**Q**
        'Are you married?'   (volunteered JH, VG; accepted, BS, HH)

Lisa: "Does [(14)] assume they're married?"
Hector: "No. That question is asking about, you don't know if he is."

    c. # **Nee**=**dii**   naks-in=**aa**?
        NEG=**EXH**   spouse-2SG.II=**Q**
        'Are you not married?'   (BS, VG)

Comments on (14)c:
"Couldn't use that, no." (VG)
"If the question is 'Are you not married?'" (BS)

Another type of scenario where *nee* can be in the question is when the questioner thought beforehand that the answer to the question was positive, but they don't have evidence at the time they are asking the question that the answerer will necessarily give a positive answer.

An example is given in Figure 6. Before Bob asks Mary where they should go to eat, Mary thought there was a good Chinese restaurant in the area. But she isn't sure whether Bob agrees with her. In this context, all the five speakers who were consulted offered questions that started with *nee*; two versions are given in (15). The version just with *aa* is not very good (15), and *nee dii* is also not good (15).

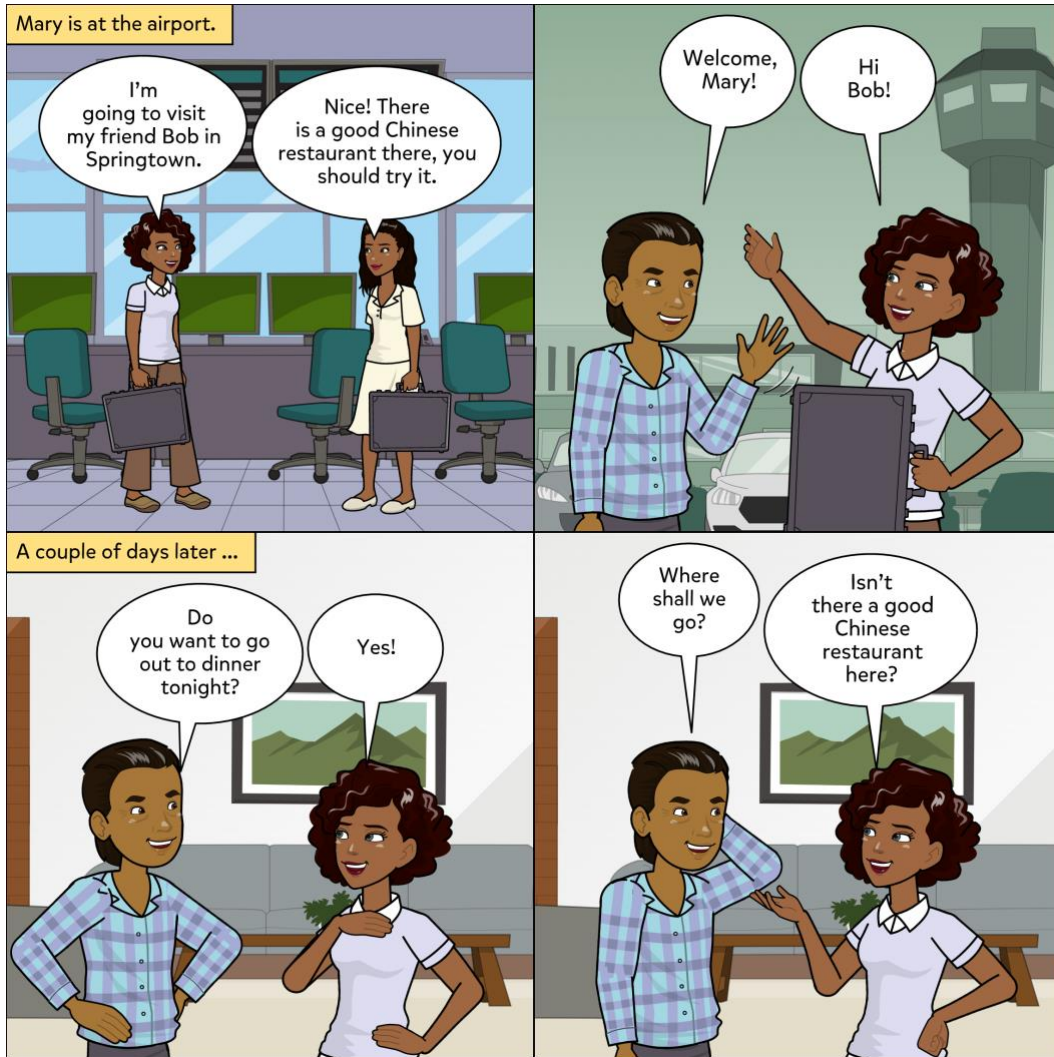[11] Adapted from Gunlogson (2003:15), as used by Šafářová (2005:359-360).

