

mimif (Mermish)

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Chapter 1

Backstory

1.1 General Backstory

Society of mer-people (*meeple*, or *merson* in the singular), who split off from humans before human development of language, so not influenced by human language. Influenced by what sounds carry underwater (e.g. fewer stops, more vowels, nasals, clicks) and how other sea creatures communicate (e.g. whales, clownfish). Used to live closer to coasts, but are now deep sea dwellers, so ocean surface is where dead things go and where danger is, but also where food comes from. Northern Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Newfoundland (that's where I got the rising and falling tide times for the time sentences).

There is currently no written form of the language.

1.2 Biology

6 fingers on each hand (2 opposable thumbs, same other 4 fingers as humans (webbing between pairs of fingers so pairs can work as a unit but also hands can be used for paddling in water) (see Appendix B for illustration); gills inside the body, so lungs are used to move water past the gills and hold water the same way humans hold their breath); tail-fins come in colors usually blue/purple or sometimes dark red; no gender or sex, baby mersons are made by one single parent just wanting it really badly.

1.3 Daily Life

Mostly hunting for food, since they live in open ocean/deep sea (esp. since human developments made it unsafe to be near the coast because humans pollute and are also liable to hunt you for food and sport); poor eyesight, so more words for smells/sounds as well as orientation wrt the earth (magnetic fields); lots of human cargo ships lose cargo in the ATlantic, and they're interested in what they find because htey can sometimes be useful but also it just adds to the ocean trash situation which is not good; because of their need to remain undetected and mobile, they don't keep a lot of unnecessary items.

1.4 Society

Everyone is mostly spread out because there's space to do that in the ocean, but "highway" travel via currents (e.g. Gulf stream); mostly live in nomadic tribes (pods, like whales) that belong to geographic kingdoms, but distance means royalty is not relaly part of daily life; generally peaceful, since there's a lot of pressure to exist off humans' radar and survive in over-fished oceans.

1.5 Values

Good things are associated with ocean currents, which bring warm and nutrient-filled waters as well as food and a means of travel; storms are not good because the rain and turbulent water makes it hard to hear at a distance; whales are very good because they are a source of food and are mysterious and majestic.

1.6 Mythology: ζεμ and safi

The story of the oceans goes something like this:

Back when the world was young, the earth was bored and wished to fill the world with creatures to watch over. But the world is a big place, and filling it would take time, so Earth called on all their children to help them. To their youngest children, ζεμ and safi, two giant saltwater catfish, they gave the responsibility of filling the oceans.

ζεμ and safi soon began to struggle with their tasks. Their personalities were just too different, and all they could agree to make in those first days were flatworms and sea cucumbers. So they spoke to Earth, who divided the oceans between the two.

To ζεμ, they gave all the places the light could touch under the water. ζεμ, who loved to run and play and especially loved to eat, crafted his world in his vision. He filled the coasts and the reefs with millions of different fish so he'd never get bored, and filled the open ocean with huge schools of fish so he'd never go hungry.

To safi, the Earth gave the deepest parts of the sea, where light would never reach from above. safi, who had a deep love of sleeping, dozing, and napping, took her time. As ζεμ created every variation of fish and crustacean he could imagine, safi slept. While she slept, she dreamt. And out of those dreams crawled the strangest, most bizarre creatures to grace the planet.

Eventually, ζεμ's creations drew hungry humans to the water, and the merpeople retreated away from the abundance and variety of ζεμ's waters to the safety of safi's dark and strange domain.

1.7 Metaphors

Whales: live in pods and are mysterious because they spend time above/near the surface (where mer-people can't/dont go because they can't breathe air and are afraid of humans) to breathe, then make deep dives for food (so they live both at the surface and in the deep); too big for meeple to hunt, but are a windfall of food and resources when they die.

Conceptual metaphor: People (target) are whales (source)

1. he's breaching → he's taking a risk for unknown reason (dating back to before mermaids realized whales need to breach to breath)
2. a dolphin → someone who isn't a useful resource to the tribe (based on the premise that dolphins are fake tiny whales)

Conceptual metaphor: Opportunities (target) are whales (source)

1. a fat opportunity → an opportunity that yields large positive results
2. a diving opportunity → it's coming closer (time-wise) / getting closer within the realm of possibility

1.8 Time

Time is usually not precisely told, so it's reported to the closest hour. When discussing lengths of time, it's acceptable to use fractions of hours (e.g. *meet me in 1/3 hour*), and then most people just estimate how long that is as timekeeping is a difficult art underwater.

The numbers six and 12 are important to these meeple, as each merson has 12 fingers, or six sets of webbed pairs (see Appendix B). Each year is divided into five months, each named after an animal historically hunted in that month. Each month has six *αιφε* ("weeks") of twelve *αηφε* (days) each and with 5 days at the end of the year not in any month. The days of the week are named after fingers on the hand, starting from right to left.

The time system is based on the tides, dating back to when this civilization lived close enough to the coast to be affected by the tides. Even though they have moved away from the coasts toward open ocean and the deeps, they still use the established system of keeping time.

Each day is divided into 4 sections of six hours, originally based off the tidal schedule. Each hour has (about) 60 minutes (like human hours). The first section of the day starts around what we'd call 5:00 AM. Time is told

by how many hours into a section have passed.

Time (human)	Language (IPA)	English (literal)
5:00-11:00	ziɣɪm	rising tide
11:00-16:00	saɣɪm	falling tide
16:00-23:00	aɣziɣɪm	second rising tide
23:00-5:00	aɣsaɣɪm	second falling tide

Table 1.1: The four sections of the day

Phonology

	Labial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-Alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	m			n		ŋ	
Plosive	p p ^h			t t ^h		k k ^h	
Affricate							
Fricative		f	θ	s z	ʃ ʒ	x	ɦ
Approx.				r			
Lat. approx.				l			
Glide	w						
Click	ɸ				!		

	Front	Central	Back
High	i iː y yː		u uː ʊ ʊː
Near-High	ɪ ɪː		ʊ ʊː
High-Mid	e eː		
Mid		ə əː	
Low-Mid	ɛ ɛː		ʌ ʌː
Near-Low	æ æː		
Low			ɑ ɑː

6

NB: order of application matters!
 $\text{ak}^h + \text{ɲɪap}^h \not\rightarrow \text{aɲɛɲɪap}^h$
 $\text{ak}^h + \text{ɲɪap}^h \rightarrow \text{aɲɪap}^h$

2.3 Syllable Structure

Allowed Syllable Structures:

1. $(C_{[-stop]})(C_{[-stop]})V$
2. $V(C_{[-stop]})(C_{[-stop]})(C)$
3. (C)
4. $V*$
5. $V*(C_{[-stop]})V*$

Stops must be word-final.

Chapter 3

Counting and Numbers

3.1 Numerals

The number system of this language is in base 12, because each hand has 6 fingers (see Appendix B). Numbers 0-12 have their own words, numbers 13-15 are compounds with some irregularity, and all numbers beyond are also compounds formed the same way but regularly. Compounds take the form *number* + /fie/ (**'and' used for adding numbers**) + **number**. 24 is its own word, and other multiples of 12 are compounds of the form *k twelve*.

	Language	English (literal)		Language	English (literal)
1	fiv	one	13	anfieū	twelve and one
2	ak ^h	two	14	anfiea	twelve and two
3	sa	three	15	anfiesa	twelve and three
4	ŋeʒ	four	16	anfieŋeʒ	twelve and four
5	mʊt ^h	five	17	anfiemʊt ^h	twelve and five
6	æmp ^h	six	18	anfieæmp ^h	twelve and six
7	eiə	seven	19	anfie:iə	twelve and seven
8	esl	eight	20	anfie:sl	twelve and eight
9	fii	nine	21	anfiefi	twelve and nine
10	is	ten	22	anfieir ^h	twelve and ten
11	fʊf	eleven	23	anfiefʊf	twelve and eleven
12	at ^h	twelve	24	hʊtʃ	twenty four
			25	hʊtʃfiefiū	twenty four and one

Table 3.1: Some number examples

Numbers modifying nouns agree with the nouns they modify in number and case and appear after all adjectives modifying that noun.

e.g. four hours

1. xɛnfiə ŋeʒfiə
xɛn -fiə ŋeʒ -fiə
hour -NOM.PL four -NOM.PL
hours four
'four hours(NOMINATIVE)'
2. xɛnɪ ŋeʒɪ
xɛn -ɪ ŋeʒ -ɪ
hour -ACC.PL four -ACC.PL
hours four
'four hours(ACCUSATIVE)'

3. xɛnsfɛ ɲeʒsfɛ
 xɛn -sfɛ ɲeʒ -sfɛ
 hour -POSS.PL four -POSS.PL
 its-hours its-four
 ‘four hours(POSSESSIVE)’

4. xɛnə ɲeʒə
 xɛn -ə ɲeʒ -ə
 hour -ADPOS.PL four -ADP.PL
 hours four
 ‘four hours(ADPOSITIVE)’

3.2 Ordinals

Ordinals do not agree with the nouns they modify in case and number. Rather, they are formed by attaching to the beginning of nouns they modify as a clitic.

e.g.

1. rising tide : zɪʒɪm
 second rising tide : ak^h + zɪʒɪm → aɲzɪʒɪm
2. fish: ʃ:ɛʃ:
 second fish: ak^h + ʃ:ɛʃ: → aɲʃ:ɛʃ:
 third fish: sa + ʃ:ɛʃ:e → saʃ:ɛʃ:
 eighth fish: esl + ʃ:ɛʃ: → eslʃ:ɛʃ:
 25th fish: fʊtɬɛfʊ + ʃ:ɛʃ: → fʊtɬɛfʊʃ:ɛʃ:

Chapter 4

Noun Morphology

4.1 Singulars, Duals, And Plurals

For singular and dual nouns, if no number is included then it is an implicit one or two respectively. For plural nouns, either a number must be specified or the word *slix*, meaning *some unspecified amount*, must be used.

e.g. red tail-fin(s)

saip^h flims
saiph^h -Ø flims -Ø
tail-fin -NOM.SG red -NOM.SG
tail-fin red
'red tail-fin'

sam: flimsm
sam -m flims -m
tail-fin -NOM.DU red -NOM.DU
tail-fin -s red
'(two) red tail-fins'

samfie flimsfie safie
sam -fie flims -fie sa -fie
tail-fin -NOM.PL red -NOM.PL three -NOM.PL
tail-fin -s red three
'three red tail-fins'

samfie flimsfie slixfie
sam -fie flims -fie slix -fie
tail-fin -NOM.PL red -NOM.PL some -NOM.PL
tail-fin -s red some
'some red tail-fins'

4.2 Case Endings

Nouns have **number** (singular, dual, plural) and **case** (nominative, accusative, possessive, and adpositive (used in adpositional phrases)). The number and case are indicated with suffixed morphemes, where each combination of number and case has a different morpheme. The nominative singular form is marked with a null morpheme.

