

# The position of the negative particle /ʔa/ and a relative clause in Tsilhqut'in\*

Yuko Igarashi  
University of Victoria

Tsilhqut'in is a Dene language, spoken in south central BC. This paper mainly examines word order of relative clauses in relation to the negative particle /ʔa/ in Tsilhqut'in. I hypothesize that the negative particle is in a fixed position, regardless of sentence types and word order. In order to support this hypothesis, simplex and complex sentences will be analyzed. Simplex sentences will be examined for illustrating the basic word order of negative sentences. Based on this observation, then, complex sentences will be analyzed. As an example of such sentences, relative clauses are chosen, which display two types of word order. Such clauses will be analyzed by the framework proposed by Rice (2003) and Saxon (2000). In association with the analysis of word order for relative clauses, I will demonstrate that the position of the negative particle is fixed even in the two types of relative clauses.

## 1 Introduction

Negatives are one of the basic sentence structures in languages: all of the languages in the world have ways to negate sentences. However, negatives in Tsilhqut'in are not extensively observed in the literature. Russell and Myers (2005) state two issues in terms of negatives in their paper: adding the negative particle /ʔa/ in the sentence and changing verb forms from those in affirmative sentences. For example, the verb /ʔidah/ 'to stay (the first person singular imperfective form)' in an affirmative sentence becomes /hesdah/ in a negative sentence (Russell & Myers, 2005: 89). Russell and Myers (2005) described this change as morpho-phonological processes. Although these processes are an interesting topic for further investigation, this paper simply focuses on examining the position of the negative particle syntactically because Russell and

---

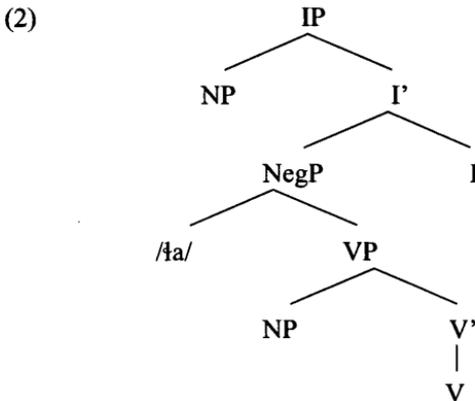
\* I would like to sincerely thank our language consultant, Lois William, for providing us with data in Tsilhqut'in and thank you Linda Smith for providing me with Tsilhqut'in spellings. I also wish to thank Suzanne Gessner for her valuable comments. And finally I would like to express my gratitude to Leslie Saxon for her helpful suggestions and encouragement.

Myers (2005) do not describe where the negative particle /ʔa/ is placed in various environments in sentences. They simply provide example sentences with intransitive verbs and no other sentence elements are provided, as illustrated in (1)<sup>1</sup>.

- (1) a. /lha hesdah/  
 not stay.imperf. 1<sup>st</sup>.sg.neg  
 ‘I am not staying.’ (Russell & Myers, 2005: 89)
- b. /lha gwesʔa-l/  
 not have.perf.1<sup>st</sup>.sg.neg  
 ‘I didn’t have [sic] it.’ (Russell & Myers, 2005: 89)

Since the subject pronouns are, in general, not overtly presented in Tsilhqat’in, it is not clear whether the negative particle is positioned before or after the subject in their examples. Moreover, we cannot see whether the particle is positioned before or after the object in transitive sentences from their examples.

This paper examines word order of simplex and complex sentences in relation to the negative particle /ʔa/. In order to illustrate the position of the negative particle in a syntactic tree, I adopt Radford’s (1997: 232) description of the negative particle in the syntactic tree where the negative particle is dominated by the NegP node and where the NegP is placed to be the mother of the VP and a daughter of the I’. Given this syntactic position, I hypothesize that the negative particle is placed in a fixed position, so that it always remains in the position, regardless of sentence types and word order. The following tree by Radford (1997: 232) demonstrates the position of the negative particle in the syntactic tree.



