

International Linguistics Challenge 2025

Qualification Round

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Problem A: Phonetic Transcription

Question No. 1 - 10: Listen to each of the audio files linked in 1–10 and transcribe what you hear into IPA notation. Each recording consists of a single word from Language X.

Table 1: Transcriptions for Audio 001-010

AUDIO NO.	IPA	TRANSLATION
001	/ʃinu/	to sing
002	/nara/	river
003	/plutʃon/	to carry
004	/fntʃ/	long
005	/tile/	tree
006	/gelum/	cold
007	/burak/	to sleep
008	/tʃeso/	house
009	/rabik/	to break
010	/lasau/	bright

Problem B: Word Boundaries

Question No. 11 - 13: Listen to each of the audio files linked in 11–13. Each recording consists of a short sentence in Language X. Transcribe the full sentence and show word boundaries clearly.

Question No. 11

Table 2: Audio 011 Transcription

ENGLISH	The long river carries the small cold stone.					
	long	river	small	cold	stone	carry
LANGUAGE X	fintʃ	nara	mika	gelum	tʃon	plutʃon

Question No. 12

Table 3: Audio 012 Transcription

ENGLISH	The small bright bird sings.			
	small	bright	bird	sings
LANGUAGE X	mika	lasau	kosap	ʃinu

Question No. 13

Table 4: Audio 013 Transcription

ENGLISH	The tall child breaks the tree easily.				
	tall	child	tree	easily	breaks
LANGUAGE X	gopni	mu	tile	loraik	rabik

Problem C: Word Order & Plural Morphology

Questions:

(a) What is the basic word order of subjects, objects and verbs in Language X? Give a short explanation, using examples from the dataset to support your answer.

- By using the examples in Problem B, we can deduce the word-by-word structure for the general translations in Problem C.
- The basic word order of subjects, objects and verbs in Language X is Subject, Object and Verb (SOV).

Table 5: Example 15

ENGLISH	The women see the boy.		
	women	boy	see
LANGUAGE X	kanabi	telum	feru
COMPONENTS	Subject	Object	Verb

Table 6: Example 16

ENGLISH	The dog chases the boy.		
	dog	boy	chases
LANGUAGE X	lomu	telum	huni
COMPONENTS	Subject	Object	Verb

Table 7: Example 18

ENGLISH	The woman studies the stars.		
	woman	stars	studies
LANGUAGE X	kanab	kuran	baraa
COMPONENTS	Subject	Object	Verb

- If there is an adjective, the adjective will be placed before the noun it is describing.

Table 8: Example from Problem B

ENGLISH	The small stone rolls.		
	small	stone	rolls
LANGUAGE X	mika	tʃon	repik
COMPONENTS	Adjective + Subject		Verb

Table 9: Question 11 in Problem B

ENGLISH	The long river carries the small cold stone.					
	long	river	small	cold	stone	carry
LANGUAGE X	fɪntʃ	nara	mika	gelum	tʃon	plutʃon
COMPONENTS	Adjective + Subject			Adj. 1 + Adj. 2 + Object	Verb	

(b) How are plural nouns formed in Language X? Give a short explanation, using examples from the dataset to support your answer.

- To form plurals in Language X, we must first see whether the noun is human or otherwise.
- For humans, the letter ‘i’ is added at the end of the noun to form the plural noun

Table 10: Comparison of the first word in Example 14 and 18

NOUN FORM	Singular	Plural
ENGLISH	woman	<u>women</u>
LANGUAGE X	kanab	kanabi

Table 11: Noun form comparison from Example 16 and 17

NOUN FORM	Singular	Plural
ENGLISH	boy	boys
LANGUAGE X	telum	telumi

- For non-humans, the letter ‘n’ is added at the the end of the noun to form the plural noun

Table 12: Noun form comparison from Example 19 and 20

NOUN FORM	Singular	Plural
ENGLISH	mountain	mountains
LANGUAGE X	pano	panon

Table 13: Noun form comparison from Example 16 and 21

NOUN FORM	Singular	Plural
ENGLISH	dog	dogs
LANGUAGE X	lomu	lomun

(c) Translate the sentence below into Language X.

‘The mountains study the women and the dogs.’

- From Example 21, we can see that the word ‘and’ can be translated as ‘o’.
- We can also use the existing vocabulary from our dataset to translate the nouns and verb: (see Table 7, Table 10, Table 12 and Table 13).

Thus, the translation of the sentence in Language X: panon kanabi o lomun baraa.

Table 14: Sentence Translation

ENGLISH	The mountains study the women and the dogs.				
	mountains	women	and	dogs	study
LANGUAGE X	panon	kanabi	o	lomun	baraa

Problem D: Verbal Agreement

Questions:

(a) Describe the verbal agreement system in Language X. Use examples from the dataset to support your answer.

- In Language X, the verbal agreement system is between the Object and the Verb.
- When the Object is plural, the letter ‘a’ is added at the end of the Verb.
- For example, we can compare example 18 with example 24.
 - Both examples have Subject in singular form, but example 18 has the Object in plural form, while example 24 has the Object in singular form.
 - Consequently, the Verb in example 18 has the letter ‘a’ added to the end of the Verb, while the Verb in example 24 maintains its basic form.