4.2.1 Accusative Case

The accusative case is most often used without an adposition to indicate a noun is the object of a transitive verb.

e.g.

Number	Nominative	Accusative	Possessive	Adpositive
SG	-∅	-aɪ	ɪt ^h	-a
DU	-m	-iɪ	-wɛ	-i
PL	-fiɛ	-ɪ	-sfɛ	-ə

Table 4.1: Case endings

saɪaɪ ʃlɪmsaɪ
 saɪ -aɪ ʃlɪms -aɪ
 tail-fin -ACC.SG red -ACC.SG
 tail-fin red
 ‘red tail-fin’

4.2.2 Nominal Possession (Possessive Case)

Possession is shown by marking the possessive case on the possessed, with no marking on the possessor. Possessed nouns can be **alienable** or **inalienable**, which affects the word order within the noun phrase. Alienable nouns appear before the possessor, and inalienable nouns appear after the possessor.

e.g.

saɪp^h ɲɛwfiɪt^h
 saɪp^h -∅ ɲɛwfiɪ -ɪt^h
 tail-fin -SG.NOM color -SG.POSS
 tail-fin its-color
 ‘tail-fin’s color’

ʃɪɛʃɪt^h wlat^h
 ʃɪɛʃɪ -ɪt^h wlat^h
 fish -SG.POSS 1.SG.PRO
 its-fish it
 ‘its fish’

wlat^h fiɛmuɪt^h
 wlat^h fiɛmuɪ -ɪt^h
 1.SG.PRO head -SG.POSS
 it its-head
 ‘its head’

saɪp^h ɲɛwfiɪt^h
 saɪp^h -∅ ɲɛwfiɪ -ɪt^h
 tail-fin -SG.NOM color -SG.POSS
 tail-fin its-color
 ‘tail-fin’s color’

In the examples above, a fish is not inalienable to a merson (mer-person), but color is inalienable to a tail-fin and a merson’s head is inalienable to a merson. Comparison between examples 2 and 3 demonstrates the word order difference between alienable and inalienable possessives.

Nominal possession can be applied recursively, where the possession is applied first to the head, then to each possessor. A brief example:

ʃɪɛʃɪt^h ɲɛwfiɪt^h wlat^h
 ʃɪɛʃɪ -ɪt^h ɲɛwfiɪ -ɪt^h wlat^h
 fish -SG.POSS color -textscsg.poss 1.SG.PRO
 its-fish its-color me

‘my fish’s color’

For more examples of recursion, see Section 5.2.

4.2.3 Adpositive Case

This case is taken by nouns in adpositional phrases. The adposition is in most cases clitics (postposition) positioned after the last word in the adpositional phrase. These are can be used used to indicate a location, position, indirect object, or more.

e.g. indirect object

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɑmat^h
ʃ:ɛʃ: -a -mat^h
fish -SG.ADP -IO.POST
fish to
‘to a fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:imat^h
ʃ:ɛʃ: -i -mat^h
fish -DU.ADP -IO.POST
fish two to
‘to two fish’

e.g. instrument

anɪlziɑsi
anɪlzi -ɑ -si
whale-bone -SG.ADP -INSTR.POST
whale-bone using
‘using a whale-bone’

anɪlzi:si
anɪlzi -i -si
whale-bone -DU.ADP -INSTR.POST
whale-bone two using
‘using two whale-bones’

e.g. in

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɑsɛ
ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɑ -sɛ
fish -SG.ADP -INE.POST
fish in
‘in a fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:ə slɪxəsɛ
ʃ:ɛʃ: -ə slɪx -ə -sɛ
fish -PL.ADP some -PL.ADP -INE.POST
fish some in
‘in some fish’

e.g. into

ʃ:ɛʃ:asei
ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɑ -sei
fish -SG.ADP -ILL.POST
fish in
‘into a fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:ə slɪxəsei
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -ə slɪx -ə -sei
 fish -PL.ADP some -PL.ADP -ILL.POST
 fish some in
 ‘into some fish’

4.3 Pronouns

Pronouns have **number** (singular, dual, plural), **person** (1st, 2nd inclusive, 2nd exclusive, 3rd), and **case** (nominative, accusative, and adpositive (used in adpositional phrases)). Meeple (mer-people) do not have gender or sex, as is reflected in the language, so third person singular pronouns are applied the same to all individuals and also things. Pronouns do not have a possessive case because people cannot be owned (relation is not shown through possession).

Number	Person	Nominative	Accusative	Adpositive
SG	1	wlat ^h	wlanɑɪ	wlanɑ
	2	zɛm	zɛmɑɪ	zɛmɑ
	3	ʒɑ	ʒɑɑɪ	ʒɑɑ
DU	1 inc	slap ^h	slamiɪ	slami
	1 exc	slan!	slaniɪ!	slani!
	2	zɛɑ	zɛaiɪ	zɛai
	3	ʒɛnt ^h	ʒɛniɪ	ʒɛni
PL	1 inc	nɛʃ	nɛʃɪ	nɛʃə
	1 exc	nɛʃ!	nɛʃɪ!	nɛʃə!
	2	sɛi	sɛiɪ	sɛiə
	3	ʒɛint ^h	ʒɛinɪɪ	ʒɛinə

Table 4.2: Table of Pronouns

e.g.

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪt^h wlat^h
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪt^h wlat^h
 fish -SG.POSS me
 its-fish me
 ‘my fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪt^h ʒɑ
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪt^h ʒɑ
 fish -SG.POSS it
 its-fish it
 ‘its fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪt^h slap^h
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪt^h slap^h
 fish -SG.POSS 1.DU.INCL
 its-fish you-and-me
 ‘our fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪt^h slan!
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪt^h slan!
 fish -SG.POSS 1.DU.EXCL
 its-fish two-of-us-but-not-you
 ‘our fish’

To see how possession works in these examples, see Section 5.1.

Chapter 5

Noun Phrases

5.1 Possession

Possession is shown by marking the possessive case on the possessed, with no marking on the possessor. Possessed nouns can be **alienable** or **inalienable**, which affects the word order within the noun phrase. Alienable nouns appear before the possessor, and inalienable nouns appear after the possessor.

e.g.

saip^h ηεwfiɾt^h
saip^h -∅ ηεwfiɾ -it^h
tail-fin -SG.NOM color -SG.POSS
tail-fin its-color
‘tail-fin’s color’

saip^h ηεwfiɾt^h
saip^h -∅ ηεwfiɾ -it^h
tail-fin -SG.NOM color -SG.POSS
tail-fin its-color
‘tail-fin’s color’

f:ef:ɪt^h wlat^h
f:ef:ɪ -it^h wlat^h
fish -SG.POSS 1.SG.PRO
its-fish it
‘its fish’

wlat^h fiεmunt^h
wlat^h fiεmunt -it^h
1.SG.PRO head -SG.POSS
it its-head
‘its head’

In the examples above, a fish is not inalienable to a merson (mer-person), but color is inalienable to a tail-fin and a merson’s head is inalienable to a merson. Comparison between examples 2 and 3 demonstrates the word order difference between alienable and inalienable possessives.

Nominal possession can be applied recursively, where the possession is applied first to the head, then to each possessor. A brief example:

f:ef:ɪt^h ηεwfiɾt^h wlat^h
f:ef:ɪ -it^h ηεwfiɾ -it^h wlat^h
fish -SG.POSS color -textscsg.poss 1.SG.PRO
its-fish its-color me
‘my fish’s color’

For more examples of recursion, see Section 5.2.

5.2 Recursion

Nominal possession can be applied recursively, where the possession is applied first to the head, then to each possessor, applying the ordering rules for alienable/inalienable nouns. For cases of multiple levels of recursion in the same noun phrase, word ordering can lead to ambiguity. Thus, for complex recursive nominal possession, any important words in the phrase are pulled to the beginning of the sentence and the rest of the possessive phrase is left to the audience to be understood from context.

e.g.

saip^h ɲɛwfi^h
 saip^h -Ø ɲɛwfi -it^h
 tail-fin color -1.SG.POSS
 tail-fin its-color
 ‘tail-fin’s color’

samit^h ɲɛwfi^h S:eS:
 saim -it^h ɲɛwfi -it^h ʃ:ɛʃ:
 tail-fin -1.SG.POSS color -1.SG.POSS fish
 its-tail-fin its-color fish
 ‘fish’s tail-fin’s color’

ɲɛwfi^h samit^h ʃ:ɛʃ:it^h ama
 ɲɛwfi -it^h saim -it^h ʃ:ɛʃ: -it^h ama
 color -1.SG.POSS tail-fin -1.SG.POSS fish 1.SG.POSS parent
 its-color its-tail-fin its-fish parent
 ‘parent’s fish’s tail-fin’s color’

We know in example 2 that the translation cannot be *fish’s color’s tail-fin* because color is inalienable, so its possessor comes before it. We can apply this same logic to example 3, also knowing that fish is alienable to parent, so it must be *paren’ts fish’s...* rather than *fish’s parent...*

5.3 Quantifiers and Definiteness

Quantifiers and definite articles modify nouns and thus agree with the nouns they modify in number and case. For the quantifier nɛm, even if all of the noun in question is just one, they take the plural. Quantifiers and definite articles are listed after adjectives in use.

e.g. all

ʃ:ɛʃ: ʃlɪms nɛm
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -Ø ʃlɪms -Ø nɛm -Ø
 fish red all
 fish red all
 ‘all red fish’

e.g. definiteness

ʃ:ɛʃ: ʃlɪms sim
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -Ø ʃlɪms -Ø sim -Ø
 fish red specific
 fish red specific
 ‘specific red fish’

ʃ:ɛʃ:a ʃlɪmsa simamat^h
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -a ʃlɪms -a sim -a -mat^h
 fish -SG.ADP red -SG.ADP specific -SG.ADP -textipaio.post
 fish red specific to
 ‘to the specific red fish’

5.4 Adjectives

Adjectives agree with the nouns they modify in number and case.

e.g.

