

mimif (Mermish)

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Contents

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 ?? 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: ʒem 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, ʒem and safi, two giant saltwater catfish, they gave the responsibility of filling the oceans.

ʒem 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 ʒem, they gave all the places the light could touch under the water. ʒem, 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 ʒem 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, ʒem's creations drew hungry humans to the water, and the merpeople retreated away from the abundance and variety of ʒem'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/don't 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 breathe)
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 ??). Each year is divided into five months, each named after an animal historically hunted in that month. Each month has six *aiŋe* ("weeks") of twelve *ayŋŋe* (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

2.1 Inventory

	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	ʘ			ǀ	!		

Table 2.1: Consonants

	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

Table 2.2: Vowels

2.2 Phonological Rules

In order of application:

1. $(C/V)_1 \wedge (C/V)_1 \rightarrow C_1 \cdot / _$
 Adjacent identical sounds across morpheme boundary changes into sound + long.
e.g. $\text{vmri} + \text{ini} \rightarrow \text{vmri:ni}$
2. $\emptyset \rightarrow [\varepsilon] / C_{[+manner1]} \wedge _ C_{[+manner1]}$
 ε epenthesized between adjacent consonants of same manner of articulation at morpheme boundary
e.g. $\text{ɣeʒ} + \text{simu} \rightarrow \text{ɣeʒ\varepsilon simu}$
3. $C_{[+stop]} \rightarrow C_{[+nasal]} / _ (C/V)$
 Stops change to nasals when they are not word-final
e.g. $\text{ak}^h + \text{ziʒim} \rightarrow \text{aɳziʒim}$

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 ??). 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	anfieṽ	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	anfiēfʊf	twelve and eleven
12	at ^h	twelve	24	hʊtʃ	twenty four
			25	hʊtʃfiēfiṽ	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. xɛnfiē ŋeʒfiē
xɛn -fiē ŋeʒ -fiē
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’

ʃɪɛfɪt^h wlat^h
ʃɪɛfɪ -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:

ʃɪɛfɪt^h ɲɛwfiɪt^h wlat^h
ʃɪɛfɪ -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 ??.

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 ??.

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’

ʃ:ef:ɪt^h wlat^h
ʃ: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:

ʃ:ef:ɪt^h ηεwfiɾt^h wlat^h
ʃ: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 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.

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf

ʃ:ɛʃ: -Ø i:æf -Ø

fish -SG.NOM quick -SG.NOM

fish quick

‘The fish is quick.’

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æfa lɛŋa

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf -a lɛk^h -a

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

fish quickly flap

‘The fish flaps quickly.’

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf i:æfa lɛŋa

ʃ:ɛʃ: 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.*

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æfa ʊm:iɑ

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf -a ʊm:i -a

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

fish quickly swim

‘The fish swims quickly.’

ʃ:ɛʃ: sɹi:æfa ʊm:iɑ

ʃ:ɛʃ: i:æf -a ʊm: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 ??.)

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.

f:ef: flms
f:ef: flms
fish red
fish red
‘The fish is red.’

flms f:ef:
flms f:ef:
red fish
red fish
‘The fish is red.’

wlat^h ejek^h
wlat^h ejek^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.

naʊnlɪe slɪxɪe naʊmlinwat^h
naʊnlɪ -ɸie slɪx -ɸie naʊm -lɪt^h -wat^h
whale -PL.NOM some -PL.NOM sing -3.PL.PRS -IMPF
whale -s some sing
‘Some whales are singing.’

naʊnlɪe slɪxɪe slamɪɪ lamsɪnwat^h
naʊnlɪ -ɸie slɪx -ɸie slamɪɪ !amsɪt^h -ɪt^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.

naʊnɪlɪe slɪxɪe wʊlθasei ʊmɪlɪt^h
naʊnɪl -ɪe slɪx -ɪe wʊlθ -a -sei ʊmɪ -lɪt^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.’

anɪlzi:si ɪmɪlɪwɪ
anɪlzi -i -si ɪmɪl -ɪwɪ
 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 wlanasi -si zis- 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 zis- 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 ʃɪlθɪm
naʊnɪl -ɪm wlanasi -si ʃɪlθ -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 /sɪ-/ is attached to the beginning of the verb phrase. *e.g.*

ɪmɪlɪwɪ ʃeɪt^h
ɪmɪlɪwɪ -ar ʃeɪ -ɛt^h
 hagfish -SG.ACC smell -1.SG.PRS
 hagfish smell
 ‘I have smelled the hagfish.’

