FOUR FORMS OF THE VERB IN SLIAMMON

A Pedagogical Paper Presented at the

Sixth International Conference on Salish Languages

Victoria, B.C., August 16-18, 1971

John H. Davis

Department of Linguistics

University of Victoria

This paper was written during May, 1971, in consultation with speakers of the Sliammon language. It was distributed in June, 1971, to interested members of the Sliammon, Homalco, and Klahoose bands and their non-Indian friends.

This paper is being presented in the hope that comments will be offered on its design to fulfill two pedagogical purposes: to introduce the concept of "aspect" to speakers of Sliammon and to give non-Indians some idea of the structure of the language. This is the first of several projected papers on points of Sliammon to be written for the nonlinguist. It is intended that these papers will form the nucleus for a pedagogical grammar.

The orthography used herein was developed over the past three years by Professor G.N. O'Grady and other members of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Victoria. It has been used mostly with Cowichan but was designed to be used for Salish languages generally, with minor modifications. Its advantages are that it uses no diacritics over or under the letters and the only additional symbol is the apostrophe. This orthography was adopted for Sliammon after a year's dialogue with speakers of the language. At the request of a member of the Homalco band, the digraph wh is being used instead of hw; otherwise the orthography is unchanged.

FOUR FORMS OF THE VERB IN SLIAMMON

NOTE

The alphabet used here in this paper is the same as the alphabet that is being used to write the Cowichan language in Duncan. It is not the technical alphabet used by linguists.

INTRODUCTION

The verbs of Sliammon are extremely interesting, occurring in a wide variety of forms with such precision and economy that often one word will include several elements of what would be an entire verb phrase or sentence in English. For example:

Kw'unomisolh.	He saw you.
Ch'umch'iamum.	He's feeling cold.
z'iz'iyutawhulh	(the one) which you are hunting for
z'oz'okw'okw'	just breaking daylight

For the person learning Sliammon, the simplest forms of the verb are those that are often translated into English by phrases equivalent to "it's about to do it (or has just done it)", "it is doing it", "it does it several times", and "it is it".

The first of these four is the shortest form of the word:

joxwut	he is about to vomit (here the o is pronounced as in "nose" and the u as in "but")

The second consists of the word with a doubling of the first syllable:

jojoxwut	he is vomiting (here the first o is pronounced as in "lose" and the second o as in "nose")

The third consists of the word with a doubling of the first syllable along with the consonant after it, sometimes with a change of the vowel:

jiaxwjoxwut	he vomits several times (here the o is pronounced as in "nose" and the a almost as in "cat")

The fourth form involves the insertion of the letter i:

joxwit	it is vomit (here the i is pronounced as ea in "head")

ASPECTS

These four forms of the verb are not tenses, but are called "aspects", a term used by linguists to mean the type of action referred to, rather than the time of the action. In these four examples, the first form is said to be in the "perfective aspect" (not continuing action), the second in the "imperfective aspect" (continuing action), the third in the "iterative aspect" (repeated action), and the fourth in the "stative aspect" (in a state of being). Hopefully, as the study of Sliammon grammar progresses, more descriptive Sliammon words can be used to replace the four linguistic terms used above.

TENSES

Sliammon also has various ways to show the tense or <u>time</u> of the word. The most common way to show the past tense is to add -<u>olh</u> onto the end of the word:

joxwutolh	he vomited (here both <u>o</u>'s are pronounced as in "nose")
jojoxwutolh	he was vomiting
jiaxwjoxwutolh	he vomited a lot
joxwitolh	it was vomit

This ending can also be added to nouns:

shuth chiaptholh	your late uncle (deceased) (here the <u>u</u> is pronounced as in "busy")
lhuth chiaptholh	your late aunt (deceased)
natolh	last night (<u>a</u> as in "father"; <u>o</u> as in "nose")
jiasolh	yesterday

The most common way to show the future tense is to add -<u>sum</u> onto the end of the word:

joxwutsum	he will vomit (both <u>u</u>'s as in "but")
jojoxwutsum	he will be vomiting
qwul'sum	he will come
qwul' chunsum	I will come

This ending can also be added to nouns:

snanatsum	this evening
kwi'sum	tomorrow

SPELLING

Sliammon can be spelled with four vowels: a i o u. The exact pronunciation of each vowel is precisely determined by the surrounding consonants. Depending on the neighbouring consonants, these four vowels may be pronounced as follows:

a   as in: 1. father

2. fat or cat

3. caught

i   as <u>ea</u> in: 1. head or read (past tense) or sweat

2. great or wear

3. heat or read (present tense) or seat

o   as in: 1. lose or move or toque or tomb

2. nose or hope

u   as in: 1. busy or business or lettuce

2. but or putt

3. put or bush or pull or push

In addition to the four vowels the following consonants and combinations of consonants are being used to write Sliammon:

```
ch   ch'  g   h   j   k   k'  kw  kw'  l
l'   lh   m   m'  n   n'  p   p'  q   q'
qw   qw'  s   sh  t   t'  th  tl  tl'  w
w'   wh   x   xw  y   y'  z   z'
```

