Hli, Focus and Relativization in Gitksan[*]

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Abstract: There are two parts to this paper. In the first, we give an overview of the various uses of the particle *hli* in Interior Tsimshianic (IT), drawing on previous research as well as both textual and directly elicited examples. We classify the function of *hli* into three broad types, "nominal", "subordinating", and "relativizing", each of which contains several subtypes. We find much variation between speakers, with many uses of *hli* either lexicalized or semantically bleached. In the second part of the paper, we conduct a detailed examination of *hli* in A'-movement configurations. Our investigation leads us to the conclusion that there are two distinct syntactically active uses of *hli*, one in relative clauses and one in focus fronting structures. We provide evidence that in both cases, *hli* is a complementizer, and give a detailed account of its interaction with WH-relative pronouns, which leads us to distinguish the latter from interrogative-indefinite WH-words. The result is a comprehensive account of the various surface forms of relative clause in IT, which also extends naturally to relativization in Sm'algya̲x (Coast Tsimshian).

Keywords: Gitksan, Tsimshianic, relative clauses, focus, A'-movement

1 Introduction

The particle *hli* has multiple uses in Interior Tsimshianic (IT), none of them easy to elucidate.[1,2] This is reflected in the nomenclature used to label it. Rigsby (1986:399) refers to it as a 'DEFinite prefix' in Gitksan, though it is neither definite nor a prefix (the idea that it is connected to definiteness probably comes from its use in possessive constructions, since possessors are typically definite). Tarpent (1987:471) calls it 'RESTrictive' in Nisg̲a'a, presumably on the basis that it narrows down the reference of a nominal, though even that very broad definition fails to account for all of its uses, not all of which involve nominals.

There are two parts to this paper. In the first (Section 2), we give an overview of the various uses of *hli* in IT, drawing on previous research (particularly Tarpent's 1987 grammar of Nisg̲a'a) as well as both textual and directly elicited examples from Gitksan. We classify the function of *hli* into three broad types, 'nominal', 'subordinating', and 'relativizing', each of which contains several

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[1] As far as we can see, *hli* is completely absent in the Maritime branch of Tsimshianic; its role in nominal contexts is partly filled by the possessive proclitic *na*, though the latter has a rather different distribution: it never occurs as a relativizer, for example.

[2] Pronunciation of the particle varies from [ɬɪ] (*hli*) to [ɬa] (*hla*), with the vowel in the latter predictably raised to [ɬɛ] (*hle*) in western dialects of Gitksan.

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subtypes. We find much variation between speakers, with many uses of *hli* either lexicalized or semantically bleached.

In the second part of the paper (Section 3), we conduct a detailed examination of *hli* in relative clauses, focusing on its use by VG, the only one of our principal Gitksan consultants to employ it productively. Our investigation leads to the conclusion that at least for VG there are two distinct uses of *hli*, one in relative clauses and one in focus fronting structures. We provide evidence that in both cases, *hli* is a complementizer, and give a detailed account of its interaction with WH-relative pronouns, which leads us to distinguish the latter from interrogative-indefinite WH-words. The result is a comprehensive account of the various surface forms of relative clause in IT, which extends naturally to relativization in Sm'algyax (Coast Tsimshian).

Section 4 concludes.

2 An overview of *hli* in Interior Tsimshianic

In this section, we give a catalogue of the principal uses of *hli*. Subsections 2.1–2.4 deal with nominal uses, 2.5–2.7 with subordinating uses, and 2.8–2.10 with relativizing uses.

2.1 *Hli* on possessed nouns

Perhaps the core nominal use of *hli*, present in Nisga'a and for all speakers of Gitksan, is on possessed nouns. There are two cases to consider here: those where *hli* introduces a noun with ordinary (Series II) possessor marking, and those where it induces an additional 'increment' (the term is Rigsby's), identified by Tarpent (1987) as the ubiquitous — and enigmatic — morpheme 'Big T'. (Tarpent dubs Big T 'DEFinite medial'; we will simply label it *-T*).[3]

Tarpent (1987) claims that while both these cases are broadly partitive, there is a semantic difference between them in Nisga'a. With *hli* plus *-T*, the possessive relation is what she calls 'generic', by which she appears to mean that the possessor forms an intrinsic (inalienable) part of the possessed noun.

(1) a. **hla** **gan-di**=hl gan[4,5]
HLI **tree-T[-3.II]**=CN tree
'the trunk of the/a tree'

[3] The name 'Big T' derives from Tarpent's gloss *-T*, used as a cover term for the surface allomorphs, *-d (-t)*, *-i (-ə)*, and *-di (-tə)*. See Tarpent (1987:634).

[4] We gloss the sequence *-di (tə)* simply as *-T* here, without segmenting it further. Tarpent (1987) analyzes the consonantal onset as epenthetic, with *-T* itself surfacing as schwa. Since *-T* may actually lack any fixed content, we remain neutral as to its exact phonological analysis here.

[5] Examples are given in the Hindle-Rigsby practical orthography widely employed in Gitksan and Nisga'a territory, and also adopted in a slightly modified form throughout Sm'algyax territory. Glossing abbreviations are as follows: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, and third person, respectively, I, II, and III = Series I (clitic), Series II (suffixal), and Series III (independent) pronouns, respectively, ABSN = absent, AFF = affirmative marker, ANTIP = antipassive, ASSOC = associative plural, ATTR = attributive, AX = A (transitive subject) extraction marker, CAUS = causative suffix, CAUS1 = causative prefix, CCNJ = clausal conjunction, CN = common noun connective, COM = comitative, COMP = complementizer, DEM = demonstrative, HLI = *hli*,

b. **hla** **meeg-a**=hl sginist
HLI **cone-T[-3.II]**=CN pine
'the cones of a pine tree' (Nisga'a: Tarpent 1987:472)

Without *-T*, Tarpent (1987) claims that the possessive relation induced by *hli* is 'non-generic', and more specifically that the possessor is conceived of "as a part separate from the whole" (in other words, what we might refer to as "alienated" possession). Examples are given in (2)–(3).

(2) **hli** **maas**=hl sguusiit
HLI **peel[-3.II]**=CN potato
'the peel of potatoes, potato peelings' (Nisga'a: Tarpent 1987:472)

(3) Gu'ws-im-muus=hl wag-i'y ii=t gin-i'm
shoot-ATTR-moose=CN elder.brother-1SG.II CCNJ=3.I give.food.to-1PL.II
a=hl **[hl]i** **t'imges-t**.
OBL[-3.II]=CNN **HLI** **head-3.II**
'My brother killed a moose and gave us its head.' (Nisga'a: Tarpent 1987:168)

We have not been able to replicate this finding consistently for Gitksan. For example, Rigsby (1986) gives the following example with *-T*:

(4) **lha** **hab-i**=hl an-jam
HLI **cover-T[-3.II]**=CN NMLZ-boil
'the lid of the kettle' (Rigsby 1986:399)

Following Tarpent (1987), we might interpret this to mean that the lid is an inalienable part of the kettle. However, lids can also be alienated (by being removed and lost, or being used for a different purpose, for example) and in that case we predict that *-T* should disappear. When we tested this contrast with VG, however, there was no difference between these cases: *-T* was invariably present.

(5) a. *Context: You can't get the lid off the kettle.*
Gos ji=n saa+guu-di=hl **hla** **habax-a**=hl an-jem.
impossible IRR=1SG.I off+take-T[-3.II]=CN **HLI** **cover-T[-3.II]**=CN NMLZ-boil
'I can't get the lid off the kettle.' (VG)

IMPS = impersonal, INCEP = inceptive aspect, INDEF = indefinite, INTJ = interjection, IRR = irrealis, LOC = locative, MANR = manner, NEG = negation, NMLZ = nominalizer, OBL = oblique, PCNJ = phrasal conjunction, PL = plural, PN = proper noun connective, POSS = possessive, PR.EV = previous evidence, PROSP = prospective aspect, PROX = proximal, REPORT = reportative enclitic, RSTR = restrictive, SG = singular, SPT = spatio-temporal, SX = S (intransitive subject) extraction marker, T = 'Big T', TR = transitive marker (independent clauses and object relatives), VAL = valency suffix, YNQ = yes-no question enclitic. Affixes are marked by hyphens (-), clitics by equals signs (=), a tilde (~) separates reduplicants, and pre-verbs and pre-nouns are marked with a plus sign (+). Material which is underlying present but has been deleted by a regular morphophonological rule is marked by square brackets […] in the gloss line only; material which is deleted in fast or casual speech but may be restored in slower or more formal speech is marked by square brackets […] in both the orthographic representation and the gloss line.

b. *Context: You can't find the lid of the kettle.*
Gos ji=n 'we=hl **hla** **habax-a**=hl an-jem.
impossible IRR=1SG.I find[-3.II]=CN **HLI** **cover-T[-3.II]**=CN NMLZ-boil
'I can't find the lid of the kettle.' (VG)

c. *Context: You're using the lid of the kettle as something else entirely.*
Hooy-i-'y=hl **hla** **habax-a**=hl an-jem dim win=in
use-TR-2SG.II=CN **HLI** **cover-T[-3.II]**=CN NMLZ-boil PROSP COMP=1SG.I
k'ag-a=hl anluugoyp'ax.
open-T[-3.II]=CN window
'I'm using the lid of the kettle to keep the window open.' (VG)

The same is true for Tarpent (1987)'s example (2), where *-T* appears when potato peelings have been alienated — i.e., removed from the potato. Again, the prediction is that when still on the potato (i.e., as an inalienable part), *-T* should be absent. This is not, however, what we find: for VG, *-T* is present in both cases.

(6) a. *Context: I'm about to peel some potatoes. You say:*
Am **hli** **maas-i**=hl sguusiit loo-n: ha'w mi=ji
good **HLI** **peel-T[-3.II]**=CN potato OBL-2SG.II don't 2SG.I=IRR
ksi+maas-t
off+peel-3.II
'Potato peel is good for you: don't take the peel off.' (VG)

b. *Context: I've just finished peeling some potatoes. You say:*
Ksi+xhlu-xws **hli** **maas-i**=hl sguusiit.
off+throw-VAL **HLI** **peel-T[-3.II]**=CN potato
'Throw the potato peel out.' (VG)

More broadly, it is difficult to find a consistent pattern for the use of *-T* with nominals introduced by *hli* in Gitksan. Some combinations are almost certainly lexicalized: these include *hli gedit* 'the people of…' (7), which always appears with *-T*, and *hli hlgit* 'the children of…' (8) which always appears without it.

(7) Ii bis~besax-xw=hl **hli** **ged-i**=hl Gitanyaaw.
CCNJ PL~separate-VAL[-3.II]=CN **HLI** **people-T[-3.II]**=CN Gitanyaaw
'That was when the people of Gitanyaaw were dispersed.' (VG; *Frog Phratry*)[6]

(8) Ii=t si-limxs **hli** **hlgi**=s wak-t.
CCNJ=3.I CAUS1-grow **HLI** **PL.children[-3.II]**=PN man's.brother-3.II
'And he raised his brother's children.' (BS; *Grandfather*)[7]

[6] Textual examples in this paper are taken from Forbes et al. (in preparation).
[7] Tarpent (1987:169) claims that "the 'possessions' of a human being, such as relations, clothing, houses etc., never take the particle [*hli*]". This is clearly false for Gitksan, as shown by (8).