$\lambda masai safeiet^h$
 λmas -ar $sa-$ $fiei$ - ϵt^h
 hagfish -SG.ACC NEG- smell -1.SG.PRS
 hagfish not smell
 ‘I have not smelled the hagfish.’

For sentences without a verb, 3ϵ (*no*) is added to the end of the sentence. *e.g.*

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

$wlat^h S:eS: ZE$
 $wlat^h$ $f:ef:$ 3ϵ
 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 ??):

$ayzizim xeni\lambda aji\lambda 3\epsilon$
 $ay-$ $zizim$ - \emptyset xen - $i\lambda$ ay - $i\lambda$ 3ϵ
 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’

$ayzizim xeni\lambda aji\lambda samsa$
 $ay-$ $zizim$ - \emptyset xen - $i\lambda$ ay - $i\lambda$ $sa-$ ms - 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.

$unilzi\lambda \eta e3\lambda mset^h$
 $unilzi$ - i $\eta e3$ - i ms - ϵt^h
 whale-bone -PL.ACC four -PL.ACC have -1.SG.PRES
 whale-bone four have
 ‘I have four whale-bones.’

$ama\lambda \eta e3\lambda msem$
 ama - i $\eta e3$ - i ms - ϵt^h
 parent -PL.ACC four -PL.ACC have -1.SG.PRES
 parent four have
 ‘I have four parents.’

$samsi\lambda masai mset^h$
 $sai p^h$ - si λmas - $a\lambda$ ms - ϵt^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 ??).

8.5 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:iɛt^h
 wulθ -sœ um:i -ɛt^h
 water-mass -in.POST swim -1.SG.PRS
 water-mass in swim
 ‘I swim in the water-mass.’

naʊnɪl wulθsei wlanasi fylθɪm
 naʊnɪl -m wulθ -sei wlanasi -si fylθ -ɪm
 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’

eŋfiɑm:ei ʒɑɑɪ ʊs:ɛm
 eŋfiɑp^h -mei ʒɑɑɪ ʊs: -ɛm
 shipwreck -at.POST hear 3.SG.ACC.PRON -1.SG.PST
 shipwreck at it hear
 ‘I heard it at the shipwreck.’

wulθmɪɑ um:iɛm
 wulθ -mɪɑ um:i -ɛm
 shipwreck -near.POST swim -1.SG.PST
 shipwreck near swim
 ‘I swam near the shipwreck.’

simʊɪɪ um:iɛm
 simʊ -ɪɪ um:i -ɛm
 iceberg -below.POST swim -1.SG.PST
 iceberg below swim
 ‘I swam below the iceberg.’

li wulθ um:iɛm
 li wulθ um:i -ɛm
 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 *ʒɛm* (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 ʒɛm i:æfiwi um:iɪwi
 li ʒɛm 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 məmɑp^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. saʒım eıɲa

saʒım	-Ø	eıɲ	-a
falling tide	-NOM.SG	begin	-3.SG.PRS
falling tide		begin	-s

'It is just past 11 am'

2. zıɲım suɭa

zıɲım	-Ø	suɭ	-a
rising	-NOM.SG	end	-3.SG.PRS
rising tide		end	-s

'It is almost 11 am'

