Question Formation in Haida

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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 guuta'aassanuuus
   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 uuus 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 guusuuugang
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 guusu 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 diang 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 giit- similar to guus precedes questions that ask who?, when?, where?, and how many?. Swanton (1911:261) suggests giit or giit- may be a stem, 'where?', from which other interrogative words are built. We prefer to think of giit 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 giit 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 Kaaju iijing
    where T. Victor is
    Where is Victor going?

(17) giitlan 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 giit indicates a more specific answer is required. The initial phrase giitlang guu is the surface representation 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 giit 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 somewhere 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 immovable 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 l iijing
   who he is
   Who is he?
(22) giisduu dang iijing
   who you is
   Who are you?
(23) giitl'daa uu l 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 gi 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 l xyaahlansaang
   when he dance FUT
   When will he dance?
(26) giistluu k'iilwaay 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) \(1\) labeledga
   he minister
   Is he a minister?
(29) \(1\) k'iiaa
   he old
   Is he old?
(30) laa guu 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 uu and uujaa.

(31) dalangkw isdii 1ii(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 tlaahgiiuus
    moccasins you pl. make always
    Are you always making moccasins?
(34) taaway 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 uu and uujaa. There is no other syntactic information to indicate that these are questions. It is our feeling that the tensed question markers uu and uujaa (uuugaa)
are composed of the topic marking particle uu plus a subordinate marker -g 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 taaujuja
yesterday not fish you eat
Didn't you eat the fish yesterday?

(36) gam adaahl chiinaay dang taa'angang
not yesterday fish you eat NEG
You didn't eat the fish yesterday.

In (35), the verb taaujuja (<taauusgaa) is composed of a stem taa plus topic marker uu, subordinate marker g 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 occurring outside the context of the immediate speech event (i.e., the event of questioning). This unit is then subordinated by -g. 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 -g 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 uujaas 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 -g 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 xwiiiaang
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 observed 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'inaangujuuja
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 gunu, 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 gi as in glieduu 'who (sg)', giit'idaa 'who (pl)', gliisanduu 'when?' and gliistluyu '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.

REFERENCES


