On-going analysis of the role of some post-positional particles in Haida indicates that topic marking and topic-prominence are important in the organization of this language.

Topicalization refers to a process whereby sentence elements are placed at the front of the sentence for the purpose of focus or contrast. Some languages employ topicalization more than others and are said to be topic-prominent languages (Li & Thompson 1976). Chinese is the time-honored example of a topic-prominent language.

The topic in Haida will be assumed to be any sentence-initial element (a word or phrase) marked with a topic marking particle. Initial elements without such particles will be said to be...
Sentence elements in Haida are foregrounded (i.e., placed in a more prominent position) to indicate communicative importance. These elements may be topicalized for contrast or emphasis.

The topic-comment dichotomy of the Prague school\(^1\) will be examined in the analysis of topicalization of Haida. It will be seen that defining the topic as the contextually bound element (as in Sgall 1973) hampers the description of the function of the two-part sentence in Haida. Topicalization in this language is motivated by the need to emphasize certain information. It is the purpose of this paper to examine topicalization in Haida, to indicate its basicness in the language and to describe the particles that are used to mark it.\(^2\)

1. Theoretical Perspective and Prior Studies

The concern of the Prague school linguists is that the logical structure of the sentence says nothing about the way the sentence functions in the process of communication. Topic-comment analysis is considered to be the way to show the relationship between the systematic nature of the language and its communicative function. For the Prague school, a sentence consists of something the speaker wants to modify for the hearer (the topic), and how he wants to modify it (the comment). The initial element of the sentence signals a starting point. Thus, topicalization is more than a superficial process, it is basic to the act of communication.

Prague school linguists define the topic as a contextually bound element having to do with information known "from the context, from the situation or from general conditions of the given utterance" (Sgall et al., 1973:48). This sentence-initial element is a reference by the speaker to some points of information in the hearer's memory. The definition of topic as used in this paper has been broadened to include any sentence-initial element marked with a topic marking particle. This element may be contextually bound information as defined above or it may be some point of new information the speaker wishes to bring to the hearer's attention or fix in the hearer's memory. It is not clear whether the topic is preposed from a more basic structure or whether it is generated in sentence-initial position. The latter is believed to be the case for topic-prominent languages.

Li & Thompson suggest the following characteristics for the topic of topic-prominent languages:

1. The topic must be definite in Chafe's (1976) sense of "I think you already know and can identify the particular referent I have in mind" (Li & Thompson 1976:461). This does not seem to be a primary criterion for Haida topics, which depend more
on the speaker's intent to foreground certain information.
It is a concomitant, however, of the referential nature of
topic marking particles (see Edwards 1977) that the topic
will probably be something the hearer can identify.

2. The functional role of the topic is constant across sentences
(Li & Thompson 1976:463). It will be shown that the functional
role of the topic in Haida is to foreground and differentiate
the information which is of greatest communicative importance.

3. The topic will occur in sentence-initial position (p.465). In
Haida, the foregrounded element will occur in sentence-initial
position whether topicalized or not because of the speaker's
intention to place before the audience that information which
has the most communicative importance. Specifying an element
as contrastive, locative or relative also tends to enhance
communicative importance. Thus, topicalization and foregrounding
together determine the sentence-initial element.

4. In topic-prominent languages there will be surface coding for
the topic but not necessarily for the subject (p 465). In
Haida the topic is marked by morphological markers as well as
occurring in sentence-initial position. The morphological
markers also indicate the relationship of the topic to the
comment, for example, in the relative or locative sense.

Subjects, on the other hand, are determined by selectional
restrictions or the hearer's assumptions based on previous
knowledge.

Li & Thompson present other suggestions about topics and
topic-prominent languages which are beyond the scope of this paper.
They include the absence of selectional restrictions and verb
agreement for topics and grammatical processes that depend on the
topic; the lack of a passive construction or dummy subjects; the
double subject; co-reference; constraints on the topic constituent
(in Haida there may be none); and the basicness of topic-comment

Chomsky (1973) refers to the contextually bound part of the
sentence as the "presupposition". New information about the
presupposition (the comment) he calls "focus". He refers to the
two parts as topic and focus and suggests that topic-focus is a
grammatical relation of surface structure corresponding to the
subject-predicate relation of the logical (deep) structure (1965:163).
In many cases the topic would coincide with the logical and/or
grammatical subject. Such an analysis assumes the basicness of
the subject and predicate in the derivation of the sentence, and
the assignment of topic at the surface level. However, in a topic-
prominent language the logical subject and object are determined
by selectional restrictions on the verb and are not crucial to the
order of elements in the sentence. The sentence is generated as topic
+ comment. Since the presence of a sentence-initial topic is a matter
of communicative importance, not every sentence will have one.

