This paper is an attempt to characterize the simpler inflection structures common to large numbers of Lower Tsimshianic montransitive sentences. The term Lower Tsimshianic refers to Coast Tsimshian (Sim'ágliax) and Southern Tsimshian (Sgúuxs), which together comprise a major subdivision within the Tsimshianic group in Northern British Columbia and Southeastern Alaska. The characterization of inflection undertaken here presumes, for the sake of argument, that Lower Tsimshianic syntax is configurational and that recent advances in the characterization of Inflection Phrase structures (government-binding theory) have made possible a more insightful syntactic description of the inflection configurations of Lower Tsimshianic.

1. Lower Tsimshianic. Outward and coastward within the Tsimshianic community people use two indigenous terms to refer to language. These terms are Sim’ágliax (The True Language) and Sgúuxs (The Language Beside). There is general agreement among the Tsimshian people that Sim’ágliax is the language of, among others, Kitkatla, the two Metlakatlas, and Hartley Bay, and that Sgúuxs is the language of Klemtu and the former language of Hartley Bay. These two varieties exhibit very high cognate sharing, well over 90\% of their total vocabularies. At the same time they are divergent in terms of phonetic structure. Even so the phonetic correspondences are quite regular. The Lower Tsimshianic community apparently has a long history of close social interaction between groups that have maintained strict autonomy insofar as local identities are concerned. As a result they have formed a sociolinguistic moiety.

2. Theoretical Model. This paper uses a model for sentence structure that has developed since Chomsky 1986 and that is appropriate for English and similarly constructed languages (See e.g., Aoun and Li 1989, Baker 1988, 1989, Diesing 1990, Larson 1988, Pollock 1989):

The subject coinates 1 (for purposes of agreement):

In English the subject \( N' \) then moves to the specifier of 1 position in order to receive nominative case from 1.

3. The Lower Tsimshianic basic sentence parameter. The structure of the common montransitive sentence in Lower Tsimshianic differs from the English parameter in a number of significant ways: (1) word order, (2) case-marking, (3) theta-role marking of grammatical functions, (4) the verb inflection does not indicate tense, but only the number of the subject, (5) the use of coindexing pronominal clitics for both subject and object grammatical functions, (6) pro-drop phenomena.

Basic Lower Tsimshianic word order is VOS:
Both the subject and object have the same case mark, i- in Sgūks and a- [-] in Sim'álgiax. This indicates that movement of the subject into the specifier for I position does not occur. The verb case-marks both subject and object. There is another case-mark, it'ei- in Sgūks and da- in Sim'álgiax. This paper does not deal with the latter case-mark, but see *5.4 below for an example.

Lower Tsimshianic, having an ergative syntax, assigns proto-patient role to the subject and proto-agent role to the object (See Dowty 1987).

Tense is a lexical category in Lower Tsimshianic. It inflects (receives by incorporation) the subject-indexing pronominal clitic. The verb inflects to show the number of the subject; it also receives by incorporation the object-indexing pronominal clitic. Because the tense and verb are both lexical categories inflecting for discrete information, it is most useful to analyze the IP component as two separate phrases (See, e.g., Pollock 1989): one for T(ense) and another for the verb-AGR(eement) complex (V agr).
Each N* has a specifier clitic (CL). These clitics indicate the person and number of their respective N's. In inflection they incorporate themselves into the T(ense) and AGR(eement) components (See Borer 1986, Osvaldo 1986, Pulleybank 1986). The clitic specifier for the proto-patient subject inflects Vagr; the clitic specifier for the proto-agent object inflects T(ense).

First and second person subject and object arguments usually manifest themselves by these clitics coindexed to pro constructions. Third person subject and object arguments are also usually expressed as pro+clitic anytime pragmatics constraints allow the pro drop.

4. Examples from Sgůxš provided by Violet Neasloss of Klemtu, British Columbia.

4.1 Hla wellt guhpdi həʼtsiyəni hoan.
Maggots are eating the fish.

d-structure: [hla wellt guhpdi ə-guhp həʼtsiyəni ə-hoan ə-hoan]
tense eat maggots fish

case-marking: hla wellt guhpdi ə-hatsisyəni ə-hoan ə-hoan
verb-incorporation: hla wellt ə-guhp ə-hatsisyəni ə-hoan ə-hoan

subject clitic incorporation: hla wellt ə-guhp ə-hatsisyəni ə-hoan ə-hoan
object clitic incorporation: hla wellt ə-guhp ə-hatsisyəni ə-hoan ə-hoan

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4.2 Hla yagwit si’ki niisdí ol hoan.
   The bear is staring at the fish.
   d-structure: [hla yagwa ru si’ki niis diPLU \[l hoan 1
   tense \[t stare-at bear fish
   case-marking: hla yagwa ru si’ki niis PLU l hoan 1
   verb-incorporation: hla yagwa si’ki niis1-s 1-l hoan 1
   subject clitic incorporation: hla yagwi-t3 e-si’ki niis2-s 2 l hoan 1
   object clitic incorporation: hla yagwi-t3 e-si’ki niis 1-l hoan 1
   subject pro drop: hla yagwi-t3 e-si’ki niis 1-l hoan 1