The same is probably true for *hli sipt* referring to the body (literally, 'the bones of…') of a dead person, as in (9).

(9) … naa dim ehldi+t'aa-t dim an am-a-ga'a-di=hl
… who PROSP all.night+sit-SX PROSP AX[=3.I] good-ATTR-see-T[-3.II]=CN
aloohl **hli** **sip**=hl a=hl 'nu'w-it.
INTJ **HLI** **bone[-3.II]**=CN OBL[-3.II]=CN die-SX
'…who will be staying up to look after the body (literally, the bones) of the dead person.'
(HH; *Before the People Die*)

In short, it seems most likely that at least in Gitksan, there is no longer a systematic semantic difference between possessed nouns with *hli* and those with *hli* + *-T*. This is reminiscent of the status of *-T* on verbs, whose distribution must be explained by a combination of lexical factors (certain verbs are inherently 'T-verbs'), morphological factors (certain preverbs trigger *-T* even on non-T verbs), and syntactic factors (*-T* only appears on transitive verbs); there is no semantic explanation for this distribution, at least synchronically.

In fact, setting aside *-T*, the use of *hli* itself on nominals is not always easy to assimilate to the idea of inalienable/alienated possession. It is unclear, for example, whether wishes can be thought of as inalienable or alienated, yet in (10), they are introduced by *hli*:

(10) Ii luu+wil-txw **hla** **k'oo'm-sxw**=s Wiladoo.
CCNJ in+be/do-VAL **HLI** **wish-ANTIP[-3.II]**=PN Wiladoo
'Wiladoo's curse came true.' (VG; *Wiixagwaashlaam*)

The converse is also true: *hli* is not obligatory with inalienable possession, either in Gitksan or Nisga'a. In the following example, given in both Nisga'a and Gitksan, the head of a cat is clearly inalienable, yet *hli* is not present on the possessive NP.

(11) a. Sim+anoog-a=hl duus-i'y daa hlaa na=gap~gaap=hl
really+like-TR[-3.II]=CN cat-1SG.II SPT INCEP 1SG.I=PL~scratch[-3.II]=CN
t'imges-t.
head-3.II
'My cat really likes it when I scratch its head.' (Nisga'a: Tarpent 1987:168)

b. Aanoog-a=hl duus-i'y win=in gaap=hl **t'imges-t**.
like-TR[-3.II]=CN cat-1SG.II COMP=1SG.I scratch[-3.II]=CN **head-3.II**
'My cat really likes it when I scratch its head.' (VG)

It appears the best we can say is that in possessive contexts *hli* is broadly partitive in meaning, with many *hli*-possessed NP combinations lexicalized, either with or without *-T*.

2.2 *Hli* on locative nouns

As an extension of its use with possessed nouns, *hli* is employed widely in both Nisga'a and Gitksan to introduce *locative nouns* such as 'the inside (of)', 'the edge (of)', 'the bottom (of)', 'the top (of)'. In this construction, the possessor denotes an entity, and the head noun a location on that entity. Examples are given in (12)–(15):

(12) **hli** **ts'ee'w**=hl ts'i[m]+muw-i'y
HLI **inside[-3.II]**=CN in+mouth-1SG.II
'the inside of my mouth' (Rigsby 1986:400)

(13) **hli** **ts'ee'w-i**=hl wilp
HLI **inside-T[-3.II]**=CN house
'the inside of the house' (Nisg̲a'a: Tarpent 1987:241)

(14) Hlimoo'l-txw=hl **hli** **ts'ee'w-i**=hl g̲ald-im si-mihl-a'a,
wrap-VAL[-3.II]=CN **HLI** **inside-T[-3.II]**=CN container-ATTR CAUS1-burn-DETR
sgen-di=hl aloohl sginist.
pitch-T[-3.II]=CN INTJ pine
'The inside of the torch was wrapped (with) pine tree pitch.' (VG: *Volcano*)

(15) Ii masxw=hl **hla** **g̲a-daax-t**.
CCNJ red[-3.II]=CN **HLI** **DIST-outer.surface-3.II**
'And it's red around the edges.' (BS; *Button Blanket*)

(16) Ii t̲xalp̲x g̲abi=hl hu~wilp, wiit'a̲x hu~wilp, ii=t
CCNJ four[-3.II=CN] how.many[-3.II]=CN PL~house PL.big PL~house CCNJ=3.I
jap-diit=hl gahl g̲an het-xw-it g̲oo=hl
make-3PL.II=CN carve pole[=CN] stand-VAL-SX LOC[-3.II]=CN
hla-g̲oo̲k=hl mahla k'i'y=hl hu~wilp.
HLI-in.front[-3.II]=CN each one=CN PL~house
'And there were four houses, big houses, and they made totem poles which stood in front of each house.' (BS: *Ansbayaxw*)

Notice that *-T* is absent on *ts'ee'w* 'inside' in (12) but present in (13) and (14): as with possessive nouns, there is no obvious semantic difference between these cases, suggesting either dialectal, idiolectal, or free variation.[8]

2.3 *Hli* on quantifiers

Probably also related to its broadly partitive function, we find *hli* on a number of quantification elements in both Nisg̲a'a and Gitksan, including at least the following: ***hli****buu(t)*~***hle****buu(t)* '(a) few (of)', ***hla****g̲ats'uu(t)*~***hla****g̲ats'oo(t)* 'some (of), others (of)', ***hli*** *sdo'o(t)* 'half (of)…', ***hla*** *k̲'ap(t)* 'part of…', ***hli*** *k'i'y(t),* ***hli*** *ky'ul((i)(t))* 'one of…'.[9] In the first two cases, *hli* is fused to the stem,

[8] Clarissa Forbes (p.c. 2021) raises an important point with respect to *tsee'w*: namely, that following a glottalized sonorant and preceding an obstruent, schwa is often epenthesized even when it does not represent an underlying segment. This means that the presence of *-T* in (12)-(14) may be independently difficult or impossible to detect.

[9] *K'i'y* is used for non-humans, *k'yul* for humans.

but in the others, *hli* is detachable and the stem appears as an independent word.[10] Examples are given in (17)–(21):

(17) Anoog-a-'y[=hl] kshla'wxws dipun ii na=dok=hl **hlibuu-t**.
like-TR-1SG.II[=CN] shirt PL.PROX.DEM CCNJ 1SG.I=PL.hold=CN **few-3.II**
'Those shirts were good so I bought a few (of them).' (VG: Bicevskis et al. 2017:315)

(18) Nee dii=t wilaax[=hl] **hla-ga-ts'uu=hl** **jayn** win
NEG FOC=3.I know[-3.II][=CN] **HLI-DIST-other[-3.II]**=CN **Chinese** COMP
lok'on t'i+gwen-txw **hli** **ky'ul-diit**
into.water/fire sharply.down+fall-VAL[-3.II=CN] **HLI** **one.HUM-3PL.II**
go'o=hl ts'im+'aks.
LOC[-3.II]=CN in+water
'The other Chinese didn't know one of them fell into the water.' (VG; *Origin of Words*)

(19) Dim gub-i=lh tk'ihlxw-um ii'uxwt **hli** **sdo'o=hl** ***cake***,
PROSP eat-TR[-3.II]=CN young-ATTR men **HLI** **half[-3.II]=CN** **cake**
ii dim=t gup=hl tk'ihlxw-um haanak' **hli** **sdo'o-t**.
CCNJ PROSP=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN young-ATTR women **HLI** **half-3.II**
'The young men will eat half the cake, and the young women will eat half of it.'
(VG: Bicevskis et al. 2017:322)

(20) Ii 'nit=hl **hla** **k'ap=hl** laxyip=hl Lax+Gibuu=hl
CCNJ 3.III=CN **HLI** **part[-3.II]=CN** territory[-3.II]=CN Wolf.Clan=CN
an-sdo'o=hl Ksi+Txemsim, ii wagayt 'wudin
NMLZ-half[-3.II]=CN River+Nass CCNJ all.the.way forward
daa'whl-t go'o=hl T'ah-am Meji'aadin.
leave-3.II LOC[-3.II]=CN lake-ATTR Meji'aadin
'This is part of the Wolf Clan territories, which includes half of the Nass River, and continues all the way along the river to Meji'aadin Lake.' (VG: *Founding of Gitanyaaw*)

(21) Bagadil=hl k'uba+tk'ihlxw-um ha'nak' ii daa'w=hl **hli**
two.HUM=CN PL.small+young-ATTR PL.woman CCNJ leave[-3.II]=CN **HLI**
ky'ul-i-t ii gina+t'aa=hl **hli** **ky'ul-i-t**.
one.HUM-T-3.II CCNJ behind+sit[-3.II]=CN **HLI** **one.HUM-T-3.II**
'There were two girls. One of them left and one of them stayed.'
(BS: Bicevskis et al. 2017:324)

[10] Tarpent (1987:563) reports that in Nisga'a, the element *ts'uu*, as found in *hlagats'uu* 'others', is used to form ordinal numbers: thus *ts'uu-bagadil* means 'second (human)', and *ts'uu-gwilan* means 'third (animal)'. Michael Schwan (p.c. 2021) points out that this is also possible in Gitksan.

As with possessed nominals, *-T* appears on quantificational elements introduced by *hli*, particularly with the numeral 'one', as in (21) above.[11] However, it is not always present in this environment, as can be seen in (22)–(23) below; note that (23) is from the same speaker as (21).

(22) Huxw nde win hlaa huxw beligi kw'oot-xw **hli ky'ul-t**
again WH COMP INCEP again suddenly lost-VAL[=CN] **HLI one.HUM-3.II**
ii=t huxw gidax̲-diit=g̲at=hl miin-diit…
CCNJ=3.I again ask-3PL.II=REPORT=CN boss-3PL.II
'Whenever one of them was unexpectedly absent they apparently asked their boss…'
(VG: *Origin of Words*)

(23) N=ii 'wa=hl wilp=s nibib-iy, ii bax̲+yee-'y
1SG.I=CCNJ find[-3.II]=CN house[-3.II]=PN uncle-1SG.II CCNJ uphill+go-1SG.II
g̲oo=hl hlgu+k̲'elt n=ii 'wa=hl wilp=hl
LOC[-3.II]=CN small+hill 1SG.I=CCNJ find[-3.II]=CN house[-3.II]=CN
hli ky'ul=hl nibib-i'y.
HLI one.HUM[-3.II]=CN uncle-1SG.II
'And I came upon my uncle's house, and I walked up the hill and came to my other uncle's house.' (BS: *Gitxsan Barbie*)

There does not appear to be any significant semantic difference between cases with and without *-T*. In fact, for VG, *ky'ulit* is simply ungrammatical, and *hli* itself appears to be optional with *k'i'y/k'yul*, as shown in (24) below (cf. (21)).