3. aɲsaʒım xɛɲɪ ɲeʒɪ msa

ak ^h -	saʒım	-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. aɲzıɲım xɛɲɪ aɲfiemʊɲɪ msa

ak ^h -	zıɲım	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-ɪ	aɲ	-fi	-mʊɲ	-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. aɲzıɲım xɛɲɪ aɲfiemʊɲɪ

ak ^h -	zıɲım	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-ɪ	aɲ	-fi	-mʊɲ	-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. saʒım xɛɲɪ fıɯar msa

saʒım	-Ø	xɛt ^h	-aɪ	fıɯ	-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. saʒım xɛɲɪ msa

saʒım	-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. saʒım xɛɲɪ

saʒım	-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:aeɪf zɛmɪf

<i>wlat^h</i>	<i>i:aeɪf</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:aeɪf ʃ:ef:ɪf ʃlɪmsɪf

<i>wlat^h</i>	<i>i:aeɪf</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 (??)

Comparative adjectives can be used as adverbs (??).

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 (??) .

Superlative adjectives can be used as adverbs (??).

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

ʊmɪ:niwat^h sfʌ wlana
 ʊmɪ: -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:ɛma sfʌ wlana
 ɪ:æf -ɛma ʊmɪ: -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 naʊnɪlɔɪ
 !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 naʊnɪlɔɪ
 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.’

ʃlɪms ʃɪfɪ ʒɛ
 ʒɛ wlat^h ʃɪfɪ
 red fish no
 red fish no

‘No, the fish is not red.’

ʌmas naʊnɪlɪ!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 ʌmasaɪ !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?’

naʊnɪlɪ 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 amait^h wlat^h
 ʒa -θe ama -it^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 fɪlɪɛt^h mɪt^h naʊnɪlɑɪ fɪlɪɛt^h
ʒemɑɪ fɪlɪ -ɛt^h mɪt^h naʊnɪl -ɑɪ fɪlɪ -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 ɸɪɪɪɛt^h mit^h lɪmqɪɪɪ ɸɪɪɪɛt^h
 zεmqɪ ɸɪɪɪ -ɛt^h mit^h lɪmqɪ -aɪ ɸɪɪɪ -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.

mɛɪɪ sɸfi ʊmɪɪɪɪ
 mɛ- -ɪɪ sɸfi ʊmɪɪ -ini
 IMP- INE deep-ocean swim -2.SG.FUT
 in deep ocean swim
 ‘Be safe/bye!’

mɛɪɪsɸfi
 mɛ- -ɪɪ -sɸfi
 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 ɸɪɪɪɛma mit^h mɛmɪmqɪɪma
 zεmqɪ ɸɪɪɪ -ɛma mit^h mɛmaq^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 ɸɪɪɪɛma mit^h sɸɸɪɪɪɛt^h
 zεmqɪ ɸɪɪɪ -ɛma mit^h sɸ- ɸɪɪɪ -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.’

zɛɪn ɛɲek^h
 zɛɪ 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 zɛɪma ʊ:mi:wi
 sʃɒ zɛɪma 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 zɛɪma
 ʊ:mi -iwi sʃɒ zɛɪma
 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 շեմ below him.

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

He lets go.

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

10.2 Mermish Text

maɫɫɪ ʌ nʊɪ nʊ sɪnɪə mɪɟɛnɪtʰ. nʊɪ laɪɹ ʃɛfːa sɑmɑ ʌ ʒɛnɑnɪɹ mɛɑ. maɫɫɪ ʒɑɹ xœxɪə swɪɪ ʃɛfːɑnɪɹ sɑɪːnɑ. ʃɛfː nɛxmɪə mɪtʰ apʰ... ʃɛfːɑɹ nɑʊnɪɹ ɦɪɹɪtʰ. nʊɪ nɑʊnɪɹnɪɹ nɑʊmɑ.

'mɛslɑnɪ!nɪɹ laɪɹ ʌɹzɪnɪ'

nɑʊnɪ ʊɑɫmɪnːɑ mɪtʰmaɫɫɪ ɑnɑnɑkʰ. nʊɪ ʒɑɹ ɑmɪɹɑ apʰ nɑʊnɪɹ nɛmɪ ʃɪʃɪ slɪxɪ ʌmsɪmɪ mɪɹtʰ maɫɫɪmɑɹ sʌʌmsɪmɪ.