Figure 6: Isn't there a good Chinese restaurant? storyboard (adapted from Ladd 1981:164)

(15) *Context: Isn't there a good Chinese restaurant? storyboard*

a. *Neehl t'aahl ama jeynem wilp txookxw ga'asun aa?*
    Nee=hl t'aa=hl   am-a   jeyn-em   wilp txook-xw ga'a-sun=**aa**?
    NEG=CN sit[-3.II]=CN good-ATT Chinese-ATT house eat.PL-VAL LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**
    'Isn't there a good Chinese restaurant here?'   (volunteered HH)

b. *Neehl wanhl ama wilp txookxw jeyn goosun aa?*
    Nee=hl wan=hl   am-a   wilp txook-xw jeyn   goo-sun=**aa**?
    NEG=CN sit.PL[-3.II]=CN good-ATT house eat.PL-VAL Chinese LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**
    'Aren't there some good Chinese restaurants here?'   (volunteered VG)

224

c. **??** *T'aahl ama jeynem wilp t̲xook̲xw ga'asun aa?*
  ?? T'aa=hl am-a jeyn-em wilp t̲xook̲-xw ga'a-sun=**aa**?
  sit=CN good-ATT Chinese-ATT house eat.PL-VAL LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**
  'Is there a good Chinese restaurant here?' (HH)

d. **#** *Nee dii wanhl ama wilp t̲xook̲xw jeyn goosun aa?*
  # **Nee=dii** wan=hl am-a wilp t̲xook̲-xw jeyn goo-sun=**aa**?
  NEG=FOC sit.PL[-3.II]=CN good-ATT house eat.PL-VAL Chinese LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**
  'Are there no good Chinese restaurants here?' (VG)

Comments on versions of (15):
"Are there no? … Slightly different." (VG)
"It's saying "Oh, is there no good restaurant here?" (BS)

Another example is given in (16). The questioner believed beforehand that there is a bus in the morning. They are not sure if the agent will confirm this though, and *nee* is the best way to start the question.

(16) *Context: Tomorrow you need to go from Vancouver to Seattle as early as possible. Michael goes there a lot and he told you he thinks there is a bus in the morning. You go to the ticket office and ask for a bus ticket for the next morning. The agent says 'When do you want to go?' You reply:*[12]

a. *Neehl bax̲hl bus ahl hiihluxw aa?*
  Nee=hl bax̲=hl *bus* a=hl hiihluxw=**aa**?
  NEG=CN run=CN bus PREP[-3.II]=CN morning=**Q**
  'Isn't there a bus in the morning?' (volunteered BS)

b. ?? *Bax̲hl jikjik a'niidok̲xwhl get ahl hiihluxw aa?*
  ?? Bax̲=hl jikjik a-'nii-dok̲-xw=hl get a=hl hiihluxw=**aa**?
  run=CN vehicle INS-on-take-VAL=CN person PREP[-3.II]=CN morning=**Q**
  'Is there a bus [literally: vehicle that takes people] in the morning?' (HH)

Comment on (16): "When you don't use the *neehl*, it's like louder than normal … Some of the questioning can be done in that way, but not all. *Neehl* is questioning. That would complete the sentence. Starting with *bax̲hl* is not quite complete." (HH)

A similar type of case is when the questioner believed beforehand that the answer would be positive, but something in the context makes them think the answer might be negative after all. Using *nee* is better than not using *nee* in this type of context. For example, in (17) the questioner thought earlier that it was sunny, but now they're not sure any more because they see wet raingear.

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[12] Adapted from Domaneschi et al. (2017:14).

(17) *Context: When you arrived at UBC it was sunny. You go into a windowless room and when I arrive, I am wearing a dripping wet raincoat. You ask:*

a. *Neehl ts'etxwhl hloxs aa?*
    Nee=hl   ts'etxw=hl   hloxs=**aa**?
    NEG=CN   shine[-3.II]=CN   sun=**Q**
    'Isn't it sunny?'   (volunteered HH)

b. # *Ts'etxwhl hlox̲s aa?*
   # Ts'etxw=hl   hlox̲s=**aa**?
      shine=CN   sun=**Q**
      'Is it sunny?'   (HH)

Another case like this is in (18). All the five speakers who were shown this context offered questions that began with *nee;* one example is given in (18a). Using just *aa* is not appropriate, as shown in (18b), and *nee dii* can be okay, as in (18).