(24) Daa'w=hl ky'ul=hl tk'ihlxw-um hanak̲' ii gina+wil=hl
leave=CN one.HUM[-3.II]=CN young-ATTR woman CCNJ behind+be/do[-3.II]=CN
(hli) ky'ul-t.
(HLI) one.HUM-3.II
'One girl left and one stayed.' (VG: based on Bicevskis et al. 2017:324)

More investigation is needed here; however, provisionally it appears that the use of *-T* on quantificational elements with *hli* is often lexicalized and does not appear (at least synchronically) to have a consistent semantic effect.

2.4 *Hli* in event nominalizations

Still in the nominal domain, but less obviously related to the first three uses, Tarpent (1987:192, 242) documents a construction in Nisga'a where *hli* + *-T* can be applied to a verb phrase to produce an event nominalization.

[11] An alternative analysis, suggested by Clarissa Forbes (p.c. 2021) is that the ending in *hli k'yul-it* is actually the intransitive subject extraction marker (SX) *-it* rather than *-T (-i)* plus the third person Series II possessive *-t*, in which case the examples of *hli ky'ulit* in (21) have the status of relative clauses, perhaps with an elided NP head.

(25) **hli** ‘nii-t’aat-gw-**i**=hl gyuwadan
HLI on-sit-VAL-**T[-3.II]**=CN horse
‘the riding of a horse’ (Nisga’a: Tarpent 1987:242)

(26) **hli** yee-**di**=hl limx
HLI perform-**T[-3.II]**=CN song
‘the singing of a song’ (Nisga’a: Tarpent 1987:243)

Attempts to replicate this construction in Gitksan have met with mixed success. VG, whose dialect is closest to Nisg̲a’a of the speakers we work with, does appear to at least recognize it, as evidenced by the three-way contrast in (27) below. VG accepted the first example in (a) together with its translation as an event nominal, and then volunteered the two other examples, which involve relativization as opposed to nominalization with *hli*, and crucially lack *-T*.

(27) a. Am **hli** t’am-**di**=hl sim+’algax̲.
good **HLI** mark-**T[-3.II]**=CN true+language
‘The writing of Sm’algyax̲ is good.’
Consultant’s comment: “That’s right.”

b. **Hli** ent t’am=hl sim+’algax̲ am-it.
HLI AX=3.I mark**[-3.II]**=CN true+language good-SX
‘The one who wrote Sm’algyax̲ was good.’ (VG)

c. Am **hli** t’am-i=s Michael.
good **HLI** mark-TR**[-3.II]**=PN Michael
‘What Michael wrote is good.’ (VG)

However, we have never recorded this construction being produced spontaneously in Gitksan, and even VG does not always recognize it, as evidenced by our attempt to replicate Tarpent (1987)’s example in (25) above. His comments on (28a) below indicate he has difficulty processing *-T*, probably because he is attempting to interpret the sentence as containing an object relative clause rather than a nominalization. His volunteered alternative in (28b) employs an ordinary subordinate clause (i.e., ‘I saw (that) Michael rode’ as opposed to ‘I saw Michael’s riding.’).

(28) a. * Ga’-a-’y **hli** mak̲-xw-**di**=s Michael.
see-TR-1SG.II **HLI** ride-VAL-**T[-3.II]**=PN Michael
Consultant’s comment: “Hmm…It’s used somewhere, but… *dis* is what’s throwing me: ‘I saw what it was that Michael was riding’, I guess.” (VG)

b. Ga’-a-’y mak̲-xw=s Michael.
see-TR-1SG.II ride-VAL[-3.II]=PN Michael
‘I saw Michael riding.’ (VG)

2.5 *Hli* in counterfactuals

We now turn to cases where *hli* acts as a clausal subordinator. Tarpent (1987) treats subordinating *hli* as a different, homophonous particle to nominal *hli*; this seems reasonable, though not entirely satisfying.

The first case of subordinating *hli* is found in counterfactual clauses, as discussed by Tarpent (1987:416) for Nisga'a. Here, *hli* occurs in combination with the prospective aspect marker *dim* in independent clauses (29a), and with *dim* and the irrealis particle *ji* in dependent (counterfactual conditional) clauses (29b).

(29) a. **Hli** dim giigw-i-'y.
HLI PROSP buy-TR-1SG.II
'I was going to buy it.' / 'I would have bought it.'

b. Ji **hli** taala-'y, **hli** dim ii ni=giikw-t.
IRR **HLI** money-1SG.II **HLI** PROSP CCNJ 1SG.I=buy-3.II
'If I had had money, I would have bought it.' (Nisga'a: Tarpent 1987:417)

Counterfactuals with *hli* have not previously been recorded in Gitksan; however, preliminary investigation indicates that the construction is present in VG's grammar:

(30) *Context: you were buying shirts: you saw a nice blue one, but it was too expensive*
a. **Hli** dim giigw-i-'y.
HLI PROSP buy-TR-1SG.II
'I was going to buy it.' (VG)

b. Dim giigwi'y ji **hli** daala-'y.
PROSP buy-TR-1SG.II IRR **HLI** money-1SG.II
'I would buy it if I had money.' (VG)

2.6 *Hli* on temporal adjuncts

Hli also forms a component of at least two temporal subordinators. The first, ***hli****daa* '(at the time) when', consists of *hli* plus the 'spatio-temporal' particle *daa*, though it seems to act synchronically as a fixed expression. It is found in both Nisga'a and Gitksan.

(31) Hlaa xbi'l=hl k'uuhl **hli**-daa 'nu'w-t.
INCEP ten[-3.II]=CN year **HLI**-SPT die-3II
'It's been ten years since she died.' (Nisga'a: Tarpent 1987:474)

(32) 'Nakw **hli**-daa wil an-[h]ee-'y=sa, 'nakw.
long **HLI**-SPT be/do NMLZ-say-1SG.II=PROX long
'What I'm talking about happened a long time ago, a long time ago.' (BS; *Big Snake*)

In addition, in Gitksan, the locative noun *gook* 'the front (of)' (cf. (16) above) combines with *hli* to create the temporal subordinator 'before':

(33) Ii **hla-**g̲oo**k̲** dim bekw=hl an-wo'o-txw=gi ii
CCNJ **HLI-**in.front PROSP arrive.PL[-3.II]=CN NMLZ-invite-VAL=PR.EV CCNJ
sim+luu+wila jiip=hl lo'op tun=si.
true+in+MANR vanish[-3.II]=CN rock that=PROX
'Before the guests arrived it's as if the boulder disappeared.' (VG: *Raven's Nest*)

2.7 Arbitrary *hli*

One of our Gitksan consultants, HH, uses *hli* in a unique construction which we have not encountered elsewhere, and which appears roughly equivalent to infinitival clauses with PRO_{ARB} in English.

(34) Nee dii am **hli**=t yim-t.
NEG FOC good[-3.II] **HLI**=3.I smell-3.II
'It wasn't good to smell it.' (HH; *Jayeehlim*)

(35) a. Am **hle**=t gya'a-n.
good **HLI**=3.I see-2SG.II
'It's good to see you.' (HH)

b. * Am **hle**=n gya'a-n.
good **HLI**=1SG.I see-2SG.II
(*Intended meaning*: 'It's good that I see you/for me to see you.')

The third person Series I enclitic *=t* in these cases cannot be replaced by a first- or second-person enclitic, as shown in (35b): the subject therefore appears to be genuinely arbitrary/generic. More investigation is needed.

2.8 Relative clauses with *hli wil*

We now turn to relativizing uses of *hli*. For the purposes of exposition, we distinguish here between argument and non-argument relatives. The former are discussed in Section 2.10 and more extensively in Section 3, but the latter are actually more common in the Gitksan texts we have recorded, and form the subject matter of the next two subsections.

One type of adjunct relative features the combination *hli wil*, the latter element being the standard complementizer used to introduce a variety of subordinate clauses throughout Tsimshianic. In both Gitksan and Nisg̲a'a, *hli wil* is used to introduce locative relative clauses; for VG, these are headed by the locative noun *go'o*, which is otherwise used mainly in a prepositional function (cf. (18) above).

(36) Gina+g̲abi-txw **hla go'o wil** wo**k̲**'-asxw-dix.
behind+apparent-VAL **HLI LOC COMP** dig-ANTIP-IMPS
'(The place) where the digging was is still visible.' (VG; *Wiixagwaashlaam*)

Tarpent (1987) identifies a parallel construction in Nisg̲a'a, but without *go'o* (which is only used as a verb in Nisg̲a'a).

(37) Huxw ‘wa-diit[=hl] **hli** **wil** wi[l]=hl wak-t=gi.
again find-3PL.II[=CN] **HLI** **COMP** be/do[-3.II]=CN older.brother-3.II=PR.EV
‘Again they reached (the place) where his brother had been.’
(Nisga’a; Tarpent 1987:473, citing Boas 1902)

Tarpent also claims that *hli wil* is obligatory in Nisga’a for headless relative clauses with an adjectival predicate:

(38) Anoog-a-’y=hl **hli** ***(wil)** gwisgwooskw-t.
like-TRA-1SG.II=CN **HLI** ***(COMP)** blue-3.II
‘I like the blue one.’ (Nisga’a; Tarpent 1987:474)

We have checked this structure with one Gitksan speaker (VG), who volunteered the equivalent to (38) without *hli* or *wil* (39a), accepted it with *hli* (39b), but rejected it with *hli wil* (39c).

(39) *Context: Buying shirts.*

a. Hasag-a’y=hl xs-lax[h]a-txw-it.
want-1SG.II=CN colour-sky-VAL-SX
‘I want the blue one.’ (VG)

b. Hasag-a’y=hl **hli** xs-lax[h]a-txw-it.
Want-1SG.II=CN **HLI** colour-sky-VAL-SX
‘I want the blue one.’
Consultant (VG)’s comment: “Yes, you can do that, too.”

c. * Hasag-a’y=hl **hli** **wil** xs-lax[h]a-txw-it.
want-1SG.II=CN **HLI** **COMP** colour-sky-VAL-SX
Consultant (VG)’s comment: “Couldn’t use *wil*, no.”

2.9 *Hli* in amount/degree relatives

A second type of non-argument relative clause appears in Gitksan as the complement to *gasgoo* ‘how much, so much’:

(40) Hats’im ligi kw’ihl wilxs-in=s k’inaa=hl gan~gan
just INDEF around go-CAUS[-3.II]=PN so-and-so=CN PL~tree
gasgoo=hl **hli**=t an wilaax=hl yal.
how.much=CN **HLI**=3.I AX know[-3.II]=CN lie
‘So-and-so could just about make trees walk, the amount of lies s/he knows.’
(Rigsby 1986:418)

(41) Gasgoo=hl **hli** ‘wii+t’is=hl t’a’wihlgan tun=si.
how.much=CN **HLI** big+large[-3.II]=CN grubworm PROX.DEM=PROX
‘This boy (the grubworm) grew to be of giant stature.’ (More literally: ‘How much was the amount to which this grubworm was big!’) (VG; *Wiixagwaashlaam*)

These examples appear to correspond to amount relatives, with abstraction over a degree or quantity rather than an argument.[12]

2.10 Argument relativizaton with *hli*

We now turn to relativization of arguments with *hli*. Rigsby (1986), the first to discuss relativization in Gitksan, provides the following remarks:

> I have twice elicited object relative constructions, but I don't recall having come across them in texts or discourse. In 1968, I recorded an isolated phrase smax **hli**giigwi'y /smax **łə**-ki:kʷ-əy̓ /, which my consultant translated as 'the meat l bought', and in 1969, I elicited a series of sentences with object relatives from an older western Gitksan man during a field methods course. (Rigsby 1986:471)

One of the object relatives Rigsby elicited is given in (42).