ʃ:ɛf: ʃlɪms
 ʃ:ɛf: -Ø ʃlɪms -Ø
 fish -NOM.SG red -NOM.SG
 fish red
 ‘red fish’

ʃ:ɛf:m ʃlɪmsm aɪm
 ʃ:ɛf: -m ʃlɪms -m aɪm -m
 fish -NOM.DU red -NOM.DU two -NOM.DU
 fish red two
 ‘two red fish’

Adjectives can be negated in two ways producing two different negations:

1. By suffixing *nɛʒ* to the adjective stem, meaning not-*adjective*, as in ”not happy, but some other emotion”
2. By suffixing *nɛnɛʒ* to the adjective stem, meaning opposite-*adjective*, as in ”opposite of happy i.e. unhappy”

e.g.

ʃ:ɛf: ʃlɪmsnɛʒ
 ʃ:ɛf: -Ø ʃlɪms -nɛʒ -Ø
 fish -NOM.SG red -NEG -NOM.SG
 fish red not
 ‘not-red fish’

ʃ:ɛf: i:æfnɛʒ
 ʃ:ɛf: -Ø i:æf -nɛʒ -Ø
 fish -NOM.SG quick -NEG -textscnom.sg
 fish quick not
 ‘not-quick fish’

ʃ:ɛf: ʃlɪmsnɛʒ
 ʃ:ɛf: -Ø ʃlɪms -nɛnɛʒ -Ø
 fish -NOM.SG red -NEG -NOM.SG
 fish red -opp
 ‘green fish’

ʃ:ɛf: i:æfnɛnɛʒ
 ʃ:ɛf: -Ø i:æf -nɛʒ -Ø
 fish -NOM.SG quick -NEG -textscnom.sg
 fish quick -un
 ‘slow fish’

5.5 Word Order

Adjectives modifying nouns appear after the nouns they modify. If multiple adjectives modify the same noun, they all follow that noun. Numbers modifying a noun follow other adjectives. Quantifiers/determiners follow numbers. Alienable possessed nouns (with possessive marker) appear before the possessor, and inalienable possessed nouns appear after the possessor.

e.g. ordinal + adjective

aŋʃ:ef: ʃlɪms
 aŋ- ʃ:ef: -Ø ʃlɪms
 second fish -NOM.SG red
 second fish red
 ‘second red fish’

e.g. possessive + definiteness

ʃ:ef:ɪt^h sɪmɪt^h wlat^h
 ʃ:ef: -ɪt^h sɪm -ɪt^h wlat^h
 fish -SG.POSS specific -SG.POSS me
 its-fish its-specific me
 ‘my specific fish’

e.g. possessive + quantifier

ʃ:ef: samsfɛ nɛmsfɛ
 ʃ:ef: -Ø sɪm -sfɛ nɛm -sfɛ
 fish -NOM.SG tail-fin -PL.POSS all -PL.POSS
 fish its-tail-fin -s its-all
 ‘all of the fish’s tail-fins’

e.g. possessive + quantifier + definiteness + ordinals + adjectives + numbers + recursion

ʃ:ef:ɪt^h nɛmɪt^h aŋsɪmwe ʃlɪmswe aŋwe sɪmwe amam sɪm:
 ʃ:ef: -ɪt^h nɛm -ɪt^h aŋ- sɪm -we ʃlɪms -we aŋ -we
 fish -SG.POSS all -SG.POSS second- tail-fin -DU.POSS red -DU.POSS two -DU.POSS
 its-fish its-all second- its-tail-fin its-red its-two
 sɪm -we ama -m sɪm -m
 specific -DU.POSS parent -DU.NOM specific -DU.NOM
 its-specific parent -s specific
 ‘two specific red second tail-fins possessed by all the fishes belonging to two specific parents’

Chapter 6

Verb Morphology

Verbs have **number** (singular, dual, plural) and **person** (first, second, third), **tense** (past, present, future), **perfectivity** (perfect, imperfect).

6.1 Number, Person, Tense

The number, person, and tense are indicated with unique suffixed morphemes, as indicated indicated in the tables below.

PRS	Person	Ending	PST	Person	Ending	FUT	Person	Ending
SG	1	-εt ^h	SG	1	-εm	SG	1	-iwi
	2	-ε		2	-εma		2	-ini
	3	-a		3	-ama		3	-ima
DU	1.INCL	-εms	DU	1.INCL	-εmsala	DU	1.INCL	-ila
	1.EXCL	-εmsa		1.EXCL	-εmsalt ^h		1.EXCL	-ilt ^h
	2	-υιθ		2	-υιθα		2	-ιθ
	3	-lit ^h		3	-lin:a		3	-im
PL	1.INCL	-ειθ	PL	1.INCL	-ειθε	PL	1.INCL	-ειθi
	1.EXCL	-αιθ		1.EXCL	-αιθε		1.EXCL	-αιθi
	2	-eai		2	-eame		2	-ιθl
	3	-lit ^h		3	-lin:e		3	-iml

Table 6.1: Present, past, and future tense verb endings

e.g.

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪ slɪx.ɪ msa
ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪ slɪx -ɪ ms -a
fish -PL.ACC some -PL.ACC have -3.SG.PRS
fish some have
'He has had some fish.'

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪ slɪx.ɪ msama
ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪ slɪx -ɪ ms -ama
fish -PL.ACC some -PL.ACC have -3.SG.PST
fish some have
'He had had some fish.'

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪ slɪx.ɪ msa
ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪ slɪx -ɪ ms -ima
fish -PL.ACC some -PL.ACC have -3.SG.FUT
fish some have
'He will have had some fish.'

6.2 Aspect

Imperfective aspect is marked with the /wat^h/ suffix (attached behind the number-person-tense morpheme). If unmarked, then aspect is unspecified.

e.g.

ʊm:ɪɛma
ʊm:ɪ -ɛma
swim -2.SG.PRS
swim
'You have swum.'

ʊm:ɪɛmawat^h
ʊm:ɪ -ɛma -wat^h
swim -2.SG.PRS -IMPF
swim
'You are swimming.'

ʊs:ama
ʊs: -ama
swim -3.SG.PST
swim
'You had heard.'

ʊs:amawat^h
ʊs: -ama -wat^h
swim -3.SG.PST -IMPF
swim
'You were hearing.'

Chapter 7

Verb Phrases

7.1 Adverbs

Adverbs can be formed from adjectives by adding the verb ending to the nominative singular adjective (the stem).

e.g.

S:eS: i:æf

f:ef: -Ø i:æf -Ø

fish -SG.NOM quick -SG.NOM

fish quick

‘The fish is quick.’

S:eS: i:æfa IENa

f:ef: i:æf -a lɛk^h -a

fish quick.ADV -3.SG.PRS flap -3.SG.PRS

fish quickly flap

‘The fish flaps quickly.’

S:eS: i:æf i:æfa IENa

f:ef: i:æf i:æf -a lɛk^h -a

fish quick quick.ADV -3.SG.PRS flap -3.SG.PRS

fish quick quickly flap

‘The quick fish flaps quickly.’

7.2 Word Order

Adverbs modifying verbs occur before the verb and agree in number, person, tense, and aspect. *e.g.*

S:eS: i:æfa Um:ia

f:ef: i:æf -a um:i -a

fish fast.ADV -3.SG.PRS swim -3.SG.PRS

fish quickly swim

‘The fish swims quickly.’

S:eS: s2i:æfa Um:ia

f:ef: i:æf -a um:i -a

fish NEG- fast.ADV -3.SG.PRS swim -3.SG.PRS

fish not quickly swim

‘The fish does not swim quickly.’

(Negation is discussed in Section 8.3.)

Chapter 8

Sentences

8.1 To Be (Or Not To Be)

Zero copula encoding is mandatory for constructions involving predicate nominals. The order of the nominals is left to the speaker to decide, and tense is understood from context. Ambiguity is resolved through context as well.

e.g.

S:eS: SIIms

f:ef: flims

fish red

fish red

‘The fish is red.’

SIIms S:eS:

flims f:ef:

red fish

red fish

‘The fish is red.’

wlAt^h eNek^h

wlat^h eyek^h

1.SG.NOM.PRON trash

I trash

‘I am/was/will be trash.’

8.2 Transitive and Intransitive

8.2.1 Active Voice

All sentences are nominative-accusative. For transitive sentences, the subject is in the nominative and the object is in the accusative. For intransitive sentences, the subject is in the nominative. The verb must agree with the subject in number.

e.g.

naUnIIHe sIIxHe naUmlinwAt^h

naʊnl -fie slix -fie naʊm -lit^h -wat^h

whale -PL.NOM some -PL.NOM sing -3.PL.PRS -IMPF

whale -s some sing

‘Some whales are singing.’

naUnIIHe sIIxHe slAmir !amsinwAt^h

naʊnl -fie slix -fie slamir !amsit^h -it^h -wat^h

whale -PL.NOM some -PL.NOM -1.INCL.DU.NOM.PRON eat -3.PL.PRS -IMPF

whale -s some two-of-us-but-not-you eat

‘Some whales are eating us.’

Adpositional phrases follow the subject noun phrase and precede the object.

naUnIlHe sIlxHe wUlTasei Um:ilit^h
naʊnɪl -fiə sɪlx -fiə wʊʌθ -a -sei ʊm:i -lit^h
 whale -PL.NOM some -PL.NOM water-mass -SG.ADP -into.POST swim -3.PL.PRS
 whale -s some water-mass into swim
 ‘Some whales have swum into the water mass.’

anIlzi:si l2mAsr EmImliwi
anɪlzi -i -si lɒmas -ɪ ɛmɪml -iwi
 whale-bone -DU.ADP -using.POST hagfish -SG.ACC attack -1.SG.FUT
 whale-bone -s using hagfish attack
 ‘I will attack the hagfish using two whale-bones.’