(18) *Context: A thinks there is a Chinese restaurant near here. A says 'I'm hungry. Let's go eat.' B says 'But there aren't any restaurants around here.' A replies:*

a. *Oo, neehl t'aahl wilp tx̲ookx̲w jeyn goosun aa?*
    Oo, **nee**=hl   t'aa=hl   wilp   tx̲ook-xw   jeyn   goo-sun=**aa**?
    oh **NEG**=CN   sit=CN   house eat.PL-VAL Chinese   LOC=DEM.PRX=**Q**
    'Oh, isn't there a Chinese restaurant around here?'   (volunteered BS)

b. # *Oo, t'aahl wilp tx̲ookx̲wim jeyn ga'asun aa?*
   # Oo, t'aa=hl   wilp   tx̲ook-xw-im   jeyn   ga'a-sun=**aa**?
      oh sit=CN   house eat.PL-VAL-ATT   Chinese   LOC=DEM.PRX=**Q**
      'Oh, is there a Chinese restaurant around here?'   (HH)

c. *Oo, nee dii taahl wilp tx̲ookx̲w jeyn goosun aa?*
    Oo, **nee**=**dii**   t'aa=hl   wilp   tx̲ook-xw   jeyn   goo-sun=**aa**?
    oh **NEG**=**FOC**   sit=CN   house eat.PL-VAL Chinese   LOC=DEM.PRX=**Q**
    'Oh, isn't there a Chinese restaurant around here?'   (volunteered JH; accepted BS)

2.4 Questions with *nee dii* and *aa*

Now we will show the type of situations where it's best to use *nee dii* in the question. The first case is when the questioner previously had no idea what the answer was, but just before they ask the question, they get some evidence that the answer is negative.

In Figure 7, the questioner previously had no clue about the answer, but right before she asks the question, she gets evidence that the answer is going to be 'no'. Examples (19) show that *nee dii* is a good way to ask the question in this context. Just *nee* is also okay (19), but a plain question with only *aa* isn't a good choice (19).

Figure 7: Greasy burgers storyboard

(19)   *Context: Greasy burgers storyboard*

    a.   *Oo, nee dii t'aahl ama wilp t<u>x</u>oo<u>k</u>xw ga'asun aa?*

Oo,	**nee=dii**	t'aa=hl	am-a	wilp	t<u>x</u>oo<u>k</u>-xw	ga'a-sun=**aa**?
oh	**NEG=FOC**	sit=CN	good-ATT	house	eat.PL-VAL	LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**

        'Is there no good restaurant here?'   (volunteered HH)

    b.   *Nee dii wanhl ama wilp t<u>x</u>oo<u>k</u>xw goosun aa?*

Nee=dii	wan=hl	am-a	wilp	txook-xw	goo-sun=**aa**?
NEG=FOC	sit.PL=CN	good-ATT	house	eat.PL-VAL	LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**

        'Are there no good restaurants here?'   (volunteered VG)

c. *Oo, neehl t'aahl ama wilp ţxookxw goo/ga'a-sun aa?*

Oo, **nee**=hl   t'aa=hl   am-a   wilp   txook̲-xw   goo/ga'a-sun=**aa**?
oh **NEG**=CN   sit=CN   good-ATT   house eat.PL-VAL   LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**
'Is there no good restaurant here?'   (volunteered HH, VG)

d. # *Oo, t'aahl ama wilp ţxookxw ga'asun aa?*

Oo, t'aa=hl am-a   wilp   txook̲-xw   ga'a-sun=**aa**?
oh   sit=CN   good-ATT   house eat.PL-VAL   LOC-DEM.PRX=**Q**
'Is there a good restaurant here?'   (HH)

Comment on (19): "No, when you say [(19)] it's literally telling him that there's a good restaurant here. Because there's no *nee dii* or *neehl*." (HH)

Another case where the questioner was neutral before, but now expects the person to answer negatively, is shown in (20).

