

Contextualizing Cues In Haida Narrative

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Introduction

Verbal strategies and efforts to analyze them interpretively and sociolinguistically have been topics of a number of recent works (e.g., the two recent volumes written and edited respectively by Gumperz as part of a series of Studies in International Sociolinguistics (1982)). Underlying this work is a recognition that context and the language user's sociocultural presuppositions "play a key role in interpretive processes" (Gumperz, 1982:205). The idea is that in order to intend, we need to use our knowledge of the world. In conversation we need to both intend and comprehend. Our problem here, as Gumperz puts it, "is not simply one of making sense of a given chunk of discourse". Instead,

What is to be interpreted must first be created through interaction, before interpretation can begin, and to that end speakers must enlist others' cooperation and actively seek to create conversational involvement." (Gumperz, 1982:206)

Conversation is just one style of speaking, one type of discourse task. In a conversational mode there is turn-taking which allows for interactive checking for the speaker's intention. With narrative, where what is to be comprehended is first created by the narrator interacting with an audience, interpretation must enlist audience cooperation as well and actively seek to create what may be called 'narrative involvement'. This one--many speech style as opposed to the one--one conversational mode involves discourse strategies of a different form. In this mode, 'checking' for the speaker's intention is of a different sort. Research in recent years on narrative has tended to focus on structure (Hymes, 1981; Givon (ed.), 1983), or on the interpretation of content (as given impetus by the 'anthropologizing' of hermeneutics in works such as those of

e.g., Ricoeur, 1981). The Hymes (1981) approach sees narrative structure in its sociocultural context, interpreting the text through linguistic, cultural and personal dimensions. In this paper we seek to isolate structural devices in Haida narrative that narrators use to involve the audience and enlist its cooperation.⁴ Our interest is in the way narrative structures the performance context rather than how it structures itself.

We are concerned with how narrators assist audiences in their comprehension task. In contrast, some studies have looked at how the audiences let the narrators know that they are being attended and with what effect. Eastman (1983) described certain exclamations in Swahili as pragmatic parts of speech used to keep a narrative going. Silberstein (1983) has looked at how narrators build the texts of their narrative using various discourse strategies. In our work with Haida, we have looked at oral folk narrative (e.g., the legend "qaao qaao" discussed in Edwards and Eastman, 1983), conversation (Edwards, 1983), and recently we have examined historical narrative, personal narrative, and biblical (translation) narrative. In each case the audience was composed of both of us and up to three native speakers of Haida. Certain common devices emerged that crosscut narrative in whatever form. These are what we will describe here as devices used by the narrator to insure audience comprehension of text structure. In our paper on conjunction in Haida (1982), we looked at how various grammatical devices and morphological particles link different clauses, phrases, and words. Here we will see that there are other conjunctions used above the sentence level that are involved in signalling to the audience where the narrator is in terms of sequencing of events or plot development. Such conventions when used in conversation are referred to by Gumperz (1982, Chapter 6) as contextualizing cues.

Audience Involvement Devices

When telling traditional stories, narrators make sure their audiences are clearly informed that the narrative is over. In formal story telling, narrators also see that audiences are informed that a legend or historical tale is about to begin. There are also different connectives used in narrative that link whole segments and relate them to each other. In our paper for this conference last year, we pointed out that, in the narrative being looked at there, lexical formatives entered into increasingly complex forms

as the narrative moved along. This is a form of what we mean here by audience involving on the part of the narrator such that, once the audience gets a sentence's meaning for example, the fun comes later in seeing what happens to the whole sentence as what it says is progressively referred to by shorter phrases and ultimately often single words. The audience is to listen for such transformations of sentences into single words, or for roots to have their referential meaning changed, or for roots to be combined in novel ways after first being used separately.

Striking to us, too, in a number of our texts, was the use of negative sentences or negated nominals prior to the formal closing and thanking elements of a narrative. Each narrative form we looked at from Swanton's Skidegate text (Swanton, 1911), to the stories recorded in the Alaska Native Language Haida Language Workshop project (e.g., Lawrence, 1975), to Bible 'stories', to traditional and personal narratives (when orally rendered) exhibited this feature.