Swanton (1911) discusses the linear order of subjects and
objects in the Haida sentence with respect to whether they are
nouns or pronouns. Leer (1977) differentiates between dependent
and independent pronouns in the matter of ordering. Eastman (1978,
this conference) discusses the work of these and other authors and
concludes:

(When the subject and object of the verb are nouns,
objects may precede subjects and subjects may precede
objects; when they are pronouns, objects precede
subjects....When nouns and pronouns are both used
as subjects or objects, the pronouns usually stand
nearest to the verb.

Exceptions to the 'rule' are usually occasioned
by the process of topicalization or, as Swanton states
it, 'exceptions to this are usually for emphasis'.

(1978:16)

2.0 Data and Analysis
The following sentences illustrate various Haida sentence
types. I refers to the topic marking particle. The orthography
is that used in Edwards (1977) and is a modified form of the
Practical Orthography used in the Haida Language Workshop,
Ketchikan, Alaska.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) chin uu</td>
<td>hl taagang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish T</td>
<td>I eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) hlaa o</td>
<td>chin taagang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I T</td>
<td>fish eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>chin hl taagang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish I eat</td>
<td>I eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>dit guudanggang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chin taagaay gu</td>
<td>I want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish to eat T</td>
<td>I want fish to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>fijang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gwaahl uu</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sack T</td>
<td>It's a sack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>gwaalaay fijang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sack is</td>
<td>It's a sack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>gwaalaay diingaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sqiidang sack</td>
<td>my red is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my sack is red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In (1) and (2), respectively, "fish" or "I" are designated
as topic by the position of the word in the sentence and the use
of a topic marking particle. In (1) the grammatical subject is hl
"I", the verb is taagang "eat", and the object chin "fish" has
been topicalized. In (2) the grammatical subject is the marked
topic hlaa "I", the verb and object are taagang and chin,
respectively. Sentence (3) does not have a marked topic. In (4)
the topic coincides with the object of the predication. This focal
point, "to eat fish", is marked by its initial position and the
use of the topic marking particle guum. The grammatical subject of
the sentence is *di."* and the verb is guudanggang "want".

Sentence (5) has a topic (sack), but sentences (6) and (7) do not. A native speaker of Haida was asked about the acceptability of using a topic marking particle in (6) or leaving it out of (5). The response was that there is a contrastive sense to (5) that is not present in (3), (6) or (7). Sentence (6) simply declares the existence of a sack, while (5) is used to focus old information or imply contrast: it's a sack, not a doormat.

In the semantic framework of the Prague school, the topocalized elements of these sentences would have to be contextually bound old information, that is, be based on hearer presupposition. Such elements would have to be known "from the context, from the situation, or from general conditions of the given utterance" (cf. above). But this rules out the contrastive sense of (1), (2) and (5) and does not address the focal preposing of new information as in (6). It appears that the topic in Haida is not contextually bound.

In a transformational framework, the topocalized sentences (1), (2), (4) and (5) would be derived from a basic linear order. Near the end of the derivation, a topocalizing transformation would prepose an element from each sentence to appear in sentence-initial position in the surface structure.

Li & Thompson claim that the topic-comment construction is basic or is among the basic types of sentence constructions in topic-prominent languages (471ff.). The initial element of the sentence (the topic) in a topic-prominent language can be new or old information; it is the intent of the speaker to give it communicative importance by placing it first in the sentence. If this is so, the speaker can choose to say "fish is what I eat" as in (1) where "fish" occurs in sentence initial position. If the pronoun is more important to the communication as in (2), the speaker can say "I (am the one who) eat(s) fish". Similarly, communicative importance is the reason for the initial position of "fish to eat" in (4), possibly in answer to the question "what do you want?".

2.1 Ordering

The linear order of the nouns or noun phrases which have the relation of subject and object to the verb is determined by the intent of the speaker to foreground certain information. In the untopocalized sentence the hearer is assumed to have enough information from the context to prevent ambiguity. In the topocalized sentence it is the object which occurs in the sentence-initial slot. When either the subject or object is a pronoun, it will occur next to the verb. When both subject and object are
pronouns, it is again the object which comes first. The following sentences illustrate the various linear orders:

(8) Fred nang jaadas tiigan Fred the woman killed Fred killed the woman. The woman killed Fred.

(9) nang jaadas Fred tiigan the woman Fred killed Fred killed the woman. The woman killed Fred.

In these sentences, the hearer has to know that either Fred or the woman is alive or which one of them is dead in order to understand the sentences. The object status of either can be established by topicalizing it:

(10) Fred uu nang jaadas tiigan Fred the woman killed The woman killed Fred.