8.2.2 Passive Voice

In passive voice sentences, the agent is indicated by the adpositive + *si*, while the patient is in the nominative. Passive voice verbs are indicated by prefixing *zis* to the verb stem and agree with the word in the nominative in number.

e.g.

wlat^h simʊɪ ɛmɪmlɛnwat^h
wlat^h simʊ -ɪ ɛmɪml -ɛt^h -wat^h
 1.SG.NOM.PRON iceberg -SG.ACC attack -1.SG.PRS -IMPF
 I iceberg attack
 ‘I am attacking the iceberg.’

simʊ wlanasi zisɛmɪmlawat^h
simʊ wlanə -si zɪs- ɛmɪml -a -wat^h
 iceberg 1.SG.ADP.PRON -by.POST PASS- attack -3.SG.PRS -IMPF
 iceberg me by attack
 ‘The iceberg is being attacked by me.’

wlat^h simʊasi zisɛmɪmlɛnwat^h
wlat^h simʊ -a -si zɪs- ɛmɪml -ɛt^h -wat^h
 1.SG.NOM.PRON iceberg -SG.ADP -by.POST PASS- attack -1.SG.PRS -IMPF
 I iceberg by attack
 ‘I am being attacked by the iceberg.’

Some verbs are automatically in the passive voice, do not take the passive prefix, and cannot be used as an active verb.

e.g.

naʊnɪlm wlanasi ʃylθm
naʊnɪl -m wlanə -si ʃylθ -ɪm
 whale -DU.NOM 1.SG.ADP.PRON -by.POST follow.PASS -3.du.fut
 whale -s me -by.POST follow -
 ‘The whales will be followed by me → I will follow the whales’

8.3 Negation

Negation can be expressed in two ways. For sentences containing a verb, the clitic /sɒ-/ is attached to the beginning of the verb phrase. *e.g.*

lɒmasaɪ fiɛt^h
lɒmas -aɪ fiɛ -ɛt^h
 hagfish -SG.ACC smell -1.SG.PRS
 hagfish smell
 ‘I have smelled the hagfish.’

$\lambda mas a i \quad sa f e i e t^h$
 $\lambda mas \quad -ar \quad sa- \quad f e i \quad -e t^h$
 hagfish -SG.ACC NEG- smell -1.SG.PRS
 hagfish not smell
 ‘I have not smelled the hagfish.’

For sentences without a verb, $ʒe$ (*no*) is added to the end of the sentence. *e.g.*

$wlat^h \quad f: e f:$
 $wlat^h \quad f: e f:$
 1.SG.NOM.PRON fish
 I fish
 ‘I am a fish.’

$wlat^h \quad S: e S: \quad Z E$
 $wlat^h \quad f: e f: \quad ʒe$
 1.SG.NOM.PRON fish no
 I fish no
 ‘I am not a fish.’

This gives us two different ways to negate time sentences (Section 8.6.1):

$a j z i m \quad x e n i \quad a j i \quad ʒe$
 $a j- \quad z i m \quad -\emptyset \quad x e n \quad -i i \quad a j \quad -i i \quad ʒe$
 two- falling tide -NOM.SG hour -ACC.DU two -ACC.DU no
 second- rising tide hour -s two no
 ‘It is not 7:00 pm’

$a j z i m \quad x e n i \quad a j i \quad s a m s a$
 $a j- \quad z i m \quad -\emptyset \quad x e n \quad -i i \quad a j \quad -i i \quad s a- \quad m s \quad -a$
 two- falling tide -NOM.SG hour -ACC.DU two -ACC.DU not have -3.SG.PRS
 second- rising tide hour -s two not have
 ‘It is not 7:00 pm’

8.4 Possession

Possession is shown using the verb *ins* (*have*). *ins* operates like any other transitive verb, taking a subject and direct object. Both alienable and inalienable possessions are treated the same way.

e.g.

$u n i l z i \quad ɲ e ʒ i \quad m s e t^h$
 $u n i l z i \quad -i \quad ɲ e ʒ \quad -i \quad m s \quad -e t^h$
 whale-bone -PL.ACC four -PL.ACC have -1.SG.PRES
 whale-bone four have
 ‘I have four whale-bones.’

$a m a i \quad ɲ e ʒ i \quad m s e m$
 $a m a \quad -i \quad ɲ e ʒ \quad -i \quad m s \quad -e t^h$
 parent -PL.ACC four -PL.ACC have -1.SG.PRES
 parent four have
 ‘I have four parents.’

$s a m s i \quad \lambda m a s a i \quad m s e t^h$
 $s a i p^h \quad -s i \quad \lambda m a s \quad -a i \quad m s \quad -e t^h$
 tail-fin -in.POST hagfish have -1.SG.PRS
 tail-fin in hagfish have
 ‘I have a hagfish in my tail-fin.’

Time sentences are formed as possessive sentences (see Section 8.6.1).

8.5 Location

Location is marked by a number of postpositions, which take the adpositive case. The most common are *sœ* (*in*), *sei* (*into*), *mei* (*at*), *mia* (*near*), *li* (*through*; preposition, not postposition), and *li* (*below*).

wulθsœ um:iæt^h
wulθ -sœ *um:i* -εt^h
 water-mass -in.POST swim -1.SG.PRS
 water-mass in swim
 ‘I swim in the water-mass.’

naʊnɪlm wulθsei wlanasi fylθim
naʊnɪl -m *wulθ* -sei *wlana* -si *fylθ* -im
 whale -DU.NOM water-mass -into.POST 1.SG.ADP.PRON -by.POST follow -3.du.fut
 whale -s water-mass into me -by.POST follow
 ‘I will follow the whales into the water-mass’

eɲfiam:ei ʒaɑɪ us:εm
eɲfiap^h -mei *ʒaɑɪ* us: -εm
 shipwreck -at.POST hear 3.SG.ACC.PRON -1.SG.PST
 shipwreck at it hear
 ‘I heard it at the shipwreck.’

wulθmia um:iεm
wulθ -mia *um:i* -εm
 shipwreck -near.POST swim -1.SG.PST
 shipwreck near swim
 ‘I swam near the shipwreck.’

simʊɪli um:iεm
simʊ -li *um:i* -εm
 iceberg -below.POST swim -1.SG.PST
 iceberg below swim
 ‘I swam below the iceberg.’

li wulθ um:iεm
li *wulθ* *um:i* -εm
 through.PREP water-mass swim -1.SG.PST
 through water-mass swim
 ‘I swam through the water-mass.’

Some words are irregular and do not take the adpositive with location words. Two notable examples are *ʒεm* (the part of the ocean reachable by light) and *safi* (the dark depths of the ocean), which are derived from mermish mythology (mermythology), and are irregular in adpositive and accusative cases and are always inalienable possessors.

li ʒεm i:æfiwi um:iwi
li *ʒεm* *i:æf* -iwi *um:i* -iwi
 through.PREP light-ocean quickly -1.SG.FUT swim -1.SG.FUT
 through light-ocean quickly swim
 ‘I will swim quickly through the light-ocean.’

safisi məmamiwi
safi -si *məmap^h* -iwi
 deep-ocean -in.POST sleep -1.SG.FUT
 deep-ocean in sleep
 ‘I will sleep in the deep-ocean.’

8.6 Time

8.6.1 Time as a Possession Sentence

Time sentences take the form of a "has" sentence. A time sentence starts with which tide it is in the nominative, followed by the number of hours (or hour, singular) into the tide in the accusative, then the singular third-person form of the verb *to have*. The hours can be modified by *and half* to indicate that it is near the middle of the hour, as it's hard to keep track of exact minutes underwater. It is also valid to use the present third-person verb *begins* or *ends* rather than the hours + *to have* if a new tide has just begun or will begin soon respectively. The *to have* or *one* (when only one hour has passed since a new tide) are sometimes elided.

1. saʒɪm eɪja

saʒɪm	-Ø	eɪj	-a
falling tide	-NOM.SG	begin	-3.SG.PRS
falling tide		begin	-s

'It is just past 11 am'

2. ziʒɪm suɫa

ziʒɪm	-Ø	suɫ	-a
rising	-NOM.SG	end	-3.SG.PRS
rising tide		end	-s

'It is almost 11 am'

3. aɲsaʒɪm xɛnɪ ɲeʒɪ msa

ak ^h -	saʒɪm	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-ɪ	ɲeʒ	-ɪ	ms	-a
two-	falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.PL	four	-ACC.PL	have	-3.SG.PRS
second-	falling tide		hour	-s	four		has	

'It is 3 am'

4. aɲziʒɪm xɛnɪ aɲfiemʊnɪ msa

ak ^h -	ziʒɪm	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-ɪ	aɲ	-fi	-mʊn	-ɪ	ms	-a
two-	falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.PL	two	-and	-half	-ACC.PL	have	-3.SG.PRS
second-	rising tide		hour	-s	two	and	half		has	

'It is 7:30 pm'

5. aɲziʒɪm xɛnɪ aɲfiemʊnɪ

ak ^h -	ziʒɪm	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-ɪ	aɲ	-fi	-mʊn	-ɪ
two-	falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.PL	two	-and	-half	-ACC.PL
second-	rising tide		hour	-s	two	and	half	

'It is 7:30 pm'

6. saʒɪm xɛnɪ fɪʊar msa

saʒɪm	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-aɪ	fɪʊ	-aɪ	ms	-a
falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.SG	one	-ACC.SG	have	-3.SG.PRS
falling tide		hour		one		has	

'It is noon'

7. saʒɪm xɛnɪ msa

saʒɪm	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-aɪ	ms	-a
falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.SG	have	-3.SG.PRS
falling tide		hour		has	

'It is noon'

8. saʒɪm xɛnɪ

saʒɪm	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-aɪ
falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.SG
falling tide		hour	

'It is noon'

9. zizim xeni aji msa

<i>zizim</i>	-Ø	<i>xet^h</i>	-iɪ	<i>aj</i>	-iɪ	<i>ms</i>	-a
falling tide	-NOM.SG	hour	-ACC.DU	two	-ACC.DU	have	-3.SG.PRS
rising tide		hour	-s	two		has	

‘It is 7:00 am’

Comparison of examples 4 & 5 and 6, 7, & 8 demonstrate omission of *to have* and *one*. This language does not mark definiteness or gender, but does mark case and number (singular, dual, plural).

