

Masset Haida Discourse: A Case Study of *Ihldiinii*  
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Discourse is at once socially-situated and grammatically-driven (see, e.g., Hymes, 1974; Gumperz, 1982; Sherzer, 1983). Thus, discourse analysis poses the unique challenge of coupling linguistic investigation with the study of social and cultural knowledge. This paper examines one sample of discourse that clearly illustrates the interconnectedness of language and culture: the Massett Haida story *Ihldiinii*, as told by the late Sandlenee (Emma Matthews) to Marianne Ignace in 1979 (M. Ignace, personal communication, January 31, 2016; see Swanton, 1908 for an earlier version). The discussion identifies linguistic strategies used by Naanii (“grandmother”) Emma in her telling of *Ihldiinii*, and demonstrates how she employed such strategies to convey cultural information. Further, the paper explores how the form of the story resulting from the use of these strategies informs its function as a representative of the *gyaahlaang* (oral history or oral tradition) genre.

The analysis and discussion is situated within linguistic anthropology as conceptualized by Duranti (1997:2), who views the field as embodying the use of the cultural resource of language for the cultural practice of speech. Thus, this examination of the *Ihldiinii* story is concerned with both its linguistic form (e.g. the types of structures used in telling the story) as well as its linguistic function (i.e. how the performance of language within the story is reflective of both cultural practices and genre norms). Such a work provides both a resource for the academic community, as it articulates the bi-directional relationship between language and culture, and for learners of Haida, in that it gives an example of the structural form typical of *gyaahláangee* and articulates cultural information that influences the story content and form, both of which will be helpful as learners build fluency.

A brief review of significant contributions to the body of work on Haida further motivates the need for an anthropologically-situated work like the present one, which provides an interlinear morphemic gloss of the story as well as versions in both English and Haida. Included in the review are grammatically-focused work like that of Lawrence (1977), Enrico (2003, 2005), and Lachler (2010), early works like those of Boas (1889) and Swanton (1905a), and cultural and anthropologically-focused works such as Boelscher’s (Ignace) (1989) discussion of Haida social and political organization and Boelscher Ignace’s (1991) article on Haida oratory in its social context. The limited works on Haida stories are also presented, including the few sources having parallel Haida and English texts, namely Swanton (1905b,1908) and Enrico (1995), as well as works based on English translations, such as Bringham (2011) and dramatized narrative performances presented in Haida and English (e.g. CBC, 2007).

An examination of notable features of the discourse as represented in the *Ihldiinii gyaahláangee*, including the use of indirect past tense as an evidential, the differentiation between the suffix sequence of complementizer *-s* plus change of topic marker *-ii* and the areal suffix *-sii*, and the use of lexical items to situate the story both physically and culturally, demonstrates Naanii Emma’s skill as a storyteller. Further, her sophisticated use of these features provides valuable grammatical information about Haida, such as illustrating the complexity of allowable verbs obtained through affixation. Her telling also gives an example of the use of an apparently narrative-restricted feature, namely the use of the suffix sequence *-s* plus *-ii*, which merits further study. In beginning to catalogue and document linguistic features of Haida narrative, this work both adds to the understanding of one genre of the language and aids in revitalization. Significantly, it illustrates the need for additional work of this type to increase both the breadth and depth of materials available for Haida learners as they build their fluency in the language and acquire the intricate narrative performance skills deployed by their ancestors.

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