The Kwadacha Tsek’ene Nuts’oodalh stories

Sharon Hargus

University of Washington

January 5, 2018
Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, Salt Lake City UT
Overview

1. The language
2. Text content
3. Text production
4. Insubordination in the Nuts’oodalh texts
5. Summary
6. Acknowledgements
Kwadacha Tsek’ene

- Kwadacha, “most remote community in B.C.”
Kwadacha Tsek’ene

- a “mixed” language. Inputs: Tsek’ene, Kaska and Tahltan(?)

Kwadacha Tsek’ene speakers

The story-teller, the late Mike Abou

The translators:
the late Mary Charlie
Edna McCook
Eileen McCook
Protagonist types

- **Travellers**
  - K’etetaalkkaanee (Koyukon), “a traveler, strong in medicine power, who traverses the North...who paddled all summer and walked all winter”
  - Yamaagn Teeshyaay/Tsa’ Ushyaa (Upper Tanana), “traveled around the country killing...bad animals”

- **Tricksters**
  - “in the western part of [North America], a character called Coyote is especially important...a trickster figure”
  - Yixgitsiy/Yuxgitsiy (Deg Xinag) (Raven/Crow)

Attla, Catherine, and Eliza Jones. 1990. K’etetaalkkaanee, the one who paddled among the people and animals: The story of an ancient traveler. Fairbanks: Yukon Koyukuk School District and ANLC.
McKennan, Robert A. 1959. The Upper Tanana Indians. New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University.
Who was Nuts’oodalh?

- Traveller and trickster
- **Nuts’oodalh** etymology?
  - *nu-D-* iterative
  - *ts’-* impersonal subject, “4th person”?
  - *oo-* = ?
  - *ya* ‘sg. goes’
  - *-lh* progressive
  - ‘so-and-so is returning’ (?)

- partial key to orthography: \[ ⟨u⟩ = [e], ⟨a⟩ = [a], ⟨oo⟩ = [u], ⟨i⟩ = [i], ⟨ii⟩ = [i], ⟨lh⟩ = [ɪ] \]
The Nuts’oodalh cycle

- 9 episodes recorded
  - 8 in Kwadacha
    - Digii Nuts’oodalh ’èh nunìdetl. ‘Swans flew off with Nuts’oodalh.’
    - Nuts’oodalh ’uts’idòòhşt’e too ’eyzèhkhè. ‘Nuts’oodalh drowned a giant.’
    - Nuts’oodalh lhoowe dut’èsii kooda’ìì’. ‘Nuts’oodalh learned how to roast fish.’
    - Dlèzhe ’uzidèhgè. ‘A grizzly killed itself.’
    - Nuts’oodalh khàts ’èh ‘Nuts’oodalh and the stump’
    - Nuts’oodalh dutsole loodè’ nutsuts. ‘Nuts’oodalh eats his anus scab.’
    - Nuts’oodalh ’ut’a ghîghdèhtìiyìì k’ànehtà. ‘Nuts’oodalh sees a treasured girl.’
    - Nuts’oodalh dlèzhe lhèkwudut’e wooba joo k’e’ììghò. ‘Nuts’oodalh killed two grizzlies and their father.’
  - 1 in English: Nuts’oodalh and the two beavers
- 37:01 mostly Kwadacha
Text production

- 2002 recordings of Mike on a Sony WM-D6C cassette recorder
- Free translations mostly by Mary, Edna, Eileen
- Initially side-by-side English and Tsek’ene, without audio
- Currently for web dissemination, with word glosses and audio
Text production challenges

- Not “pure” Kwadacha

  Ducks **k’è’òlh.**
  tsits  k’ì-’òlh
  PER-PL.swim
  ‘Ducks were swimming around.’

  Ducks **k’è’òlh.**
  tsits  they’re swimming around
  ‘Ducks were swimming around.’
Text production challenges

- Not “pure” Kwadacha (longer example)

’Ii big rock gwuda, that tse dachow there
rock DIM-PROG-be.big tsì̀dì̀ihk’as.
tsì-y-d-ii-h-k’as into.fire-3SO-into.fire-CNJ-THM-toss.compact
‘He threw a big rock in the fire.’

’Ii big rock gwuda, tsì̀dì̀ihk’as.
that tse dachow there he threw it in fire
‘He threw a big rock in the fire.’

^tse ‘rock’, dachow ‘it’s big’
Text production challenges

- Sentences added by the translators
  - to help the listener understand the plot
  - to translate longer stretches of English

Then he, you know them alder willow? He carve out that kind too.

*K’uz kìiht’ats.*

alder *kù-ii-h-t’ats*

off-CNJ-THM-cut.shape

‘He cut off a piece of alder.’

He carried that kind too.

