Tahltan Verb Classifiers: Level 2

by Louise S. Framst, B.Ed

Dedicated

to *these language warriors*
for their efforts in
rejuvenating Tāɬtān

Edōsdi (Judy Thompson, Phd),
for working to make
language courses happen

Angela Dennis,
for her lifelong dedication to
teaching our language.
In 2015 she was awarded a Language Champion
Lifetime Achievement Award

Hotseta (Oscar Dennis, MA),
whose long hours with recording
and transcibing Tāɬtān are crucial to keeping
our languagealive

Illustrations

Clip art is from public domain clip art that has been vetted as being royalty free for use as non-commerical and commercial. In this booklet, only three images have been used: the background for notes, a man holding a sign (the image on the sign is my own), and the cartoon frame.

All diagrams and charts are my own

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Łān mēduh

Tahltan Verb classifiers: Level 2

Introduction

This booklet is the second study booklet in the Tahltan Verb classifiers series. The first booklet was written only from class notes and from fluent speakers. This booklet provides the second level of difficulty for this topic. It includes:
- research from written material.
- information from class instruction and from fluent speakers.
- information about the structure of Tahltan verb classifiers.
- suggestions for learning this group of words in our Tāłtān language.

Note: This booklet will contain some grammar, but I will take the advice of Hinton. She wrote, "We don't have to be able to name grammatical structures in order to use them." (p. 63) She also points out that learning grammar will help us to learn our language. Therefore, I will use the names used in grammar only when it is helpful to you, the reader, to understand the structure of the word, word-phrase, or sentence.

Our heritage language is Tāłtān; I will also use the common spelling: Tahltan.

What I learned from my research…

Details of the results of my research are written up in *Tahltan Verb Classifiers: Introduction*. The *Introduction* describes linguistics for Tahltan. Since my project relates to learning First Nations languages, the *Introduction* also contains my research findings related to best methods for teaching a language with morphemes, such as the Tahltan language. The final section of the *Introduction* addresses factors that might affect language learning, focusing on Indigenous students learning their heritage language.

One of the most helpful sources for teaching and learning our language was a study into approaches and methods to teach languages with morphemes. This report is called *Pathways* to *Creating Onkwehonwehnéha Speakers at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory,* headed by Jeremy Green (2017). The languages of the Six Nations are made up of meaningful parts, the same as

Tā̀łtān. That means, the way this group of First Nations people learn their language will likely be the same, or similar to, the way we learn Tā̀łtān. For convenience, I will refer to this study as *Pathways*, with apologies to the participants of the study for taking this liberty.

The Tā̀łtān language is part of the Dene/Athabaskan language family. One of the features that this language family has in common is that they are made up of morphemes, parts of words that have meaning. Each of the languages in this language family also contain a group of verbs that describe how an object is handled. Linguists call this group *classificatory verbs*. We learned them in our language class by a simpler term, *Tahltan verb classifiers*. So, that is the term I will use in this booklet. I will also continue to use *special suffixes, stem*, and the more informal, *ending*, for the classifiers.

One of the 'big' lessons I learned from doing my research relates to interviewing people. When collecting information through interviews, scheduling can become a serious issue. And, that is what happened when I was ready to collect vocabulary for this booklet and for the *Glossary*. First, my letter of permission to do the interviews was delayed. Under the rules for researchers, I was not permitted to do interviews without that letter.

This delay was the first in a series of events that caused a long delay that resulted in my having only a short time to collect vocabulary. Then fluent speakers were unavailable for many reasons: work load, caring for ailing relatives, moved, and so on. So, I ended up having an even shorter time to collect information from the few fluent speakers who were available. The result of this is that you will see charts that have little or no information—because I was not able to collect the vocabulary from fluent speakers.[1]

What should I do with these incomplete charts? I could simply delete them. However, I offer these charts as a challenge to you, the student of the Tā̀łtān language, to locate the vocabulary and complete the charts yourself. In the meantime, I will do the same. My website is currently under renovation, when it is up and running, I will post charts as I complete them. Googling my name will bring up my website.

Note: Each study booklet is designed to be a stand-alone booklet. Since this is the second study booklet this booklet will begin with a brief review of the first booklet.

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[1] Thanks to Hotseta for sharing some of his unpublished research.

A brief review…

   Tahltan Verb classifiers: The Basics is the first study booklet in this series. It contains all that I had learned in class about Tahltan verb classifiers. The following is a brief description of what is in the first booklet **Fig. 1**.

> **What are Verb Classifiers and how many are there?**
>
> Verb Classifiers show a relationship between a verb and nouns.
> - Verb classifiers are special suffixes added to verbs.
>   (Suffixes are affixes add to the end of a word.)
> - These suffixes are unusual because they describe nouns.
> - They give information about objects: the size, the number, and so on.
> - Tahltan has six verb classifiers.

Fig. 1. *Tahltan Verb classifiers: The Basics*, p. 2.

The following chart shows the six Tahltan verb classifiers and their meaning. **Fig. 2**.

   Our language is made up of meaningful parts. These parts are called *morphemes*. Morphemes can be combined to create a word-phrase, or even a whole sentence. The following section will give more details about morphemes. The following is an example of how the word-phrase esghanchūsh is created. **Fig. 3**. Each part of the word-phrase is a morpheme that has a meaning.

   In **Fig. 3**, linguists call -**ghan**- the verb. They call -**chūsh**, *the stem*. I refer to the last morpheme as a *special suffix, stem,* or *ending.*

Esghanchūsh = es + ghan + chūsh

to me

you give it
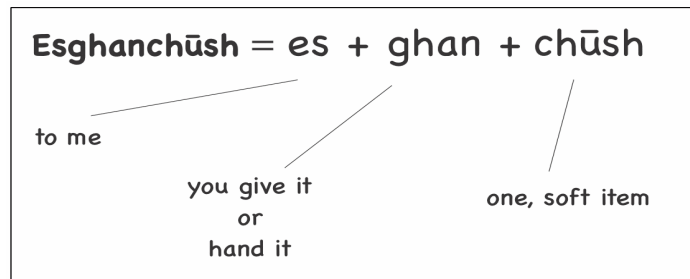or
hand it

one, soft item

Fig. 3. An example of a verb-phrase showing its structure.

