

Using pronouns in Sim'algyax̣ (Gitksan)

This short guide is meant to answer the following Sim'algyax̣ grammar questions:

- *When do I use pronouns like 'nii'y (me), 'niiin (you), 'nit (him/her)?*
- *When do I use pronoun suffixes like -'y (me), -n (you), -t (him/her), attached to a verb?*
- *When do I use special pronouns like n (me), m (you)?*
- *What other pronouns are there, and how do I use them?*

In general, different kinds of sentences have different rules for which pronouns should be used. This is the same in both English (for pronouns like "we" versus "us") and Sim'algyax̣ (for 'nuu'm versus -'m versus *dip*). But the rules for using each kind of pronoun in Sim'algyax̣ are very different from those of English, so they often require more time for people to learn. This guide breaks down the rules into a few steps.

In total, there are four different types of sentences, each with a different pattern. This guide will show you how to use pronouns in all four kinds of sentence, and how to tell the difference between them.

There are two properties that make the sentence types unique: **dependence**, and **transitivity**.

The first section will talk about sentence dependence, which is a property unique to the Tsimshianic or Sim'algyax̣ family of languages (Gitksan, Nisga'a, Coast Tsimshian, Southern Tsimshian). The second section will talk about transitivity, which you can use to evaluate sentences in almost any language. The third section will put these two things together to show you the pattern of pronouns in the four sentence types.

Each section is just a page long with the basic idea. This means that you will have to do a lot of further exploring yourself. It also means there are sometimes exceptions to these rules. These exceptions might be the topic of later guides. For now, you will have the basics.

Remember, it is up to you to put these ideas to work in the world!

Dependence

Independent clauses: **Liphetxwithl hlgu algyax**

It's hard to define these sentences. They are special mostly because they are straightforward, involving just one verb at a time, and don't include much description of context. They are common in conversation.

Only one idea/verb is used. The verb stands on its own.	T'aa 'nii'y. Yookxw 'niin. Sdilit 'nii'y. Dim hiilani'y 'nidiit. Kw'oodini'y. Kw'oodini'y 'nit.	I sat down. You ate. He/she accompanied me. I'll chase them. I lost it. I lost him/her.
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There are some words that don't affect the independent nature of these sentences. *Dim* sets any kind of sentence in the future, and *ap* or *k'ap* can always be used for emphasis. They can be added "for free".

Dependent clauses: **'Niihuksxwithl hlgu algyax**

These sentences involve expression of multiple linked ideas. They are an important part of fluent or complex speech, and are common when one person is speaking for a longer time, connecting sentences together on the same topic. The exception are commands, which aren't connected to anything.

Commands	T'aan! / Wansi'm! Hiilani'y! / Sim hiilani'y!	You, sit! / You all, sit! You, chase me! / You all, chase me!
Sentences connected by <i>ii</i> (and)	...ii alygaxt. ...iit gya'a'y.	...and he/she spoke. ...and he/she saw me.
Negative sentences with <i>nee</i> , <i>needii</i> , <i>ak</i>	Needii a'laxa'y. Nemdiin mahlit.	I'm not angry. I won't tell/say it.
Sentences with special perspectives like <i>yukw</i> (happening), <i>hlaa</i> (about to, starting to)	Yukwhl yookxwin. Yukw madim hlisint.	You're eating. You're going to finish it.
Subordinate clauses connected by <i>wil/win</i> (that), <i>ji</i> (if), or which begin after another verb.	(Gya'a'y) wil xsdaan. (Needii aam) jin bajit.	(I saw) that you won. (It's not good) if I carry it.

Usually, the sentence or clause has something that comes before the verb. Unlike *dim* or *ap/k'ap*, adding these words does not come "for free" – it makes the sentence dependent, and changes the pronouns. You could imagine that commands start with a silent *Aam dim*... (it would be good if...)

It is common, for the first clause/verb in a sentence to be independent, but a connected clause/verb to be dependent. (That is, it depends on the first clause, that's why it's dependent.)

Transitivity

Intransitive: **K'am k'i'yhl luuhuksxwit**

These are sentences and clauses where only one person or object is closely tied to the verb. This single person or item that is introduced by the verb can be referred to as the **simple subject**.

