Question Formation in Haida[1]

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0.   Introduction.

Interrogation in Haida is generally accomplished by employing question words as sentence initial elements or by marking the initial phrase with a question particle. Inversion of word order does not occur, nor is there a terminal rising intonation pattern. The verb may be unmarked for tense or it may utilize uujaa or uu(s) in the past and non-past respectively. The question particle -k is optional and will be reanalyzed here as a boundary marking particle which indicates the intended scope of the question. Sentences (1) - (5) are examples of Haida questions.

(1) guusgyaao dan taagang

   what   you eat

   What are you eating?

(2) laa guuk k'iiaa

   he   old

   Is he old?

(3) laa dang guulaauus

   him you like

   Do you like him?

(4) dang guutaa'aasaanuus

   you eat   FUT

   Are you going to eat?

(5) adaahl   gam damaan dang k'atuujaa

   yesterday not well   you sleep

   Didn't you sleep well yesterday?

Sentence (1) shows the use of a question word, 'what?', as the sentence-initial element. The verb in this question occurs with a regular present tense ending. Sentences (2) through (5) are examples of yes-no questions. In sentence (2), the boundary marker -k limits the scope of the question to 'here and now' and the verb is tenseless. Sentences (3) through (5) have no boundary markers but may be considered marked non-past or past by the interrogative endings uus and uujaa.

It is the purpose of this paper to describe question formation in Haida as a morphological process

that interrelates various other processes in the
language such as topic-marking (Edwards 1979), temporal
and spatial boundedness (Eastman 1979), negation
(Eastman, forthcoming) and the delimitation of subordinate
semantic scope (Eastman & Edwards 1979b). Where
interrogation is not morphologically marked we will
offer an explanation for how interrogation versus
declaration in such instances is understood. We will
analyze the interrogative words used in Haida questions
and their interaction with other sentential elements.
We will also describe how yes-no questions may be delimited
for topic, scope and boundedness.

1.   Question words.
1.1   "What?"
      Questions seeking information that cannot be
answered by yes or no begin with a question word. This
word or the initial phrase will be followed by a topic
marking particle which delimits the scope of the
expected answer. The following sentences ask the
question "what?":
(6) guusuu iijing
     what   is
     What is that?
(7) guus kil   uu dang guusuugang
     what language T. you speak
     What language do you speak?

(8) guusgyaa uu dang istaan
     what   T. you do
     What are you doing?
(9) guus gyaa uu dan taagang
     what   T. you eat
     What are you eating?
     The initial words guus and guusuu ask specific
questions and expect specific answers: "What is that?";
"What language do you speak?". Combined with gyaa,
the partitive particle, the question becomes: "What
sort of action/thing are you doing/eating?". These
words ask 'what?' (and I expect that you know) while
sinuu is used to ask 'what?' (if you know or in
general).
(10) sinuu dii kiiaang
     what my name
     What's my name?
(11) sinuu dang suugang
     what you say
     What did you say?
(12) sinuu gintagaay kluukdaangaagan
     what blanket   feel
     What does a blanket feel like?
     The question word sinuu is used to ask a general
question or one where it is not anticipated that the
hearer will be able to respond precisely. You wouldn't

have to answer (11) 'What did you say?' with a verbatim
response nor would you be expected to be able to say
exactly what a blanket feels like in response to (12).
This question word is also used to ask about a state
or condition.

(13) sinuu dlang istaan

    what you(pl) do

    How do you do?

(14) sinuu dang jaa xiidang

    what your wife condition

    How is your wife?

(15) sinuu wed 1 xedang

    what now he condition

    How is he now?

    In these sentences the word appears to be questioning
the general health or state of affairs of a person.

1.2 "Where?"

    .A specific question marker gii- similar to guus
precedes questions that ask who?, when?, where?, and
how many?. Swanton (1911:261) suggests gii or giis
may be a stem, 'where?', from which other interrogative
words are built. We prefer to think of gii as a
concatenation of the boundary marker -k and a locative
particle ii which functions to limit the scope of a
question to a specific time and/or place. When gii is

present, the question asks for a specific answer. The
specific versus the general scope of the question word
'where?' is illustrated in sentences (16) - (19):

(16) giitlang guu Kaajuu iijing

    where   T. Victor is

    Where is Victor going?

(17) giitlaan uu naay daa iijing

    where   T. house your is

    Where is your house?

(18) tlaanuu 1   nagangwaan

    where   they live

    Where are they all living?