(42) mahl-d-i-'y loo-dit dim guw-i=s John=hl smax **hli**
tell-T-TR-1SG.II OBL-3PL.II PROSP shoot-TR[-3II]=PN John=CN bear **HLI**
ga'-a-n.[13]
see-TR-2SG.II
'I told them John would shoot the bear you saw.' (Rigsby 1986:471)

Further examples of object-relativizing *hli* appear sporadically in the literature on Gitksan: the following is from Hunt (1993), featuring an extraposed object relative.

(43) T'imis=hl k'ay ' mas-im hanak' loo-'y **hli** yeexs-d-i-'y
write=CN still grow-ATTR woman OBL-1SG.II **HLI** visit-T-TR-1SG.II
go'o=hl Terrace.
at=CN Terrace
'The young woman wrote to me whom I visited in Terrace.' (Hunt 1993:61)

Though neither Rigsby (1986) nor Hunt (1993) give examples of subject relatives, Davis and Brown (2011) show that they are equally possible for speakers who allow *hli*-relatives; the example below involves relativization of a transitive subject:

(44) Guw-i=s John=hl smax **hla** an=t jagw-i=s Bill.
shoot-TR[-3II]=PN John=CN bear **HLI** AX=3.I kill-T[-3.II]=PN Bill
'John shot the bear that killed Bill.' (Davis & Brown 2011:72)

While, as observed by Rigsby (1986), relativization with *hli* seems to be more commonly used by western/downriver (*geets*) speakers, eastern/upriver (*gigeenix*) speakers do occasionally employ them, as in the following textual example from BS, who is originally from Ansbayaxw (Kispiox):

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[12] Tarpent (1987:751) gives similar structures in Nisga'a with both *gasgoo* and *gabi* 'how many', but without *hli.*

[13] The transitivizing schwa (*-i*) in *guw-i=s* is odd (it is in a dependent clause, where it should be absent). It is just possible that this is a direct speech report, i.e., "I told them: 'John will shoot the bear you saw'": however, in that case the object pronoun in the second clause should be 2PL rather than 2SG.

(45) Ii ‘widin+wax-t loo-t ii=t ga’a[-t] wil hlgu+t’ihlxw
CCNJ towards+paddle-3.II OBL-3.II CCNJ=3.I see[-3.II] COMP small+child
hli hee-t.
HLI make.noise-SX
‘And he paddled towards it and saw that it was a small child that was making the noise.’
(BS: *Birth of ‘Wiigat*)

As documented by Tarpent (1987), argument relatives with *hli* are also attested in Nisga’a: examples are given in (46)–(47), featuring a headless transitive subject relative and object relative, respectively.

(46) Wilaay-i-n **hli**=t an guuhl hlguhlgw-in=a?
know-TR-2SG.II **HLI**=3.1 AX take[-3II]=CN child-2SG.II=YNQ
‘Do you know who took the child?’ (Nisga’a; Tarpent 1987:473)

(47) Luu+yuxgw-i-t=hl **hli** yuxgw-i=hl hu~wak-kw-t.
in+follow-TR-3SG **HLI** follow-TR[-3II]=CN PL~older.brother-POSS-3.II
‘He followed what (the route) his brothers had followed.’
(Tarpent 1987:263, citing Boas 1902)

2.11 Interim summary

The picture that emerges from our overview of *hli* is complex and variable. Of the three types of *hli* covered in our survey, it appears that nominal *hli* is neither fully productive nor compositional in Gitksan. In particular, we failed to replicate the semantic contrasts reported by Tarpent (1987) for *hli* on possessed nominals with and without *-T* (Sections 2.1–2.2), and obtained at best mixed results for event nominalization (Section 2.4). In addition, we noted that *hli* (with or without *-T*) has become lexicalized with some common possessed nominals, as well as on many quantificational elements (Section 2.3).

The same is partially true for subordinating *hli*. Elements such as *hlidaa* ‘(the time) when’ (Sections 2.5) seem to be fully lexicalized, though we have identified at least two subordinating environments — neither of them recorded before for Gitksan — where *hli* behaves independently: in conditionals (Sections 2.6) and — for one speaker only — in arbitrary/generic contexts.

This leaves relativizing *hli*. Here, for speakers who use it (and not all do), *hli* is fully productive, both in adjunct and argument uses. Setting aside adjunct uses, at this point we change course, focusing in detail on the use of *hli* in argument relatives.

3 A closer look at argument relativization with *hli*

Data in the following sections are largely taken from our own recent fieldwork with two speakers from the western half of the Gitksan dialect continuum, VG and HH. However, it turns out that only one of them (VG, from Gitanyaaw) uses *hli* in argument relative clauses. In contrast, HH, from Gijigyukwhla, does not even recognize *hli* relatives: when presented with relevant examples, he systematically reinterprets *hli* as the inceptive aspect marker *hlaa*. Consider the following sequence:

(48) a. Guxw-i=s John=hl smex=hl ga'-a-n.
shoot-TR[-3II]=PN John=CN bear=CN see-TR-2SG.II
'John shot the bear you see.' *(consultant's translation)*

b. Guxw-i=s John=hl smex[=hl] **hla** ga'-a-n.
shoot-TR[-3II]=PN John=CN bear[=CN] **HLI** see-TR-2SG.II
'You are about to see the bear John shot.' *(consultant's translation)*
Consultant's comment: "Some people say *hlaa dim ga'an* for 'about to see'."

It seems clear both from HH's translation for (48b) and his follow-up comment that he is hearing *hlaa* rather than *hla* (i.e., *hli*) in this example.

Accordingly, from now on we focus on VG's use of *hli* in relativization structures, which it turns out is both highly productive and provides important insight into the structure of relative clauses and A'-movement in Gitksan more generally.

3.1 Two types of *hli*

We begin with a somewhat surprising finding. Since Rigsby (1986), it has been assumed that *hli* and *hla* (*hle* in western dialects) are allophonic variants of a single morpheme. VG, however, treats them as syntactically distinct, based on the phonological differentiation of the vowel. Consider the examples in (49), which come from the same elicitation session:

(49) a. Hun=hl gub-i=hl log-om 'wii+get.
fish=CN eat-TR[-3.II]=CN decayed-ATTR big+man
'It's fish the old man ate.'

b. hun[=hl] **hli** gub-i=hl log-om 'wii+get[14]
fish[=CN] **HLI** eat-TR[-3.II]=CN decayed-ATTR big+man
'the fish the old man ate'
Consultant's comment: "Yeah, that's a phrase."

c. Hun[=hl] **hle** gub-i=hl log-om 'wii+get.
fish[=CN] **HLE** eat-TR[-3.II]=CN decayed-ATTR big+man
'It was fish the old man ate.'
Consultant's comment: "That's a sentence." (VG)

VG's comments show that he treats *hli* and *hle* as syntactically distinct. In (49b), *hli* acts as a relativizer which turns the sentence in (49a) into a noun phrase, whereas in (49c) *hle* merely marks a fronted object, without affecting the sentential status of the base structure.

On other occasions, however, VG switches the roles of *hle* and *hli*, such that *hli* serves to mark a fronted argument, while *hle* acts as a relativizer:

[14] The use of the connective *=hl* before *hli* is highly variable. We have yet not undertaken a systematic investigation as to whether it is always underlyingly present but phonologically deleted, or simply optional. For present purposes, we treat it as present but optionally deleted.

(50) a. log-om ‘wii+get **hle** ‘witxw-it
decayed-ATTR big+man[=CN] **HLE** come-SX
‘the old man who came’
Consultant (VG)’s comment: “Seems to be a phrase.”

b. Siipxw=hl log-om ‘wii+get[=hl] **hle** ‘witxw-it.
sick=CN decayed-ATTR big+man[=CN] **HLE** come-SX
‘The sick old man was the one who came.’ (*consultant (VG)’s translation*)

c. log-om ‘wii+get[=hl] **hli** bax-at.
decayed-ATTR big+man[=CN] **HLI** run-SX
‘It was an old man who ran.’

The example in (50a) is structurally parallel to that in (49b): *hle* is treated as a relativizer, and therefore yields a phrasal interpretation (as confirmed by (50b), where the relative clause is embedded in a sentential context). On the other hand, the structure of (50c) is parallel to that of (49c): *hli* marks a fronted argument, and the resulting structure is a sentence, not a noun phrase.

While the examples in (49) and (50) are clearly inconsistent, they are not randomly so. VG alternates between phases where *hle* marks a fronted DP and *hli* marks a relative clause, and phases where the exact opposite is true: however, *within* any given phase he systematically discriminates between the two. We interpret this pattern as follows: at the syntactic level there are two types of *hli*, but this distinction is not realized consistently in the phonology, because *hli* and *hle* are indeed just allophonic variants. VG therefore consistently makes a syntactic distinction by creating a temporary (and fluctuating) phonological contrast.

3.2 Focusing *hli*

The data in (49)–(50) suggest that we must draw a distinction between *relativizing hli*, as exemplified in (49b) and (50a,b) and what we will call *focusing hli*, as exemplified in (49c) and (50c). With regards to the latter label, though it is not clear that all cases of DP fronting involve focus, it does seem to be the case that all focused DPs are fronted; furthermore, as we shall see, *‘nit* clefts, which are canonical focus structures, also take focusing *hli*. We will henceforth notate focusing *hli* as hli_{foc} and relativizing *hli* as hli_{rel}, ignoring the surface value of the vowel.

So far, we have referred to *hli* simply as a ‘particle’, but it is now time to consider its syntax more closely, beginning with hli_{foc}. There are two potential analyses for the structure of sentences such as those in (49c) and (50c). The first, referred to as the *direct movement* account by Davis and Brown (2011), involves A’-movement of a DP constituent to an initial position preceding *hli*. The second, referred to by Davis and Brown as the *indirect movement* account, involves a pseudo-cleft-like structure: an NP predicate is base-generated in initial position, with its argument consisting of a headless relative clause introduced by *hli*. For an example like (49c), repeated as (51a) below, these two candidate structures are schematized in (51b) and (51c), respectively. (We represent the relativization operation in (c) via movement of an empty operator O_{rel}, which can be thought of as the covert counterpart of a relative pronoun).