The raised comma is used to show when the breath is cut off or slowed down in the throat. For example, the first member of each of the following pairs of words does not have the raised comma while the second one does:

imush	walk (here i is pronounced as ea in "head")
i'imush	he is walking
tam?	what?
t'in	barbecued fish (pronounce i as ea in "head")
tlusum	hit with fist, punch
tl'alhsum	physically strong
puq	white
p'uq'	smoke
qay'	he dies
q'ay'um	to stay someplace overnight

In the following sentence, notice the raised comma at the end of the last word and compare its pronunciation with the second word:

Q'atwholh ch'ia tu ch'ia'.   There was a fire on the island.
(literally: There was a fire out in the middle of the water.)

The letter z is being used to show the sound made at the front teeth; it is pronounced like the end of the word "eighth".

uzna' ch'iano	my dog
hozum	I will go
z'iz'ikw'	earthworm (pronounce i as ea in "head")
xiz'	steel
z'okw'	day

The letters x and q are being used to show sounds made far back in the mouth:

xa'a	clam
mulxw	little grey bird that lives in the creek
suq'	half; cracked
qawum	eye (pronounce a as in "father", u as in "put")

The following pairs of words show a comparison between k̲ and q̲:

kwanuch	sitting down
qwasum	flower
kwom'a'jus	red spot on the cheek (pronounce o̲ as in "lose")
qwom'a'jus	kiss on the cheed (pronounce o̲ as in "nose")
lhokw'	to fly (pronounce o̲ as in "lose")
lhoqw'	clear weather (pronounce o̲ as in "nose")

The following letters and combinations of letters are not used at all in writing Sliammon:

b   d   e   ee   f   oo   r   v

SOUNDS THAT CHANGE

In Sliammon, the letters j̲ and y̲ sometimes change into each other. When this happens, j̲ occurs before a vowel and y̲ occurs not before a vowel:

tl'axay	old man or woman
tl'axajolh	those that were old long ago
hoy gi!	quit it!
hojit	ready (pronounce i̲ as ea̲ in "heat")

And the letters g̲ and w̲ sometimes change into each other. When this happens, g̲ occurs before a vowel and w̲ occurs not before a vowel:

Qiw	Deer (his myth name)
qiguth	deer (pronounce i̲ as ea̲ in "great")
hihiw	very; foremost (pronounce i̲ as ea̲ in "head")
higos	a rich man, a high class person
tuw'	ice (pronounce u̲ as in "put")
ta'git	it is frozen (pronounce i̲ as ea̲ in "heat")

"DOUBLING"

The linguist's term for "doubling" is "reduplication", a term which comes from Latin. "Doubling" as a grammatical process is extremely common in Sliammon. For example, in plurals:

junus	tooth (pronounce u̲ as in "busy")
junjunus	teeth
hiyom'	seagull (pronounce i̲ as ea̲ in "head", o̲ as in "move")
hiyhiyom'	lots of seagulls
qam	husband or wife; companion
qamqams	his companions

Plurals (continued):

kwasho	pig	(pronounce o as in "who")
kwishkwasho	pigs	(pronounce i as ea in "heat")
choy'	child	(pronounce o as in "move")
chuychoy'	children	(pronounce u as in "busy")

"**Doubling**" is also used in refereing to something small, or to a little bit:

qaymuwh	Indian
qaqaymuwh	small Indian
nuwhulh	boat (pronounce both u's as in "pull")
nunwhulh	small boat (pronounce the first u as in "lettuce")
z'ayz'ojos	crazy
z'iz'uyz'ojos	a little bit crazy

Some words always appear "doubled":

wuxwux	cigarettes
homhom	blue grouse
z'iz'ikw'	earthworm
z'iz'iq'	mud (pronounce both i's as ea in "head")
kwishkwish	blue jay
ch'umch'um	cold (pronounce both u's as in "busy")

   (compare: ch'umshin ch "my feet are cold")

tlatlapwh	pocket knife

   (compare: tlupwh "to break")

For some meanings, the vowel changes when the word is "doubled":

tlacht	asleep	(pronounce a as in "father")
tluchtlacht	sleepy-head	(pronounce u as in "busy")
tam?	what?	(pronounce a as in "father")
Tatum chwh?	What are you doing?	(pronounce u as in "but")
ch'umch'um	cold	
Ch'umch'iamum a chwh?	Are you feeling cold?	
qusum	smile	(pronounce u as in "but")
qasqusum	lots of smiles	
imush	walk	
am'imush	walking around	
i'amush	daytime hunting	