<sup>1</sup> The sentence (1b) should be translated as ‘I didn’t find it’, according to Linda Smith.

Taking this structure as illustrating the basic position of the negative particle /ʔa/, this paper will investigate word order of simplex and complex sentences in relation to /ʔa/.

Note that some of the data used in this paper come from the elicitation sessions with Lois William that were conducted during the Linguistics 461/500 classes in the 2005-6 Spring Term at the University of Victoria. Such data are placed in [ ], having the item number in ( ) after the Tsilhqut'in sentences. This paper also uses Tsilhqut'in sentences written in its spelling system, provided by Linda Smith, and these sentences are placed in < >. The study of the word order with the negative particle presented in the following pages is necessarily limited because of limitations of time and experience with the Tsilhqut'in language. What is said here should be taken as preliminary and likely in need of revision. Our class members' transcriptions of the Tsilhqut'in language differ from each other's because of our differing experience with languages and with the International Phonetics Alphabet (IPA), and because of our brief, three-month acquaintance with the Tsilhqut'in language. Despite best efforts by everyone there will be errors. Errors are my responsibility.

## 2 Simplex Sentences and the Negative Particle

Tsilhqut'in has SOV word order in simplex sentences, as illustrated in the following example<sup>2</sup>.

- (3) [ʔɔ: dɪkʰ                      hēj,jæ̃n] (197)  
Joe saskatoon berries eat.perf.  
'Joe ate saskatoon berries.'

In (3), 'Joe' is the subject, placed before the object *dɪkʰ* 'saskatoon berries' and the verb *hēj,jæ̃n* 'ate'. Based on the word order of this sentence, word order of negative simplex sentence with and without a verbal adverb will be analyzed in the following.

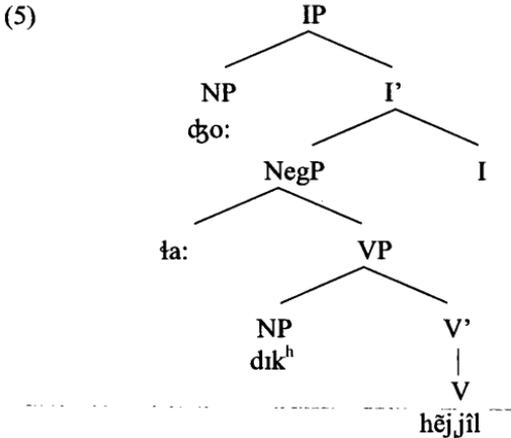
When the sentence (3) is negated, the negative particle /ʔa/ is added to the sentence. This sentence does not contain a verbal adverb. The position of the negative particle is after the subject and before the object in a transitive sentence, as demonstrated in (4).

---

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, abbreviations are used for the following grammatical terms: S for subject, O for object, V for verb, Adv for adverb, NP for noun phrase, VP for verb phrase, DP for determiner phrase, IP for inflected auxiliary phrase, I for inflection, NegP for negative phrase, D for demonstrative, CP for complementizer phrase, perf for perfective, imperf for imperfective, sg for singular, pl for plural, and neg for negative. Additionally, 'personal communication' is abbreviated as 'p.c.', 'Linda Smith' is abbreviated as 'Smith', and 'Yuko Igarashi' is abbreviated as 'Igarashi.'

- (4) [ɕʒo: ʔæ: dɪk<sup>h</sup> hējjił] (196)  
 Joe not saskatoon berries eat.perf.neg  
 'Joe didn't eat any saskatoon berries.'

Accordingly, word order of a negative sentence without a verbal adverb is 'S + /ʔa/ + O + V'. The following tree illustrates the position of the negative particle in a syntactic tree.