(51) a. Hun **hle** gub-i=hl log-om ‘wii+get.
fish $\mathbf{HLI}_{\mathbf{FOC}}$ eat-TR[-3.II]=CN decayed-ATTR big+man
‘It was fish the old man ate.’

b. *Direct movement*

[	**hun**	[**hle**	[	gubihl logom ‘wii get	___	]]]
[$_{CP}$	**DP**	[**C**	[$_{IP}$		~~**DP**~~	]]]

c. *Indirect movement*

[	**hun**	[	___	[	___	[**hle**	[	gubihl logom ‘wii get	___]]]]]
[$_{IP}$	**NP**	[$_{DP}$ *pro*		[$_{CP}$	~~**O**$_{rel}$~~	[**C**	[$_{IP}$		~~**O**$_{rel}$~~]]]]]

An initial consideration in favour of the direct movement account is that it allows us to distinguish straightforwardly between *hli$_{foc}$* and *hli$_{rel}$*, unlike the indirect movement account, where both *hli$_{foc}$* and *hli$_{rel}$* introduce a relative clause. Davis and Brown (2011) give a number of additional arguments for direct A’-movement in cases of focus fronting, of which perhaps the most straightforward is that the initial position in focusing structures can be occupied by elements (proper names and Series III pronouns) which cannot be predicative, and therefore must be fronted arguments. This is equally true of focus movement structures with *hli:*

(52) [Dip John gan=s Sander] **hle** en=t gup=hl hun.
ASSOC John PCNJ[-3.II]=PN Sander **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I eat=CN fish
‘John and Sander ate the fish.’ (VG)

In addition to a fronted (conjoined) proper name, this example contains the associative marker *dip*, which forms part of the connective system, and therefore marks arguments, never predicates.[15]

We conclude that focus fronting involves direct movement. It remains, however, an open question as to why the indirect movement structure in (51c) is ruled out, or at least over-ruled by direct movement, given that both its components (headless relative clauses with *hli* and nominal predicates) are independently possible. Headless relatives introduced by *hli* are common — in fact, they constitute the most frequently attested type of *hli*-relative in textual material:

(53) Ii=t luu+si-tyeexw-i=hl Gitanyaaw **hli** **wa-diit**
CCNJ in+CAUS1-change-T[-3.II]=CN Gitanyaaw **HLI$_{REL}$** **name-3PL.II**
hligook=gi a=hl Gitwinhlguu’l…
before=PR.EV OBL[-3.II]=CN Gitwinhlguu’l
‘It was then that what they had previously named Gitanyaaw was changed to Gitwinhlguu’l…’
(*More literally*: ‘Then Gitanyaaw changed what they called it previously to Gitwinhlguu’l…’)
(VG: *War with the Jits’aawit*)

Nominal predicates are also certainly possible in both Gitksan and Nisga’a (see Rigsby 1986:257; Tarpent 1987:248; Davis and Brown 2011:55). However, it is worth observing that

[15] *Dip* is particularly useful in this regard because unlike the common noun connective *=hl*, it does not automatically drop in initial position. This is probably because *=hl* is strongly enclitic and deletes unless it can find a host to its left, whereas *dip* is prosodically independent. The proper noun connective *t* is intermediate in this respect: though it is a clitic, it is “bi-directional”, meaning it can procliticize as well as encliticize to a host. For some (more conservative) speakers such as BS, this allows it to surface on fronted DPs.

nearly all unambiguous examples of nominal predication are "asymmetrical": that is, they consist of cases where a noun is the only possible predicate because the subject is a proper noun (54a) or a (Series III) independent pronoun (55a), neither of which can be predicative, as shown in (54b) and (55b), respectively. (The only exception is where there are two common nouns, in which case either one can act as the predicate (56)).

(54) a. Si'moogit t Cathy.
chief PN Cathy
'Cathy is a chief.'

b. * Cathy=hl si'moogit.
Cathy=CN chief

(55) a. Si'moogit 'nid=ist.
chief 3SG.III=AFF
'S/he is a chief.'

b. * 'Nit=hl si'moogid=ist.
3SG.III=CN chief=AFF (Davis & Brown 2011:55)

(56) a. Hlgu+tk'ihlxw=hl gat.
small+child=CN male
'The boy is a child.'

b. Gat=hl hlgu+tk'ihlxw.
male=CN small+child
'The child is a boy.' (Rigsby 1986:284)

It seems possible, therefore, that nominal predication in IT is more restricted than previously thought, with direct movement taking precedence over indirect movement whenever possible. If true, this is an interesting finding, because it contrasts quite sharply with the situation elsewhere in the NW *Sprachbund*, where "predicate-argument flexibility" (the ability of open-class lexical items to switch freely between predicate and argument) is a well-established phenomenon in, e.g., Salish and Wakashan languages (see Davis et al. 2014 for discussion).

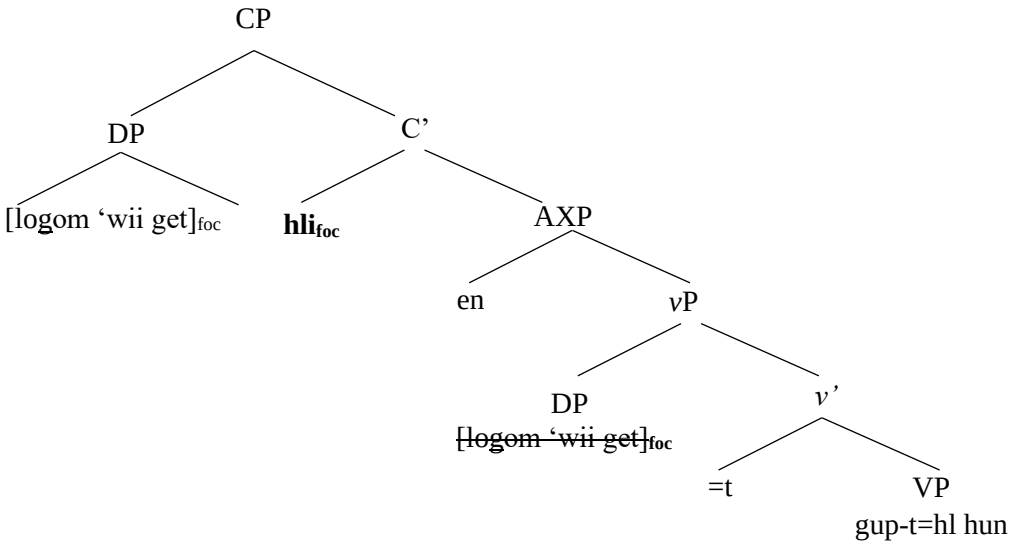
Returning to the role of hli_{foc} in the direct movement analysis of focus fronting, we assume that the fronted constituent moves to a left peripheral A'-position which we provisionally identify here as [Spec, C], without undertaking a more fine-grained investigation of functional heads in the left periphery.[16] We further identify hli_{foc} as the C head of this projection. In order to distinguish hli_{foc} from hli_{rel}, we assume that 'flavours' of C are endowed with unvalued syntactic features: thus, hli_{foc} acts as a probe for an agreeing DP with a matching focus feature, which moves to [Spec, C] to value the unvalued focus feature on C_{foc}. For a sentence such as (57a), which involves direct A'-

[16] This is certainly an over-simplification. A more plausible hypothesis is that hli_{foc} occupies one of the 'split CP' positions advocated by Rizzi (1997) — the most obvious one being the head of FocP. We do not make this move here because of our uncertainty about the semantic status of fronted DPs, which may not all be focused: we do not want to make a syntactic diacritic stand in for a semantic analysis.

movement of a transitive subject, we therefore propose the (somewhat simplified) structure in (57b).

(57) a. [log-om 'wii+get] [**hli** [en=[t gup=hl hun.]]]
decayed-ATTR big+man **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I eat[-3II]=CN fish
'It was an old man who ate (the) fish.'[17]

b.



3.3 Relativizing *hli*

We now turn to the role of *hli$_{rel}$*. We begin by outlining two possible analyses. In the first, *hli$_{rel}$* is a *relative complementizer* (and thus parallel to *hli$_{foc}$*); in the second, it is a *relative pronoun*, moving from an argument position to [Spec, C] in the same way as a WH-pronoun in English relative clauses. These two possibilities are schematized in (58b) and (58c) for the example in (49b), repeated below as (58a).

(58) a. hun **hli** gub-i=hl log-om 'wii+get
fish **HLI** eat-TR[-3.II]=CN decayed-ATTR big+man
'the fish the old man ate'

b. [hun [___ [**hli** [gubihl logom 'wii get ____]]]]
[NP NP [CP **O$_{rel}$** [**HLI$_{rel}$** [IP ~~**O$_{rel}$**~~]]]]

[17] We have dubbed the projection hosting the A'-extraction marker *an~en* AXP here for convenience. Though it clearly sits lower in the tree than *hli* and WH-pronouns and above the *v*P, we do not know whether it forms the lower part of the left periphery or the upper part of the verbal complex, and set the issue aside here.

c. [hun [**hli** [[gubihl logom ‘wii get ____]]]]
[NP NP [CP **HLI$_{rel}$** [[IP ~~**HLI$_{rel}$**~~]]]]

These competing hypotheses are testable. As documented in Davis and Brown (2011) and Davis (2011), Gitksan, like English, has overt WH-relative pronouns, homophonous with WH-question words. These are most prominent in eastern (*gigeenix*) dialects, where they surface in headed as well as free relative clauses:

(59) a. Ixsta=hl [suusiit=hl [**agwi**=hl gub-i=s John]].
tasty=CN potato=CN **what**=CN eat-TR[-3.II]=PN John
‘The potato John ate was tasty.’

b. Wilaay-i-n=hl [gat [**naa**=hl lim-id]]=a?
know-TR-2SG.II=CN man **who**=CN sing-SX=YNQ
‘Do you know the man who sang?’

c. Ga’-a-’y=hl [gat [**naa** an=t gup=hl suusiit]].
see-TR-1SG.II=CN man **who** AX=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN potato
‘I saw the man that ate the potato.’ (Davis 2011)

Speakers of western dialects are less tolerant of overt WH-relative pronouns in headed relative clauses, but often prefer free (WH-headed relatives) to “bare” (truly headless) relatives:

(60) Ga’-a-’y [**naa** [an=t jagw-i=hl smax]].
see-TR-1SG.II **who** AX=3.I eat-T-[-3.II]=CN bear
‘I saw the one who killed the bear.’
Consultant (VG)’s comment: “More correct [than without naa*].”* (Davis 2011)

There is thus evidence throughout the Gitksan dialect continuum for WH-relative pronouns, though speakers/dialects differ in how freely they allow them to surface.

There are a number of reasons to believe that WH-relative pronouns undergo A’-movement to [Spec, C]: the most striking, documented by Davis (2011), is the fact that for some speakers a copy of the WH-pronoun can be found in intermediate [Spec, C] landing sites in cases of long-distance extraction:

(61) Nee=ma ga’a=hl [gat [**naa**=hl ha’nigoot=s James
NEG=2SG.I see[-3.II]=CN man **who**=CN thought[-3.II]=PN James
[**naa** [an=t gup=hl anaay]]]]=a?
who AX=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN bread=YNQ
‘Did you see the man who James thinks ate the bread?’ (BS: Davis 2011)

Given the existence of WH-relative pronouns, it is straightforward to test whether *hli$_{rel}$* is itself a relative pronoun. If it is, it should (i) show parallel behaviour to WH-pronouns, and in particular,

optionally appear in intermediate [Spec, C] positions in cases of long-range extraction; and (ii) be in complementary distribution with WH-pronouns.

