International Linguistics Challenge

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Contents

1   Clarifications and Definitions

(a) In sentence structure: the subject, verb and object are abbreviated as S, V and O respectively. Nouns are also abbreviated as N.

(b) S, V, O and N are all considered words.

(c) S, O are both considered nouns.

Let X, Y be a word, then:

(d) X_{last} signifies the last letter of that word.

(e) $N_{sg.}$ signifies a noun in its singular form.

(f) $N_{pl.}$ signifies a noun in its plural form.

(g) $X \rightarrow Y$ signifies an alteration of word X into word Y, whether it be an addition of a letter, a removal of a letter etc.

2 Problem A: Phonetic Transcription

Below are my own interpretations of the given words in IPA format, as given in the statements, with some additional notes included.

1. /ʃinu/

2. /nara/
   Note: I heard it as /ɾ/ but in later problems the /r/ sound is more clearly heard.

3. /blut͡ʃon/

4. /fint͡ʃ/
   Note: The vowel was barely heard here, but it is voiced as /i/ in later problems.

5. /tilɪ/

6. /gelun/

7. /bulak/

8. /ʃeso/
   Note: The first consonant was more similar to the English *j*, but this was the closest thing.

9. /rafik/
   Note: The second consonant was more similar to the English *v*, but this was the closest thing.

10. /lasao/

3   Problem B: Word Boundaries

Below are IPA transcriptions of the following sentences with clear word boundaries, according to the given IPA chart.

11. fint͡ʃ   nara   mika   gelun   t͡ʃon   blut͡ʃon
    long   river   small   cold   stone   carry
    'The long river carries the small cold stone.'

12. mika   lasao   gosap   ʃinu
    small   bright   bird   sings
    'The small bright bird songs.'

13. gop   nimu   tɪlɪ   lorai   rafik
    tall   child   tree   easily   breaks
    'The tall child breaks the tree easily.'

4   Problem C: Word Order and Plural Morphology

4.1   Sentence Morphology explanation

We consider the sentences in Language X given by the statement. The sentences can be divided into individual words as follows. (These are already divided into words and subunits, but the answers will not be referring to the below for addition information.)

14. kanabi   ʃelu
    woman$_{pl.}$ dance
    'The women dance.'

15. kanabi   telum   feru
    woman$_{pl.}$ boy$_{sg.}$ see
    'The women see the boy.'

16. lomu   telum   huni
    dog$_{sg.}$ boy$_{sg.}$ chase
    'The dog chases the boy.'

17. telumi lomu feru
    boy$_{pl.}$ dog$_{sg.}$ see
    'The boys see the dog.'

18. kanab kuran baraa
    woman$_{sg.}$ star$_{pl.}$ study
    'The woman studies the stars.'

19. panon ʃelu
    mountain$_{pl.}$ dance
    'The mountains dance.'

20. lomun pano feru
    dog$_{pl.}$ mountain$_{sg.}$ see
    'The dogs see the mountain.'

21. lomun o telumi pano feru
    dog$_{pl.}$ and boy$_{pl.}$ mountain$_{sg.}$ see
    'The dogs and the boys see the mountain.'

4.2 Questions

(a) Consider 14. and 15. where both start with /kanabi/ correlating to 'The women', so <u>the sentence structure starts with a subject.</u>
Next, consider 15. and 16. where both has 'the boy' as the object, the word /telum/ appears second in both sentences, so <u>the sentence structure has the object right after the first word, which is the subject.</u>
So with this information, it can be said that the sentence structure for Language X is **SOV**.

(b) Consider 14. and 18. which have 'The women' /kanabi/ and 'The woman' /kanab/ as their respective subjects. This pattern is also present in 'The boy' /telum/-/telumi/.
And consider 16. and 20. which have 'The dog' /lomu/ and 'The dogs' /lomun/ as their respective subjects. This pattern is also present in 'The mountains' /pano/-/panon/.
It can be said that to form plural nouns in Language X, there are two possible procedures.

(i) If the last letter of a word is a vowel then the plural form would have an '-n' at the back or **if $N_{last} = V$ then $N \rightarrow N +$ -n**.

(ii) If the last letter of a word is a consonant then the plural form would have an '-i' at the back or
if $N_{last} = C$ then $N \rightarrow N +$ -i.

(c) With the information above, the sentence 'The mountains study the women and the dogs.' can be translated as:

mountain$_{pl.}$ woman$_{pl.}$ and dog$_{pl.}$ study
panon kanabi o lomun baraa

So the translated sentence is /**panon kabani o lomun baraa**/.

5 Problem D: Verbal Agreement

5.1 Sentence Morphology explanation

We consider the sentences in Language X given by the statement. The sentences can be divided into individual words as follows.

22. kanab ʃelu
    woman$_{sg.}$ dance
    'The woman dances.'

23. telumi lomun ferua
    boy$_{pl.}$ dog$_{pl.}$ see
    'The boys see the dogs.'

24. kanab kura bara
    woman$_{sg.}$ star$_{sg.}$ study
    'The woman studies the star.'

25. lomu kuran hunia
    dog$_{sg.}$ star$_{pl.}$ chase
    'The dog chases the stars.'

5.2 Questions

(a) Observe that some verbs now have an ending '-a', and further observation reveals that verbs only have said ending letter when the object of

the sentence is in plural form. This can be seen in 23. /ferua/ gaining the ending letter compared to 17. /feru/ or the absence of one in 24. /bara/ compared to 18. /baraa/.

With this information, it can be said that verbal agreement only happens when the object of the sentence is in plural form. Or that **if $O = O_{pl.}$ then $V \rightarrow V + $-a**.

(b) With the information above, we can translate the sentence 'The bird sees the river and trees.' in steps:

1. Divide the sentence into individual words.
   bird_{sg.}   river_{sg.}   and   tree_{pl.}   see

2. Translate them directly into Language X, note that the word for tree /tilɪ/ has to be turned into plural form.
   gosap   nara   o   tilm   feru

3. Lastly, adjust the verb according to the verbal agreement morphology.
   gosap   nara   o   tilm   ferua

Therefore, the translated sentence is **/gosap nara o tilɪn ferua/**.

6   Problem E: Dialectal Variation

6.1   Part (a)

We consider the sentences in Language X from Dialect II. The sentences can be divided into individual words as follows.

26. kanabi   ferua
    woman_{pl.}   see
    'The women see.'

27. kanabi   telum   feru
    woman_{pl.}   boy_{sg.}   see
    'The women see the boy.'

28. panon   ferua
    mountain_{pl.}   see
    'The mountains see.'

29. lomu   panon   ferua
     dog$_{\text{sg.}}$ mountain$_{\text{pl.}}$ see
     'The dog sees the mountains.'

Observe that the only sentence that has /feru/ instead of /ferua/ is 27., where the verb is following a noun that's in singular form.
So, it can be said that:

(i) The agreement systems of both dialects are similar in the sense that **both of them involves an alteration of the verb**.

(ii) The agreement systems of both dialects are different in the sense that **they have different conditions for when it is triggered**. (Dialect I's system focuses on the object only as to Dialect II's system which focuses on any noun that's before the verb.)

6.2 Part (b)

Observe that Dialect I only looks for the object of the sentence, so in 30. and 31., the agreement system defaults to "no change" as there is no object to be considered. So a prediction for what would happen in Dialect II is that, because there is no noun to be considered, there will be no change to the verb. Therefore, a good prediction of what Dialect II's equivalent of 31. is would be **/ʃelu/**.