8.6.2 Time as a Noun Phrase

Time can also be expressed through nominal possession in a postpositional phrase. To use a time in a noun phrase, the appropriate tide is the possessor and the number of hours is the possessed (if any hours). *e.g.*

ajsaʒima ɲeʒxenasus

<i>ak^h</i>	<i>saʒim</i>	-a	<i>ɲeʒ-</i>	<i>xet^h</i>	-a	- <i>sus</i>
two-	falling tide	-ADP.SG	three.ORD	hour	-ADP.SG	-during.POST
second-	falling tide		third-	hour		during

‘at 3 am’

ajsaʒimasus

<i>ak^h</i>	<i>saʒim</i>	-a	- <i>les</i>
two-	falling tide	-ADP.SG	-before.POST
second-	falling tide		before

‘before 11 pm’

8.7 Comparison

8.7.1 Comparatives

Comparison is done by suffixing *if* to the comparative and the standard, then adding the case ending that agrees in number and case to the comparee NP. Pronoun standards agree with the comparee before suffixing the comparison morpheme. Adjectives modifying the standard also take the suffix, and the listener understands through context and word order which adjective is modifying the standard and which is the comparative.

e.g.

wlat^h i:aeɸif zɛmɪf

<i>wlat^h</i>	<i>i:aeɸ</i>	- <i>if</i>	<i>zɛm</i>	- <i>if</i>
1.SG.NOM.PRON	quick	-COMP	2.SG.NOM.PRON	-COMP
I	quicker	than	you	

‘I am quicker than you.’

wlat^h i:aeɸif ʃ:ef:ɪf ʃlɪmsɪf

<i>wlat^h</i>	<i>i:aeɸ</i>	- <i>if</i>	<i>ʃ:ef:</i>	- <i>if</i>	<i>ʃlɪms</i>	- <i>if</i>
1.SG.NOM.PRON	quick	-COMP	fish	-COMP	red	-COMP
I	quicker	than	fish		red	

‘I am quicker than the red fish.’

ʃ:ef:ɑɪ ʃlɪmsɪfɑɪ ʃ:ef:ɪfɑɪ smɪfɑɪ mset^h

<i>ʃ:ef:</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>ʃlɪms</i>	- <i>if</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>ʃ:ef:</i>	- <i>if</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>sm</i>	- <i>if</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>ms</i>	- <i>et^h</i>
fish	-SG.ACC	red	-COMP	-SG.ACC	fish	-COMP	-SG.ACC	that	-COMP	-SG.ACC	have	-1.SG.PRS
fish		redder	than		fish			that			have	

‘I have a fish that is redder than that fish.’

ʃ:ef:ɑɪ ʃlɪmsɪfɑɪ ʃ:ef:ɪfɑɪ nɛmɪfɑɪ mset^h

<i>ʃ:ef:</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>ʃlɪms</i>	- <i>if</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>ʃ:ef:</i>	- <i>if</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>nɛm</i>	- <i>if</i>	- <i>ɑɪ</i>	<i>ms</i>	- <i>et^h</i>
fish	-SG.ACC	red	-COMP	-SG.ACC	fish	-COMP	-SG.ACC	all	-COMP	-SG.ACC	have	-1.SG.PRS
fish		redder	than		fish			all			have	

‘I have a fish that is redder than all fish → I have the reddest fish’

This last example can also be constructed using superlatives (8.7.2)

Comparative adjectives can be used as adverbs (7.1).

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æfɪfa naʊnɪlfa ʊm:ia
 ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf -ɪf -a naʊnɪl -ɪf -a ʊm:i -a
 fish quick -COMP -3.SG.PRS whale -COMP -3.SG.PRS swim -3.SG.PRS
 fish quick -er whale swim
 ‘The fish swims more quickly than a whale.’

8.7.2 Superlatives

Superlatives are formed by suffixing *ɪfnɛm* to an adjective stem. Superlatives agree with the NPs they modify in number and case.

e.g.

wlat^h i:æfɪfnɛm
 wlat^h i:æf -ɪfnɛm
 1.SG.NOM.PRON quick -SUPL
 I quick -est
 ‘I am the quickest.’

ʃ:ɛʃ: ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪfnɛm i:æfɪfnɛm
 ʃ:ɛʃ: ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪfnɛm i:æf -ɪfnɛm
 fish fish -SUPL quick -SUPL
 fish fish quick -est
 ‘The fish is the quickest fish.’

ʃ:ɛʃ:ɪfnɛmaɪ ʃlɪmsɪfnɛmaɪ mɛt^h
 ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɪfnɛm -aɪ ʃlɪms -ɪfnɛm -aɪ mɛs -ɛt^h
 fish -SUPL -SG.ACC red -SUPL -SG.ACC have -1.SG.PRES
 fish reddest have
 ‘I have the reddest fish.’

Compare this last example to the equivalent construction using comparatives (8.7.1) .

Superlative adjectives can be used as adverbs (7.1).

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æfɪfnɛma ʊm:ia
 ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf -ɪfnɛm -a ʊm:i -a
 fish quick -SUPLP -3.SG.PRS swim -3.SG.PRS
 fish quick -est swim
 ‘The fish swims the quickest.’

8.8 Questions (And Maybe Some Answers)

8.8.1 Yes–No Questions

Yes–no questions involving the zero copula indicated by the first word of the sentence – either *sa* if the speaker is indicating an expected ‘yes’ answer, *ʒɛ* to indicate an expected ‘no’ answer, or *saʒɛ* if no expectation.

e.g.

sa ʃlɪms ʃ:ɛʃ:
 sa wlat^h ʃ:ɛʃ:
 yes red fish
 yes red fish
 ‘The fish is red, isn’t it’

ʒɛ ʃlɪms ʃɪɛʃ:
 ʒɛ wlat^h ʃɪɛʃ:
 no 1.SG.NOM.PRON fish
 no I fish
 ‘The fish isn’t red, is it?’

saʒɛ ʃlɪms ʃɪɛʃ:
 saʒɛ wlat^h ʃɪɛʃ:
 yes-no red fish
 yes-no red fish
 ‘Is the fish red?’

Other yes–no questions are formed by moving the verb phrase to the beginning of the sentence (while maintaining all other word order).

e.g.

sfʌ wlana ʊmɪ:ɪniwat^h
 sfʌ wlana ʊmɪ:ɪ -ini -wat^h
 with.COM.PRE 1.SG.ADP swim -2.SG.FUT -IMPF
 with me swim
 ‘You will be swimming with me.’

ʊmɪ:ɪniwat^h sfʌ wlana
 ʊmɪ:ɪ -ini -wat^h sfʌ wlana
 swim -2.SG.FUT -IMPF with.COM.PRE 1.SG.ADP
 swim with me
 ‘Will you be swimming with me?’

ɪ:æfɛma ʊmɪ:ɪma sfʌ wlana
 ɪ:æf -ɛma ʊmɪ:ɪ -ɛma sfʌ wlana
 quickly -2.SG.FUT swim -2.SG.FUT -IMPF with.COM.PRE 1.SG.ADP
 quickly swim with me
 ‘Did you swim quickly with me?’

!amsawat^h lʌmas naʊnɪlʌɪ
 !ams -a -wat^h lʌmas naʊnɪl -aɪ
 eat -3.SG.PRS -IMPF hagfish whale -SG.ACC
 eat hagfish whale
 ‘Did the hagfish eat the whale?’

Special emphasis can be placed on certain words in a question by suffixing /-θe/ to the word in question. For example:

!ɪ:æfawənθe amsawat^h lʌmas naʊnɪlʌɪ
 ɪ:æf -a -wat^h -θe !ams -a -wat^h lʌmas naʊnɪl -aɪ
 quickly -E.SG.PRS -IMPF -textscq eat -3.SG.PRS -IMPF hagfish whale -SG.ACC
 quickly eat hagfish whale
 ‘Did the hagfish eat the whale *quickly*?’

Answers to yes/no questions are either just a *sa* or *ʒɛ* or else should have the answer (*sa/ʒɛ*) at the end of the sentence, regardless of the form of the response.

e.g.

ʃlɪms ʃɪɛʃ: sa
 sa wlat^h ʃɪɛʃ:
 red fish yes
 red fish yes
 ‘Yes, the fish is red.’

ʃlms ʃ:ef: ʒɛ
 ʒɛ wlat^h ʃ:ef:
 red fish no
 red fish no

‘No, the fish is not red.’

ʌmas naʊnɪlɑː!amsawat^h sa
 ʌmas naʊnɪl -aɪ !ams -a -wat^h sa
 hagfish whale -SG.ACC eat -3.SG.PRS -IMPF yes
 hagfish whale eat yes

‘Yes, the hagfish did eat the whale.’

8.8.2 Wh- Questions

”Wh-” questions ask for an answer that fills a specific part of the sentence. These questions are formed using the 3rd person pronoun with the appropriate number (as judged by the questioner) + /-θe/ in place of the word being questioned, maintaining normal sentence word order. For unknown quantities (how many?), the default number 12 (*at^h*) + /-θe/ is used instead of the 3rd person pronoun.

e.g.

ʒaθe ʌmasɑː!amsawat^h
 ʒa -θe ʌmas -aɪ !ams -a -wat^h
 3.SG.NOM.PRON -Q hagfish -SG.ACC eat -3.SG.PRS -IMPF
 who hagfish eat -ing

‘Who is eating the hagfish?’

ʌmas ʒaarθe !amsawat^h
 ʌmas ʒaar -θe !ams -a -wat^h
 hagfish 3.SG.ACC.PRON -Q eat -3.SG.PRS -IMPF
 hagfish who eat -ing

‘Who(m) is the hagfish eating?’

ʌmas ʒaarθe !amsawat^h
 ʌmas ʒaar -θe !ams -a -wat^h
 hagfish 3.SG.ACC.PRON -Q eat -3.SG.PRS -IMPF
 hagfish who eat -ing

‘Who(m) is the hagfish eating?’

naʊnɪlɑː ʒaaθesi ɛmmɪlɪni
 naʊnɪl -aɪ ʒaa -θe -si ɛmmɪl -ini
 whale -SG.ACC 3.SG.ADP.PRON -Q -INSTR.POST attack -2.SG.FUT
 whale what using attack

‘What will you use to attack the whale?’

ʒaθe amɑːt^h wlat^h
 ʒa -θe ama -ɪt^h ʒem
 3.SG.NOM.PRON -Q parent -SG.POSS 2.SG.NOM.PRON
 who parent you

‘Whose parent are you?’

ʒaaθesʊs ʊmɪɪni
 ʒaa -θe -sʊs ʊmɪɪ -ini
 3.SG.ADP.PRON -Q -during.POST swim -2.SG.FUT
 when during swim

‘When are you going to swim?’

wlanai ʒaθemui emmlema

wlanai	ʒaa	-θe	-mui	emmle	-ema
1.SG.ACC.PRON	2.SG.ADP.PRON	-Q	-because-of.POST	attack	-2.SG.FUT
me	why		because-of	attack	

‘Why did you attack me?’

