

The Fisher and the Little Fish: An ʔayʔajuθəm Version of Aesop’s Fable

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Abstract: This paper presents a fully transcribed, translated, and glossed version of Aesop’s fable *The Fisher and the Little Fish* in ʔayʔajuθəm (a.k.a. Comox Sliammon), a Central Salish language traditionally spoken by four communities along the northern Strait of Georgia. The story, translated into ʔayʔajuθəm and narrated by the late Karen Galligos in September 2019, is a novel addition to the growing corpus of textual material in the language.

Keywords: Salish, Central Salish, Comox-Sliammon (ʔayʔajuθəm), narrative, stories

1 Introduction

In this paper, we present an ʔayʔajuθəm (a.k.a. Comox-Sliammon; Central Salish) version of Aesop’s fable *The Fisher and the Little Fish*, as told by the late Karen Galligos (1954–2020). A line-by-line translation of this story was first elicited by Daniel Reisinger and Laura Griffin in Tla’amin on Sept. 27, 2019; a freely narrated version — the version presented here — was recorded on Sept. 29, 2019. The story was subsequently transcribed and translated by the authors, with the help of Betty Wilson.

In Section 2, we first provide the English version of Aesop’s fable that was used as a prompt during elicitation with Karen Galligos. Section 3 presents a transcription of the ʔayʔajuθəm telling of the fable in the orthography, followed by a literal English translation in Section 4. A fully glossed interlinear version in Section 5 concludes this paper.

2 Aesop’s Fable: The Fisher and the Little Fish

It happened that a Fisher, after fishing all day, caught only a little fish. “Pray, let me go, master,” said the Fish. “I am much too small for your eating just now. If you put me back into the river I shall soon grow, then you can make a fine meal off me.” “Nay, nay, my little Fish,” said the Fisher, “I have you now. I may not catch you hereafter.” (Aesop 1922:124)

3 ʔayʔajuθəm Text: kʷuyukʷamən hɛga tə titol jɛnxʷ

ʔukʷ tʰokʷ nes kʷuyukʷəm. hoy (ʔi) hoys ʔot titol jɛnxʷ maʔuxʷas. “χəpjišθ ga!” natəm kʷa tə titol jɛnxʷ. “hanəmč titol sčəʔet. qʷolčensəm λoł. čəʔetčxʷaga tih ʔɛtənit.” “xʷa, xʷa”, hotkʷa kʷuyukʷamən. “manomeč sčəʔet. xʷač toχʷnɛxʷən maʔuxʷan ga qaji.”

4 Direct English Translation

The Fisher and the Little Fish.

He fished all day, but he only caught a little fish. “Please, put me back!” said the little fish. “I am too small now. I will start to grow. Then you’ll have had a big meal.” “No, no,” said the fisher. “I have got you now. I don’t know whether I will catch you again.”

5 Interlinear Gloss

The first line of this interlinear version shows the text in the orthography, while the second line presents a morphophonemic representation. The third line shows glosses for the morphemes, and the final line presents the English translation.¹

- (1) *kʷuyukʷamen hega tə titol jənɣʷ.*
 kʷuyukʷ-amin higa tə=titul jənɣʷ
 fish-A.INTR+INST and CDE.DET=little fish
 ‘The fisher and the little fish.’
- (2) *ɳukʷ tʰokʷ nɛʔs kʷuyukʷʔəm.*
 ʔəwʰkʷ tʰokʷ niʔ=s kʷuyukʷ-ʔəm
 all day be.there=3POSS fish-A.INTR
 ‘He fished all day.’
- (3) *hoy (ʔi) hoys ʔot titol jənɣʷ maʔəxʷas.*
 huy (ʔiy) huys=ʔut titul jənɣʷ maʔ-əxʷ-as
 then (and) only=EXCL little fish obtain-NTR-3ERG
 ‘But he only caught a little fish.’²
- (4) *“xəpʔiʃθ ga!” natəm kʷa tə titol jənɣʷ.*
 xəpəy-aʃ-θ=ga na-t-əm=kʷa tə=titul jənɣʷ
 return-TR-1SG.OBJ=DPRT say-CTR-PASS=RPT CDE.DET=little fish
 “‘Please, put me back!’ said the little fish.’

¹ The abbreviations used in this paper are: 1 ‘first person’, 2 ‘second person’, 3 ‘third person’, A.INTR ‘active intransitive’, CAU ‘causative’, CDE ‘current direct evidence’, CTR ‘control transitivizer’, DET ‘determiner’, DPRT ‘discourse particle’, ERG ‘ergative’, EXCL ‘exclusive’, FUT ‘future’, INST ‘instrumental’, NEG ‘negation’, NTR ‘non-control transitive’, OBJ ‘object’, PASS ‘passive’, POSS ‘possessive’, PRF ‘perfect’, RPT ‘reportative’, SBJ ‘subject’, SBJV ‘subjunctive’, SG ‘singular’, STV ‘stative’, TR ‘transitive’. Affixes are marked by a hyphen ‘-’, clitics by an equal sign ‘=’, infixes by angle brackets ‘< >’, and fused morphemes that cannot be segmented by a ‘+’.

² While the line-by-line translation of Aesop’s fable recorded on Sept. 27, 2019 included the conjunction *ʔiy*, the freely narrated version recorded two days later does not include this element. This fits Watanabe (2003:555, footnote 467)’s observation that the conjunction is often omitted.

wanting to help. We came to her amongst the fog, wanting to understand parts of the language that had yet to be described, and she steered us in the direction of clarity.

In elicitation, we construct contexts that are sometimes outside the realm of the probable, and sometimes even the possible, but Karen entertained these with an eager energy and could create with her words and imagination. She was fiercely creative and would help us build stories from ideas, not only translating our English prompts but breathing life into them and encouraging play - testing what was possible and helping us to learn the limits of the grammar. Karen allowed us to ask silly questions in the spirit of learning, she nurtured exploration and rewarded our attempts. She was kind where we hit limits, and where we crashed spectacularly into the coast with terrible pronunciation mistakes or completely confused word order. She would laugh at our mistakes while offering encouraging and valuable corrections to help us learn.

She was not only a keeper of language, she was a teacher in every sense. Her face would light up with intense excitement and passion when helping anyone with speaking or writing in the language. It was impossible not to smile when with her. Her contributions to the documentation and description of the language are numerous and extend much further than the work we have done and we are grateful for all that she gave.

A lighthouse: Karen was a keeper of language and a dear friend. Her memory will continue to guide us forward and we are blessed to have had the opportunity to learn from her.

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