(20) *Context: Tomorrow you need to go from Vancouver to Seattle as early as possible. You have no idea what time the buses might go. You go to the ticket office and ask for a bus ticket for the next morning. The agent says 'The only bus is at 1 o'clock.' You say:*[13]

a. *(Oo,) nee dii baxhl/golhl jikjik/bus ahl hiihluxw aa?*

(Oo,) **nee**=**dii**   bax̲/gol=hl   jikjik/*bus*   a=hl   hiihluxw=**aa**?
(oh) **NEG**=**FOC** run/run.PL[-3.II]=CN vehicle/bus PREP[-3.II]=CN morning=**Q**
'Are no buses running in the morning?'   (volunteered BS, RJ, VG)

b. *Oo, neehl baxhl jikjikhl hiihluxw aa?*

Oo, **nee**=hl   bax̲=hl   jikjik=hl   hiihluxw=**aa**?
oh   **NEG**=CN run[-3.II]=CN vehicle=CN morning=**Q**
'Is no bus running in the morning?   (volunteered HH)

c. **?** *Baxhl jikjikhl hiihluxw aa?*

? Bax̲=hl   jikjik=hl   hiihluxw=**aa**?
run=CN   vehicle=CN morning=**Q**
'Is a bus running in the morning?'   (HH)

Comment on (20): "Usually when people ask a question they wanna know the answer. When you say [(20)] it's pretty hard to say yes or no. Because it's almost like a direct answer to the question in answering. It's kind of direct, putting it right back to the individual." [Judges (20) as "much worse" than (20).] (HH)

The second main case where *nee dii* is used is a pretty uncommon type of context. It's when the questioner thought before that the answer to the question was 'no', but the person they are asking seems to be neutral about the answer. So the questioner is double-checking the negative answer. An example is given in (21). The speakers always volunteer *nee dii* in this type of context (21), and other versions are not accepted (21).

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[13] Adapted from Domaneschi et al. (2017:14).

(21) *Context: A is learning to become a Gitksan teacher and wants some practice at teaching beginners. B knows that Charlie has never learnt the language. B says:*[14]

a. *Oo, (ap) nee diit halaaxs/wilaaxs Charliehl Gitxsanimx̲/Gitsenimux̲/Giyaanimx̲ aa?*
Oo, (ap) **nee**=**dii**=t halaax/wilaax=s Charlie=hl
oh (VERUM) **NEG**=**FOC**=3.II know[-3.II]=PN Charlie=CN
Gitxsanimx̲/Gitsenimux̲/Giyaanimx̲=**aa**?
Gitxsanimx̲/Gitsenimux̲/Giyaanimx̲=**Q**
'Doesn't Charlie not know how to speak
Gitxsanimx̲/Gitsenimux̲/Giyaanimx̲?'   (volunteered BS, HH, JH)

b. # *Oo, neehl wilaaxt Charliehl Giyanimx̲ aa?*
Oo, **nee**=hl wilaax-t Charlie=hl Giyanimx̲=**aa**?
oh **NEG**=CN know[-3.II]=PN Charlie=CN Giyaanimx̲=**Q**
Intended: 'Doesn't Charlie not know how to speak Giyaanimx̲?'   (VG)

Comment on (21): "More and more you hear *Neehl wilaaxd aa?*. The Elders would say ***Nee diit** wilaaxd aa?*." (VG)

c. # *Oo, wilaaxt Charliehl Gitxsanimx̲ aa?*
Oo, wilaax=t Charlie=hl Gitxsanimx̲=**aa**?
oh know[-3.II]=PN Charlie=CN Gitxsanimx̲=**Q**
'Oh, does Charlie know Gitxsanimx̲?'   (BS, JH)

Comment on (21): "No. You're saying 'Oh, does Charlie know Gitxsanimx̲?' You wanna say does Charlie *not* know, right? *Oo, ap **nee dii**t wilaaxs Charliehl Gitxsanimx̲ aa?* Different." (BS)

Nee dii is also used in the negative counterparts of the surprise and 'beyond surprise' (disbelieving) contexts we saw earlier in (8)–(10). In other words, *nee dii* is a good choice when you expect the answer to be negative, including when you are surprised that the answer is negative (along with the emphasis marker *k̲'ap/ap*, as in (22)), and also when you disbelieve a negative statement but you think the answerer will confirm the negative statement (as in (23)).