Answers to Wh-questions are not always complete sentences or phrases, but should agree with the /θe/-word they answer.

e.g.

Q: nu ʒaθe umiila

nu	ʒaa	-θe	umi	-ila
to.PREP	3.SG.ADP.PRON	-Q	swim	-1.DU.INCL.FUT
to	what		swim	

‘Where will we swim to?’

A1: nu simua umiila

nu	simu	-a	umi	-ila
to.prep	iceberg	-SG.ADP	swim	-1.DU.INCL.FUT
to	iceberg		swim	

‘We will swim to the iceberg.’

A2: nu simua

nu	simu	-a
to.prep	iceberg	-SG.ADP
to	iceberg	

‘To the iceberg.’

A3: simua

simu	-a
iceberg	-SG.ADP
iceberg	

‘(To) the iceberg.’

Chapter 9

Communication

9.1 Greetings

The most informal greeting, used between people who know each other, is *euʒ*. Using this greeting with someone unfamiliar would typically lead to a "you talkin' to me???" reaction, but isn't inherently offensive. This is spoken with a lilting, song-like prosody inspired by whale-calls.

Friendly/informal greetings between strangers are sentences that involve a pleasantry or introduction. The informal greeting *euʒ* can be used after a quick introduction.

e.g.

nimʊ wlat^h euʒ
nimʊ wlat^h euʒ
nimU 1.SG.NOM.PRON hello
nimU I hello
'Hello! I'm Nemo.'

saʒim aɪʊ
saʒim aɪʊ
falling-tide warm
falling-tide warm
'Good afternoon.'

ziʒim aɪʊ
ziʒim aɪʊ
rising-tide warm
rising-tide warm
'Good morning.'

Greetings in passing (not stopping for a conversation) are typically conveyed through body language (a wave of the hand or a quick tail- or fin-flap), but can be vocalized with an alveolar click (//).

Formal greeting are used when talking to individuals of note/rank. This includes pod/family leaders, praiseworthy individuals, or subjects of intense flattery. These greetings are well-known, and shortening or changing of these greetings through omission or substitution of words are used mockingly.

e.g. the serious ones

ʒemɑɪ ɦɪɪɛt^h mɪt^h naʊnɪlɑɪ ɦɪɪɛt^h
ʒemɑɪ ɦɪɪɪ -ɛt^h mɪt^h naʊnɪl -ɑɪ ɦɪɪɪ -ɛt^h
2.SG.ACC.PRON see -1.SG.PRS and-so.CONJ whale -1.SG.ACC see -1.SG.PRS
you see and-so whale see
'I have seen you and-so I have seen a whale.'

e.g. the not-serious ones

zεmqɪ mit^h naʊnɪɪɪ
 zεmqɪ mit^h naʊnɪ -aɪ
 2.SG.ACC.PRON and-so.CONJ whale -1.SG.ACC
 you and-so whale
 ‘I have seen you and-so I have seen a whale hahahahahahha.’

e.g. the not-serious ones

zεmqɪ ɦɪɪɛt^h mit^h lɪmqɪɪ ɦɪɪɛt^h
 zεmqɪ ɦɪɪɪ -ɛt^h mit^h lɪmqɪ -aɪ ɦɪɪɪ -ɛt^h
 2.SG.ACC.PRON see -1.SG.PRS and-so.CONJ hagfish -1.SG.ACC see -i.sg.prs
 you see and-so hagfish see
 ‘I have seen you and-so I have seen a hagfish (rude!!!).’

9.2 Partings

The most informal parting, used between people with basic familiarity with one another, is *a:rwε*. Using this parting with someone unfamiliar would typically lead to a “*you talkin’ to me???*” reaction, but isn’t inherently offensive. This is spoken with a rising, song-like prosody inspired by whale-calls.

The somewhat less informal parting is used to impart well-wishes on the departee. It is sometimes shortened, since it is a familiar phrase.

e.g.

mɛɪ sɒfi ʊmɪ:ɪni
 mɛ- -ɪɪ sɒfi ʊmɪ -ini
 IMP- INE deep-ocean swim -2.SG.FUT
 in deep ocean swim
 ‘Be safe/bye!’

mɛɪsɒfi
 mɛ- -ɪɪ -sɒfi
 IMP- INE deep-ocean
 in deep
 ‘Be safe/bye!’

Partings in passing (not stopping for a conversation) are typically conveyed through body language (a wave of the arm or a quick tail- or fin-flap), but can be vocalized with an alveolar click (//) similarly to greetings.

Formal parting are not typical because if someone’s really that important they’ll just tell you that you’re leaving now (rude) or just swan off. A slightly mocking parting (someone you’re not a fan of is swimming off) would be a variant of the formal greeting but modified to reflect that the person is departing.

e.g.

zεmqɪ ɦɪɪɛma mit^h mɛmqɪma
 zεmqɪ ɦɪɪɪ -ɛma mit^h mɛmqɪ^h -ɛt^h
 2.SG.ACC.PRON see -1.SG.PST and-so.CONJ sleep -1.SG.PST
 you see and-so sleep
 ‘I saw you and-so I slept (zzzz).’

zεmqɪ ɦɪɪɛma mit^h sɪɦɪɪɛt^h
 zεmqɪ ɦɪɪɪ -ɛma mit^h sɪ- ɦɪɪɪ -ɛt^h
 2.SG.ACC.PRON see -1.SG.PST and-so.CONJ -NEG see -1.SG.PRES
 you see and-so not see
 ‘I saw you and-so I don’t see.’

9.3 Compliments and Insults

9.3.1 Compliments

General compliments (not about a particular characteristic) typically either draw from the mermish fascination with whales or highlight a person's place/importance to the pod.

e.g.

zɛm	naʊnɪɪfnɛmɪt ^h	naxɪfnɛmɪt ^h	nɛʃ				
zɛm	naʊnɪɪ	-ɪfnɛm	-ɪt ^h	naxɪ	-ɪfnɛm	-ɪt ^h	nɛʃ
2.SG.NOM.PRON	whale	-SUPL	-SG.POSS	huge	-SUPL	-SG.POSS	1.INCL.PL.NOM.PRON
you	whale			huge	-est		us

‘You are our hugest whale. (Wow!! Very nice)’

zɛm	naxɪfnɛm		
zɛm	naxɪ	-ɪfnɛm	
2.SG.NOM.PRON	huge	-SUPL	
you	huge	-est	

‘You are the hugest. (Pretty darn nice)’

zɛm	naxɪ		
zɛm	naxɪ		
2.SG.NOM.PRON	huge		
you	huge		

‘You are huge. (Slightly lukewarm, possibly damning with faint praise)’

nɛm	zɛma	ʒasafɪt ^h si	Um:iaIT				
nɛm	zɛma	ʒasaf	-ɪt ^h	-si	ʊm:i	-aɪθ	
all	2.SG.ADP.PRON	shadow	-SG.POSS	-in.POST	swim	-1.EXCL.PL.PRS	
all	you	your-shadow		in	swim		

‘We all swim in your shadow → Your presence makes us safe → You’re generally very useful to the pod.’

9.3.2 Insults

General insults (not about a particular characteristic) typically either draw from the mermish fascination with whales or diminish a person's place/importance to the pod. Comparisons to debris from human existence are also considered particularly insulting because the merms do not appreciate the sloppy presence of humans in the oceans.

e.g.

zɛm	naʊnɪɪfnɛmɪt ^h	naxɪfnɛmɪt ^h	nɛʃ				
zɛm	naʊnɪɪ	-ɪfnɛm	-ɪt ^h	naxɪ	-ɪfnɛm	-ɪt ^h	nɛʃ
2.SG.NOM.PRON	whale	-SUPL	-SG.POSS	huge	-SUPL	-SG.POSS	1.INCL.PL.NOM.PRON
you	whale			huge	-est		us

‘You are a dolphin → You are small and fake whale → You’re fake and useless’

zɛm	naxɪmɛnɛʒɪfnɛm		
zɛm	naxɪ	-nɛnɛʒ	-ɪfnɛm
2.SG.NOM.PRON	huge	-NEG	-SUPL
you	huge	opp	-est

‘You are the tiniest.’

zɛm	naxɪmɛnɛʒ		
zɛm	naxɪmɛnɛʒ		
2.SG.NOM.PRON	huge	-NEG	
you	huge	opp	

‘You are tiny.’

zɛm ɛɲek^h
 zɛm ɛɲek^h
 2.SG.NOM.PRON debris
 you debris
 ‘You are trash/human debris.’

9.4 Speech Acts

9.4.1 Commands

Commands are formed by using the clitic *mɛ* at the beginning of the sentence with the future tense verb.
e.g.

sʃɒ wlana ʊ:mi:ni
 sʃɒ wlana ʊ:mi -ini
 with.ACC 1.SG.ADP.PRON swim -2.SG.FUT
 with me you swim
 ‘You will swim with me.’

mɛsʃɒ wlana ʊ:mi:ni
 mɛ- sʃɒ wlana ʊ:mi -ini
 IMP- with.ACC 1.SG.ADP.PRON swim -2.SG.FUT
 with me you swim
 ‘Swim with me.’

mɛʃ:ɛʃ:ɑɪ ʃamini
 mɛ- ʃ:ɛʃ: -ɑɪ ʃam -ini
 IMP- fish -ACC.SG swallow-whole -2.SG.FUT
 fish swallow-whole
 ‘Swallow-whole the fish.’

mɛɛɲɪθl
 mɛ- ɛɲ -ɪθl
 IMP- begin -2.PL.FUT
 begin
 ‘(Y’all) begin.’