Neither of these predictions is borne out. *Hli$_{rel}$* is ungrammatical in intermediate [Spec, C] positions in cases of long-range relativization:

(62) Nee=ma ga'a=hl [get [**naa**=hl ha'nigoot=s James
NEG=2SG.I see[-3.II]=CN man **who**=CN thought[-3.II]=PN James
[(***hli**) [en=t gup=hl anaax]]]]=a?
(***HLI$_{REL}$**) AX=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN bread=YNQ
'Did you see the man who James thinks ate the bread?'

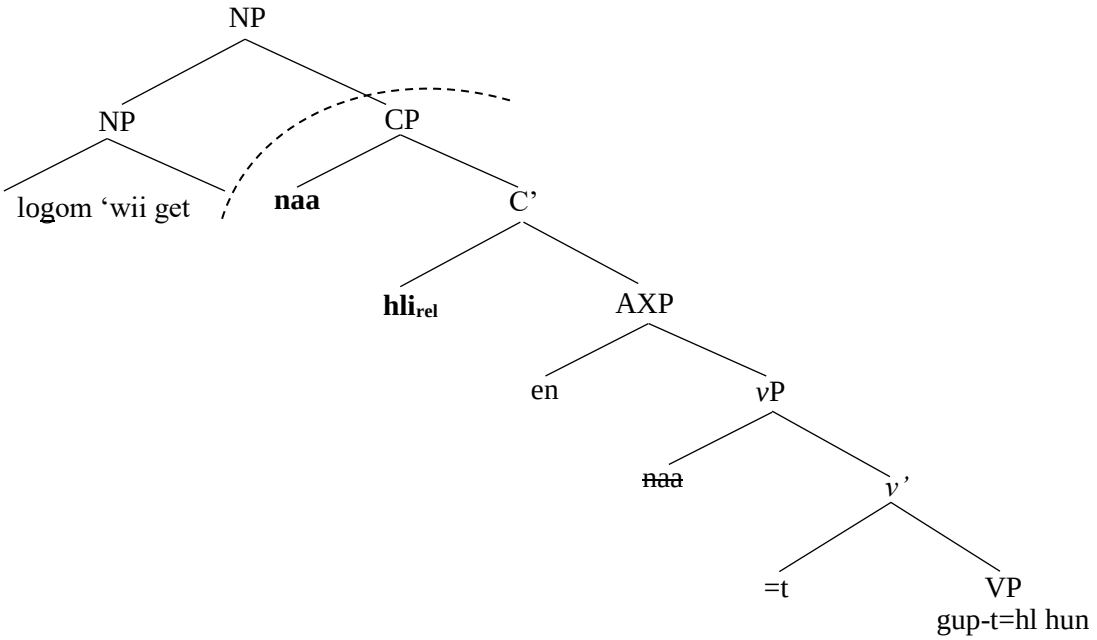
More strikingly, WH-pronouns and *hli$_{rel}$* can and do co-occur, in that order, showing unambiguously that *hli$_{rel}$* must be a complementizer, not a relative pronoun.

(63) [Log-om 'wii+get [**naa** [**hli** en=t gup=hl hun]]]
decayed-ATTR big+man **who** **HLI$_{REL}$** AX=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN fish
gukws+'witxw-it.
back+come-SX
'The old man who ate the fish came back.'

(Note that in this example, the entire DP containing the relative clause has been focus fronted, triggering intransitive subject (SX) morphology on the main predicate *gukws + 'witxw*.)

The full order of elements in the left periphery exemplified in (63) leads us to propose the structure in (64) (assuming an externally headed relative clause).

(64)



This structure provides a unified account for the WH-relative pattern prevalent in eastern dialects and VG's *hli*$_{rel}$ system as investigated here. The differences between the systems follow from the fact that *hli* is not usually used as a complementizer in eastern dialects (where we assume C_{rel} is generally null). As an indirect consequence, WH-relative pronouns surface more freely, including in contexts where VG and other western dialect speakers reject them. More generally, (non-)pronunciation of elements at the left periphery is subject to dialect and speaker-specific "doubly-filled COMP" effects (Koopman 2000), which leads to telescoping of functional elements in CP.

3.4 Free (WH-)relatives and headless relatives

Aside from relatives with an overt nominal head, Gitksan has at least two other types of argument relative clause: those with an initial WH-word, which we will refer to here as *free* relatives, and those with either an initial *hli*$_{rel}$ or just a connective *=hl* preceding the clause, which we will refer to as *headless* relatives.[18] Examples of each are given in (65)–(67).

(65) Ga'-a-'y[=hl] [**naa** [an=t jagw-i=hl smax]].
see-TR-1SG.II[=CN] **who** AX=3.I eat-T[-3.II]=CN bear
'I saw the one who killed the bear.' (Davis 2011)

(66) Ga'-a-'y[=hl] [**hli** en=t giikw=hl hun].
see-TR-1SG.II[=CN] **HLI$_{REL}$** AX=3.I buy[-3.II]=CN fish
'I saw the one who bought fish.' (VG)

(67) Ga'-a-'y[=hl] [an=t jagw-i=hl smax].
see-TR-1SG.II[=CN] AX=3.I eat-T[-3.II]=CN bear

'I saw the one who killed the bear.' (Davis 2011)

In light of the discussion presented so far, it is fairly clear how to relate these cases to headed relative clauses: they involve non-pronunciation either of *hli*$_{rel}$ in C (65), a WH-relative pronoun in [Spec, C] (66), or both (67). Since *hli*$_{rel}$ and WH-relative pronouns may co-occur in headed relative clauses, we predict that they should also co-occur in free relatives: this prediction is borne out, as shown in (68):

(68) Ga'-a-'y[=hl] [**naa** [**hli** en=t giikw=hl hun]].
see-TR-1SG.II[=CN] **who** **HLI$_{REL}$** AX=3.I buy[-3.II]=CN fish
'I saw the one who bought the fish.' (VG)

An interesting question now arises as to the status of the head in free relatives. First, note that free relatives have the external syntax of DPs, not bare CPs, as evidenced by their parallel

[18] Aonuki (2021) refers to the latter as "super-free" relatives following Caponigro (2020).

distribution to other DPs in the language. For example, they can be transitive subjects (69a) like ordinary DPs (69b) but unlike CPs (69c), and they can be freely coordinated with other DPs (70).

(69) a. Dim hlimooy-i=s **[naa hli ent giikwhl hun]** 'nii'y.
PROSP help-TR[-3.II]=PN **who HLI$_{REL}$ AX=3.I buy[-3.II]=CN fish** 1SG.III
'The one who bought fish will help me.'

b. Dim hlimooy-i=s **John** 'nii'y.
PROSP help-TR[-3.II]=PN **John** 1SG.III
'John will help me.'

c. * Dim hlimooy-i=hl **[win 'witxw=s John]** 'nii'y.
PROSP help-TR[-3.II]=CN **COMP arrive[-3.II]=PN John** 1SG.III
(*Intended meaning:* 'That John arrived will help me.')

(70) Ga'-a-'y **[t John [gan[=t [naa hli an=t giikw=hl hun]]]]**.[19]
see-TR-1SG.II **PN John PCNJ=PN who HLI$_{REL}$ AX=3.I buy[-3.II]=CN fish**
'I saw John and the one who bought fish.' (*Consultant (VG)'s translation*)

Now, note that both WH-relative pronouns and *hli$_{rel}$* occupy positions in CP under our hypothesis. This means that either D (as the head of DP) selects directly for CP, or it selects for an intermediate null (*pro*) NP. If the D-head directly selects for a CP, then we must adopt a raising analysis of relative clauses (Kayne 1994).

However, Davis (2011) argues for a matching analysis for headed relative clauses in Gitksan, since it is possible to extrapose the relative clause, as shown in (43) above. (As argued by Hulsey and Sauerland 2006, extraposition is a key diagnostic for the matching analysis: see Cinque 2015 for a useful summary of relevant tests.) Under the matching analysis, an NP moves to [Spec, C] in the relative clause and is elided at PF via an identity relation with a base-generated external head.

On the other hand, Aonuki (2021) specifically argues that free and headless relative clauses in Gitksan are bare CPs, entailing a raising analysis. Her account runs as follows. For free relatives, she first of all adopts the standard analysis of relativization, whereby WH-movement to [Spec, C] leaves a trace which is converted to a lambda-bound variable at LF: the remnant clause is a derived predicate of type ⟨*e*,*t*⟩. However, rather than being semantically vacuous, as in the standard analysis of headed relative clauses, she supplies the WH-word itself with a minimal semantic denotation (e.g., ⟦human⟧ for *naa*). As a noun of type ⟨*e*,*t*⟩, the WH-word is then composed with the relative clause via predicate modification. In contrast, she treats headless relative clauses as simply CP predicates (presumably derived by movement of a semantically vacuous null operator to [Spec, C], in order to create the required semantic category of type ⟨*e*,*t*⟩.

In support of her analysis, Aonuki (2021) adduces semantic differences between free and headless relative clauses. In particular, she claims that (i) the WH-word *naa* in free relatives comes with an animacy restriction lacking in headless relatives, and (ii) that the domain-widening particle *ligi* is only possible with free relatives, not headless relatives, because a WH-word is needed to provide the domain for *ligi* to widen.

[19] The WH-word *naa* is unusual in taking the proper noun connective *t~=s* rather than the common noun connective *=hl*: see, e.g., Davis and Brown (2011) for discussion.

However, the analysis of headed relative clauses with WH-relative pronouns which we have adopted from Davis (2011) is not easy to reconcile with Aonuki (2021)'s analysis of free relatives. The reason is that we treat the WH-relative pronouns in headed relatives as semantically vacuous, in line with the standard analysis where predicate modification takes place between the (external) head and the relative clause, not the moved WH-word and the relative clause (Heim & Kratzer 1998).[20] This means that given Aonuki's analysis, the semantic representation of WH-relative pronouns would have to differ between free and headed relatives (semantically contentful in the former, vacuous in the latter): we take this to be an undesirable result. Given the syntactic reasons outlined above as to why we would want to maintain a matching account for headed relative clauses, it seems that an alternative analysis of free relatives is warranted.

There are at least two possible directions to take. The first is to assume a null *pro*-NP (effectively the equivalent of English 'one' in 'the one who/that…') in the head position. The second is to propose that there is a second (interrogative-indefinite) WH-word in the external head position, with the moved internal WH-relative pronoun obligatorily deleted under identity (i.e., via matching) with this external WH-word.[21] These possibilities are schematized in (71b) and (71c), respectively for the free relative in (71a):

(71) a. **naa** (**hli**) en=t giikw=hl hun
who (**HLI$_{REL}$**) AX-3.1 buy[-3.II]=CN fish
'(the one) who bought the fish'

b. [***pro*** [**naa** [(**hli**) [ent giikwhl hun ____]]]]
[$_{NP}$ **NP** [$_{CP}$ **WH$_{REL}$** [(**HLI$_{REL}$**) [$_{IP}$ ~~**WH$_{REL}$**~~]]]]

c. [**naa** [____ [(**hli**) [ent giikwhl hun ____]]]]
[$_{NP}$ **WH$_{INT}$** [$_{CP}$ ~~**WH$_{REL}$**~~ [(**HLI$_{REL}$**) [$_{IP}$ ~~**WH$_{REL}$**~~]]]]

While (71b) appears simpler on the surface, (71c) has two advantages for the analysis of free relatives. First, it provides a matching account parallel to that for ordinary headed relatives. And second, it allows the WH-head *naa* to have semantic content, as argued by Aonuki (2021), while the moved *naa* in the relative clause remains semantically vacuous, as in headed relative clauses.

