

¹ Kamayon pandahajang-hen mino; minarya miraneri sitang-ton pandahāng-hen minarya.

² Enyareng atauya kāryo nangaya pandahana Oblonski. ³ Silvisaye sarisa envanang, ang manga miraya ayon yena cān-cānas layeri Kahani, seri ganvayās pandahaya ton, nay ang narisaye ayonyam yena, ang ming saylingoyye mitanyam nangaya kamo kayvo yāy. ⁴ Eng manga yomāran eda-mineye luga bahisya kay, nay tong vakas ten pulengeri, sitang-tong-namoy ayonang nay envanang, nārya nasimayajang-hen pandahana nay nangānena ton naynay. ^{5a} Ang mayayo nyān-hen nangaya, ming tenubisoyrey, mitantong kadanya. ^{5b} Ang engyon vihyam miromānjas keynam si sa lancon kadanya apineri kondangaya, nasimayajas pandahana nay nangānena Oblonski. ⁶ Ang saroyye envan sangalas yena, ang manga yomoyya ayon rangya ton luga bahisya kay. ⁷ Sa senyon ganye nangaya-hen; ang ranye ganvaya Angli kayvo lomāyaya visam nay ang tahanye ledoyam, yam mya balangyeng pinyan yanoley gumo hiro ye; ang saraya ersaya bahisya sarisa pidimya tarika sirutayyānena; ang narisaton lomāya risang nay lantaya vapatanas ton.

3 Interlinear Breakdown

- (1) *Kama -yon pandaba -ye -ang =ben mino; mino -arya miran -eri sitang- ton*
 be.like -3PL.N family -PL -A =all happy; happy -NEG way -INS self- 3PL.N.GEN
pandaba -ang =ben mino -arya.
 family -A =every happy -NEG.

“All happy families are alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

I was looking for a way to express ‘alike’ here, first trying to go with ᑭᑭᑭ *kamo* ‘equal, same’ and then realizing that it might in fact be better to use the related verb ᑭᑭᑭ *kama-* ‘be as ... as ...’ intransitively to mean ‘be alike’, i.e. expressing likeness rather than equality.

In an earlier article on the blog, I wrote about constituent order in Ayeri that “the predication in equative sentences seems to be interpreted in the way of a transitive sentence, although it is lacking an overt predicate” (Becker 2012): in Ayeri, adjectives and nominals in predicative sentences come after the subject NP, as though they were objects. This, in fact, goes counter to Universal 145 in *The Universals Archive* (Plank et al. 2009), since Plank et al. predict predicative adjectives in VSO languages to be treated like (or at least similar to, I suppose) verbs. I decided to break my rule and follow the universal in this case for stylistic reasons, since I thought that *pandahāng-hen minarya minarya miraneri sitang-ton* does not flow as well as the sentence with the constituents reversed.

- (2) *Enya -reng atau -ya kāryo nanga -ya pandaba -na Oblonski.*
 everything -A.INAN chaos -LOC big house -LOC family -GEN Oblonski.

“Everything was in a big chaos in the Oblonski family’s house.”

This sentence shows Ayeri’s normal constituent order again, as compared to (1), the predication being the NP “atauya kāryo.” Tagalog, as a VSO language which I have been returning to as an inspiration for Ayeri, however, seems to place not only predicative adjectives before actors like the universal cited above predicts, but also predicative NPs:

(i) Tagalog (Schachter 1976: 499):

a. *Abogado ang lalaki.*

lawyer T- man

“The man is a lawyer.”

b. *Matalino ang lalaki.*

intelligent T- man

“The man is intelligent.”

Since I could not find out anything about the etymology of the name Oblonsky, I left it as it is and respelled it with the graphemes available in Ayeri transcription.

(3) a. *Silvisa -ye sarisa envan -ang, ang manga mira -ya ayon yena*
 discover -3SG.F previously wife -A, AT PROG do -3SG.M husband (-T) 3SG.F.GEN
cān -cān -as lay -eri Kabani, si -eri ganvaya -as pandaba -ya ton, ...
 love -DIM -P girl INS French, REL -INS governess -P family -LOC 3PL.N.GEN, ...

“The wife had previously discovered that her husband had been having an affair with a French girl, who had been a governess in their family, ...”

b. *..., nay ang narisa -ye ayon -yam yena, ang ming sayling -oy*
 ..., and AT announce -3SG.F (-T) husband -DAT 3SG.F.GEN, AT can continue -NEG
-ye mitan -yam nanga -ya kamo kayvo yāy.
 -3SG.F (-T) live -PTCP house -LOC same with 3SG.M.LOC.

“..., and had announced to her husband that she could not continue living in the same house with him.”