Within the body of the narrative itself, narrators also employ certain devices to keep an audience attentive and on track with regard to how far along into the narrative they are. These contextualizing devices, then, range from using the same roots over and over again, word building sequentially throughout the narrative, employing narrative segment connectives in a certain pattern, to syntactically signalling the approach of the narrative's close by using e.g., negative constructions not used previously in the story. This change in usual sentence pattern in a narrative's final segment is a kind of jolt to lulled listeners to get them to pay heed to the summation part of the narrative just prior to its formulaic close. Such cues to an audience ensure that its members are given as good a chance as possible of following a narrative without the benefit of being able to take turns, interrupt, or ask questions as it progresses. The devices allow them to periodically 'check' that they are comprehending yet do not make it incumbent on them to help the narrator along with devices of their own such as exclamatory verbal cues.

In the remainder of this paper we will look at each such device in turn. We will be drawing for the most part from one exemplar of each type of narrative for which we have data. Our examples will be gleaned then from:

1. personal narrative: e.g., "The Scaredest I've Ever Been in My Life" and "The First Kill" - childhood reminiscences and memories of 'the old days' respectively - told to us in Haida by Lillian Pettviel.

2. traditional narrative: e.g., "qaao qaao" the legend discussed in Edwards and Eastman (1983) told to us by Lillian Pettviel in Haida and also told to us in English by David Peel.

3. historical narrative: a retelling in Kaigani Haida of the Skidegate story at the end of Swanton's (1911) Haida Grammar; "The Spanish Story" from a collection of Haida historical legends in English put together by Erma Lawrence (1975) and told to us in Kaigani Haida by Lil Pettviel (1984). We also draw on the other historical legends in the Lawrence collection and make some reference to the abstracts of Haida (Kaigani) texts gathered in English by Swanton (1905).

4. biblical narrative: e.g., a Haida translation of Psalm 46 from the Revised Standard version of the Bible.

We hope to show here that the narrative devices described are common to oral narrative in Haida and that they are also often evidenced in transcribed texts as well - sometimes even hinted at in some Haida narratives told in English or gathered and written only in English.

Narrative Openings and Closings

Perhaps the clearest contextualizing cues are words and phrases or sentences used to open and close traditional narratives whether legendary or historical. They may also be used in personal narratives told as stories about one's childhood or the old days. These are formal devices that, as such, do not usually occur in narratives embedded in conversation. They are also missing from our examples of biblical narrative (translated from English) and from stories collected in English (e.g., Swanton, 1905; Lawrence, 1975). When such non-traditional English narratives are translated into Haida, there is an ambivalence manifested with regard to beginnings and endings. This will be seen below when these forms of narrative are discussed in connection with how they are structured in the telling. The formulaic openings and closings set up a frame in which the narrative takes place and block out a period when other people (i.e., the audience) are to be quiet and listen. The opening phrase most often used is awaahl or awaahl Gagwi, translated generally as 'a long time ago' or 'once upon a time'. Lawrence (1977:159) glosses these openers as 'long ago' and 'long long ago' respectively. Our experience is that they may be used interchangeably and that there is no distinction such that one is used for events further in the past than another. Traditional narratives end formulaically with a sentence roughly of the form:

aao tlaan gyaehlingaay diingaa Giidang
 this never story the my state
 There's no more to my story.

This sentential close is followed by an obligatory 'thank you' -usually said twice: haw'aa haw'aa.

The Skidegate text at the end of Swanton's grammar in Boas' Handbook of American Indian Languages (1911) referred to by Swanton as "A Raid on the Bella Coola by the People of Ninstantins and Kaisun" (1911:277ff) ends with:

Hao Lan a'sqai at qialqalA'ndAqai ge'da
 here end this of the story comes to an

Once it is retranslated, this actually conforms almost exactly to the formulaic ending we have found to be 'the rule' in Kaigani, i.e.,

Hao Lan a'sqai at qialqalA'ndAqai ge'da
 this never from then to the story state
 There's no more of the story.

When Swanton's script is adapted to the current orthography, the ending in Kaigani Haida becomes:

aao tlaan esqaay aa gyaehlingaay Giidaa

essentially the very ending noted above as the 'usual' formula for a narrative close.

In our Haida rendering of Psalm 46 (Revised Standard Version), an ending is added to the biblical one. After "...the God of Jacob is our refuge" comes:

aao tlaan gyaehlingaay Giidaang
 this never story the state
 At this the story ended.

haw'aa dlang anhl kil laagan
 thank you you self+I talk good
 Thank you. I myself spoke well to you.