If we make the additional assumption that *headless* relative clauses actually have the structure in (71b), we also correctly predict that free (WH-headed) and headless relatives differ semantically, since the nominal head in the former is a contentful WH-pronoun, while in the latter it is a semantically empty *pro*.[22]

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[20] It *would* be possible to save the Aonuki (2021) analysis of free relatives by saying that headed relative clauses are "doubly modified": that is that predicate modification (Heim & Kratzer 1998) first applies to a WH-phrase and the clause it has been extracted from, and then to the resulting predicate and the external head. Since the output of predicate modification is itself simply a predicate, there's nothing to stop this in principle, but it would be then hard to stop recursive predicate modification from producing strings of heads.

[21] VG never permits more than one WH-word to surface in a relative clause, just as he never permits more than one *hli*.

[22] For the analysis of headless relatives, we must either assume that the moved (internal) WH-phrase is always deleted, or that it can optionally surface. In the latter case, relative clauses with an initial WH-word would actually be structurally ambiguous between free and headless relatives, though they would differ subtly in meaning. We will not attempt to distinguish between these two possibilities here.

The approach we have sketched out here thus provides a potentially unified analysis of headed, free, and headless relative clauses in all varieties of Gitksan. The basic structure is that of an externally headed relative clause, with variation in what occupies the head NP position (an overt nominal, a WH-pronoun, or *pro*) and in which elements can surface in the relative clause itself (a moved WH-pronoun, the complementizer *hli*$_{rel}$, both, or neither). The findings of Aonuki (2021) that there are semantic differences between free and headless relatives are accounted for, as well as the arguments in Davis (2011) that Gitksan relative clauses are uniformly of the matching rather than the raising type.[23]

3.5 Further extensions: relativization in Sm'algyax

While a full cross-Tsimshianic comparison is beyond the scope of this paper, in this section, we would like to briefly point out how our analysis of relative clauses in Interior Tsimshianic (IT) might fit in with observed relativization patterns in the Maritime branch of the family — more specifically, in Sm'algya̲x (a.k.a. Coast Tsimshian).

First, as mentioned in footnote 1, *hli* seems to be systematically absent in Sm'algya̲x, a finding which is itself quite significant given its antiquity in IT, as attested both by its appearance in older texts (e.g., Boas 1902) and its diverse, partly lexicalized and highly variable uses, as documented in the first part of this paper.

WH-relatives, however, are robustly attested in Sm'algya̲x:

(72) Ada 'nii+wil lu+spa̲gayt hoksg=a hana'ax=ga **gu** ksm+Gitksan.
and on+COMP in+among join=CN woman=ABSN.CN **WH$_{REL}$** female+Gitksan
'And among them was the woman who was the Gitksan lady.'
(Sm'algya̲x Living Legacy Dictionary)[24]

(73) Ła hasax-d=a dm=t wilaay naa=ga sup'as-m 'yuuta
ASP want-3.II=CN PROSP=3.I know[-3.II] ho=ABSN.CN young-ATTR man
gu t=in di-da̲mg̲(i)-t=ga a=txa̲'nii aatk.
WH$_{REL}$ 3.I=AX COM-sleep-3.II=ABSN.CN OBL=every night
'She wanted to know who the young man was who slept with her every night.'
(Sm'algya̲x Living Legacy Dictionary)[25]

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[23] This analysis makes one prediction that is not supported by the data. If free relatives are actually headed by a WH NP, as proposed here, then extraposition should be possible, stranding the WH-word, just as an NP head can be stranded in ordinary headed relatives (see (43) above). However, this is impossible, as can be seen in (ib): a temporal adjunct cannot intervene between *naa* and the rest of the relative clause.

(i) a. Dim 'witxw **naa** **hli** **en=t** **giikw=hl** **hun** t'aalha̲k̲w.
PROS come who HLI$_{REL}$ AX=3.I buy[-3.II]=CN fish tomorrow
'The one who bought the fish will come tomorrow.' (VG)

b. * Dim 'witxw **naa** t'aalha̲k̲w **hli** **en=t** **giikw=hl** **hun**.

We leave this as an unresolved problem.

[24] https://www.webonary.org/smalgyax/browse/browse-vernacular/?letter=g&key=tsi&totalEntries=182&pagenr=6. Morpheme glosses (including mistakes!) are ours.

[25] https://www.webonary.org/smalgyax/g0409ffd4-2dd1-4763-9126-cada6d09e420/

This is significant from a historical-comparative perspective, since it strongly suggests that WH-relativization is a deep-seated property of the Tsimshianic language family, rather than a recent innovation under European influence. The distribution of headed relative clauses with WH-pronouns is particularly telling: they surface in *gigeenix* dialects of Gitksan, at the eastern periphery of the Tsimshianic language continuum, and in Sm'algya̲x, at the western edge, but are largely missing (or at least, highly marked) in the middle. This type of geographical distribution is typically associated with older and more conservative linguistic traits, which are furthest removed from centres of linguistic innovation. It also means that the speculation in Davis and Brown (2011:73) that *hli* might have been a structural precursor to WH-relative pronouns cannot be right: aside from the fact that *hli*$_{rel}$ is a complementizer, not a relative pronoun, WH-relatives evidently pre-date *hli* relatives.

Of particular interest for the current analysis, WH-pronouns in Sm'algya̲x are differentiated into a set of non-relative (interrogative-indefinite) WH-pronouns, largely cognate with those of IT, and a single, undifferentiated WH-relative pronoun *gu* (sometimes pronounced as *go(o)*). Both types can be seen in (73) above: the interrogative-indefinite pronoun *naa* 'who' introduces the embedded question which serves as complement to the verb *wilaay* 'know', while the relative pronoun *gu* introduces the relative clause headed by the noun *'yuuta* 'man'. The phonological distinction between these two types of WH-pronoun is exactly what we might expect to emerge based on our analysis of Gitksan relative clauses, where interrogative-indefinite and relative WH-pronouns, though homophonous, are distinguished on the basis of syntactic and semantic criteria. We further predict that in Sm'algya̲x free relatives, interrogative-indefinite pronouns will show up in the external head position, with *gu* inside the relative clause. As far as we can tell, this prediction is borne out, as shown in (74)–(75).

(74) Ałga mi=dm=sm ga̲b=a [ksg̲oog̲-m **goo**=ga dm=t gyiin-sm]
NEG 2.I=PROSP=2PL.I eat=CN [first-ATTR **what**=ABSN.CN PROSP=3.I feed-2PL.II]
'Do not eat what they feed you first.' (Sm'algya̲x Living Legacy Dictionary)[26]

(75) Ada=t wil baal-t=ga gyet dm=t ksigaa-t ada ałga=t
and=3.I COMP try-3.II=ABSN.CN person PROS=3.I catch-3.II but NEG=3.I
da'axłg-it awil=t łaxs-d=a łguwoomłg=a
able.to-3.II because=3.I scratch-3.II=CN child=CN
[**naa goo** t=in baal dm(t) t=in gaa-t].
who WH$_{REL}$ 3.I=AX try[-3.II] PROSP 3.I=AX take-3.II
'And then the people tried to catch him but they couldn't because the child scratched whoever tried to take him.' (Sm'algya̲x Living Legacy Dictionary)[27]

In (74), we see the interrogative-indefinite *goo* 'what' modified by *ksgoox* 'first' and heading a free relative. In (75), both types of WH-pronoun occur in the same free relative clause: interrogative-indefinite *naa* is in the head position, followed by the WH-relative pronoun *gu* (here

[26] https://www.webonary.org/smalgyax?s=gyiinsm&search=Search&key=&tax=-1&search_options_set=1&match_whole_words=1&displayAdvancedSearchName=0)

[27] https://www.webonary.org/smalgyax?s=scratch&search=Search&key=&tax=-1&search_options_set=1&match_whole_words=1&displayAdvancedSearchName=0

realized as *goo*) in [Spec, C]. Sm'algyax thus provides strong supporting evidence for our analysis of free relatives in IT.

3.6 Back to *hli$_{foc}$* again

In this section, we return to *hli$_{foc}$* in the light of our analysis of *hli$_{rel}$*. Recall the *direct movement* analysis of focus, as developed in Section 3.1. and exemplified in (76) below, repeated from (51).

(76) a. Hun **hle** gub-i=hl log-om 'wii+get.
fish **HLI$_{FOC}$** eat-TR[-3.II]=CN decayed-ATTR big+man
'It was fish the old man ate.'

b. *Direct movement*
[**hun** [**hle** [gubihl logom 'wii get ___]]]
[$_{CP}$ **DP** [**C$_{FOC}$** [$_{IP}$ ~~**DP**~~]]]

Under the direct movement analysis, *hli$_{foc}$* occupies the head of CP$_{foc}$ and a focused DP moves to its specifier, leaving a trace/deleted copy in argument position. This analysis straightforwardly predicts that WH-relative pronouns may not co-occur with *hli$_{foc}$*: the examples in (77) show that this prediction is borne out.

(77) a. hanak' **hli** en=t gup=hl hun, nee-t a=hl get.
woman **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN fish NEG-3.II OBL[-3.II]=CN man
'A woman ate fish, not a man.'

b. * hanak' **naa** **hli** en=t gup=hl hun, nee-t
woman who **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I eat[-3.II]=CN fish NEG-3.II
a=hl get.
OBL[-3.II]=CN man

Note that as observed previously, the ungrammaticality of (77b) entails the unavailability of a potential alternative structure with *hanak' '*woman' acting as a nominal predicate and *naa* heading a free relative clause. This reinforces our earlier conclusion that nominal predication in Gitksan is generally ungrammatical with a relative clause argument (though see Section 3.7 below).

In light of our direct movement proposal for *hli$_{foc}$*, an interesting issue arises with *'nit* clefts. As first observed by Davis and Brown (2011), clefts behave syntactically like focus structures in never permitting a WH-word; exactly the same is true with clefts containing *hli$_{foc}$*, as show in (78).

(78) a. Cathy **hli** en=t yee-di=hl limx.
Cathy **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I go-T-[-3.II]=CN song
'It was Cathy who sang a song.'

b. * Cathy **naa** **hli** en=t yee-di=hl limx.
Cathy **who** **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I go-T-[-3.II]=CN song
Consultant (VG)'s comment: "Couldn't do it, no."

c. **'Nit** Cathy **hli** en=t yee-di=hl limx.
FOC Cathy **HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I go-T-[-3.II]=CN song
'It was Cathy who sang a song.'

d. * **'Nit** Cathy **naa hli** en=t yee-di=hl limx.
FOC Cathy **who HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I go-T-[-3.II]=CN song
Consultant (VG)'s comment: "Nope."