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The first morpheme, *es-*, means *to me*. The morpheme *-ghan-* means *you give it or hand it*. It also shows who or what is doing the action. The *-n-* in that morpheme means *you*; so, *you are doing the action.*

The remainder of the first booklet focused on how to determine which special suffix to use. It also contains practice exercises and samples of activities for learning the Tahltan verb classifiers.

Part 1: About morphemes

From our first class with Dr. Anvita Abbi in July of 2017, she impressed on us that our First Nations languages are not like English. This statement seems obvious, but it is easy to lose sight of this fact when we are always surrounded by English. From my readings, I have come to understand that when we are learning to speak a language, the characteristics of the language are important. So, what are some of the characteristics of our Dene languages that might need to be considered?

From *Pathways*, I learned that the language of the Six Nations is made up of morphemes and so is Tahltan. Therefore, Green wrote, "it is absolutely critical to understand the morphology of a [polysynthetic language] in order to become a speaker of it." (Green: p. 55) [I have taken the liberty of changing the name of the Six Nations language to the more general term for simplicity, with apologies to them.]

So, what does this actually mean? First, what is a *polysynthetic* language? Polysynthetic is made up of two parts: *poly* meaning *many*, and *synthetic* meaning *put together*. In other words, a polysynthetic language is made up of many smaller parts.

And, *morphology*? Morphology is the linguistic term meaning the study of how words are constructed. The message from *Pathways* is that f**or us to learn a language created from many parts, it is critical that we learn the parts**.

Why did I tell you all of this?

The answer is that all Dene/Athabaskan languages are polysynthetic. That is, our languages are many up of many smaller, meaningful parts called *morphemes*. And, the Tahltan verb classifiers that we are studying in this booklet are made up of morphemes.

Learning the meaning of the parts of words and word-phrases helps to speed up language learning because we learn a *pattern*, rather than learning one word at a time. Therefore, it makes sense to begin by learning about morphemes. This booklet will focus on only morphemes that are part of the structure of Tahltan verb classifiers.

Kell (pp. 6-8) describes the following characteristics of morphemes. Note that the examples are mine and are written in Tahltan with our spelling:

1. A morpheme is a word or part of a word that has meaning. Example: *bēs* meaning *knife*, is only one morpheme.

2. If a morpheme is part of a word, it cannot stand alone. That is, it has no meaning unless it is attached, *bound*, to another morpheme.

   For example: *La'* means *hand. Esla',* meaning *my hand*, has the morpheme **es-** at the beginning of the word. The hyphen shows that this morpheme (**es-**) cannot stand alone.

   The hyphen is a place-holder for another morpheme. In this case, it is holding a place for the word *hand*, which is *la'. La'* is a word that is a single morpheme, so, it can stand alone. It does not need to be bound to another morpheme to have meaning.

3. The spelling of a morpheme can change, but its meaning stays the same. *Sudenkit* means *You ask me*. The morpheme -**s**- is an alternate spelling of the word **sini** which means *me*.

4. There can be more than one morpheme in a word, as in *esghanā*. The morphemes are **es-** *(to me),* -**ghan**- (you give it), and, -**ā** showing that *one thing that is hard is being given to me*. A sample sentence might be: *Hand me the cup. Cup* is a single, hard object.

5. The meaning of a morpheme depends on its location within a word. For instance, in the example above, *esghanā*, the **es-**, located at the beginning of the word-phrase, means *to me*, while the -**n**- in the middle of the word-phrase represents the pronoun *you*. See **Fig. 4.**

Word	Prefix	Verb	Who is doing the action?	Stem
esghanā	es-	-gha-	-n-	-ā
(you) Hand it to me.	*to me*	*give/hand it*	*you*	*Something hard, one item*

Fig. 4. Example of a polysynthetic language showing the four morphemes that make up the word-phrase *esghanā*. Note that the hyphens in the morphemes are placeholders.

Pronouns as morphemes…

Our language instructor, Hotseta (Oscar Dennis, MA), taught us that pronouns are a key to understanding and learning our Tahltan language. Pronouns are especially important when learning about Tahltan verb classifiers. In this section, the pronouns and only some of the morphemes used in Tahltan verb classifiers will be presented.

The basic pronouns are the personal pronouns. The following charts shows the basic personal pronouns in singular and plural forms. **Fig. 5.**

1 person (singular)	More than 1 person (plural)
sini *(I)*	**dakhuni** *(we)*
nini *(you)*	**dakhuni** *(all of you)* (*same as above because the speaker also hears the conversation.)*
dedini *(he, she, it)*	**hededini** *(they)*

Fig. 5. The basic personal pronouns showing both singular and plural pronouns. *(Hotseta: p. 24.)

Pronouns can also show ownership of an object, as in my house. These pronouns are called possessive pronouns because they show that something is possessed, owned. These pronouns can be singular or plural. See the charts below, **Fig. 6** and **Fig. 7.**

possessive pronoun	morpheme	example
1st person singular	**es-**	*esbet* (my stomach)
2nd person singular	**en-**	*enbet* (your stomach)
3rd person singular	**me-**	*mebet* (his, hers, *or* its stomach)

Fig. 6. Possessive pronouns, singular form.

possessive pronoun	morpheme	example
1st person, plural	**dah-**	*dahbet* (our stomachs)
2nd person, plural	**dah-**	*dahbet* (your stomachs)
3rd person, plural	**hu-**	*hubet* (their stomachs)

Fig. 7. Chart showing plural forms of the possessive pronouns.