This is said to be a "real Indian" ending. In keeping with the religious tone of the piece the ending is extended with

saan iitlaagdaas xiiti aehl stangaay
 God us with two the
hans quu dii gwudangan
 also topic I pray
 I pray also that God is one with us.

Note the use of stang + qaay (two + definite) to convey the idea of one. This also occurs in the 'title' given Psalm 46, i.e., 'God is with us' rendered as saan iitlaagdaas xiiti aehl stang literally 'God with us is two' said to mean 'We become one'. Once the extra ending formula is used, there are then two more haw'aa, haw'aa utterances for 'thank you, thank you'.

Narrative-specific lexical manipulation

One practice that seems common in Haida narrative is to keep the number of actual lexemes to a minimum while effecting nuances of meaning by means of grammatical particles with certain pragmatic and syntactic functions. Looking solely at traditional narrative in our paper for this conference last year (Edwards & Eastman, 1983), we observed there to be a creative verb forming feature - a kind of narrative virtuosity whereby verbs are built from nouns that were key in the story. For example, the raven had been attacking the people's fish with his claws (xa), then we see him as he would be claw-ruining the fish (xadaGanqiiit), and he would get in the habit of claw-ruining them, xadaGaaniitqiiqaangaan, he would claw-shred them (xajahnang) and claw-ruin them again. As the narrative moved along, the constructions in which 'claw' (xa) appeared were more and more complex and novel. In that same story, this device was also used in character development: we are first introduced sententially to a key person in the story, one who understood raven language (nang sGwaansang uu yaahl kil an l unsidaang - 'there's one, he understands raven language.'). This character is a person able to figure out why the ravens are causing such trouble with the people's fish. Then, as that person is referred to again and again, each new mention is a condensation of that sentence through a process of progressive nominalization. The next mention is-

nang sGwaansang yaahl kil an unsidaan uu
 The raven language understanding one it is

then,

yaahl kil an nang unsits uu
 Of raven language, the knower it is

and next,

nang yaahl kil an l unsits
 The one who knows raven language

and finally,

nang yaahl kil an unsits
 The raven language knower

In the story, lexical repetition also involves the root k'aldingaa 'amazing', the root Giit 'wait for', and the root xiit 'fly'. These examples are discussed more fully in Edwards and Eastman (1983).

In the Haida version of Psalm 46, even though a set text, we see this same phenomenon in the use of the root stang 'two' mentioned above as it occurred at the close of the narrative. The Psalm is referred to in English as 'God is with us' literally rendered in Haida as 'God with us equals two'. Later, where the English is 'The Lord Almighty is with us', the form is stangan i.e., 'two' is inflected as a verb. This is carried over in a nominal phrase---saan itlaagdaas xiitl aehl stangaay 'The God-with-us pair or two' i.e., the union of God and us. Also in Psalm 46, the roots qaagan 'save' and hIGwaak 'fear' are used over and over again, e.g.,

God is our shelter and our strength
saan itlaagdaas aehl uu xiitl qaganaa
 God with us saved are

It is through God we are saved.

The God of Jacob is with us.

Jacob xang hluu xiitl qagaangaagan
 father with us saved did

We are saved through Jacob's father.

It is interesting that here we may have expected stang 'two' again but that was used just previously in "The Lord Almighty is with us" since the English uses the phrase "...is with us". Later the English essentially repeats the two phrases but when we get "The God of Jacob is our refuge" this second time it occurs in Haida as:

Jacob xang uu aehl uu xiitl qaganaagan
 father it with it us saved are
 is is

With Jacob's father it is that we are saved.

hIGwaak occurs in the Haida version of the English "...so we will not be afraid" as

waadluu gam xiitl hIGwaagangsaan
 then not we fear neg. fut.
 Then we will not fear.

What is interesting here is that where the scripture does not repeat the phrase 'we will not fear' after the ensuing lines i.e., '...even if the earth is shaken' etc. and 'even if the seas roar etc.', the Haida does. hIGwaak also occurs in the rendering of 'nations are terrified' as

Gwaaykangaay hIGwaagasang
 nations the fear will

In the short personal narrative "The Scaredest I've Ever Been in My Life", lexical manipulation involves primarily skaao ('berry') and also hIGwaak again. Skaao occurs as a verbal noun in skaadangs 'berry picking' e.g.,

waadluu uu skaadangs Ingiinii
 everyone topic berry goes always
 picking

Everyone was always going berry picking.