(22) *Context: Our friend Charlie has been sick for a while. I tell you that Charlie is coming to my party today and you are surprised, so I say 'It's ok, he's not sick.' You are skeptical and you reply:*

Oo, k̲'ap/ap nee dii siipxwd aa?
Oo, **k̲'ap/ap** **nee**=**dii** siipxw-d=**aa**?
oh **VERUM** **NEG**=**FOC** sick-3.II=**Q**
'Is he really not sick?'   (volunteered BS, HH)

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(23) *Context: You cleaned the house thoroughly before your sister came to visit, but when she*
      arrives, she says 'You could have cleaned the floor.' You say:

  a.   *(Oo,) nee dii saks/seksxwhl ha'niiwan (tun) aa?*
         (Oo,) **nee=dii**   saks/seks-xw=hl   ha'nii-wan   (tun)=**aa**?
         (oh)   **NEG=FOC**   clean-VAL[-3.II]=CN   INS-on-sit.PL   (DEM.PRX)=**Q**
         'This floor isn't clean?'   (volunteered BS, HH, VG)

  b. # *Neehl saksxwhl ha'niiwan (tun) aa?*
     # **Nee**=hl   saks-xw=hl   ha'nii-wan   (tun)=**aa**?
        NEG   clean-VAL[-3.II]=CN   INS-on-sit.PL   (DEM.PRX)=**Q**
        Intended: 'This floor isn't clean?'   (VG)

     Comment on (23): "In that context I would have said [(23)]." (VG)

2.5 Always use *aa*

The last thing we want to say about making polar questions in Gitksan is that speakers don't usually
accept it when the *aa* is missing. This is different from in English, which has a construction called
a 'declarative question', which is when you ask a question without doing anything except raising
your tone. This is shown in 0. In 0, the declarative question has the same words in the same order
as an ordinary statement, but if the tone rises it is interpreted as a question (request for
confirmation).

(24) *Context: Raingear storyboard (see Figure 1)*

  a.   Is it raining?   ORDINARY QUESTION
  b.   It's raining?   DECLARATIVE QUESTION

   In Gitksan, speakers usually don't accept declarative questions. For example in 0 and 0, the
speakers say that the question needs to have *aa;* you can't do it just by raising the tone.

(25) *Context: Raingear storyboard (see Figure 1)*

  # *Yukwhl wis?*   [pronounced with rising intonation]
  # Yukw=hl   wis?
     PROG=CN   rain
     Intended: 'It's raining?'   (HH)

     Comment: "No. You need the *aa*." (HH)

(26) *Context: At Katie's graduation; Katie is standing next to an older woman. You ask the older*
woman:[15]

Noxs Katie 'niin?

#	Nox-s	Katie	'niin?	[pronounced with rising intonation]
	mother[-3.II]=PN	Katie	2SG.III	

'You're Katie's mother?'   (VG)

Comment: "I guess nowadays, but not really, no. We're of the old school. My father would say it's English." (VG)

3   How to ask and answer polar questions in the Gitksan way

In this section we offer some of Hector's thoughts about asking and answering polar questions in a Gitksan cultural context.

One thing to be aware of is that asking a question is not always appropriate; in certain conversations we try to avoid asking questions. We might say *Hasaga'y dimin gidaxin* ('I wanna ask you.') If the other person says *Guuhl hasagan dim halaayin?* 'What do you wanna know?', then you can ask.

Also, we don't ever talk back to Elders. After an Elder says something, you never question it. Hector's Mum taught him that when you question things, it means you're talking back to them.

Here is an example about questioning back to a parent. Hector's Dad would often say *Gidaxin noxi'm aa?* 'Did you ask our Mum?'. In this wording he was including himself in the question. This would be when he knew that Hector had already asked Mum if he could go along, and Dad wanted to verify that Mum had okayed it. If Hector answered back with *Guu?* 'What?', his Dad would reply *Gidaxin noxin aa?* 'Did you ask your mother?' The first time it was asked calmly with no loudness, and the second time it was direct and loud and Dad no longer included himself in the question. The responsibility was on Hector alone, and the responsibility didn't come on Hector until he questioned his Dad.

Another thing to know is that sometimes a question is not to be answered. It is a guide. When you don't answer a question, you're inviting the person to figure it out. And if you can't answer a question, and if you're stressed about that because you are full of the Western society ways, just breathe it out a few times and relax.

Sometimes people asking a question already have the answer. They're just trying to figure out if you know what they know. If you know what they know, they'll agree with you. Questioning can mean you have something but you're not sure of it, so the question in a way becomes the answer.

We were taught about questions that the person may already know the answer and they are trying to get verification. Is it the right question? How can I ask the question without saying that I don't know? Hector's Mum told him once that when the teacher asks you a question, you should look at how she or he is. What are they doing – arms crossed? hand to their face? Looking at their gestures can tell you whether someone knows the answer or not.