(Since I do not know who will be reading this study booklet, I will include a bit of grammar throughout so that we all understand the same terms.)
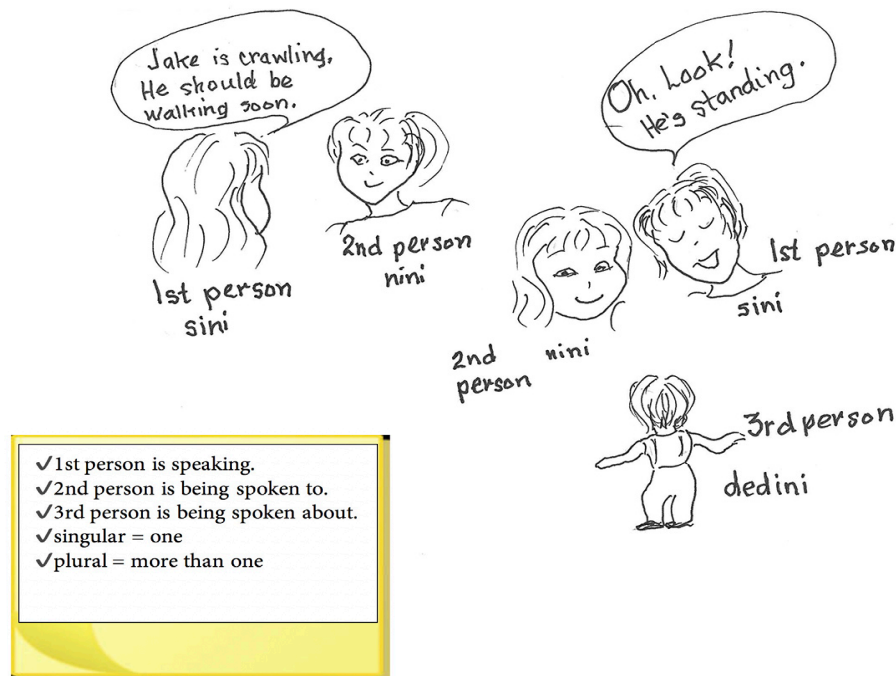
Other morphemes used in Tahltan verb classifiers…

Both the special suffixes (*-lē, -kā, -tē, etc.*) and pronouns are morphemes. Tahltan verb classifiers also use other morphemes. See the chart below for some examples. **Fig. 8.**

morpheme	meaning	example
an-	directional, going back to a destination you are familiar with (home, camp, town, etc.)	*andēstĭł* means I'm *taking something long, sharp, heavy back to a familiar place*
ho-	for this grammatical feature, **ho-** refers to an unspecified container[3]	*hot'ānle* means you pack up lots of things into an un-named container that you might pointing to
ła-	future tense	*ładeslēł* = I'm going to bring lots.
łās-	ā= past tense; so, *łās-* indicates past tense	*łāsał* means *I brought it.* (As a term for one of anything, or one hard item)
ya-	directional, from outside to inside	*yanle* means you bring lots from outside to inside.
t'	*must* be used for words meaning *in* or *putting into*	*t'āt* means *in* *t'ānlē* = you are *putting lots into some named container*

Fig. 8. These morphemes are some of the prefixes used in Tahltan verb classifiers.

Notes

Part 2:   About Tahltan verb classifiers

Pronoun patterns…

Hotseta describes three patterns for pronouns in *Tahltan Pronouns*: *Pattern A, Pattern B,* and *Pattern C.* (pp. 32-49) All of these patterns are based on the following personal pronouns and their plural forms, as described in **Fig. 5.**

- **sini** (I)
- **nini** (you)
- **dedini** (3rd person, that is, he, she, or it.)

In *Pattern A*, these pronouns change form at the beginning of the word-phrase to change the meaning of words. **Fig. 9.** Examples:

- The **s-** in **sini** is used to represent the morpheme meaning **I** in the word-phrase *sonejit*, meaning *I am dangerous.*

- The first **n-** in nini represents the morpheme meaning *you* in the word-phrases *nonejit*, meaning *you are dangerous.*

- The morphemes representing the other person, that is, *he, she,* or *it*, are not so obvious. These might begin with **m-** (from the pronoun *me-* (he, she, it)) or **y-**. In this case, *monejit* is the word-phrase that means he, she, or it, is dangerous.

Pronoun	Morpheme	Root word	Word-phrase	Meaning
sini *me*	s-	-onejit	*sonejit*	*I'm dangerous .*
nini *you*	n-	-onejit	*nonejit*	*You're dangerous.*
dedini *he, she, it*	me- y-	-onejit	*monejit*	*He, she,* or *it, is dangerous.*

Fig. 9. *Pattern A* showing that the first letter of the pronoun for 1st and 2nd person is unchanged. Note possible changes for 3rd person.

Pattern B forms a different pattern with these pronouns. **Fig. 10**. In this pattern, the pronoun is located in the middle of the word before the special suffix. The singular form of these pronouns is used to create the following patterns:

- The **s-** in **sini** is moved to the middle of the word-phrase. Example: In *t'āschūsh*, means *I am putting something soft into a specific container*. The **s-** in **sini** is now in a middle position, behind the special suffix, *-chūsh*.

- The first **n-** in **nini** is moved to a middle position in the word-phrase. Example: The **n-** in *t'ānchūsh* now changes the word-phrase to mean you are putting something soft into a specific container. The **n-** in **nini** is now in a middle position, behind the special suffix, chūsh.