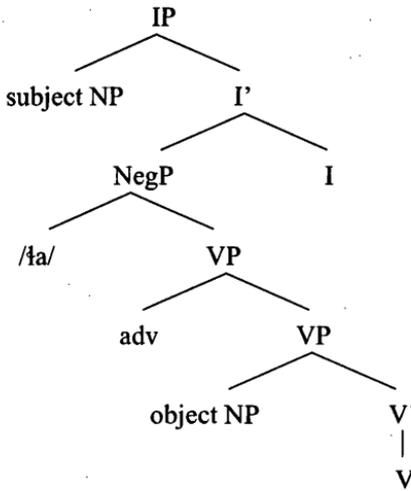
The negative particle is placed in the NegP node, and the NegP is the mother of the VP and a daughter of I'. This is the basic position of the negative particle, as illustrated in (2).

When a verbal adverb is added to a simplex sentence, the adverb is placed before the object and the negative particle is placed after the subject and before the adverb, as in (6).

- (6) a. [ɕʒo: ʔæ: sunitsel dɪk<sup>h</sup> hējjił] (195)  
 Joe not slowly saskatoon berries eat.perf.neg  
 'Joe didn't eat the saskatoon berries slowly.'
- b. <nendan lha gahunlhghen dig ch'ele?inyinl?>  
 who not quickly saskatoon berries eat.perf.3<sup>rd</sup>.sg.neg  
 'Who didn't eat up the saskatoon berries quickly?'  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)

Both *sunitsel* 'slowly' in (6a) and *gahunlhghen* 'quickly' in (6b) are placed between the negative particle and the object in the sentence. The object NP is a constituent of the VP in a transitive sentence, as described in (5). The negative particle is positioned in the NegP node to be the sister of the VP, as illustrated in (2). Therefore, the position of the negative particle and other constituents in a syntactic structure for the sentences in (6) would be the following.

(7)



In (7), the adverb is placed within the VP as an adjunct of the VP. It is appropriate to treat the adverb as an adjunct, since Radford (1997) states that a verbal adverb is an adjunct of the VP (142-3). The negative particle is positioned above the VP. Thus, word order of a simplex sentence with a verbal adverb is 'S + <lha> + Adv + O + V'. The syntactic tree in (7) suggests that adding a verbal adverb to a simplex sentence does not change the position of the negative particle in a syntactic tree.

Given these observations, we can clearly state that the basic word order of negative simplex sentences in Tsilhqut'in is 'S + <lha> + O + V' and that the negative particle in such sentences is placed in the position described as follows: (a) the NegP is placed to be the daughter of the I', and (b) the negative particle /ʔa/ is placed in the NegP node to be the sister of the VP. This is the position described as the basic place for the negative particle, as in (2). Accordingly, we can conclude that the negative particle is in a fixed position in simplex sentences. Starting from this basic word order and the position of the negative particle in a syntactic structure, the next section will investigate word order of complex sentences, relative clauses, in relation to /ʔa/.

### 3 Relative Clauses and the Position of the Negative Particle

In Tsilhqut'in, a relative clause is constructed by a clause and a demonstrative. This demonstrative functions as a topic marker, similar to a relative pronoun in English. The relative clause is connected to the main clause by the topic marker. There are three types of topic markers in Tsilhqut'in, (a) <ʔeyen (-in)> used for referring back to human, (b) <ʔeyed (-id)> for location/time, and (c) <ʔeyi (-i)> used for other (Russell & Myers, 2005: 25, 27). These topic markers indicate which DP is the head of a relative clause. For example, when the head of a relative clause is a person, <ʔeyen (-in)> is used.

There is an agreement relationship between a topic marker and the head of a relative clause. The following show examples of relative clauses.

- (8) a. <Joe *dig* ghinyan ?eyi inlhes hutish>  
 Joe saskatoon berries ate that very sweet  
 ‘The saskatoon berries that Joe ate were very sweet.’  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)
- b. <Guyen *dig* jaghinyan in gula dinlhdzan  
 people saskatoon berries ate that hand blue  
 yanlin>  
 became  
 ‘The hands of the people who ate saskatoon berries became blue.’  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)