If I don't answer a question, that means you know and I know. We don't have to verbalize it. Our gestures and body language may also answer the question already. Tone and facial expression and body language are very important in our language.

When you answer a question with words, usually the answer will not be just the one word *ee*

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[15] Adapted from Poschmann (2008:257).

'yes' or *nee* 'no'. When you answer, you should paint a picture so the questioner will know.[16]

It also depends who is asking, and who is answering. How you answer a question depends on who you are talking to.

For example, if a child asks you if they can play with a knife, you would say *nee* and then show them why, and show them the severity of the danger of it. If a teenager asks the same question, you could answer simply *k'ap* (an emphasis word, discussed above). Then if they pick up the knife you say *Dim lipk sigweyn,* 'You will find out.'

If an Elder asks you a question, you have to sit down for a while. You don't answer with what you know. You might say *Ha'niigoodi'y* … 'I think …'

If your parent asks you *Halaayin aa?* ('Do you know it?'), answering with either *nee* or *ee* could get you in trouble. If you say *nee,* that means you didn't listen. If you say *ee,* that means you think you know everything. A better answer wouldn't even contain *nee* or *ee;* it would be to say *Dim mehldin loo'y* ('You will tell me.') or *Mehlihl loo'y* ('Tell me.')

How you ask a question matters. Here is an example. One time when Hector's mother was pulling a big fish out of the Skeena with her rod, he asked *Am jin hlimoon aa?* 'Can I help you?' (literally: 'Is it good if I help you?'). She answered *Nee, amhl wildis,* meaning 'No, it's ok the way it is. The fish is doing ok.' To get a different answer, he should have asked *Amhl win aa?* 'Are you good?'. Then, Mum could have said either *Nee, hlimoo'y* 'No, help me,' or *Nee, amhl wil'y* 'No, I'm good.'

Here is another example showing that the way you ask a question makes a difference. If Hector's father asked him *Ndehl win?* ('What's wrong?'), Hector would answer *Nee dii guut* ('Nothing.') In the same situation, his Mum would probably ask *Googan wilhl gitxwhl goodin?* 'Why does your heart hurt?', and then Hector would be more likely to open up.

4   Conclusion

4.1 Summary

To ask and answer polar questions in a really fluent way in Gitksan, it's important to understand cultural aspects about when to ask, when to answer, and how to adapt your questions and answers depending on who you are talking to. To ask and answer questions like a fluent speaker it's also good to understand when you should use just *aa,* when you should use *nee* as well as *aa,* when it's best to use *nee dii,* and when you should add *k'ap/ap.*

As we mentioned earlier, the best way to absorb the information is to talk to fluent speakers and listen to how they ask and answer questions. The more you listen and the more you practice, the more you will naturally be able to use the questions in the most authentic way.

In 0 we summarize some of the main ideas we have presented about the different ways to make a question in Gitksan.

(27)   a.   If you believe the answerer is going to confirm the statement in the question, using just *aa* is a good choice. (This works both if you also believe the statement, and if you are skeptical.)

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[16] This matches what Rigsby says about answering (1986:296):

'[Polar] questions can be answered minimally with the particles Ee'e. /ʔeˑʔ/ <u>Yes.</u> or Nee. /neˑ/ <u>No.</u>, as in English, but good speakers say that it is better to frame fuller answers or replies in terms of the predicate and nominal adjuncts of the question sentence.'

b. If you believe the answerer is going to confirm the statement but you are surprised that this is the right answer, you can still use *aa* without *nee,* but add *k'ap/ap.*

c. If the context is very neutral (you have no idea what the answer is going to be, or you don't want to give a clue about the answer), *nee* is appropriate.

d. Using *nee* is also good when you thought beforehand that the answer would be positive, but now in the context you are not sure what the answerer is going to say.

e. *Nee dii* is the best choice when you expect the answer to be negative. (This includes if you are surprised that the answer is negative, in which case you add *k'ap/ap.*)

4.2 Some final words from Hector about questions

Guut gan wil ma gidaxt? – Why did you ask that?

Oo guuhl dii halaa'an? – What do you know?

K'am ha'nii goodi'y na halaaxt. – I think I know it.

This, *k'am ha'nii goodi'y na halaaxt* (I think I know it), always gets me in trouble because we were taught to know what we were asked to do or know.

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