- In Tahltan, the 3rd person, singular in the verb has no morpheme. So, the word-phrase is *t'āchūsh*, meaning **he, she,** or **it** is *putting something soft into a specific container.*

Pronoun	Singular Morpheme	Root word	Word-phrase	Meaning
sini *me*	s-	*t'ā*	*t'āschūsh*	*I am putting something soft into a specific container.*
nini *you*	n-	*t'ā*	*t'ānchūsh*	*You are putting something soft into a specific container.*
dedini *he, she, it*	None in the 3rd person	*t'ā*	*t'āchūsh*	*He or she is putting a soft item into a specific container.*

Fig. 10. Pattern B with the pronoun in the middle position, behind the special suffix.

The plural forms for *Pattern B* are similar **Fig. 11**:

- The -**si**- in sini is the plural form. So, *t'āsichūsh* means *we are putting something soft into a specific container*. Note that the -**s**- is underlined.

- The -**n**- in nini forms the plural form as well as the singular form. The context shows whether the word-phrase is singular or plural. For instance, the sentence might be *Tsedze kinā'et didi gweł t'ānlē.* (*All of you are putting the coat into this bag.*)

- The plural form for the 3rd person for this word is *t'āhechūsh*. The sample sentence: *Kinā'et gweł chō t'āhechūsh.* (*They are putting the coat into the big bag.*)

Pronoun, singular	Plural Morpheme	Root word	Word-phrase	Meaning
sini *me*	-s̲i-	*t'ā*	*t'ās̲ichūsh*	*We are putting something soft into a specific container.*
nini *you*	-h-	*t'ā*	*t'āhlē*	*You (more than 1) are putting lots of things into a named container.*
dedini *they*	he- hu- hi-	*t'ā*	*t'āhechūsh*	*They are putting a soft item into a named container.*

Fig. 11. *Pattern B* with morphemes for the plural subjects in middle of the word, behind the special suffix.

Notice that in *Patterns A* and *B*, the word-phrases contains *only a subject*. In *Pattern C*, word-phrases have *both* the subject and the *object*. And, these two can switch places within the word to change the meaning of the word.

So, using this information, we see how *Pattern C* works in the following example for the word-phrase *sudenkit*, meaning *you ask me*.

> *Reminder*
> ✓*Subject* is doing the action.
> ✓For Tahltan verb classifiers:
> *object* answers to what or to whom?
> *Joe gave the ball to Ken.*
> In this sentence, Joe is the *subject*. To whom? *To Ken. Ken* is the object.

- Who is doing the action? You are, because of the -n- in the middle of the word, *sudenkit*. Who is doing the asking? You are asking.

- In this word-phrase, *sudenkit*, the -s- is the object, answering the question *to whom are you asking the question*? The answer is *to me*.

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Pattern C allows for these two pronouns to be switched. So, *sudenkit (you ask me)* becomes *nudeskit,* meaning *I ask you.* **Fig. 12.**

Object	Subject	Word-Phrase	Meaning
sini	nini	*sudenkit*	*You ask me.*
nini	sini	*nudeskit*	*I ask you.*

Fig. 12. Pattern C, showing how changing the positions of the pronouns in the word-phrase changes the meaning.

Putting it together with Tahltan verb classifiers

Patterns A, B, and *C* can be described in another way. In our language, we have word-phrases that we call *intransitive* or *transitive.* Our definitions are based on whether or not the word-phrase contains only a subject, or whether it contains both the subject and the object. Note that our definitions for these two words are different from those in the English language.

In *Patterns A* and *B,* from the samples above, we can see that the words contain only the subject. Nothing is to be moved, or "transitioned" from one part of the word to another. In our Tahltan grammar, we call these *intransitive* word-phrases.

In *Pattern C,* however, the word-phrases contain both the subject and the object. Also, the subject and the object can switch locations within the word-phrase to change the meaning. So, *sudenkit (you ask me)* becomes *nudeskit (I ask you)* when the pronouns are switched, or "transitioned," from one location within the word to the other. We call these *transitive* word-phrases.

Note that the first morpheme in a transitive word-phrases is the object. The subject is located in the middle of the word, in front of the ending. **Fig. 13.**

Word-phrase	Object	Verb	Subject	Stem
esghanā	**es–**	**-gha-**	**-n-**	**-ā**
(you) hand it to me.	*to me*	*give/hand it*	*you*	*One hard item*

Fig.13. Pattern C showing the position of the *object* and the *subject* in the word-phrase.

Pattern A with Tahltan verb classifiers: *Intransitive*

Pattern A, in which the first morpheme is the subject, has not been found in any intransitive Tahltan verb classifier to date.

Pattern B with Tahltan verb classifiers: *Intransitive*

Pattern B, in which the subject is located before the special suffix, is the most common pattern for Tahltan verb classifiers. I visualize intransitives as a 2-piece puzzle. In the diagram, the subject is darkened to show its position before the special suffix.

Note that a 3-piece puzzle with the subject on a separate puzzle piece would have been more accurate. But the two pieces helped me to see the location of the subject. Any of the special suffixes can be placed following the subject.

The following charts show a variety of patterns used in forming intransitive Tahltan verb phrases using pronoun *Pattern B*. In *Pattern B*, the pronoun is in the middle of the word, before the ending. **Fig. 14.**

Verb	Subject	special suffix	meaning	sentence
Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 1st person singular, present tense
t'ā-	-s-	-ā	t'āsā = I'm putting 1 hard item into a named container.	*Łige tsē egweł t'āsā.* (I'm putting one stone into the bag.)
nedi-	-s-	-chūsh	nedischūsh = I'm picking up 1 soft object.	*Łige ēch nedischūsh.* (I'm picking up one shirt.)
nis-	-s-	-kā	niskā = I'm putting down I food item or liquid in container.	*Gahū niskā.* (I'm putting a cup of coffee down on the table.)
Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 2nd person singular, present tense
t'ā-	-n-	-ā	t'ānā = You're packing up one hard item.	*Gŭłt'ech t'ānā.* ([You]Put one ball into the bag.) (Command)
nedi-	-n-	-chūsh	nedinchūsh = You're picking up 1 soft object.	*Łige ech nedinchūsh.* (You're picking up one shirt.)
nīn-	-n-	-kā	nīnkā = You're putting down I food item or liquid.	*Gahū nīnkā.* (You're putting a cup of coffee down on the table.)
Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 3rd person singular, present tense
t'ā-	none	-lē	t'ālē = He or she is packing up many items into a named container.	*Tom utlān ts'ah ekek'its t'āle.* (Tom is packing up many hats in a box.)
nedi-	none	-tē	nedihtē = He or she is picking up a living being.	*Judy tlī' yāze nedihtē.* (Judy is picking up a puppy.)
nīn-	none	-tī	nīntī = He or she is putting down something long, heavy, sharp, heavy	*Richard una nīntī.* (Richard is putting the gun down.)