In these examples, the clause before the topic marker is the relative clause functioning as the subject of the main clause. In (8a), *Joe dig ghinyan* ‘the saskatoon berries that Joe ate’ is the relative clause, and the head of this clause is *dig* ‘saskatoon berries’. Because the head is non-human, or ‘other’ in Russell and Myers’ (2005: 25, 27) term, the topic marker for ‘other’, *?eyi*, is used for connecting this clause to the main clause. In (8b), *guyen dig jaghinyan* ‘people who ate the saskatoon berries’ is the relative clause, having its head *guyen* ‘people’. Since the head is human, the topic marker for human, *in* which is the short form for *?eyen*, is used for connecting this clause to the main clause. The relative clause in both examples is treated as the subject of the entire sentence, constructing the ‘S + complement + V’ sentence. For example, in (8b), *guyen dig jaghinyan* ‘people who ate saskatoon berries’ is the subject of the entire sentence, and compliment *gula dinlhdzan* ‘blue hands’ and the V *yanlin* ‘became’ follow as the constituents of the main clause.

When a relative clause itself contains a negative, the negative particle can be placed after the subject and before the object in the relative clause. This is illustrated in the following examples.

- (9) a. <Joe *lha dig* yiyinl ?eyi  
 Joe not saskatoon berry eat.perf.3<sup>rd</sup>.sg.neg that  
 ch’ededan ch’ed seqan>  
 table on sit.imperf.3<sup>rd</sup>.pl.  
 ‘The saskatoon berries that Joe didn’t eat are on the table.’  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)

- b. <guyen lha dig                      jiyinl                      in  
 people not saskatoon berry eat.perf.3<sup>rd</sup>.pl.neg that  
 qungh jedilhts'ih ungh>  
 house stay                      emphasis marker  
 'People who didn't eat any saskatoon berries are at the house.'  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)

In (9a), the relative clause is *Joe lha dig jiyinl* 'the saskatoon berries that Joe didn't eat' with 'S + <lha> + O + V' word order. In (9b), the relative clause is *guyen lha dig jiyinl* 'people who didn't eat any saskatoon berries', which also has 'S + <lha> + O + V' word order. Thus, we can state that the negative particle in the relative clause is placed in a fixed position, as in (2): the particle is placed to be the sister of the VP in the NegP node, and the NegP is dominated by the I'. Word order of these relative clauses is identical to the basic word order for a simplex sentence, even though the head of the clause is the object in the case of (9a). The head phrase does not have to be fronted to the clause-initial position, unlike English. This is possible because a topic marker signals which DP is the head of a relative clause.

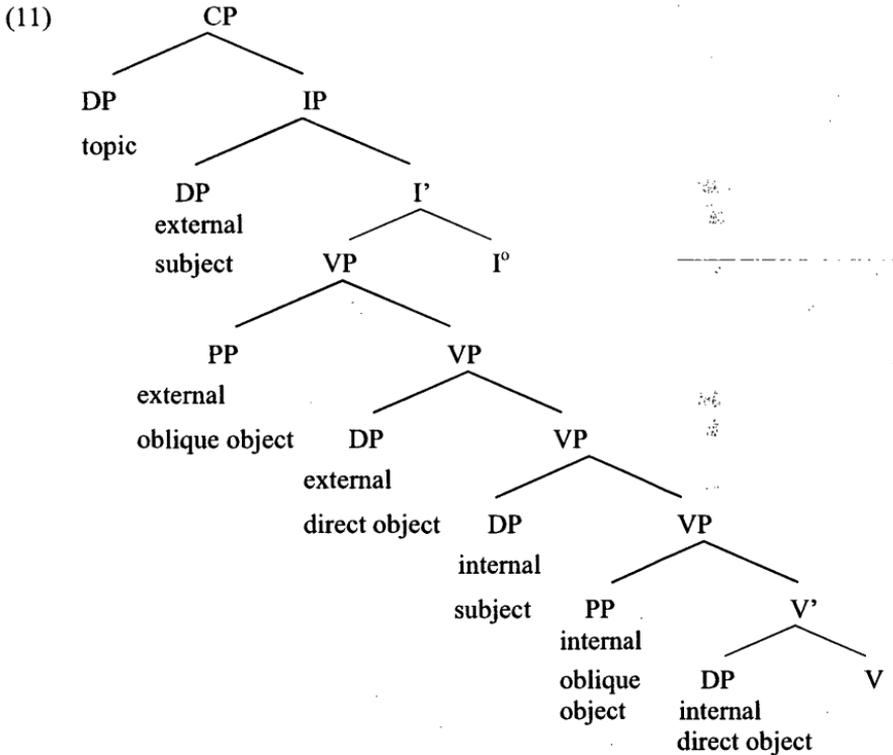
Interestingly, however, there is another way to express (9a), which is illustrated in (10a) below. (9a) is also repeated in (10b) for comparison.