This indicates that clefts in Gitksan act as direct rather than indirect movement structures, unlike their equivalents in English. One way to implement a direct movement analysis within the framework adopted here is to simply embed a focus movement structure beneath *'nit*, as in (79):

(79) [**'nit** [**Cathy** [**hli** [en [___ t yeedihl limx]]]]]
[$_{FOCP}$ **FOC** [$_{CP}$ **DP** [**C$_{FOC}$** [$_{AXP}$ [$_{IP}$ ~~**DP**~~]]]]]

The basic idea here is that *'nit* will select a clause headed by *hli$_{foc}$*. We currently have no empirical evidence for or against the structure in (79) — for example, we do not know how *'nit* clefts work in embedded contexts — and we set aside more detailed investigation for future work.

3.7 WH-questions

In this section, we briefly assess what the analysis outlined above means for WH-questions. As a first observation, notice that WH-questions with *hli* are certainly possible for VG as an alternative to regular WH-questions without a complementizer:

(80) a. **Naa** en=t ga'a-n?
who AX=3.I see-2SG.II
'Who saw you?'

b. **Naa**=hl **hli** en=t ga'a-n?
who=CN **HLI** AX=3.I see-2SG.II
'Who is it that saw you?' (VG)

Once again, both direct and indirect movement accounts are potentially available for (80b): direct movement involves the mechanism we have invoked for focus, and therefore should be possible with *hli$_{foc}$*; indirect movement involves a WH-nominal predicate and a headless relative clause in argument position, and therefore should allow *hli$_{rel}$*. The relevant structures are given in (81a) and (81b):

(81) a. [**naa** [**hli** [en [_____ t ga'an]]]]
[$_{CP}$ **WH$_{INT}$** [**C$_{FOC}$** [$_{AXP}$ [$_{vP}$ ~~**WH$_{INT}$**~~]]]]

b. [**naa** [[_____ [**hli** [en [_____ t ga'an]]]]]]
[$_{IP}$ **WH$_{INT}$** [$_{DP}$ *pro* [$_{CP}$ ~~**WH$_{REL}$**~~ [**C$_{REL}$** [$_{AXP}$ [$_{vP}$ ~~**WH$_{REL}$**~~]]]]]]

The structure in (81a) looks initially more attractive, not only on the grounds of simplicity, but

also because we have already seen that structures like (81b) appear to be unavailable with non-WH nominal predicates. However, Davis and Brown (2011) point out that *gigeenix* (upriver/eastern) speakers who permit headed relatives with WH-pronouns *do* allow them to be arguments of WH-predicates:

(82) a. **Naa**=hl [t'ihlxw-um haanak' **naa**=hl saks-it]?
who=CN young-ATTR women **who**=CN PL.leave-SX
'Who are the young women who left?'

b. **Naa**=hl [gat **naa** an=t jagw-i=hl smax]?
who=CN man **who** AX=3.I eat-T[-3.II]=CN bear
'Who is the person who killed the bear?'

c. **Gwi**=hl [alp'a wineex=hl **gwi**=hl gub-i=s John]?
what=CN RSTR food=CN **what**=CN eat-TR[-3.II]=PN John
'Which foods exactly are the ones which John ate?' (BS: Davis & Brown 2011:68)

Furthermore, for VG, WH-predicates appear to be able to select headed relative clauses with *hli*:

(83) **Naa**=hl [hanak' **hli** en=t ga'a-n]?
who=CN woman **HLI** AX=3.I see-2SG.II
'What woman saw you?' (VG)

This appears to provide evidence that the indirect movement structure in (81b) may be available for WH-questions after all. At the same time, Davis and Brown (2011) also show that direct WH-questions must be permitted, since an initial WH-phrase can appear with the associative plural marker *dip*, which unambiguously signals a fronted argument rather than a predicate. The SX (subject extraction) morphology on the nominal predicate *simgigat* 'chiefs' in (84) further indicates that movement of the WH-phrase has taken place.

(84) **Dip** **naa**=hl simgigad-**id**=ist?
ASSOC **who**=CN PL.chief-**SX**=AFF
'Who are the chiefs?' (Davis & Brown 2011:71)

Given all this, we make a clear set of predictions. First, if indirect WH-movement is permitted for VG, we expect both hli_{rel} and a WH-relative pronoun to be possible inside the relative clause complement to a WH-predicate, as in (85). However, VG rejects sentences like this (and all other cases with "doubled" WH-phrases) on the grounds of redundancy.

(85)?***Naa**=hl [hanak' **naa** **hli** en=t ga'a-n]?
who=CN [woman who **HLI**$_{REL}$ AX=3.I see-2SG.II
'What woman saw you?'
Consultant (VG)'s comment: "You've already said naa, *so you wouldn't need another one.")*

Second, if direct WH-movement is possible, we should find WH-questions with associative *dip*, and if so, hli_{foc} should be available. These cases are indeed grammatical for VG.

(86) a. **Dip** **naa**=hl [en=t ga'a-n]?
ASSOC **who**=CN [AX=3.I see-2SG.II
'Who (pl.) saw you?' (VG)

b. **Dip** **naa**=hl [**hli** en=t ga'a-n]?
ASSOC **who**=CN [**HLI$_{FOC}$** AX=3.I see-2SG.II
'Who (pl.) saw you?' (VG)

Third, we should not find WH-questions with *dip naa* co-occurring with *hli$_{rel}$* or a WH-relative pronoun. These cases are unequivocally rejected by VG.

(87) a. * **Dip** **naa**=hl [haanak' **hli** en=t ga'a-n]?
ASSOC **who**=CN [women **HLI$_{REL}$** AX=3.I see-2SG.II
(*Intended meaning:* 'Which women saw you?')

b. * **Dip** **naa**=hl [haanak' naa **hli** en=t ga'a-n]?
ASSOC **who**=CN [women who **HLI$_{REL}$** AX=3.I see-2SG.II
(*Intended meaning:* 'Which women saw you?')

Setting aside (85) as ruled out by VG's general reluctance to double WH-words, we conclude from (86) and (87) that he does appear to employ both direct and indirect movement strategies for WH-questions (supporting earlier conclusions to this effect in Davis & Brown 2011).

The existence of indirect WH-questions with *hli$_{rel}$* as an alternative to direct WH-questions with *hli$_{foc}$* is something of a puzzle, given the lack of "indirect focus" constructions (including clefts). Clearly, there is something special about WH-predicates which overcomes the language's general tendency to avoid nominal predication; however, we must leave further investigation of this issue for future work.

4 Conclusion

We have covered a lot of ground in this paper. In the first part, we undertook a broad survey of the uses of the particle *hli* across Interior Tsimshianic, drawing on previous literature (in particular, Tarpent (1987)'s detailed descriptive work on Nisga'a) as well as textual evidence from Gitksan, with follow-up elicitation where appropriate. We found a multiplicity of uses, broadly falling into three types: "nominal", "subordinating", and "relativizing". Within each of these types, we encountered much variation: not all Gitksan speakers control all uses, and not all of the observed variation falls into standard dialect divisions. Furthermore, within the first two types, many instances of *hli* are clearly lexicalized, and even when they are not, the semantic contribution of *hli* is often unclear, as evidenced, for example, by our failure to replicate Tarpent's claim for Nisga'a that *hli + -T* marks inalienable possession with possessed nominals, while *hli* by itself marks alienated possession. Overall, our impression is that in its nominal functions, and to a lesser extent in its subordinating functions, *hli* is on its way to obsolescence, either by becoming lexicalized or semantically bleached.

This is not true, however, of relativizing *hli*, the focus of the second part of the paper. For VG, the only one of our consultants who uses it systematically and productively, *hli* is a prominent structural component not only of relative clauses but — in an unexpected development — of focus fronting structures. In investigating the role of *hli* in these two structures, we came to the conclusion

that VG has split *hli* into two separate morphemes, hli_{foc} and hli_{rel}. Both are complementizers but are associated with different syntax: hli_{foc} triggers direct movement of a focused argument to [Spec, C], while hli_{rel} attracts a WH-pronoun (either overt or covert) to the [Spec, C] of a relative clause to create a derived predicate, which then undergoes predicate modification with a covert or overt nominal head.

We have shown that our analysis correctly predicts the co-occurrence of WH-relative pronouns with hli_{rel}, but not with hli_{foc}. In addition, by distinguishing WH interrogative-indefinite pronouns from WH-relative pronouns, we have been able to accommodate the semantic distinction between free (WH-headed) and headless (*pro*-headed) relatives observed by Aonuki (2021), while maintaining a uniform matching structure for all types of relative clause. Our analysis also extends to relative clauses in Sm'algya̲x (Coast Tsimshian), where there is an overt phonological distinction between indefinite-interrogative and WH-relative pronouns: we take this as an additional indication that we are on the right track.

This analysis undertaken here has two major cross-Tsimshianic implications, one for WH-relative pronouns, one for relativizing *hli*. The geographical distribution of WH-relative pronouns at both the eastern and western peripheries of the family (and the fact that they also surface in the middle, though less obviously) reinforces the earlier conclusions of Davis and Brown (2011) that they are a deep-seated feature of Tsimshianic, almost certainly dating back to the proto-language, and therefore not a recent development under European influence. This is significant in that the grammar of WH-relatives is in some ways closer to that of European languages than to that of other language families in the Pacific Northwest *Sprachbund*, with larger cross-linguistic implications for the typology of relative clauses.

Relativizing *hli*, on the other hand, is confined to Interior Tsimshianic, and though sporadically attested in eastern dialects, appears to be most prominent in Nisga̲'a and neighbouring dialects of Gitksan (notably that of VG, from Gitanyaaw).[28] This suggests it represents a more recent development than WH-relative pronouns, though *hli* itself is evidently of some antiquity, judging both by its distribution and the multiplicity of functions it has assumed across IT, as documented in the first part of the paper.

Our analysis also raises several unanswered questions. The most important is perhaps our finding that direct focus movement always takes precedence over a potential alternative pseudo-cleft-like structure with a nominal predicate and an argument consisting of a free or headless relative clause. In principle, we expect this latter structure to be available, given that both its components are independently attested, but it appears to be systematically ruled out in VG's grammar except in the case of WH-questions, which *do* appear to optionally take the form of pseudo-clefts. We leave further exploration of this issue for future work.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge how much inter-speaker variation we have discovered in our exploration of the grammar of *hli*. The data presented in the second part of the paper result from elicitation with a speaker from Gitanyaaw (VG) who actively employs *hli* in both focus and relative clause structures, but a second western dialect speaker, HH from Gijigyukwlha, uses *hli* in neither. On the other hand, HH employs *hli* in an impersonal construction (Section 2.7) which is completely missing from VG's grammar (and indeed, has never been recorded before). This highlights the need to distinguish not just different "dialects" — which are in themselves idealizations over the complex dynamics of language variation across time and place — but the idiolects of individual speakers, whose grammars can vary widely even within the same speech community.

[28] VG himself identifies his dialect as *ganimx̲*, distinct from both Gitksan and Nisga̲'a.

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