Fig. 14. *Pattern B*. Note: The pattern for the 3rd person has no morpheme. Spelling may change.

			Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 1st person plural, future tense	
verb	Subject	special suffix	meaning	sentence
t'ā-	-dī-	-āł	t'ādī'āł = We're going to put it in this box tomorrow	*Chachā k'otł ekek'its t'ādī'āł.* (Tomorrow we're going to put the pot in a box.)
nedi-	-ī-	-āł	nedī'āł We're going to pick it up tomorrow	*Chachā łige k'otł nedī'āł.* Tomorrow we're going to pick up a big pot.
nis-				

			Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 2nd person plural, future tense	
verb	Subject	special suffix	meaning	sentence
t'ā-	-dīn-	-āł	t'ādīn'āł = You're (more than 1) going to pack it up into this box tomorrow	*Chachā k'otł chō ekek'its t'ādī'āł.* (Tomorrow you're going to pack this big pot in a box.)
nedi-	-āh-	-āł	nīdāhāł = Tomorrow more than one you will pick up lots.	*Chachā eyinh nīdāhāł.* (Tomorrow you are going to put it there.)
nīn-	-ah-	-lē	nahlē = More than 1 of you will put lots down tomorrow.	*Chachā utlan gūłt'ech jani nahlē.* (Tomorrow you are going to put lots of ball here.)

			Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 3rd person plural, future tense	
verb	Subject	special suffix	meaning	sentence
t'ā-	-hī-		t'āhīdelěł = They are going pack up clothes in this box.	*Tsedze edone dahi ekek'its t'āhīdelē.* (The children will put clothes into the box.)
nedi-				
nīn-				

Fig. 15. Plural patterns are complex. Challenge #1: Can you fill in the blank boxes?

	Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 1st person plural, past tense			
verb	Subject	special suffix	meaning	sentence
t'ā-	-s̲ī-	-lē	t'āhs̲īlē = Yesterday we put my clothes into this bag.	*Kidzōk'eh esdahi egweł t'āhs̲īlē.* (translation in Left box.)
nedi-	-h-	-tīn	nedihtīn = Yesterday I picked up a puppy.	*Kidzōk'eh tlī'yāze nedihtīn.* (translation in Left box.)
nis-				

	Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 2nd person plural, past tense			
t'ā-	-h-	-lah	t'āhlah = Yesterday more than one of you packed up the dishes into this box.	*Kidzōk'eh Josh ekune ts'a' ekek'it̲s t'āhlah.* (Yesterday Josh and them packed dishes in this box.)
nedi-				
nīn-				

	Tahltan Verb Classifiers using *Pattern B* with 1st person plural, past tense			
			t'āhīlah Yesterday they put the hats into a big box.	

Fig. 16. *Pattern B* for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, person plural. Challenge #2. Did you find more words for this chart?

Word-phrases in Pattern B have different patterns. The following chart illustrates two examples of a pattern with the same root word but different prefixes for 1st person, singular. **Fig. 17.**

Examples of Pattern B: with prefixes				
Who is doing *what* action?	Present	Past	Future	Meaning
I am bringing to a location	dēsāł*	łāsāł	ładēstāł	*1 hard item*
	dēschūsh	łāschūsh	ładēschūsh	*A soft item*
	dēskāł	łāskāł	ładēskāł	*Food or liquid in a container*
	dēslěł	łāslěł	ładēslěł	*Lots, many things of any kind*
	dēstěł	łāstěł	ładēstěł	*A living being*
	dēstǐł	łāstǐł	ładēstǐł	*A long, sharp, heavy object*
I am taking something to a familiar place	andēsāł			*1 hard item*
	andēschūsh			*A soft item*
	andēskāł			*Food or liquid in a container*
	andēslěł			*Lots, many things of any kind*
	andēstěł			*A living being*
	andēstǐł			*A long, sharp, heavy object*

Fig. 17. Notice the morphemes at the beginning of the words. Do you recognize them?
*Sometimes a dot is placed to show that a pause is needed for proper pronunciation, as in *dēs·āł*.

In this chart, *Pattern B* has another pattern. This chart shows the words for *buying*. **Fig. 18.** The patterns for the past tense are often more complex. The patterns for past tense were ones I had difficulty learning, but as found out as the next charts were filled in, these patterns are repeated.

Pattern B with vocabulary for *buying*.				
Who is doing *what* action?	Present	Past	Future	Meaning
I am buying	łitadēsāł	łitanī'ān	łitadēsāł	*1 hard item*
	łitadēschish	łitanīhchūsh	łitadēschish	*A soft item*
	łitadēskāł	łitanīhtān	łitadēskāł	*Food or liquid in a container*
	łitadēslěł	łitanilah	łitadēslěł	*Lots, many things of any kind*
	łitadēstěł	łitanītīnh	łitadēstěł	*A living being*
	łitadēstǐł	łitanī'ān	łitadēstǐł	*A long, sharp, heavy object*

Fig. 18. Check the pattern of these words with those in **Fig. 17.** How are they similar? Different?