- (10) a. <guyi dig                      lha Joe jiyinl                      ?eyi  
 that saskatoon berry not Joe eat.perf.3<sup>rd</sup>.sg.neg that  
 ch'ededan ch'ed seqan>  
 table on sit.imperf.3<sup>rd</sup>.pl.  
 'The saskatoon berries that Joe didn't eat are on the table.'  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)
- b. <Joe lha dig                      jiyinl                      ?eyi  
 Joe not saskatoon berry eat.perf.3<sup>rd</sup>.sg.neg that  
 ch'ededan ch'ed seqan>  
 table on sit.imperf.3<sup>rd</sup>.pl.  
 'The saskatoon berries that Joe didn't eat are on the table.'  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)

In (10a), the head of the relative clause *guyi dig* 'these saskatoon berries' is fronted, and it functions as the object of the relative clause. The negative particle is placed before the subject in the relative clause. Thus, this clause has the word order of 'O + <lha> + S + V'. In general, the object is placed within the VP in Tsilhqut'in, as described in (5); however, in (10a), it is externalized from the VP. In contrast, (10b) has the canonical word order 'S + <lha> + O + V' in the relative clause, and the head of the relative clause *dig* 'the saskatoon berries' is positioned VP-internally. The head also functions as the object of the relative clause. These sentences indicate that Tsilhqut'in can construct two types of relative clauses to demonstrate one meaning: one relative clause is constructed

by the head positioned externally as in (10a), and the other is by the head positioned internally as in (10b).

Relative clauses with both internal and external heading have also been documented for Dogrib, Dakelh, and Slave<sup>3</sup>, all of which have head-external and head-internal relative clauses. Saxon (2000) demonstrates various examples in Dogrib that contain head-internal relative clauses as well as head-external relative clauses. Gessner (2006) extensively documented internally and externally headed relative clauses in Dakelh, which is a geographically neighbouring language of Tsilhqut'in. Rice (2003) argues that Slave has internal subject and object positions as well as external subject and object positions in the syntactic tree for relative clauses. Accordingly, she provides the following syntactic tree to describe her hypothesis.



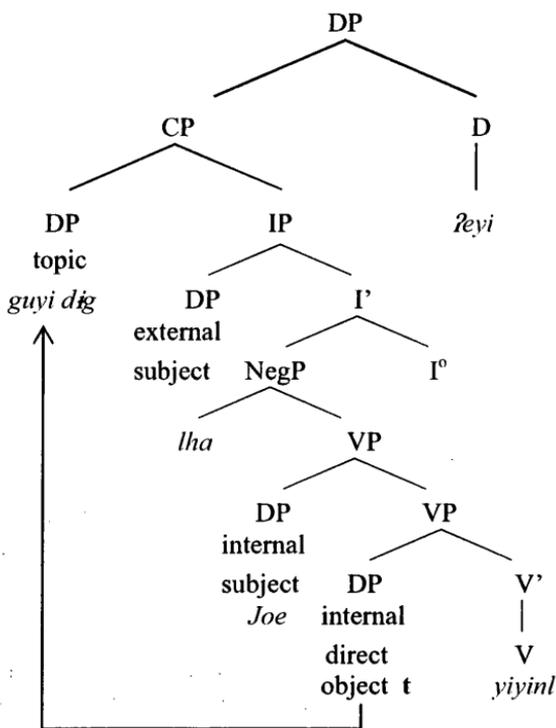
(Rice, 2003: 59)

<sup>3</sup> Both Slave and Dogrib are spoken in northern Canada. Dakelh is spoken in the central interior of British Columbia, Canada. All of these languages belong to the Dene language family.