9.4.2 Requests

Requests are formed by moving the verb phrase to the beginning of the sentence (as one would a question) and using the imperative clitic *mɛ* (as with a command).

e.g.

sʃɒ zɛma ʊ:mi:wi
 sʃɒ zɛma ʊ:mi -iwi
 with.PREP 2.SG.ADP.PRON swim -1.SG.FUT
 with you swim
 ‘I will swim with you. **statement**’

ʊ:mi:wi sʃɒ zɛma
 ʊ:mi -iwi sʃɒ zɛma
 swim -1.SG.FUT with.PREP 2.SG.ADP.PRON
 swim with you
 ‘Will I swim with you? **question**’

mesʃa zɛma ʊmi:wi
 mɛ- ʃa zɛma ʊmi -iwi
 IMP- with.PREP 2.SG.ADP.PRON swim -1.SG.FUT
 with you swim
 ‘Let me swim with you. **command**’

mɛʊmi:wi ʃa zɛma
 mɛ- ʊmi -iwi ʃa zɛma
 IMP- swim -1.SG.FUT with.PREP 2.SG.ADP.PRON
 swim with you
 ‘Can I swim with you? **request**’

9.4.3 Promises

Promises are made by using the first person future tense verb form and the postpositional phrase *safiyɛ*, meaning *for the sake of safi* (the deep-ocean spirit of mythology, or just the deep-ocean itself).
e.g.

safiyɛ ʃɛf:ɑɛmmliwi
 safi -yɛ ʃɛf: -ɑɪ ɛmml -iwi
 deep-ocean -for-the-sake-of.POST fish -SG.ACC eat -1.SG.FUT
 deep-ocean -for-the-sake-of fish eat
 ‘I promise to eat the fish (I will eat the fish for the sake of safi)’

Promises can also be requested or commanded:

mesafiyɛ ʃɛf:ɑɛmmliwi
 mɛ- safi -yɛ ʃɛf: -ɑɪ ɛmml -ini
 IMP- deep-ocean -for-the-sake-of.POST fish -SG.ACC eat -2.SG.FUT
 deep-ocean -for-the-sake-of fish eat
 ‘Promise you will eat the fish.’

mɛ:mɪmliwi safiyɛ ʃɛf:ɑɪ
 mɛ- ɛmml -ini safi -yɛ ʃɛf: -ɑɪ
 IMP- deep-ocean eat -2.SG.FUT -for-the-sake-of.POST fish -SG.ACC
 deep-ocean -for-the-sake-of fish eat
 ‘Do you promise to eat the fish?’

9.4.4 Boasting

The ocean is the ultimate authority, so boasts are often made comparing to the ocean spirits or the movement of the ocean.
e.g.

ʒimsafie nɛmfie i:aefflit^h wlaɪfflit^h sɑʊm:ilit^h
 ʒimsa -fie nɛm -fie i:aeɸ -if -lit^h wlat^h -if -lit^h sɑ-
 current -NOM.PL all -NOM.PL quick -COMP -3.PL.SG.PRES 1.SG.NOM -3.PL.SG.PRES NEG swim
 current -s all quick -er me not
 ʊm:i -lit^h
 -3.PL.SG.PRES
 swim
 ‘All the currents don’t swim faster than me.’

Chapter 10

Sample Narrative

10.1 English Text

Marlin and Dory are travelling to Sydney. Dory asks a dark and mysterious fish for directions. Marlin reprimands her while she shouts to the fish.

The fish grows and they see that the fish is.... a whale! Dory sings to the whale.

"Give us directions!!!"

The whale disappears and Marlin is frightened. Dory tells him that whales eat krill, not Marlins.

Suddenly, they see a lot of krill near them.

(...pause for suspense...)

The whale swallows them whole! Marlin frantically attacks the whale's baleen. Suddenly they see that the surface of the water of the whale's mouth is approaching...

The whale flaps its tongue. They hold onto the tongue while Dory begs Marlin trust her and let go. Marlin scolds Dory and sees a huge ʒem below him.

(...pause again for suspense...)

He lets go.

The whale swallows them quickly and blows them out into Sydney.

10.2 Mermish Text

maɪlm ʌ nʊɪ nʊ sinɪa mɪŋenɪt^h. nʊɪ laɪaɪ ʃɛf:a sama ʌ ʒenaniɪ meə. maɪlm ʒaɪ xœxia swil ʃɛf:aniɪ saɪna.
ʃɛf: nexmla mɪt^h ap^h... ʃɛf:aɪ naʊnɪlaɪ ʃɪlɪt^h. nʊɪ naʊnɪlaniɪ naʊma.

'meslani!niɪ laɪaɪ alɪzini'

naʊnɪl ʊaɪmm:a mɪt^hmaɪlm ʌnanak^h. nʊɪ ʒaɪ amyɪa ap^h naʊnɪl nɛmɪ ʃɪfɪ slɪxɪ !amsɪml mɪlɪt^h maɪlmɪ
sa!amsɪml.

ʒaɪswɪs ʒenɪmɪa ʃɪfɪ aɪlaɪ ʃɪlɪt^h.

(...mɛɔnaɪyɪe ʌmzini...)

naʊnɪl ʒenɪɪ fɪama. maɪlm naʊnɪlɪ fɪlmɪnɪt^h mɪʃamɪa ɛmɪmla. ʒaɪswɪs ʃɪlaɪ ap^h naʊnɪlaɪ ɛɲɪmɪaɪt^h wɪɪɪt^h
mɪnɪa...

naʊnɪl ʒaɪ ɪlɪaɪt^h lɛɲa. ɪlɪaɪ ɲɪmɪlɪt^h swil nʊɪ maɪlmɪ saθa ap^h ʒaɪsm ɪɪvɪmɪa mɪt^h saɲɪmɪa.

maɪlm nʊɪaɪ xœxia mɪlɪt^h ʒɛm naɪaɪ ʒaɪɪlɪ ʃɪlaɪ.

(...mɛɔnaɪyɪe aɲɪmzini...)

ɲɪmɪa.

naʊnɪl ʒenɪɪ ɪaefa fɪama mɪlɪt^h sinɪaseɪ naʊzia.

10.3 Glosses

1. maɪlm ʌ nʊɪ nʊ sinɪa mɪŋenɪt^h

maɪlm ʌ nʊɪ nʊ sinɪa mɪŋen -ɪt^h

Marlin and.CONJ Dory to.PREP Sydney -SG.ADP travel -3.DU.PRS

Marlin and Dory to Sydney travel

'Marlin and Dory are travelling to Sydney.'

2. *nʊ.ɪ laɪɪ ʃɛʃ:a samɔ ʌ ʒɛnɔnɪ mɛa*
nʊ.ɪ laɪ -aɪ ʃɛʃ: -a sam -a ʌ ʒɛn -a -nɪɪ
 Dory direction -SG.ACC fish -SG.ADP dark -SG.ADP and.CONJ mysterious -SG.ADP -DO.POST
 Dory direction fish dark and mysterious
mɛ -a
 request -3.SG.PRS
 request
 ‘Dory asks a dark and mysterious fish for directions.’
3. *maɪlm ʒaɪ xœxi suɪl ʃɛʃ:ɔnɪ saɪɪna*
maɪlm ʒaɪ xœxi -a suɪl ʃɛʃ: -a -nɪɪ saɪɪn
 Marlin 3.SG.ACC.PRON reprimand -3.SG.PRES while.CONJ fish -SG.ADP -DO.POST shout
 Marlin her reprimand -s while fish to shout
-a
-3.SG.PRES
-s
 ‘Marlin reprimands her while she shouts to the fish.’
4. *ʃɛʃ: nɛxmla mɪtʰ apʰ ʃɛʃ:ɔɪ naʊnɪɪɪ fɪɪɪltʰ*
ʃɛʃ: nɛxml -a mɪtʰ apʰ ʃɛʃ: -aɪ naʊnɪɪ -aɪ fɪɪɪ -ltʰ
 fish grow -3.SG.PRES and.CONJ IS? fish -SG.ACC whale -SG.ACC see -3.DU.PRES
 fish grow -s and that fish whale see
 ‘The fish grows and they see that the fish is a whale.’
5. *nʊ.ɪ naʊnɪɪɪɪ naʊma*
nʊ.ɪ naʊnɪɪ -a -nɪɪ naʊm -a
 Dory whale -SG.ADP -DO.POST sing -3.SG.PRS
 Dory whale to sing -s
 ‘Dory sings to the whale.’
6. *mɛslɔnɪ!nɪɪ laɪɪɪ ɹɹɹɹɹ*
mɛ- slɔnɪ! -nɪɪ laɪ -aɪ ɹɹɹ -ɹɹɹ
 IMP- 1.EXCL.DU.ADP.PRON -DO.POST direction -SG.ACC give -2.SG.FUT
 us to direction give
 ‘Give us directions.’
7. *naʊnɪɪ ʊsɔmɪɪ:ɹɹ mɪtʰ maɪlm ɔnɔnɔkʰ*
naʊnɪɪ ʊsɔ- mɪɪ: -a mɪtʰ maɪlm ɔnɔnɔkʰ
 whale NEG- appear -3.SG.PRES and.CONJ Marlin frightened
 whale dis- appear -s and Marlin frightened
 ‘The whale disappears and Marlin is frightened.’
8. *nʊ.ɪ ʒaɪɹɹ ɹɹɹɹɹ apʰ naʊnɪɪɪ nɛmɹɹ ʃɪʃɹɹ slɪxɹɹ !ɹɹsɹɹmɹɹ mɹɹɹtʰ maɪlmɹɹɹ sɹɹ!ɹɹsɹɹmɹɹ*
nʊ.ɪ ʒaɪɹɹ ɹɹɹɹɹ -a apʰ naʊnɪɪɪ -ɹɹ nɛm -ɹɹ ʃɪʃɹɹ -ɹɹ slɪx
 Dory 3.SG.ACC.PRON tells -3.SG.PRES IS whale -PL.ACC all -PL.ACC krill -PL.ACC some
 Dory him tell -s that whale -s all krill some
-ɹɹ !ɹɹs -ɹɹmɹɹ mɹɹɹtʰ maɪlm -aɹ sɹɹ !ɹɹs -ɹɹmɹɹ
 -PL.ACC eat -3.PL.FUT and.CONJ Marlin NEG- eat -3.PL.FUT
 eat and Marlin not eat
 ‘Dory tells him that whales eat krill, not Marlins.’
9. *ʒasʊs ʒɛnɹɹɹɹɹ ʃɪʃɹɹ ɹɹɹɹɹ fɪɪɪltʰ*
ʒaɹ -sʊs ʒɛnɹɹ -mɹɹɹ ʃɪʃɹɹ -ɹɹ ɹɹɹɹ -ɹɹ fɪɪɹɹ -ltʰ
 3.SG.NOM.PRON -at.POST 3.DU.ADP -near.POST krill -PL.ACC many -PL.ACC see -3.DU.PRES
 it at them near krill many see
 ‘Suddenly they see a lot of krill near them.’

10. μεσσηγυρε αμzini

me- anaγ -yie αmz -ini
IMP- fear -for-the-sake-of.POST pause -2.SG.FUT
fear for pause

‘Pause for suspense.’