It also occurs as a definite noun, e.g.,

skaaonaay kwaangini
 berries the many always were
 The berries used to be many.

inflected as a verb², e.g.,

tl'ang skaadangingaan
 we berry picking went
 We went berry picking.

tl'ang skaadangaaniingan dluu...
 we berry picking when
 went did

...when we went berry-picking...

and again as a verbal noun, e.g.,

dii skaadang xaayaagiinii
 I berry good always
 picking was

I used to be good at berry-picking.

As we saw with the raven story and the root xa 'claw', skaao 'berry' in this narrative entered progressively more complex constructions. We even get the verb form skaadaangsaan 'berry-picking any old way'. hIGwaak also occurs in the 'Scared' story as e.g.,

hIGwaagangsaan scared in such a way
 (fearing any old way)

dii hIGwaagaayaan

I was most afraid

dii hIGwaagan

I was afraid

taan dii qahlGwaakqii

I was always afraid of bears

In our Kaigani version of Swanton's Skidegate story, lexical manipulation of xuu 'blow' runs throughout - again a lexical particle not obviously necessary given the content of the story. In the first instance it is used to render '...they entered Bentinck arm' which occurs as;

...tluu Bentinck xaaw iik xwuistaayan
 canoes Bentinck Bay into blew go did
 ...canoes blew (sailed) into Bentinck Arm.

I only drank six drinks and unexpectedly already I am seeing monsters.

A comparable construction using esqaayst is

taanaayk an hl xukwatalsgan
bears self die
esqaayst hanuu taan dii ga hiGwaak qii
from then once bears I afraid always
I (thought I would) die (of fear of) the bears. From
then on I was scared of bears forever.

The audience knows that when waadluu and esqaay are used major events are being segmented. Even the Psalm recast narratively begins with waadluu narrowing the focus to God our shelter and strength being ready to help us in times of trouble. The most frequent internal connective used in the Haida version of Psalm 46 is duwaanuu 'even if' with uugyaen 'and' common as well. There is no final event marked in the Psalm by a connective shift, i.e., we get no waadlaa uu or esqaayst. This may be indicative of narrator uncertainty as to whether it is a narrative or really geared for translation to Haida narrative form. This unnaturalness of translating the Psalm is reinforced by the 'extra' ending added after the formulaic narrative one. It is as if the narrator knows something is wrong and then fixes it up with the post-thankyou extra prayer given as a blessing - effectively changing the Psalm into a prayer after it has been 'told' as a narrative.

In narrative embedded in conversation, once the topic is presented, the story line is begun and kept going with the connective waadluu. In our version of Swanton's Skidegate story (retold in Kaigani Haida), the events are linked by uugyaen 'and'. Events that follow uugyaen comprise the main body of the story of the raid. The final segment of the narrative is introduced by waagyaen and gives us the consequences of the chain of events. uu serves as an information introducing particle prefixed to qyaan 'and'. wa is a complete particle. (cf. Haida Dictionary 1977, p.383 - 'wa there, that, it'; uu 'introductory particle').

From Swanton's (1905) English texts, many of which are just abstracts of narratives told to him in English, we cannot discern structure via connectives because of the tendency not to make such distinctions in English and because Swanton was getting only the gist of the stories and not the essence of their performance. In these English-Haida stories it appears that the connectives have been randomly normalized to 'and' and 'then'.

Final Segment Structure

In each of the narratives we looked at, noticeable changes in syntactic pattern took place within the last segment (i.e. that initiated by a switch to esqaayst or waagyaan or waadlaa). In "qaao qaao", the final segment beginning with waadlaa(uu) contains the only negative verb form used in the whole story and the narrator steps outside the story to assert that what has just been said is true. "The Spanish Story", given in English by Erma Lawrence (1975) and told in Haida by Lil Pettviel (1984), also uses negative verb forms only at the end saying that once the Spanish left the area taking some Haida children with them "...the Haidas never saw them again. These Spanish people never reported what they did with the four Haida children. No report ever came back." As with "qaao qaao" here too in the final segment, the content is less story than direct talk to the audience i.e., in both cases the audience is being told that they are expected to believe what they've heard. Here, just because we have no report does not mean that the Spanish people did not take some Haida children away with them. Lack of evidence does not mean that the event did not happen.