(19) tlaanuu iijing

    where   is

    Where is it?

    In (18) and (19) a general question is asked about
the location of 'it' and 'they' while in (16) and (17)
the gii indicates a more specific answer is required.
The initial phrase giitlang guu is the surface represen-
tation of giitlank uu where the -k is a marker of spatial
or temporal boundaries within the context of the sentence.
In (16) the -k limits the 'where?' to the duration of
time within the context of the question with no reference
to where 'Victor' may be going at any other time. In
(17) the specific marker gii is present to request an
exact location of 'your house' but the -k is missing and

unnecessary since it is impossible for a house to be
in one location during the sentence context and some-
where else at another time.

Sentence (18), 'Where are they all living?',
requests a general answer such as 'across the cove'
or 'down in Seattle'. Without contextual information,
we can only guess that (19) requests information on
the location of an immoveable object or expects a very
general answer such as 'in Sakwan' or 'in my Mother's
pocket'.

1.3 "Who?", "when?", and "how many?".

The question word 'who?' has both a singular and a
plural form as illustrated in (20) - (24):

(20) giisduu iijing

    who   is

    Who is that?

(21) giisduu 1 iijing

    who   he is

    Who is he?

(22) giisduu dang iijing

    who   you   is

    Who are you?

(23) giitl'daa uu 1   iswaang

    who pl.   T. they are

    Who are they?

(24) giitl'daa uu dlang   is xujuugan

    who pl.   T. you pl. be proceeding

    Who are all of you?

In these questions, the _gii_ is always present since
it is impossible to ask 'who' without expecting a specific
answer. The same is true of _giisanduu_ 'when?' and
giistluu 'how many?'.

(25) giisanduu 1 xyaahlansaang

    when   he dance FUT

    When will he dance?

(26) giistluu k'iiwaay dang hlxaayaa(ng)

    how many clams   you   dig

    How many clams did you dig?

Though all question words usually occur sentence
initially, we have a few examples of word inversion
including (27):

(27) gaagaay daa giistluugang

    children your how many are

    How many children do you have?

No boundary or topic-marking particles occur in this
sentence and the question word _giistluu_ 'how many?'
is followed by a verb ending which functions to make
the sentence complete. This upholds our claim that
Haida questions are simply declarative statements which
may be confirmed or clarified by the addressee.

2.0 Yes-no questions.

Yes-no questions may occur in normal declarative word order without question markers or they may have a post-initial particle k(w) which sets a time or space boundary on the question (and the answer). This particle may occur as guu(k) in which case it is composed of the boundary suffix -k, topic marking particle uu and another boundary suffix -k (-k + uu + -k = guuk). This explains why the pronoun in (30) will occur in the emphatic form laa which is only possible before a topic marking particle such as uu.

(28) 1 labledgaa

he minister

Is he a minister?

(29) 1 k'iiaa

he old

Is he old?

(30) laa guuk k'iiaa

he T. old

Is he (the one who is) old?

In (28) and (29) the juxtaposition of pronoun and adjective or tenseless verb is sufficient to produce a yes-no question. In (30) the initial pronoun has been topic- and boundary-marked to focus the question: 'Is he the one who is old?'.

Yes-no questions may also occur with the interrogative

markers uus and uujaa.

(31) dalangkw isdii ii(t)saauus

you pl. be from   FUT

Are you folks leaving?

(32) laakw skaadaangwaa uu

they berry-pick

Are they picking berries?

(33) staatkwank dalang tlaahlgiiuus

moccasins you pl. make always

Are you always making moccasins?

(34) taawaay dlang taa uujaa

food   you pl. eat

Did you already eat the food?

Sentences (31) and (32) utilize the boundary marker -k to focus the scope of the question on the initial pronoun. This marker limits the time and space aspects of the questions to 'you'/'they' 'here and now'. In (33) the aspect marker gii 'always' renders the boundary marker dysfunctional and it does not occur. In (34) the time frame is set by the ending uujaa and no other aspect markers are necessary.

All these sentences occur in declarative sentence order with tenseless verbs and question-marking particles uus and uujaa. There is no other syntactic information to indicate that these are questions. It is our feeling that the tensed question markers uus and uujaa (<uusgaa)

are composed of the topic marking particle uu plus a

subordinate marker -s on both past and non-past questions

with a verbal suffix -gaa on past tense questions. In

the following pair of sentences, the question may be

considered tenseless while the verb in the answer is

tensed.