4.3 Nat luu niidza’nu hoan.
   The fish was glaring at me.
   d-structure: [nl luu niidza’nu hoan 1
   tense get woman bracelets
   case-marking: luu niidza’nu hoan 1
   verb-incorporation: yagwa niidza’nu hoan 1
   subject clitic incorporation: yagwi-'nu 3 niidza’nu hoan 1
   object clitic incorporation: niidza’nu hoan 1
   subject pro drop: yagwi-'nu 3 niidza’nu hoan 1

4.4 Nat luu niidza’nu hoan.
   The woman got the bracelets.
   d-structure: [nl luu niidza’nu hoan 1
   tense get woman bracelets
   case-marking: niidza’nu hoan 1
   verb-incorporation: niidza’nu hoan 1
   subject clitic incorporation: niidza’nu hoan 1
   subject pro drop: niidza’nu hoan 1
   object clitic incorporation: niidza’nu hoan 1
   subject pro drop: niidza’nu hoan 1

4.5 yagwina ba’ali lo’ap
   I am feeling of the rock.
   d-structure: [yagwa ba’ali lo’ap 1
   tense feel-of 1 rock
   case-marking: yagwa ba’ali 1
   verb-incorporation: yagwa ba’ali 1
   subject clitic incorporation: yagwa ba’ali 1
   subject pro drop: yagwi-nu5 e-ba’ali 1
   object clitic incorporation: yagwi-nu5 e-ba’ali 1
   object pro drop: yagwi-nu5 e-ba’ali 1

5.1 Ada wilt gidi doa’dka q'mksiwa dip gwa'a.
   The white men took them captive.
   d-structure: [ada wilt PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l dip gwa'a \[l]
   tense take-captive white men them
   case-marking: ada wilt gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa dip gwa'a \[l
   verb-incorporation: ada wilt gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa dip gwa'a \[l
   subject clitic incorporation: ada wilt gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa dip gwa'a \[l
   subject pro drop: ada wilt gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa dip gwa'a \[l
   object clitic incorporation: ada wilt gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa dip gwa'a \[l

5.2 Wilt hi waada q'mksiwa git q'xaahla.
   The white men met the Kitkatlas (Kitkatla people).
   d-structure: [wil PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l git q'xaahla \[l
   tense meet white men Kitkatlas
   case-marking: wil PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l git q'xaahla \[l
   verb-incorporation: wil PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l git q'xaahla \[l
   subject clitic incorporation: wil PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l git q'xaahla \[l
   subject pro drop: wil PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l git q'xaahla \[l
   object clitic incorporation: wil PLU gidi doa’dka \[v q'mksiwa \[l git q'xaahla \[l

5.3 Ada wilt si giahlqada k'oldini sgin si muu-t.
   One of them took some of his earwax.
   d-structure: [ada wilt PLU sgin si muu-t \[v k'oldini \[l sgin si muu-t \[l
   tense take one-of-them earwax-his
   case-marking: ada wilt PLU sgin si muu-t \[v k'oldini \[l sgin si muu-t \[l
   verb-incorporation: ada wilt PLU sgin si muu-t \[v k'oldini \[l sgin si muu-t \[l
   subject clitic incorporation: ada wilt PLU sgin si muu-t \[v k'oldini \[l sgin si muu-t \[l
   subject pro drop: ada wilt PLU sgin si muu-t \[v k'oldini \[l sgin si muu-t \[l
   object clitic incorporation: ada wilt PLU sgin si muu-t \[v k'oldini \[l sgin si muu-t \[l

5.4 Adat xahl wa'al a'Gan.
   He put on a match stick.
   d-structure: [xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
   tense put he it match stick
   case-marking: xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
   verb-incorporation: xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
   subject clitic incorporation: xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
   subject pro drop: xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
   object clitic incorporation: xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
   object pro drop: xahl wa'al a'Gan \[l \[v a'Gan \[l \[v
5.5 Adat wil wi liilt a an ont.
He rubbed his hands together.

- **d-structure:** \{r ada PLU \{v wi liill \{niit an on-t \{and\}\]\] \}
  - tense: rub together
  - he: hands-his

- **case-marking:** ada PLU wi liill a-niit an on-t

- **verb-incorporation:** ada wil-wi liill, \{t\} a-niit an on-t

- **subject clitic incorporation:** ada wil-wi liill, \{t\} a-niit an on-t \{t\}

- **object clitic incorporation:** ada-t\{t\} wil-wi liill, \{t\} a-niit \{t\} a an on-t \{t\}

- **object pro drop:** ada-t\{t\} wil-wi liill, \{t\} pro \{t\} a an on-t \{t\}

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**References**