ʒɑsɪʊs ʒɛnɪmɪə ʃɪʃɪ ɑɪɹ ɦɪɹɪtʰ.

(...mɛɑnɑɟɪɹ ʌmzɪnɪ...)

nɑʊnɪ ʒɛnɪɹ ɦɪmɑ. maɫɫɪ nɑʊnɪɹ ɦɪmɪnɪtʰ mɪʃɑmɪə ɛmɪmɪə. ʒɑsɪʊs ɦɪɹɑ apʰ nɑʊnɪɹ ɛɟɪmɑɟɪtʰ wɪɹɹtʰ mɪnːɑ...

nɑʊnɪ ʒɑɹ ɪɹɹɹtʰ ɪɹɹɑ. ɪɹɹɹ ɟɪmɪtʰ swɪɪ nʊɪ maɫɫɪmɑ sɑθɑ apʰ ʒɑsɪm ɹɪʊmɪə mɪtʰ sʌɟɪmːɑ.

maɫɫɪ nʊɹɹɹ xœxɪə mɪɹtʰ ʒɛm nɑxɪɑ ʒɑɹɹɹ ɦɪɹɑ.

(...mɛɑnɑɟɪɹ ɑɟɹmzɪnɪ...)

ɟɪmːɑ.

nɑʊnɪ ʒɛnɪɹ ɪɑɛfɑ ɦɪmɑ mɪɹtʰ sɪnɪɹɹɹɹ nɑʊzɪə.

10.3 Glosses

1. maɫɫɪ ʌ nʊɪ nʊ sɪnɪə mɪɟɛnɪtʰ

maɫɫɪ ʌ nʊɪ nʊ sɪnɪ -a mɪɟɛn -ɪtʰ

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 naʊnɪl -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 naʊnɪl -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. *naʊnɪl ʊsɔmɪn:a mɪtʰ maɪlm ɔnɔnɔkʰ*
naʊnɪl ʊsɔ- mɪn: -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 ʒaɪɪ ɔmyɪa apʰ naʊnɪɪɪ nɛmɪ ʃɪʃɪ slɪxɪ ɹɹɹɹɹɹ mɪɹɹɹ maɪlmɹɹɹ sɹɹɹɹɹ*
nʊ.ɪ ʒaɪɪ ɔmyɪ -a apʰ naʊnɪl -ɹɹ nɛm -ɹɹ ʃɪʃɪ -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 ɹɹɹɹɹ -ɹɹɹ mɹɹɹɹ maɹɹɹ -aɹ sɹɹɹ ɹɹɹɹ -ɹɹɹ
 -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 ʒɛnɪmɪa ʃɪʃɪ ɹɹɹɹɹ fɪɪɪltʰ*
ʒaɹ -sʊs ʒɛnɪ -mɪa ʃɪʃɪ -ɹɹ ɹɹɹ -ɹɹ fɪɹɹ -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

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

‘Pause for suspense.’

11. ναυνίλ ζεν:ίλ fiam

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

‘The whale swallows them whole.’

12. μαίλιν ναυνίλ filmin^h mɪsami emiml

μαίλιν	ναυνίλ	-ι	filmin	-ιθ ^h	mɪsami	-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. ζασυς fίλια ap^h ναυνίλ eγlɪmak^h wɪwɪt^h min:a

ζασυς	-syus	hίλ	-a	ap ^h	ναυνίλ	-αί	eγlɪmak ^h	-ιτ ^h	wɪwɪt
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
-ιτ ^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. ναυνίλ ζασυς ilalɪt^h lɛɣa

ναυνίλ	ζασυς	ilalɪt	-ιτ ^h	lɛk ^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. ilalɪt ɣimlɪt^h swil nυ:ί μαίλιν saθa ap^h ζασm ɣim:ia mɪt^h saɣim:a

ilalɪt	-ι	ɣim	-lɪt ^h	swil	nυ:ί	μαίλιν	-αί	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
ζασ	-sm	ɣim:i	-a	mɪt ^h	sa-	ɣim:	-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. μαίλιν nυ:ί xœxi mlat^h ζem naxi ζααίλ fίλια