(35) adaahl   gam chiinaay dang taauujaa

        yesterday not fish   you eat

        Didn't you eat the fish yesterday?

(36) gam adaahl   chiinaay dang taa'aangang

        not yesterday fish   you eat NEG

        You didn't eat the fish yesterday.

    In (35), the verb taauujaa (< taauusgaa) is

composed of a stem taa plus topic marker uu, subordinate

marker s and verbal ending gaa. The scope of the topic

marker extends leftward in the sentence to the previous

topic marking particle or to the beginning of the

sentence (Eastman & Edwards 1979a). In this instance,

the topic marker marks the whole sentence as occuring

outside the context of the immediate speech event (i.e.,

the event of questioning). This unit is then subordinated

by -s. Subordination in Haida has been shown to be a

device that "delimits a reference to a prior or subordinate

predication" (Eastman & Edwards 1979b:13). The use of

-s to make a question out of a statement refers to a

prior predication, namely, the state of affairs being

questioned. It is an assertion about the existence of

the state of affairs that obtains in the statement.

If the hearer disagrees or strongly agrees, s/he will

naturally respond.

    The -(g)aa of (35) "is added to verbs to denote a

state or condition" (Leer 1977:118) and is not normally

a tense marker. However, adding it to a question which

has been formed by the use of uu(s) limits the question

to an action that has been completed, since a statement

cannot yet be in a "state" if it is ongoing or has not

yet occurred. Thus (35) and other questions marked with

uujaa are asking about events in the past. This ending

will not occur on non-past questions since no action has

been completed. Such questions may still be indexed by

uu and asserted by -s as in (31) - (33) above.

3.0 Negative questions.

    Questions in Haida are asked in the affirmative

except in a marked context (Eastman, forthcoming).

Consider (37) and (38):

(37) dang xwii

        you cold

        Are you cold?

(38) gam dang xwiiaang

        not you cold NEG

        Aren't you cold?

Of this pair, the positive question is the more
general and the negative one would occur under certain
circumstances, perhaps when the addressee appeared to
experience a chill. This obvious contradiction to fact
(since the addressee was obserbed shivering), combined
with the absence of a tense marker, identifies (38) as
a question and requires a response (yes, hand me a
sweater; no, I had a terrifying thought).

Other obvious contradictions occur as negative
questions, including the following:

(39) adaahl gam damaan dang k'at   uujaa

    yesterday not well you sleep

      Didn't you sleep well yesterday? (You seemed to me

                        to be sleeping soundly)

(40) gam k'iiwaay dang k'inaanguujaa

    not clams   you see NEG

      Didn't you see the clams? (How could you have

                    missed them?)

When worded positively, these questions lack the
incredulity of (39) and (40).

(41) daakw adaahl   damaan dang k'adaayaa

    you   yesterday well   you sleep

      Did you sleep well yesterday?

(42) k'iiwaay dang k'aengaa

    clams   you see

      Did you see the clams?

4.0. Summary.

Questions in Haida occur in normal declarative
word order and there is no rising intonation contour.
Question words are used in non-yes-no questions. These
words usually occur sentence-initially and are followed
by topic- and/or boundary-marking particles. A
distinction is made in Haida questions between precise
and general information. 'What?', precisely, is
indicated by the use of guus, while sinuu is used to
ask 'what?' in general or 'what state or condition?'.
'Where?', precisely, is asked with the question word
giitlang and 'where?' in general by tlaanuu. 'Who?',
'when?' and 'how many?' all use the specific prefix gii
as in giisduu 'who (sg)', giitl'daa 'who (pl)', giisanduu
'when?' and giistluu 'how many?'.

Yes-no questions also occur in normal declarative
word order without a distinctive intonation contour
but with tenseless verbs. If it is not obvious from
the context that a question is being asked, several
communicational and syntactic devices may be utilized.
1. A "question-marking particle" -k(w) may follow the
initial word or phrase. This particle has been shown
to be a marker of spatial or temporal boundedness. It
functions in questions to limit the information sought
to the time and space designated in the question, e.g.,
'yesterday'.

2. The "interrogative markers" uujaa and uus may be
used to indicate questions in past and non-past situations
respectively. We have shown that these markers are
composed of topic-marking and subordinate particles,
which, in combination, function to communicate a request
for information. A verb ending gaa indicates that a
question is being asked about an event in the past.

3. Negative questions occur in a context where they are
obviously contradictory, conveying a sense of surprise
on the part of the speaker and an anticipation of
clarification.

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