THE IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT

The imperfective aspect refers to a continuing or incomplete action and is translated into English by phrases equivalent to "it is doing it". This aspect is formed by "doubling" the first syllable of the word. In the following pairs of words, the first is in the perfective aspect and the second is in the imperfective aspect:

thiq'um	to dig (pronounce i as ea in "head")
thithiq'um	he is digging
z'iyum	look for something
z'iz'iyum	he is looking for something
jothut	push it
jojothut	he is pushing it
shiasum	sneak
shiashiasum	he is sneaking
ilhtun	eat; food (pronounce i as ea in "head")
i'ilhtun	he is eating
thuyumtus	it has sunk
thuthuyum	it is sinking
suyt'ut	toss it
susuyt'ut	he is tossing it
suyawus	he got drunk
susuyawus	he is drunk
jiaqw'um	sweat
jiajiaqw'um	he is sweating

Sometimes the vowel drops out after the word is "doubled":

nushum	swim (pronounce u as in "busy")
nunshum	he is swimming
yumum	kick
yuyma'am	he is kicking

If the vowel drops out and the first consonant is j, then it must become y because it is no longer before a vowel (compare with tl'axay and tl'axajolh).

jutl'	run (pronounce u as in "busy")
juytl'	he is running
juqush	crawl
juyqush	he is crawling
jukw't	rub it (pronounce u as in "flute")
juykw't	he is rubbing it

THE IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT (CONTINUED)

If the vowel drops out and if the first consonant is g, then it must become w because it is no longer before a vowel (compare with hihiw and higos).

guxnom'ot	dream (pronounce u as in "but", o as in "nose")
guwxnom'ot	dreaming (pronounce u as in "put")
guqw'um	drag something
guwqw'a'am	he is dragging something

THE ITERATIVE ASPECT

The iterative aspect refers to a repeated action and is usually translated into English by phrases equivalent to "it does it several times". This aspect is indicated by "doubling" the first syllable along with the consonant after it, sometimes with a change of the vowel:

guxnom'ot	dream
guxguxnom'ot	keeps having dreams, like night after night
qusum	smile
qasqusum	lots of smiles
joxwut	vomit
jiaxwjoxwut	vomiting several times
jothut	push it
jiathjothut	pushing several times
nuqum	swim (said of a fish)
nuqnuqum	lots of fish swimming

THE STATIVE ASPECT

The stative aspect refers to a state of being and is often translated into English by expressions equivalent to "it is it" or "it is thus-and-so". It is formed by tne insertion of the letter i into the word. In the following pairs of words, the first word in each pair is in the perfective aspect and the second is in the stative aspect:

tlupwh	it has broken	
tlupiwh	it is broken	(pronounce i as ea in "great")
axuth	go to bed	
axith	be in bed	(pronounce i as ea in "head")
lhayt	land ashore	
lhayit	he has landed	(pronounce i as ea in "heat")
xwoqw't	snore	
xwoqw'it	snoring	(pronounce i as ea in "head")
hoy gi!	quit it!	
hojit	ready	(pronounce i as ea in "heat")

The stative aspect is not limited to verbs:

tl'up	(it is) deep	(pronounce u as in "but")
tl'ipums	under it	(pronounce i as ea in "head")
qay'uws	tired	(pronounce u as in "put")
qay'ugis	tired and can't do anything	
	(pronounce u as in "but", i as ea in "heat")	

OTHER ASPECTS OF VERBS

The four aspects listed above are not the only aspects used in Sliammon; they are merely the simplest. The following pairs of words give examples of some other aspects:

jiaxut	to wreck, take apart
jujiaxim	something that's falling apart (e.g., an old shack)
shia't'aych'um	stretch way over backwards
shia'sht'aych'um	doing backbends
z'okw'	day
z'oz'okw'okw'	just breaking daylight
tl'iqw'	high tide
tl'itl'iqw'iqw'	(when) the tide is turning to come in
mutl'	calm on the water
matl'utl'	the wind is dying down
yuw	dry
yuguw	dry
thuyumtus	it has sunk
tha'ayum	it sinks
qwul'	come
qwa'aqwul'	they are coming
qwa'aqwulul'	they are coming

POSTSCRIPT

These eight pages have given some points of Sliammon grammar. However, much more remains to be found in future study. The grammar of Sliammon is a highly sophisticated system of aspects, tenses, plurals, diminuitives, independent clauses, subordinate clauses, and more. In some ways it is reminiscent of European languages such as English, Latin, or German, but in other ways it is quite unlike them. Sliammon has its own unique and special characteristics and its own power of expressing thoughts and ideas.

John H. Davis
Department of Linguistics
University of Victoria