This object-initial order is also the rule when both the subject and object are pronouns:

(11) laa l tiigan her he killed He killed her.

If either the subject or the object is a pronoun, it will occur next to the verb:

(12) Fred laa tiigan Fred her killed Fred killed her.

(13) Fred l tiigan Fred she killed She killed Fred.

In (12) the subject noun precedes the object pronoun, while in (13) the subject pronoun follows the object noun. This corresponds to the situation where both subject and object are nouns, in that subjecthood is not reflected in word order. In these cases, information from the context is required to differentiate subject from object. Subject-initial order for pronouns is always ungrammatical unless the subject pronoun is followed by a topic marking particle. When the subject pronoun is in the sentence-initial position, it is always being used in a contrastive sense, as in (2):

(2) hlaa o chin taagang I T fish eat I eat fish.

Consider also:

(14) laa o laa tiigan he T her killed He killed her.

(15) hlaa o John gu iijaan hl guudanggang I T John there was I think I think John was there.

(16) John gu iijaan hl guudanggang John there was I think I think John was there.

The following pair of sentences is from Leer (1976:146):

(17) laa uu dlawiigan he T fell He fell.

(18) hal dlawiigan he fell He fell.

In the topicalized sentences the pronoun is emphasized by the topic marking particle to produce "I am the one who..." or "He is the one who...", whichever is appropriate. The non-emphasized
sentences, (16) and (18) are "expressions which contain the information which the speaker wishes to communicate" (cf. Sgall, above). In other words, they correspond to "rheme" in the Prague school sense, "comment" of the topic-comment dichotomy or "focus of utterance" with normal intonation (cf. Chomsky 1973:205).

Since the linear order of the noun phrases depends on communicative importance (i.e., which NP is foregrounded), a given English sentence will assume various interpretations in Haida. When the target sentence is Joe brought Lil a fish, the responses range from (19) to (22):

(19) Lil k chin Joe dlis diayaan Lil to fish Joe whole brought Joe brought whole a fish to Lil.

(20) chin Lil k Joe dlis diayaan fish Lil to Joe whole brought Joe brought whole a fish to Lil.

(21) Joe Lil k chin dlis diayaan Joe Lil to fish whole brought Joe brought whole a fish to Lil.

(22) chin uu Lil k Joe dlis diayaan fish T Lil to Joe whole brought It was a fish Joe brought whole to Lil.

If one asks a native speaker what these sentences mean, the answer is the same for (19) - (21): "Joe brought a fish to Lil--the whole thing". For (22) the response is, "It was a fish Joe brought whole to Lil". The order of the noun phrases in the untopicalized sentences depends on their importance from the speaker's point of view. When one of the noun phrases is contrastive or emphasized, it will be topicalized and marked with a topic marking particle as in (22) and the following:

(23) chin uu tablegaa sang ilijang fish T table+DEF on is A fish is on the table. It is a fish on the table.

(24) tablegaa sang k uu chin ilijang table+DEF on T fish is A fish is on the table. On the table (is where) the fish is.

2.2 The Topic as Theme

Prague school linguists discuss the two part sentence from a functional perspective. They see topic and comment as "theme" and "rheme". According to Lyons (1977:507), "'rheme' is employed by Prague school linguists to refer to the expression which contains the information which the speaker wishes to communicate". If the rheme corresponds to the comment of Haida sentences it is easy to see why every sentence needs a comment, but not every sentence has a topic. In those sentences where there is nothing contrastive or of striking communicative importance, no element will be topicalized. Whatever information is being communicated will appear in the format of a comment, including non-remarkable contextually bound elements. Lyons continues, "The theme...is the expression used by the speaker
for what he announces as the topic of his utterance... Not surprisingly, there is a very high correlation, not only in English, but in all languages, between occupying initial position in the utterance and being thematic.

Though the Haida topic is the center of attention and occupies the initial position in the sentence, it is not thematic in the Prague school sense of being contextually bound. Nor does it have the "old information" function of the theme, i.e., to "distinguish the relevant points of previous knowledge" (Sgall 1973:11). In Haida, this function of the theme may be indicated by the topic, but is primarily accomplished by an aspect marker in the verb phrase which clarifies the speaker's assumptions about the hearer's previous knowledge in this regard. In the following sentences, this aspect marker is the final syllable of the verb:

(25) Lilgyaa xyaay gwas gwanggaagan
Lil+POSS arm break + PAST (old info)
Lil's arm had been broken.