11. ναυnιl ζεν:iι fiam

navnιl ζεν:iι fiam -a
whale 3.DU.ACC.PRON swallow-whole -3.SG.PRES
whale them swallow-whole -s

‘The whale swallows them whole.’

12. μαlιm ναυnιlι filminι^h mιsami emiml

maλιm ναυnιlι -ι filmin -ιθ^h mιsami -a emiml -a
Marlin whale -SG.ACC baleen -SG.POSS frantic -3.SG.PRES attack -3.SG.PRES
Marlin whale baleen frantic -ally attack -s

‘Marlin frantically attacks the whale’s baleen.’

13. ζαsυs fιλiα ap^h ναυnιlι eγlιmαγιt^h wιwιt^h min:a

ζαα -sυs hλι -a ap^h ναυnιlι -αι eγlιmak^h -ιt^h wιwι
3.SG.NOM. -at.POST see -3.sg.pres IS? whale -SG.ACC mouth -SG.POSS water-surface
it at see that whale mouth water-surface
-ιt^h min: -a
-SG.POSS approach -3.SG.PRES
approach -ing

‘Suddenly they see that the surface of the water of the whale’s mouth is approaching.’

14. ναυnιl ζααι ιlαlιt^h λεγa

navnιl ζααι ιlαlι -ιt^h lek^h -a
whale 3.SG.ACC.PRON tongue -SG.POSS flap -3.sg.pres
whale it tongue flap -s

‘The whale flaps its tongue.’

15. ιlαlι γιιmιlιt^h swιl nυ:i μαlιnαι saθa ap^h ζααsm ιιoμ:iα mιt^h saγιιm:a

ιlαlι -ι γιιm -ιt^h swιl nυ:i μαlιm -αι saθ -a ap^h
tongue -SG.ACC hold-onto -3.DU.PRES while Dory Marlin -SG.ACC beg -3.sg.pres IS
tongue hold-onto while Dory Marlin beg -s to
ζαα -sm ιιoμ:i -a mιt^h sa- γιιm: -a
3.SG.ADP.PRON -ACCOM.POST rise -3.sg.pres and.CONJ NEG hold-onto -3.SG.PRES
her with rise and not hold-onto

‘They hold onto the tongue while Dory begs Marlin to trust her and let go.’

16. μαlιm nυ:iαι xοexia mlat^h ζεm nαxια ζααιι fιλiα

maλιm nυ:iαι -αι xοexi -a mlat^h ζεm -∅ nαxι -a
Marlin Dory -SG.ACC scold -3.SG.PRES and.CONJ light-ocean -SG.ADP huge -SG.ADP
Marlin Dory scold -s and ζεm huge
ζαα -ιlι hλι -a
3.SG.ADP.PRON -below.POST see -3.SG.PRES
him below see -s

‘Marlin scolds Dory and sees a huge ζεm below him.’

17. μεσσηγυρε αγαmzini

me- anaγ -yie αγ- αmz -ini
IMP- fear -for-the-sake-of.POST two- pause -2.SG.FUT
fear for again pause

‘Pause again for suspense.’

18. $\sigma\lambda\eta\iota\mu\iota\alpha$

$\sigma\lambda$ - $\eta\iota\mu\iota$ -a
 NEG- hold-onto -3.SG.PRES
 not hold-onto -s
 ‘He lets go.’

19. $\nu\alpha\upsilon\nu\iota\lambda\ \zeta\epsilon\nu\iota\iota\iota\ \iota\alpha\epsilon\phi\alpha\ \phi\alpha\mu\alpha\ \mu\lambda\alpha\tau^h\ \sigma\iota\nu\iota\alpha\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \nu\alpha\upsilon\zeta\iota\alpha$

$\nu\alpha\upsilon\nu\iota\lambda$	$\zeta\epsilon\nu\iota\iota\iota$	$\iota\alpha\epsilon\phi$	-a	$\phi\alpha\mu$	-a	$\mu\lambda\alpha\tau^h$	$\sigma\iota\nu\iota$	-sei
whale	3.DU.ACC.PRON	quick	-3.SG.PRES	swallow-whole	-3.SG.PRES	and.CONJ	Sydney	-into.post
whale	them	quick	-ly	swallow-whole	-s	and	Sydney	into
$\nu\alpha\upsilon\zeta\iota$	-a							
exhale	-3.SG.PRES							
blow	-s							

‘The whale swallows them quickly and and blows them into Sydney.’

10.4 Narrative Choices

1. The story is told in present tense because that’s how stories are told.
2. **Text:** The mermish language has no written form, so punctuation and formatting is borrowed from English to emulate the spoken form of this story. Exclamation points were included in the English text but not in the Mermish text to avoid confusion with the IPA symbol.
3. The word *lai* means ”direction” as in ”advice or guidance”, but is translated as ”directions” as in ”course or route” in English. The switch from singular in the Mermish to plural in English is not a mistake.
4. **Sentence 9:** *zaasus* literally translates to ”at it (time)”, meaning ”at that time” or ”immediately”
5. **Sentence 12:** The water surface falling happened in the movie but it’s also a metaphor for danger!!
6. **Sentence 14:** The direct translation of ”trust” is ”swim up with”, as swimming close to the surface is considered dangerous and thus one should only do so with someone trusted to be alert and able to defend themselves.
7. **Sentence 15:** The phrase ”he sees a huge $\zeta\epsilon\mu$ below him” is an idiom meaning that he saw that he was in a very dangerous situation (sort of like the idiom ”the alarm bells started going off”). This comes again from the idea that the closer to surface of the ocean, the more dangerous. If someone is close to the surface of the ocean, when they look down they’ll see more of $\zeta\epsilon\mu$, or the part of the ocean reachable by light, below them than if they were deeper down (though really there should have been way more clues..). Thus, looking down and seeing a ton of $\zeta\epsilon\mu$ -water below you would tip you off that you’re in a dangerous position. The idiom is also sometimes shortened to ”sees a big of $\zeta\epsilon\mu$ ” ($\zeta\epsilon\mu\ \nu\alpha\chi\iota\alpha\ h\lambda\iota\alpha$) with the ”below *x*” understood.

Appendix A

Lexicon

IPA	Part of Speech	English Translation
ɑ:wε	greeting	goodbye
ɑmɔni	verb	scratch/claw
ɑnak ^h	noun	fright
ɑnanak ^h	adjective/adverb	frightened
εmɪml	verb	attack
fiΛɪ	verb	see
fiɛni	noun	typhoon/ocean storm
fiʊ	noun	one
fiʊts	noun	twenty four
fiam	verb	swallow whole
fiei	verb	smell
fi	noun	nine
ms	verb	have
ŋɪɔp ^h	noun	finger
ŋɪm:	verb	hold
ŋeʒ	noun	four
ʃɪfɪ	noun	krill
ʃ:ɛf:	noun	fish
ʃylθ	verb	follow (passive)
ʊm:i	verb	swim
ʊnɪlzi	noun	whale
ʊs:	verb	hear
ʒɛm	noun	light-ocean
ʒɛni	adjective/adverb	mysterious
ʒɪmsa	noun	deep-sea current
ʒasɑf	noun	shadow
ɹʊm:i	verb	rise (swim up)
ɹli	postposition	below (location)
œmp ^h	noun	six
!ams	verb	eat
Λ	conjunction	and (nominal conjunction)

IPA	Part of Speech	English Translation
amz	verb	pause/stop/rest
a:lu	adjective/adverb	warm
a:ŋ	noun	day
ai	noun	week
aŋsaʒim	noun	second falling tide (11:00 pm)
aŋziʒim	noun	second rising tide (5:00 pm)
ak ^h	noun	two
alz	verb	give
amy:ɹa	verb	tell/report
anfiɛ:ɪə	noun	nineteen
anfiɛ:sl	noun	twenty
anfiɛfi	noun	twenty one
anfiɛɲɛʒ	noun	sixteen
anfiɛv	noun	thirteen
anfiɛæmp ^h	noun	eighteen
anfiɛa	noun	fourteen
anfiɛvʊf	noun	twenty three
anfiɛis	noun	twenty two
anfiɛmʊt ^h	noun	seventeen
anfiɛsa	noun	fifteen
anmɛm	noun	flesh/meat
ap ^h	particle	that/to (used in indirect speech/experience)
at ^h	noun	twelve
ɛŋ	verb	begin
ɛŋfiap ^h	noun	shipwreck
ɛɲɛk ^h	noun	human trash/debris
ɛŋlɪmak ^h	noun	water-surface
ɛia	noun	seven
ɛsl	noun	eight
ɛuʒ	greeting	hello
filmin	noun	baleen
fʊf	noun	eleven
i:æf	adjective/adverb	quick/quickly
it ^h	noun	ten
lɛk ^h	verb	flap
li	preposition	through (location)
liat ^h	verb	bite
lɪmas	noun	hagfish
laʒ	verb	chew
lai	noun	direction/advice
les	postposition	before (time)
mɪfami	adjective/adverb	frantic/desperate
mɪa	postposition	near (location)
məmei	noun	tuna
mit ^h	conjunction	and-so/therefore (verbal conjunction)
miŋɛn	verb	travel/migrate
mm:	verb	appear/show up
mʊt ^h	noun	five

IPA	Part of Speech	English Translation
ma:lm	proper noun	Marlin
mei	postposition	at (location)
mlat ^h	conjunction	and-then (verbal conunction)
naɣɿ	adjective/adverb	huge
neɪnək ^h	noun	eye of storm/whirlpool
nɛxml	verb	grow
nʊ	preposition	to (location)
nʊ:ɿ	proper noun	Dory
naʊnɪl	noun	whale
naʊm	verb	sing
naʊzi	verb	blow/exhale
sœ	postposition	in (location)
safi	noun	dark-ocean
sam	adjective/adverb	dark
sula	verb	end
sa	noun	three
saθ	verb	beg/plead
sa:t ^h	noun	thirty six
saɪp ^h	noun	tail-fin
saɜm	noun	falling tide (11:00 am)
sei	postposition	into (location)
sm	postposition	with (accompaniment)
simʊ	noun	iceberg
sin:i	proper noun	Sydney
siɜm	noun	rising tide (5:00 am)
suil	adverb	while
suis	postposition	at (time)
wʊlθ	noun	water-mass
wɪu	noun	mouth
xɛn	noun	hour
xœxi	verb	reprimand/scold

Appendix B

Hand and labelled fingers