Since Tsilhqut'in has two types of relative clauses, like Dogrib, Dakelh, and Slave, it is reasonable to assume that Tsilhqut'in also has internal subject and object positions as well as external subject and object positions in the syntactic tree. Thus, the tree in (11) can apply to Tsilhqut'in. Note, however, that in Dogrib and Slave, external heading correlates with overt object agreement on the relative verb, and internally-headed relatives do not have such agreement. Whether or not this is also the case in Tsilhqut'in remains an issue for future research.

By adopting the syntactic tree of (11), the relative clauses in (10) can be accounted for as follows. The relative clause in (10a), which is head-external, has the word order of 'O + <lha> + S + V'. The following is the syntactic tree for (10a).

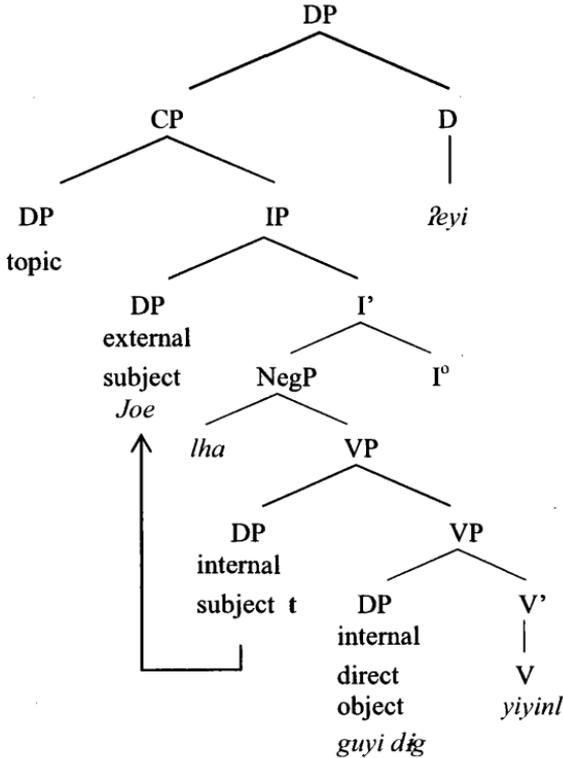
(12) head-external relative clause



In (12), the internal direct object is topicalized; thus, it is moved to the SpecCP position. Due to the movement, the internal direct object has the trace 't'. The subject remains in the internal subject position inside the VP, and <lha> is in the NegP node to be the sister of the VP. Accordingly, this clause has the word order of 'O + <lha> + S + V'.

In contrast, the relative clause in (10b), which is head-internal, has the word order of 'S + <lha> + O + V', and its head is positioned VP-internally. The following is the syntactic tree for this clause.

(13) head-internal relative clause



This tree demonstrates that the internal subject is moved to the SpecIP position where the external subject is placed. The object remains in the internal direct object position inside the VP, and the <lha> is in the NegP node to be the sister of the VP. As a result, the relative clause has the 'S + <lha> + O + V' word order.

Two further remarks can be made about the trees in (12) and (13). First, either the SpecCP or SpecIP position needs to be filled in relative clauses to be grammatical. In other words, when a relative clause has the topic marker *ɛyɪ*, it seems that either the SpecCP or SpecIP has to be filled. Thus, I speculate that the movement of the phrase is triggered by the topic marker *ɛyɪ*. This needs to be confirmed in future study. The second remark is that the NegP is in a fixed position, a daughter of the I' and the mother of the VP, even though two types of relative clauses have different word order. Given this fixed position, we can clearly see that (12) is the head-external relative clause (O + <lha> + S + V) and (13) is the head-internal relative clause (S + <lha> + O + V).