In the Skidegate story, as told in Kaigani, the narrative ends with a negative NP form,

gin tl' taanaan an tlaGiihladaa qyaenaan uu
what they went for completing and unexpectedly
sihlgaan tl' xiditlaa gam aa tl' tlaGiihladan
back they arrived not it they completed
tlak jingaan dluu
country far when
in

"That which they went to complete is what they unexpectedly arrived back not having completed it while (they were) far off."

That is, the people who went on the raid failed when away to successfully conduct the raid and had to return NOT having met their goal.

Conclusion

In some sense what we have been discussing in these pages is a form of language use above both the word and sentence level akin to what Grice has called implicature. That is, these linguistic devices represent "assumptions over and above the meaning of the sentence used which the speaker

knows and intends that the hearer will make...in order to interpret the speaker's sentence" (Kempson 1975:143). What Gumperz (1982, Chapter 6) has called "contextualizing cues", also with reference to conversation, appear to be of such a nature as well. Here we have looked at how narrators express assumptions about sequence and consequence for audience interpretation when the form of language use is narrative discourse rather than conversation. In Haida, based on this rather cursory look at a range of narrative forms, it appears that narrators utilize contextualizing cues to aid the audience's ability to interpret a story be it personal, traditional, embedded in conversation, or adapted from another medium (such as the Bible, Swanton's texts, English renderings of Haida stories etc.). Psalm 46 did not begin with the usual traditional narrative opener, yet it did have connected segments translated as sequential episodes and the narrator used lexical manipulation and a formulaic ending. The final segment, however, did not come to any summation or manifest a change in cadence. Despite its narrative aspects, Psalm 46 did not come out "right" as a traditional story. There was no final "from then..." segment. As Gumperz (1982:150-151) noted,

"Miscommunication caused by contextualizing conventions reflects phenomena that are typically sociolinguistic, in the sense that their interpretive weight is much greater than their linguistic import...Whenever they occur, they have the effect of retrospectively changing the character of what has gone before and of reshaping the entire course of an interaction."

In Psalm 46 confusion came when the content did not lend itself to a final segment with the result that the Psalm was retrospectively changed from a Psalm to a prayer. When we tried working from English translations of e.g., "The Spanish Story", Psalm 46, or Swanton's Skidegate text, we discovered that contextualizing cues that would have been there had the narrative been told in Haida were missing and speakers doing the translating from English to Haida became as Gumperz predicted (p.157) "Aware of vague difficulties in communication" which they did not think of as "...difficulties that may have linguistic causes".

When a story is being told in Haida, the teller will

1. use an opening formula, particularly if the narrative is traditional/historical
2. use some form of lexical manipulation, e.g., build single words gradually by transforming sentences employed at

the outset or use the same particles literally at first and metaphorically later

3. begin the main story line with a connective, repeatedly mark new segments (when a story has many events in it) with it until coming to the final segment which is introduced by a different connective (of a summarizing nature)

4. use negative forms or asides or somehow otherwise change cadence in the final segment as a signal that the story is over and the summary is being made.

5. use a formulaic ending followed by 'thank you', said twice.

Some of the contextualizing cues used by story tellers structure sequences in a way similar to "and then...and then..." in English oral narratives. Others operate in such a way that, within a segment a particle, word, or sentence may later be used only metaphorically or in an altered form (as e.g., "the raven language knower") the summarizing connective (e.g., *esqaayst*, *waadlaa* or *waagyaen*) signalling the final segment gives the audience a chance to find out what the consequences of the narrative might have been. Here the audience is given information in a novel form alerting it to prepare for the end and to respond to the narrator's thanks with that of its own.

What we have described in these pages is what struck us as quite obvious once we began to look at the range of examples of narrative that we had collected. Next we hope to take a more in depth look at narrative internal structure and begin to examine in detail how metaphor plays a part in Haida expressive culture. What interested us here was what we found to be a surprising similarity of narrator devices consistent across narrators and narrative forms.

We did not expect to find out that different narrative forms have such similar structures. Granted that a negative verb form in a narrative concluding statement indicates that a narrative is about to close we do not find any need to make an exception here in ours so,

aao tlaan qyaehlingaay xiitlqyaa Giidang
 this never story the our state
 Our story has ended.
haw'aa haw'aa
 Thank you , thank you.

Sources

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Notes

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2 The verbs skaadangingqaan and skaadangaaniingan consist of the following parts: skaa- stem, dang aspect, ing- manner, qaan narrative tense; and skaa- stem, dang aspect, aan narrative tense marker, iing, manner (focused), (g)an aspect.