*’Uyii joo k’ètìjh.*

that too *k’ì-tìjh*

PER-handle.rigid

‘He carried that around too.’
Insubordination

“the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses” reported in Navajo, Tlingit, Tanacross, Tanana, Deg Xinag, Ahtna, Koyukon

- not Slave, Witsuwit’en, Tsek’ene, Dogrib, Carrier
- “I should note that the claims stated above are highly tentative. The individuals credited here were offering their best recollections at the time, and should not be held responsible for any errors in this tentative list.”

Deg Xinag insubordination functions: syntactic (exclamations); discourse (backgrounding, change of scene)

Subordination

- **-ii relativizer**

Kwuye lhoowe k’è’òlhii k’ànehṭa.
there fish k’ì-’òlh-ii k’à-n-h-tạ
PER-PL.swim-REL THM-THM-THM-see
‘There he saw fish swimming around.’

- **-ii subordinator**

’Uyìi yutsàhyonàa ootònii
that yu-tsàhyon-è-a oo-tòn-ii
3SG.PSR-groundhog.skin.blanket-PSD-DIM THM-hold-SUB
tl’òh yuk’wus k’eh dusuda.
then yu-k’wus on du-su-da
3SG-neck high-CNJ-SG.sit
‘He took hold of his groundhog blanket and sat up high on his neck.’
The beginning of episode 1

You know, ’uyii Nuts’oodalh?
that
‘You know, that Nuts’oodalh?’
Nuts’oodalh, lhàwìì sq k’èdahii.
once UNCERT k’ì-dah-ii
PER-SG.go-INSUB
‘One day Nuts’oodalh was walking around.’
Dune ka nùnutå.
person for nù-nu-tå
CONT-THM-look
‘He was looking for someone.’
The beginning of episode 2

'Ii sə gwuda k’èdah, k’èdah.
then UNCERT there k’ì-dah
PER-SG.go

‘He was walking and walking around there.’
Lhàhde sə matiiyawìjìhìhì.
one place UNCERT m-atiiyawìjìhà-ìì
3sP-be.tired-INSUB

‘He got tired somewhere.’
Too, too chow kìilììjì t’ùsuya de sə
water big kù-ìi-lìì t’ù-su-ya loc.RC UNCERT
out-CNJ-flow up.to-CNJ-SG.go

matiiyawìjìhìhì.
m-atiiyawìjìhà-ìì
3sP-be.tired-INSUB

‘He came up to a big river and he got tired.’
Oh boy dèkusk’eh sə yà’ìisya,”
‘Ooh ‘ane’ how UNCERT yà-’ìì-s-ya
across-CNJ-1SS-SG.go

kwudidii, canyon wudighdzè’.
k-oo-o-d-diì wu-dighdzè’
3ARP-THM-THM-think ar-above.there

“‘Oh boy, I wonder how I might get across,” he was thinking above the
canyon.’
The beginning of episode 3

Gwa wuts’eh ghuyalhii.
that wu-ts’eh ghu-ya-lh-ii
AR-from PROG-SG.go-PROG-INSUB
‘After that he kept walking.’

Gwa lhàhde mun t’ùsuya.
there one place lake t’ù-su-ya
up.to-CNJ-SG.go
‘He came to a lake.’
Middle of episode 6

Mutsule scab  ’u-w-ìì-jàh.
mu-tsule lhoot  ’u-w-ìì-jàh
3sg-anus thus-ar-cnj-became
‘His anus became a scab.’

’Uyii kwa  k’èdahii.
then finally k’ì-dah-ii

PER-SG.go-INSUB
‘Then he was walking around.’

’Uyii lh— dubùdii  ’èh, gwuda,
that d-bùd-ii since there

THM-be.hungry-SUB
he pull out the scab, he, ’uyii  ’utsuts.
dutsule loodè’ kìihdlat that u-tsuts

IMPF-eat

‘He was hungry somewhere so he pulled out his scab.’

---
a dutsule loodè’ ‘his anus scab’, kìihdlat ‘he pulled out, off’
Insubordination

Middle of episode 8

’Ide sə kwùla, lhèhgàh sə wooba
then UNCERT finally evening UNCERT woo-ba
3PL-father

lhunadalh.
lhu-nu-a-da-lh
reach-ITER-PROG-SG.go-PROG
‘Then finally their father came back in the evening.’
’Uyii tent yìh sukigh— dahdeda live ghulę de
that ts’ììsa under wherever nùghudèl LOC.SUB

sə, kighnètalii.
UNCERT ki-n-è-tal-ii
THM-THM-THM-play-INSUB
‘Wherever they lived, they played under a tent.’
’Uyii gah ’ìkighnètal, ’ùkoo.
that rabbit ì-ki-gh-nè-tal those
with-THM-3PS-THM-THM-play
‘They were playing with the rabbit.’
Nuts’oodalh, the folk hero of Kwadacha Tsek’ene, combines properties of travellers (to the north) and tricksters (to the south).

Insubordination in the texts is extremely limited, serving discourse functions only (backgrounding, quasi-formulaic story introducer).
Acknowledgements

Funding for Kwadacha Tsek’ene research

- Kwadacha Education Society
- NSF DEL/IPY No. 0651853