Did you notice that *buying* also uses the same root word as for *bringing* and *taking*? Did you also notice that the present and future tense are the same? They are the same because you are buying it now, and since you still have not bought it, then the buying is still in the future. As soon as you pay for it, the action is complete, therefore is now in the past, and you say that you bought it.

Pattern C with Tahltan verb classifiers: *Transitive*

In *Pattern C*, the word-phrase contains both the subject and the object. These can be switched, as described above. This diagram shows how I visualize *Pattern C*. If the subject and object are switched, *esghanchūsh* becomes *enghaschūsh*. This means, *you are giving a soft item to me* becomes *I am giving one soft item to you.*
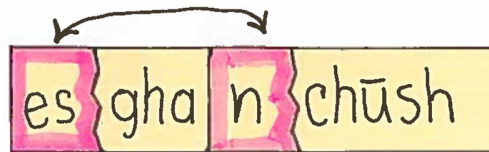
So far, I have found only one Tahltan verb classifier that uses transitive *Pattern C*. This word-phrase is **gha-**, meaning *to pass or give something*. The transitive verb-phrase in Tahltan verb classifiers has many possible combinations. Some of the following are samples:

- *I am giving it to you.*
- *You are giving it to me.*
- *He or she is giving it to me or you.*
- *They are giving it to you.*
- *You are giving it to them.*
- *They are giving it to you.*
- *and, many others*

In addition to the simple statements above, each statement would have six special suffixes. When I created charts to include all possible combinations, the result was 14 pages of charts. The following are clippings of the charts. **Fig. 19-24.** Notice the way the word-phrases become more complex when the tenses change and when plural subjects are added.

18

Pronouns	Verb Phrase	Meaning
1st person Subject		***Giving*** or ***Passing*** is based on ***context.***
You (singular)…*I* (singular)	**enghasā** **enghaschūsh** **enghastī** **enghaskā** **enghastē** **enghaslē**	***I'm*** *giving it to you.* 1 hard object. · 1 soft item: coat · 1 object: long, sharp, heavy · 1 item: food in a bowl, cup of tea · 1 living being: dog, horse · many objects

Fig. 19. This simple pattern seems familiar.

Him/her/it (sing.)…*I* (sing.)	**meghadēsåł** **meghadēschish** **meghadēstīł** **meghadēskåł** **meghadēstēł** **meghadēslēł**	*I'm giving it to him.* · 1 hard object. · 1 soft item: coat · 1 object: long, sharp, heavy · 1 item: food in a bowl, cup of tea · 1 living being: dog, horse · many objects

Fig. 20. Do you recognize a pattern in this chart? Note that the morpheme for the object is **me**-.

Him/her/it (sing.)…*s/he* (sing.)	**yegha'ā** **yeghahchūsh** **yeghatī** **yeghakā** **yeghatē** **yeghalē**	*She hands it to him.* · One hard item. · 1 soft item: coat · 1 object: long, sharp, heavy · 1 item: food in a bowl, cup of tea · 1 living being: dog, horse · many objects

Fig. 21. When 3rd person *singular* is the subject, it is not marked by a morpheme.

You (sing.)…*I* (sing.)	**enghanī'ān** **enghanīhchush** **enghanī'ān** **enghanīkān** **enghanītīnh** **enghanilah**	*I gave it to you.* 1 hard item. · 1 soft item · 1 object: long, sharp, heavy · 1 item: food in a bowl, cup of tea · 1 living being: dog, horse · many objects

Fig. 22. Where did you see this pattern for the past tense?

Them (pl.)…I (sing.)	hughanī'ān	I gave it to them. 1 hard item.
	hughanīhchush	· 1 soft item
	hughanī'ān	· 1 object: long, sharp, heavy
	hughanītan	· 1 item: food in a bowl, cup of tea
	hughanītīnh	· 1 living being: dog, horse
	hughanilah	· many objects

Fig. 23. Plural objects with a 1st person singular subject have a familiar pattern.

you (pl.)…they (pl.)		They hand it to all of you.
	dahghahe'ā	· One hard item.
	dahghahechūsh	· 1 soft item: coat
	dahghahetī	· 1 object: long, sharp, heavy
	dahghahekā	· 1 item: food in a bowl, cup of tea
	dahghahetē	· 1 living being: dog, horse
	dahghahelē	· many objects

Fig. 24. Plural objects with plural subjects make the pattern more complex

Did you notice how the ideas of *Patterns A, B,* and *C* were simple to understand. The ideas are easy to understand, but the word-phrases are more difficult. Recognizing their patterns makes learning them easier. Within the variety of patterns, do you see similarities?

Check out the patterns you see in the charts in the *Glossary*. When you study the 14-pages of charts, you will begin to see the patterns they form. As I was creating the charts, I began to recognize the patterns and learned to look for them. If I could copy a list of words and change only the object or the subject, for example, I appreciated those patterns.

By the time I had completed this booklet, I truly understood of the most important lessons shared by the *Pathways* report:

**For us to learn a language created from many parts,
it is critical that we learn the meaning of the parts.**

Part 3:   Suggestions for Activities

The activities I am suggesting in this section follow the advice I gleaned from my research:

From reading and from lessons in immersion, I learned that reading and writing will help us to learn a language. Both the *Pathways* report (p. 55) and our instructor Dr. Trish Rosborough of the University of Victoria acknowledge that reading and writing our heritage language is important in learning the language. Both recommend that reading and writing be taught only after the students have had an extended amount of time speaking. Reading and writing are tools to help us learn the patterns in our language faster. When we read, we see the patterns, so we can recognize them when we see them in new words.

We were reminded that Tahltan is made up of smaller, meaningful parts called morphemes. As the *Pathways* report points out, if your language is made up of morphemes, then we must learn the meaning of the morphemes. (p. 55)

We also learned from Hinton (p. 34) that in order to truly learn a word, we must practice the 20-20 Rule: 20 times in 20 different situations. From my experience, the more review we do in class the better because we always had fluent speakers to provide helpful feedback.