μαίλιν	nυ:ί	-αί	xœxi	-a	mlat ^h	ζem	-Ø	naxi	-a
Marlin	Dory	-SG.ACC	scold	-3.SG.PRES	and.CONJ	light-ocean	-SG.ADP	huge	-SG.ADP
Marlin	Dory		scold	-s	and	ζem		huge	
ζαα	-ίλ	hίλ	-a						
3.SG.ADP.PRON	-below.POST	see	-3.SG.PRES						
him	below	see	-s						

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

17. μεσσηγυρε αγαμzini

με-	anaγ	-yie	αγ-	αμz	-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:wɛ	greeting	goodbye
ɑmɔni	verb	scratch/claw
ɑnak ^h	noun	fright
ɑnanak ^h	adjective/adverb	frightened
ɛmmɪl	verb	attack
fiɬɪ	verb	see
fiɛni	noun	typhoon/ocean storm
fiʊ	noun	one
fiʊts	noun	twenty four
fiam	verb	swallow whole
fiei	verb	smell
fi	noun	nine
ɪns	verb	have
ŋɪɔp ^h	noun	finger
ŋɪm:	verb	hold
ŋɛʒ	noun	four
ʃɪɪ	noun	krill
ʃ:ɛʃ:	noun	fish
ʃɪlθ	verb	follow (passive)
ʊmɪ	verb	swim
ʊnɪlzi	noun	whale
ʊs:	verb	hear
ʒɛm	noun	light-ocean
ʒɛni	adjective/adverb	mysterious
ʒɪmsa	noun	deep-sea current
ʒasɑf	noun	shadow
ɹʊmɪ	verb	rise (swim up)
ɹli	postposition	below (location)
œmp ^h	noun	six
!ams	verb	eat
ʌ	conjunction	and (nominal conjunction)

	IPA	Part of Speech	English Translation
amz		verb	pause/stop/rest
a.lʊ		adjective/adverb	warm
a:ŋ		noun	day
aɪ		noun	week
aŋsaʒɪm		noun	second falling tide (11:00 pm)
aŋziʒɪm		noun	second rising tide (5:00 pm)
ak ^h		noun	two
alz		verb	give
amyɾa		verb	tell/report
anfi:ɪə		noun	nineteen
anfi:sl		noun	twenty
anfi:fi		noun	twenty one
anfi:ɛʒ		noun	sixteen
anfi:ʊ		noun	thirteen
anfi:ɛmp ^h		noun	eighteen
anfi:ea		noun	fourteen
anfi:fʊf		noun	twenty three
anfi:is		noun	twenty two
anfi:emʊt ^h		noun	seventeen
anfi:sa		noun	fifteen
anmɛm		noun	flesh/meat
ap ^h		particle	that/to (used in indirect speech/experience)
at ^h		noun	twelve
enɟ		verb	begin
enɟiap ^h		noun	shipwreck
eɟek ^h		noun	human trash/debris
eɟlɪmak ^h		noun	water-surface
eiɑ		noun	seven
esl		noun	eight
euʒ		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)
liɑt ^h		verb	bite
lɪmas		noun	hagfish
laʒ		verb	chew
lai		noun	direction/advice
les		postposition	before (time)
m.ɪfamɪ		adjective/adverb	frantic/desperate
m.ɪɑ		postposition	near (location)
məmei		noun	tuna
mit ^h		conjunction	and-so/therefore (verbal conjunction)
miŋen		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)
na:xɪ		adjective/adverb	huge
neɪnək ^h		noun	eye of storm/whirlpool
nexml		verb	grow
nʊ		preposition	to (location)
nʊ:ɪ		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
sap ^h		noun	tail-fin
saʒɪm		noun	falling tide (11:00 am)
sei		postposition	into (location)
sm		postposition	with (accompaniment)
simʊ		noun	iceberg
sin:i		proper noun	Sydney
siʒɪm		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