So far the negation of the relative clause has been discussed. How is the main clause negated, then? The following example illustrates negation of the main clause.

- (14) <guyen dig ch'elejezan ?iyen lha qungh  
 people saskatoon berry eat.3<sup>rd</sup>.pl. that not house  
 jediltš'ih>  
 stay.imperf.3<sup>rd</sup>.neg  
 'People who ate all of the saskatoon berries are not at the house.'  
 (p.c. from Smith to Igarashi, March 2006)

In (14), the negative particle which negates the main clause is placed after the relative clause, and the relative clause functions as the subject of the main clause. Thus, (14) has the word order of 'S (relative clause) + <lha> + O + V'. <lha> is in a fixed position to be the sister of the VP in the NegP node, since this word order is the canonical one. Accordingly, the syntactic tree for (14) is identical to the one in (2), except for the node for the relative clause.

#### 4 Conclusion

In this paper, I have hypothesized that in Tsilhqut'in the NegP is in a fixed position, the daughter of the I' and the mother of the VP, regardless of sentence types and word order. In order to support this hypothesis, simplex and complex sentences have been examined. In the simplex sentences, word order of negative sentences with and without a verbal adverb has been described. From these observations, it was concluded that such sentences have the 'S + <lha> + O + V' word order, regardless of the presence or absence of a verbal adverb. Given this basic word order and the position of the negative particle, complex sentences have been examined. As an example of complex sentences, relative clauses have been chosen. In Tsilhqut'in, such clauses have two distinctive word order, one has the canonical word order of 'S + <lha> + O + V' and another is different from the canonical order, which is 'O + <lha> + S + V'. It was demonstrated that the position of the negative particle is fixed even though the word order of one particular type of relative clauses is different from the canonical word order. Therefore, we can conclude that my hypothesis is maintained in negative simplex sentences with and without verbal adverbs and in negative relative clauses.

In terms of relative clauses, they have been examined according to the hypothesis by Rice (2003) and Saxon (2000) assuming that there are two positions for subject and object, internal and external. This framework made it possible to account for word order of relative clauses in relation to the Tsilhqut'in negative particle nicely. When the subject DP and the object DP are overtly presented in the surface sentence, they can be placed in the internal positions, in the external positions, or in the topic position. Due to this flexibility, Tsilhqut'in can have two types of word order in relative clauses to present one meaning. It was speculated that the movement of the internal DP to the external

position is triggered by the topic marker. This needs to be confirmed in future study.

This paper has demonstrated that the negative particle is in a fixed position in simplex sentences with and without verbal adverbs and in two types of relative clauses. In order to support my hypothesis that the negative particle is in a fixed position regardless of sentence types and word order, it is necessary to investigate other types of sentences in Tsilhqot'in such as interrogatives and sentences with postpositional phrases. This is another topic for future study.

## References

- Gessner, Suzanne. 2006, January. Variation in Athapaskan relative clause structures: Findings from Dakelh. Paper presented at the 2005-6 Annual Winter Meeting of the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA).
- Radford, Andrew. 1997. *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English: A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rice, Keren. 2003. Doubling by agreement in Slave (Northern Athapaskan). In Andrew Carnie, Heidi Harley and MaryAnn Willie (Eds.), *Formal Approaches to Function in Grammar: In Honor of Eloise Jelinek*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp.51-78.
- Russell, Susan and Maria Myers. 2005. *Instructor's Handbook. A Guide to: Chapter 1-3 of E.D. Cook's A Linguistic Introduction to Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin)*. BC, Canada: Tsilhqot'in National Government.
- Saxon, Leslie. 2000. Head-internal relative clauses in Dogrib (Athapaskan). In Andrew Carnie, Eloise Jelinek and MaryAnn Willie (Eds.), *Paper in Honor of Ken Hale, Working Papers on Endangered and Less Familiar Languages, 1*, 93-108.