When I create learning materials, I make materials that can be re-used for review, for instance. Or, the material can be used in a different game, etc. All of these are suggestions that follow my rule. If I take the time to make materials, I also find ways to store them so that they last a long time. Garage sales have provided me with many small, attractive tins, such as the one in **Fig. 2**. The notepaper in **Fig. 7** was also a garage sale item. I bought a box of lined notepaper from a company that was going out of business. My students and I had fun decorating them—after we learned about the golden rule of designing, KISS. (Keep it simple, students.)

Morphemes

    As I was beginning to write about how we could learn morphemes, it occurred to me that I would have been very wise to have started a list of morphemes and their meaning on Day 1. There are only a few notations in my notes about the meaning of some.

    Better late than never, so, I have begun my collection of morphemes using the Flashy Flash Cards as seen in this photograph. **Fig. 1**. Others might like to create their collection of separate cards that can be stored in a fancy box, like this. **Fig. 2**. How will you collect your morphemes?

by Louise S. Framst

Fig. 1. My Morpheme pack.

by Louise S. Framst

Fig. 2. An attractive container is a good investment.

Mēde Ke'? (Whose shoes?)

One of the most difficult lessons to use properly in speech was the proper personal pronoun. I still will miss-say **en-** (you) for **es-** (me). So, the first activity I suggest is a game that focuses on using personal pronouns.

Purpose: To give practice in using the correct personal pronoun when speaking.

Materials: Real shoes or other articles of clothing, or,
             Hand drawn shoes or clothing, or
             Downloaded shoes for students to decorate

How to Play:

Teacher models asking *Mēde Ke'?*
Another student or the teacher models the answer.

1. Students sit in a circle holding their shoes.
2. They show their own shoes and say, *eske' (my shoes)*
3. Next level of difficulty: Put all shoes in the middle.
4. Teacher or student holds up one pair of shoes at a time and asks the group, *Mēde Ke'?* The owner answers.
5. Next level of difficulty: Ask any student *Mēde Ke'?*
6. Student responds using the correct personal pronoun.
7. Give practice with each: sini — me
                             nini — you
                             dedini — he, she, it
                             dakhuni — we
                             dakhuni — you (more than 1)
                             hededini — they

Of course, this game can be used with any objects. I chose shoes because everyone has them in one form or anothe. A game (or a similar game) should be part of a routine, perhaps not daily, but very often. It seems to take a long time to learn to automatically answer with the correct pronoun.

23

The Flashcard Game

When I was studying the vocabulary for buying, I had a mental block. I simply could not remember the words. I tried reading and re-reading the vocabulary lists, reading aloud, making up my own scenarios, and thinking up short stories using the words on the list. My self-talk was in the form of a conversation: What are you going to buy? I'm going to buy a shirt. Are you going to buy only one? Yes. Only one. I don't have much money. And so on.

Nothing worked against this block. So, I made the flashcards shown in **Fig. 3**. As you see, the target language is written in bold print. The cards feature only a verb phrase, nothing else. The word's meaning is written in pencil with small printing to make it more difficult to see.

As I worked on the flashcards, I made up and spoke aloud conversations using the word on the card. My teacher brain began to see possibilities with these cards, so, I started playing with them. How could I use them as learning aids?

As you see, the cards that I used are Flashy Flash Cards from SFU Bookstore, but stores selling stationery should be able to order them. The cards are a bit lighter in weight than I might choose. However, I made a set of flashcards and used them for a whole summer. They are still in good condition. The head company is: www.reditag.com.

These are some ideas that came to me. What other ways can you think of to use them? If you are teaching, your students might have ideas, too.

Fig. 2. Flashcards with pencilled in translation.

by Louise S. Framst

Flashcards

First, I used them as flashcards. Since my goal is to learn to speak my language, I read the word aloud. I then set aside the ones I did not recognize immediately or ones that I could not pronounce easily. If I needed to use the hints in pencil, these were put in the pile.

Pronunciation Practice

I noticed that I could read the flashcards but stumbled over

pronunciation with some cards. These were the words that I asked fluent speakers to record for me.

Sorting

The cards can be sorted by any category, such as;
- What is the tense of the verb-phrase?
- Sort by 1st, 2nd, 3rd, person, singular and plural.
- Mix several sets of flashcards together, then sort by categories.

Sentence or story starters

In this activity, students create sentences based on the flashcard that they pick up. As students progress in their language speaking, they will gradually add more sentences to create anecdotes and stories. **Fig. 4**

by Louise S. Framst

Fig. 4. Cards set up for picking cards for sentence or story starters.

Dok'eh Ahuja? (When Did It Happen?)

One of the most effective learning tools that I picked up in Secondary School was from a teacher of Biology. Every morning he came into the classroom and gave us a mini-quiz to review vocabulary. The quiz had only two or three questions that each required a short answer. This activity was so much of a routine that at the beginning of each class, we came into the classroom, opened our notebooks, and answered the questions. He gave us the answers, with correct spelling, and continued on to his lesson.

This simple routine has several benefits. First, it is a settling-down activity. When students learn to walk into the room and open their notebooks, there is no need to talk. Secondly, once students follow this routine, they are mentally ready to start lessons for the day. A third advantage is that this daily routine helps students become familiar with self-evaluation. This activity could be used by the teacher to monitor student learning—without 'marking' being involved. And, of course, his students *learned the vocabulary.*

Purpose: To assist student learning by providing a daily drill.