<p>One person or thing is introduced by the verb.</p>	<p>T'aa 'nii'y. Yookxw 'niin. Kw'oodas 'nit as noxt. Dim t'ugwantxw! Yukwhl yookxwin. Needii a'laxa'y. T'aan!</p>	<p>I sat down. You ate. He/she misses his/her mother. It's going to fall! You're eating. I'm not mad. (You,) sit down!</p>
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In some sentences, the simple subject is silent. (Can you see where this happens in the examples above?)

Extra people or objects added with *ahl*, *as*, or *loo-* (as in *loo'y*), or *go'ohl*, *go'os* do not count. They are more closely related to that word than to the verb. (Can you see an example of this above?) These "extra" people and things are called **oblique**. Leave them on the side.

Transitive: **Luu gilbilhl luuhuksxwit**

These are sentences and clauses where two people or items are tied to the verb. The first one, usually the person or thing performing the action, is called the **transitive subject**. The second one, usually the person or thing that the action happens to, is called the **object**.

<p>Two separate people or things are introduced by the verb.</p>	<p>Sdilit 'nii'y. Dim hiilani'y 'nidiit. Kw'oodini'y. Kw'oodini'y 'nit. Yukw madim hlisint. Nemdiin mahlit. Gya'at wina bajit.</p>	<p>He/she accompanied me. I'll chase them. I lost it. I lost him/her. You're going to finish it. I won't tell it. He/she saw that I carried it.</p>
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In some sentences, the object is silent. (Can you see where this happens in the examples above?) The transitive subject is never silent.

Note: The last sentence here has two clauses in it. You can tell because there are two verbs describing two events, joined in one sentence. Both clauses are transitive here. (Think about why that might be!)

Four sentence types

Put these two concepts together, and we can sort sentences and clauses into four types.

<i>Independent Intransitive</i> <i>Liphetxwithl hlgu algyax, ganhl k'am k'i'yt</i>		<i>Dependent Intransitive</i> <i>'Niihuksxwithl hlgu algyax, ganhl k'am k'i'yt</i>	
T'aa 'nii'y. Yookxw 'niin. Dim t'ugwantxw! Kw'oodas 'nit as noxt.	I sat down. You ate. It will fall! He/she misses his/her mother.	T'aan! Wansi'm! ...ii alygaxt. Needii a'laxa'y. Yukwhl yookxwin.	You, sit! You all, sit! ...and he/she spoke. I'm not mad. You're eating.
<i>Independent Transitive</i> <i>Liphetxwithl hlgu algyax, ganhl luu gilbilt</i>		<i>Dependent Transitive</i> <i>'Niihuksxwithl hlgu algyax, ganhl luu gilbilt</i>	
Sdilit 'nii'y. Dim hiilani'y 'nidiit. Kw'oodini'y. Kw'oodini'y 'nit. Gya'at (wina bajit).	He/she accompanied me. I'll chase them. I lost it. I lost him/her. He/she saw (that I carried it).	Hiilani'y! Sim hiilani'y! ...iit gya'a'y. Nemdiin mahlit. Yukw madim hlisint. (Gya'at) wina bajit.	You, chase me! You all, chase me! ...and he/she saw me. I won't tell it. You will finish it. (He/she saw) that I carried it.

Here are the patterns, using the terms listed before:

- In independent clauses: Use **free** pronouns for simple subjects and objects.
Use **suffix** pronouns for transitive subjects (these are special).
- In dependent clauses: Use **suffix** pronouns for simple subjects and objects.
Use **preverbal** pronouns for transitive subjects (these are special again).

There are three types of pronouns, marked in three colors. Each of the sets is listed in full below. Where more than one version is listed, there is no obvious change in meaning, it is a matter of style.

Preverbal set (I, blue)	Suffix set (II, purple)	Free set (III, orange)	English
n, na, an	-y	'nii'y	I, me
dip	-m	'nuu'm	us, we
m, ma	-n	'niin	you
sim, masim, ma...sim	-si'm	'nisi'm	you guys, you all
t	-t	'nit	he, she, him, her
t	-t	-	it, them (things)
t*	-diit	'nidiit, -da	them (people)

*The main exception to these rules is when you need to use the preverbal set to refer to "them". In this case, use both the preverbal set and the suffix set. Example: **Neediit gya'adiit 'nii'y**. They didn't see me.