

## **“Polysynthesis” in Haida**

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Haida, a language isolate spoken in Haida Gwaii (or the Queen Charlotte Islands which lie off the northwest coast of British Columbia in Canada) and in south-eastern Alaska, has been claimed to be a polysynthetic language by, for instance, Boas 1911, Sapir 1921, among others. It is true that verbal elements (a cover term for derivational affixes, compounds and endings) are relatively large in number and that they can combine with each other to form a rather complex verb. However, a close examination of texts provided by the present speakers reveals that verbs composed of a large number of morphemes are not so frequently found, and thus it seems inappropriate to characterize Haida as a polysynthetic language.

The present study argues that semantic factors play a significant role in restricting combinations of verbal elements, which results in a low degree of synthesis of verb forms. In addition, it may be pointed out that analytic expression can be employed to denote almost the same notion that is also conveyed synthetically by combining verbal elements, which also contributes to reducing the degree of synthesis.