Table 15: Comparison of Example 18 and 24

	Example 18			Example 24		
ENGLISH	The woman studies the stars.			The woman studies the star.		
	woman	stars	studies	woman	star	studies
LANGUAGE X	kanab	<i>kuran</i>	<i>bara_a</i>	kanab	<i>kura</i>	<i>bara</i>
COMPONENTS	Subject	Object (Plural)	Verb + a	Subject	Object (Singular)	Verb

- Similarly, in Example 16 and Example 25:
 - The Verb maintains its basic form when the Object is singular, but has the letter ‘a’ added at the end when the Object is plural

Table 16: Comparison of Example 16 and 25

	Example 16			Example 25		
ENGLISH	The dog chases the boy.			The dog chases the stars.		
	dog	boy	chases	dog	stars	chases
LANGUAGE X	lomu	<i>telum</i>	<i>huni</i>	lomu	<i>kuran</i>	<i>hunia</i>
COMPONENTS	Subject	Object (Singular)	Verb	Subject	Object (Plural)	Verb + a

- This system is applicable regardless of the type of Object (human or non-human)

- To reconfirm, we can consider example 14 and example 22, which does not have Objects, but have two different forms of Subject (singular and plural form)
 - We can see that the Verb is in basic form without any adjustment.

Table 17: Comparison of Example 14 and 22

	Example 14		Example 22	
ENGLISH	The women dance.		The woman dances.	
	women	dance	woman	dances
LANGUAGE X	kanabi	<i>felu</i>	kanab	<i>felu</i>
COMPONENTS	Subject (Plural)	Verb	Subject (Singular)	Verb

(b) Translate the sentence below into Language X. Explain plural noun formation and verbal agreement morphology, if any, in the sentence. Note: You will also need the vocabulary from Problems A and B.

‘The bird sees the river and the trees.’

- Plural noun formation:

- Since trees are non-human, we take the basic word for trees and add the letter ‘n’ at the end:

tile → tilen

- Verbal agreement morphology:

- Since the Object is plural, the letter ‘a’ is added to the basic form of the Verb:

nara o tilen + furu → nara o tilen furua

Thus, the translation of the sentence in Language X: **kosap nara o tilen furua.**

Table 18: Sentence Translation

ENGLISH	The bird sees the river and the trees.				
	bird	river	and	trees	sees
LANGUAGE X	kosap	nara	o	tilen	furua

Problem E: Dialectal Variation

Part (a)

Questions:

Describe the agreement system of Dialect II. Identify one similarity and one difference between the agreement systems of Dialect I and II. Use examples from the dataset to support your answer.

- Dialect II shares the same basic system regarding word ordering and forming plural nouns.
- We can see the same previously discussed verbal agreement system at play in Example 27 and Example 29.

Table 19: Comparison of Example 27 and 29

	Example 27			Example 29		
	The women see the boy.			The dog sees the mountains.		
ENGLISH	women	boy	see	dog	mountains	sees
LANGUAGE X	kanabi	<i>telum</i>	<i>feru</i>	lomu	<i>panon</i>	<i>ferua</i>
COMPONENTS	Subject	Object (Singular)	Verb	Subject	Object (Plural)	Verb + a

- And while both have the same verbal agreement system at its foundation, Dialect II has some additional verbal agreement system:
 - When no Object is present in the sentence, the Verb changes form according to the Subject
 - The way the Verb is modified is similar to the verbal agreement system used for the Object:
 - * If the noun is singular, the Verb remains unchanged.
 - * If the noun is plural, the letter ‘a’ is added to the end of the Verb.

Table 20: Comparison of Example 14 and 26

	Example 14 (Dialect I)		Example 26 (Dialect II)	
ENGLISH	The women dance.		The women see.	
	women	dance	women	see
LANGUAGE X	kanabi	<i>selu</i>	kanabi	<i>ferua</i>
COMPONENTS	Subject (Plural)	Verb	Subject (Plural)	Verb + a

- This system is also used if the Subject is non-human.

Table 21: Comparison of Example 19 and 28

	Example 19 (Dialect I)		Example 28 (Dialect II)	
ENGLISH	The mountains dance.		The mountains see.	
	mountains	dance	mountains	see
LANGUAGE X	<u>panon</u>	<i>selu</i>	<u>panon</u>	<i>ferua</i>
COMPONENTS	Subject (Plural)	Verb	Subject (Plural)	Verb + a

Part (b)

Questions:

Based on the agreement rules you have identified for Dialect II in Problem E Part (a), what predictions can you make about the equivalent of (31) in Dialect II?

- In Dialect II, (31) will have two forms based on whether the Subject is in singular or plural form:

Table 22: Different forms of (31) in Dialect II

SUBJECT	Singular	Plural
ENGLISH	He/she dances.	They dance.
LANGUAGE X	selu	selua