This is the first section that necessitated coming up with new vocabulary: རྒྱུ་ལྗོངས་ *cān-cān* ‘(love) affair’ as a diminutive of རྒྱུ་ *cān* ‘love’ (a little like German *Liebelei* and *Techtelmechtel*); རྒྱུ་ལྗོངས་ *ganvaya* ‘governess’ from a combination of རྒྱུ་ *gan* ‘child’ and the feminine occupational derivative suffix ལྗོངས་ *-vaya*; and རྒྱུ་ *narisa-* ‘announce’ as a causative derivation of རྒྱུ་ *nara-* ‘say, speak’: ‘make sth. said’.

This sentence is also a good illustration for Ayeri’s tendency to underspecify tense. For one, narratives are not marked by the epic past tense, and secondly, the aspect of actions happening before the time of narration or leading up to it is only signified by the time adverb རྒྱུ་ *sarisa* ‘previous(ly), earlier; former(ly)’.

Sentence (5b) contained the difficulty of a comparative statement that was beyond a simple ‘CMP is more QTY than STD’. To evoke a more literary style, I used the comparative verb ၵၢ်: *eng-* ‘be more QTY than STD’ instead of a simpler construction with the corresponding suffix ၵၢ်: *-eng*. I am actually not completely sure if the verb construction makes sense syntactically, but I assumed that ၵၢ်: *eng-* would be the head in this case and the phrase headed by ၵၢ်: *vib-* ‘share’ would be subordinate to it, essentially serving as the quality QTY of the standard STD that the comparee CMP is compared to:

- (ii) a. CMP be.more [QTY big] than STD.
 b. CMP be.more [QTY sharing traits] than STD.

The rather complex comparative structure is, however, further complicated by the relative clause attributed to the agent ၵၢ်: *keynam[ang]* ‘people’. Due to information flow and syntactic weight, this constituent moves to the right edge of the clause.

- (6) *Ang sara -oy -ye envan sangal -as yena, ang manga yoma -oy -ya ayon*
 AT leave -NEG -3SG.F wife (-T) room -P 3SG.F.GEN, AT PROG exist -NEG -3SG.M husband
rang -ya ton luga babis -ya kay.
 (-T) home -LOC 3PL.N.GEN for day -LOC three.

“The wife did not leave her room, the husband had not been at home for three days.”

I am a little tempted to insert a conjunction between the two main clauses here, but I do not know whether it should be ၵၢ်: *nay* ‘and’ or ၵၢ်: *yanoyam* ‘because’, since either reading is possible.

- (7) a. *Sa sen -yon gan -ye nanga -ya =ben; ...*
 PT neglect -3PL.N child -PL (-T) house -LOC =all; ...
 “Children were neglected all over the house; ...”
 b. ...; *ang ran -ye ganvaya Angli kayvo lomāya -ya visam nay ang taban*
 ...; AT argue -3SG.F governess (-T) English with servant -LOC main and AT write
-ye ledo -yam, yam mya balang -yeng pinyan yano -ley gumo biro ye
 -3SG.F (-T) friend -DAT, DATT shall find -3SG.F.A please place -P.INAN work new 3SG.F
 ; ...
 (-T) ; ...

“...; the English governess argued with the head servant and wrote to a friend that she may please find her a new work place; ...”

- c. ...; *ang sara -ya ersaya babis -ya sarisa pidim -ya tarika sirutayyān -ena; ...*
 ...; AT leave -3SG.M cook (-T) day -LOC previous hour -LOC exact dinner -GEN; ...
 “...; the cook left the previous day at the exact hour of dinner; ...”

- d. ...; *ang narisa -ton lomāya risang nay lantaya vapatan -as ton.*
 ...; AT express -3PL.N servant (-T) kitchen and driver (-T) warning -P 3PL.N.GEN.
 “...; the kitchen servant and the driver expressed their warning.”

For this passage as well, new words had to be coined or extended: *sen*- ‘neglect’, and *narisa*- ‘announce’, coined in (3), gains the additional meanings ‘express, pronounce’. *lantaya* ‘driver’ and *vapatan* ‘warning’ are not in the dictionary, but they are nouns regularly derived from verbs, in so far, they are transparent and not in desperate need of a new dictionary entry.

4 Conclusive Thoughts

This translation exercise was originally proposed in a discussion thread as a stand-in for the popular “Babel Text” from the biblical book of Genesis (11:1–9) for those who do not wish to use a religious mythical story to compare fictional languages and showcase their own. And while the passage from *Anna Karenina* contains many simple sentences, it still poses some syntactic difficulties that may be hard to tackle in a rather newly developed conlang. At least, this is the context in which I have most often seen the “Tower of Babel” story used in.

However, this passage from Tolstoy provides vocabulary that seems more immediately useful to get a conlang started than the “Tower of Babel” story. How often, after all, does one talk about ‘mortar’ and ‘bitumen’, or translate texts into one’s conlang that do? At least in my own experience, vocabulary of the domestic and everyday life spheres appears much more frequently.

References

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