(26) Lilgyaa xyaay gwas gwanggaagan
Lil+POSS arm break + PAST (old info)
Lil's arm had been broken.

(27) Lilgyaa xyaay wasanggaagan
Lil+POSS arm break + PAST (new info)
Lil's arm had been broken.

In (25) the speaker and hearer both know Lil had a broken limb, but only the speaker knows it was her arm. Thus, arm is marked with

a focusing particle gwaa, and the gan in the verb phrase indicates old information as far as a broken limb is concerned. In (26) both speaker and hearer had prior knowledge of the broken arm; therefore, the gwaa of focus is not required and the verb phrase still contains the old information marker gan. In (27) the speaker is giving new information to the hearer. This is indicated by the final syllable of the verb phrase, gan. Leer calls this the inferential form of the verb. "The inferential form is also a past form, but refers to something which the speaker has not experienced for himself (sic) but has found out by inference or by being informed of it" (Leer 1977:79).

It appears that the topicalized elements in Haida sentences are either items known to the speaker and hearer from context or something the speaker wishes to fix in the hearer's mind. An example of this is (28):

(28) Ham Cove guu'1 xosaangaan
Ham Cove T he fish + PAST (new info)
Ham Cove is where he fished.

It is evident that this is new information because of the inferential ending on the verb. It is as if people had been wondering for years where he had been catching all of those fish, and finally they found out the answer: Ham Cove. In this sentence, the topic marker has a contrastive function, "Of all the places we thought he might have fished...". 

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Topic markers can also serve to recall to mind a piece of information:

(29) Ham Cove guu l xioqanggang
    Ham Cove T he fish + PAST (old info)  Ham Cove is where he fished.

Though the gloss for this sentence is the same as for (28), it would be used in a different context, that is, for the recall of general knowledge. Whenever an item is emphasized for contrast or recall, it will be topicalized and marked with a topic marking particle. It is the piece of information the speaker will want the hearer to receive first.

3.0 Summary and Implications.

The communicative importance of particular sentence elements in Haida has been analyzed as determining their linear order. These elements are often the grammatical subject or object of the sentence, but can be any word, phrase or clause. The placement of one or more of these elements at the beginning of the sentence constitutes foregrounding. By foregrounding particular elements, the speaker conveys to the hearer what the speaker has uppermost in mind with regard to the rest of the sentence. This corresponds to the Prague school maxim which says that topic-comment analysis makes the distinction between what "is spoken about" and "what is said about it" (Sgall, et al., 1973:10).

When the foregrounded elements are not only uppermost in communicative importance but are also contrastive or of special emphasis, they will be marked with a topic marking particle. If the topic marked element is not the logical object of the verb, its relation to the sentence, if unclear, will be indicated by other particles or pronouns. Recall (15):

(15) hHaa o John guu iiJan hl guudanggang
    I T John there was I think I think John was there.

In this sentence, the subject pronoun "I" appears in the comment even though it is also the topic. Though guu is glossed "there" in this sentence, it is quite possibly a topic marker. In that case an approximate interpretation of the sentence would be, "I (am who) think(s) John (is the one who) was (there)". Study now is in progress on the possibility of the occurrence of multiple topic markers in Haida sentences.
NOTES

1. The Prague school tradition referred to in this paper began in the 1920's with Hlas' comparison of the distribution of old and new information in English and Czech. He called the old information "theme" and the new information "rheme". He found the theme to be optional, especially if it was discourse-initial. Fjatov (1971, in Sgall) modified the theme/rheme concept from a dichotomy to a continuum. He said that every sentence has a theme to some degree. He introduced the idea of communicative dynamism in which some elements contribute more (theme) and some less (rheme) to the furtherance of the communication and there may be some intermediate elements (transition) in the sentence. Sgall, et al. (1973) combined generative semantics with communicative dynamism in a theory of contextual boundedness which produces a topic-comment dichotomy in sentences. (I wish to thank Professor Nules Contreras, Department of Linguistics, University of Washington for this historical information).

2. The research for this paper was partially funded by the Phillips Fund of the American Philosophical Society. I wish to express my thanks to my primary consultant, H. Lillian Pettvial of Seattle and Hydaburg. I am also grateful to Professor Carol M. Eastman and to Nancy Sharp whose discussions with me aided this analysis.

3. The logical (psychological) subject is a semantic relation of the deep structure (cf. Chomsky 1965:163) while the grammatical subject is a relation between items in the surface structure. The grammatical subject may be a convenience of the syntax of English and other "subject"-prominent languages which has little utility in languages which are organized according to different principles. In this paper the subject is an element which is in an agentive relation to the verb and corresponds to Chomsky's logical subject.

SOURCES