Materials: A whiteboard 2 x 3 ft.
Permanent marker
Dry erase markers

Method:
1. Create a chart on the whiteboard as in **Fig. 5**.
2. Write Tahltan verb classifiers on lines.
3. Each day the teacher puts the whitebord on the ledge of the large board.
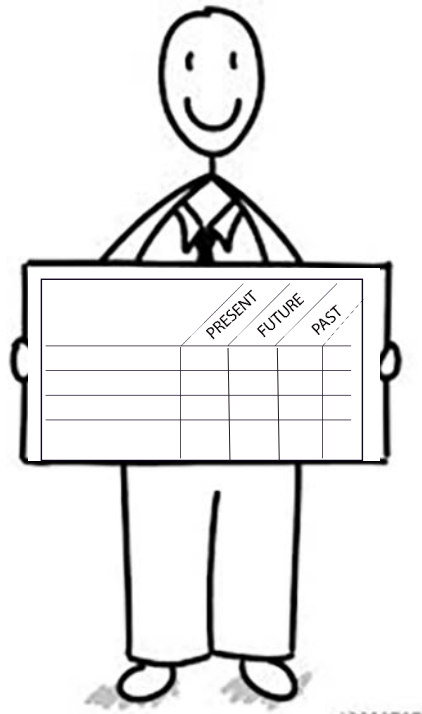

Fig. 5. A sample chart for daily practicing ready for the words-of-the-day. The lines should be 3-4 inches apart.

Fill in the Blanks

Filling in the blanks is a common activity to provide practice in choosing the correct word to complete a sentence. When we still had spelling lists, one of my favourite activities was to have students use the words in sentences I had them write their 'good copy' on a sheet of lined paper, leaving blanks for the spelling word. They wrote the answers on an index card and put their assignment into an envelope.

When I was studying, I would have welcomed something like this. One part of my studying was to select the vocabulary that I needed to learn. The other part was finding the material before I could begin my studying. I would have welcomed any prepared material to cut down the preparation time. Our language class could have made *Fill in the Blank* activity cards that we could have used for studying. Once the cards were corrected, we could have copied them. Or, they could have been copied on cardstock to avoid transcription errors. **Fig. 6.**

When I had my own classroom, I made activities such as these. Since I taught in multi-grade classrooms for several years, finding a way to create practice actitivies more efficiently was one of my goals. So, I used activities such as that described above. I would make ten different practice sheets when we were working on *synonms*, for example. (My class size for each grade was small.) Instead of using plain paper, I bought or made various types of child-friendly cards and notepaper. Assignments presented on these colourful papers made the lessons more cheerful for the students. Examples are shown in **Fig. 7.**
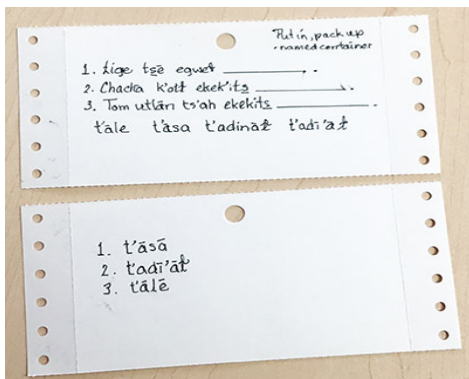

by Louise S. Framst

Fig. 6. Sample of Fill in the Blanks with answers on the back of the card. I wonder where I can find a printer that uses this paper.

by Louise S. Framst

Fig. 7. Sample of notepaper. I made these with garage sale finds; a stamp set and pads of lined paper from a closed business.

Story Challenge

The challenge is to write a story or comic book using as many Tahltan verb classifiers as you can. Can you use at least one per frame?

Bibliography

Discussions with Fluent Speakers and other knowledgeable mentors:

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Jenny Quock, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker
Mary Quock, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker
Edna Quock, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker
Regina Louie, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker
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Ed Asp, Tahltan Elder
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Angela Dennis, Tahltan, Tahltan speaker from birth
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Louise Carlick, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker
Odelia Dennis, Tahltan, and fluent speaker, language instructor
Amber Blenkiron, MA (Linguist), learning to speak Tahltan

Interviews and/or Discussions specifically for this MA project:

· Angela Dennis taught the Revitalization of Tahltan courses in Dease Lake, 2016-2018.
· Hotseta (Oscar Dennis) MA, Tahltan, and fluent speaker. Iskut, 2019.
· Odelia Dennis is teaching the Revitalization of Tahltan courses in Dease Lake, 2016-2019.
· Robert Dennis, Tahltan, Tahltan speaker from birth. Iskut, 2019.
· Bourquin, Erma, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker. Iskut, 2019.
· Louise Carlick, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker. Iskut, 2019.
· Gerald Edzerza, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker. by telephone, Watson Lake,2019.
· Theresa Etzerza, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker. Dease Lake and Iskut, 2019.
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· Mary Quock, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker. Iskut, 2019.
· Edna Quock, Tahltan Elder and fluent speaker. Dease Lake, 2019.

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Anvita Abbi, Ph.D. Professor at Simon Fraser University. Professor for Research Methods in Field Studies, July 2017.

Angela Dennis taught the Revitalization of Tahltan course offered in Dease Lake, 2016-2018.

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Tahltan Verb Classifiers and How to Use Them is a series of study booklets written to serve as a reference and study material for students of the Tahltan language. There are four booklets in the series:

- *Tahltan Verb Classifiers: Introduction*
  This booklet was written to share my research with fellow students. It contains linguistic research, approaches and methods to teaching a language containing morphemes, and research into teaching First Nations students.

- *Tahltan Verb Classifiers: The Basics*
  This was the first booklet created. It contains an introduction to Tahltan verb classifiers. It also includes practice exercises, activities, and templates.

- *Tahltan Verb Classifiers: Level 2*
  This study booklet contains more advanced study into Tahltan verb classifiers. These are presented with the goal of explaining the morphemes and their meanings. Sample practice activities are included.

- *Tahltan Verb Classifiers: Glossary*
  This is a *works-in-progress*. It contains Tahltan verb classifiers that we studied in our language classes. These are in chart form with some information completed. These incomplete charts are a challenge to anyone who has the knowledge to help complete these charts.

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