

ILC Qualification Round

Tanay Agrawal

December 30, 2025

A Phonetic Transcription

To transcribe the audio files, I listened to each recording multiple times to understand and discern individual sounds. I used the IPA chart provided to match the sounds I heard with their corresponding IPA symbols. Audio 9 was the most difficult transcription for me. The initial consonant seemed to vary between /f/, /b/, /d/ and /v/ on different listens, and the second syllable sounded like /vik/ rather than /bik/, though this might be due to an accent. My transcriptions are shown below in Table 1 (answers marked in bold).

Index	English translation	IPA transcription
001	sing	/ʃinu/
002	river	/na:ra/
003	to carry	/plutʃon/
004	long	/fnʃ/
005	tree	/tɪle/
006	cold	/gelum/
007	to sleep	/burak/
008	house	/dreso/
009	to break	/rabik/
010	bright	/lasao/

Table 1: Phonetic transcriptions of the audio files

B Word Boundaries

Note: I believe Example iii (Audio 000c) is glossed incorrectly, it should be:

mika tʃon regik

small stone roll

‘The small stone rolls.’

For this section, I used the vocab from Problem A as reference points to identify word boundaries in Sentences 11-13. When I heard a familiar word,

I could identify where that word began and ended. Additionally, the gloss provided on the PDF helped me verify my predictions of words being spoken in the audio.

Observations: In Sentence 11, I noticed a phonetic variation - the word for 'cold' is transcribed as /gelum/ on its own (Audio 006), but in the continuous speech of Sentence 11, it sounds like /gelup/. I maintained the transcription as /gelum/ in my gloss to match the form from Problem A, though the pronunciation here differs (maybe due to assimilation).

My transcriptions for each sentence are shown below in Table 2 (answers marked in bold).

Index	Gloss
011	fŋ nara mika gelum tʃon plutʃon long river small cold stone carry 'The long river carries the small cold stone.'
012	mika lasao kosab ʃinu small bright bird sings 'The small bright bird sings.'
013	gopni mu tile lorab rabik tall child tree easily breaks 'The tall child breaks the tree easily.'

Table 2: Sentence transcriptions with word boundaries

C Word Order and Plural Morphology

(a) The basic word order of Language X is **SOV**, or Subject-Object-Verb.

For example, in Sentence 15, the subject *kanabi* 'women' comes first, then the object *telum* 'boy' follows, and finally the verb *feru* 'see' appears, illustrating the SOV word order.

Similarly, in Sentence 16, the subject *lomu* 'dog' comes first, then the object *telum* 'boy', and finally the verb *huni* 'chases'.

(b) Plural nouns are formed by adding the suffix *-i* to singular nouns that end with a consonant, or by adding the suffix *-n* to singular nouns that end with a vowel.

Sentence 14 and 18 display the first case (singular nouns ending in a consonant), with *kanab* meaning 'woman' (singular) and *kanabi* meaning 'women' (plural).

Sentence 19 and 20 show the second case (singular nouns ending in a vowel), with *pano* meaning 'mountain' (singular) and *panon* meaning

‘mountains’ (plural). Furthermore, *lomu* ‘dog’ supports this hypothesis as the plural form is formed by adding an *-n* to it, creating *lomun* ‘dogs’.

(c) **Translation: panon kanabi o lomun baraa**

‘The mountains study the women and the dogs.’

panon ‘the mountains’ (subject), *kanabi o lomun* ‘the women and the dogs’ (objects), *baraa* ‘study’ (verb).

In this sentence, ‘mountains’ and ‘dogs’ are plural nouns whose singular forms end in a vowel in Language X. Thus, I added the suffix *-n* to them using my logic from Part (b) above. ‘Women’ is also plural, but, unlike the previous nouns, its singular form in Language X ends with a consonant. Therefore, it has the *-i* suffix instead. Sentence 21 illustrates that *o* ‘and’ is used to create a coordinated phrase. Finally, I arranged the sentence to align with SOV word order.

D Verbal Agreement

(a) The verbal agreement system in Language X is between the verb and the object, specifically the plurality of the object. If the object is singular, then the verb appears in its base form. On the other hand, if there is a plural object, the verb adds the suffix *-a*.

First, let’s contrast Sentence 14 (*kanabi selu* ‘The women dance’) with Sentence 22 (*kanab selu* ‘The woman dances’). Here, although the subject changes, the verb form remains the same, meaning that the verbal agreement system doesn’t depend on the subject. Additionally, this is an example of an intransitive verb, meaning there is no direct object tied to the verb.

Next, take a look at Sentences 17 (*telumi lomu feru* ‘The boys see the dog’) and 23 (*telumi lomun ferua* ‘The boys see the dogs’). The verb *feru* ‘see’ changes form based on the plurality of the object. When the object becomes plural in Sentence 23, the suffix *-a* is added to the verb for agreement.

(b) **Translation: kosab nara o tilen ferua**

‘The bird sees the river and the trees.’

kosab ‘the bird’ (subject), *nara o tilen* ‘the river and the trees’ (objects), *ferua* ‘sees’.

In this sentence, ‘trees’ is plural, so the translation in Language X, namely *tilen*, has the suffix *-n* as the singular form *tile* ‘tree’ ends with a vowel. The verb takes the form *ferua* (base *feru* + suffix *-a*) because the object contains a plural noun (*tilen* ‘trees’), satisfying the verbal agreement pattern.

E Dialectal Variation

(a) In Dialect II, the verb agrees with the object when an object is present, but when there is no object, it agrees with the subject. Therefore, it contains both similarities and differences to that of Dialect I.

(i) One similarity is that both dialects use the suffix *-a* for plural agreement.

In Dialect II, Sentence 29 (*lomu panon ferua* ‘The dog sees the mountains’) shows this similarity. The subject is singular while the object is pluralized, leading the verb agreement system to add the common suffix *-a* to the verb *feru* ‘see’.

(ii) One difference is that the verb also adds the suffix *-a* if the subject is plural and there is no object present.

This is depicted in Sentences 26 (*kanabi ferua* ‘The women see’) and 27 (*kanabi telum feru* ‘The women see the boy’). The verb *feru* ‘see’ changes form in Sentence 26 as the subject is plural and there is no object. In contrast, when the singular object is present in Sentence 27, the verb does not take the suffix *-a* even though the subject is still plural.

In Dialect I, Sentence 14 (*kanabi selu* ‘The women dance’) shows the difference between dialects. The subject is plural but the verb does not contain the suffix *-a*, whereas in Dialect II, an intransitive verb with a plural subject would have the suffix.

(b) Based on my agreement rules from Part (a) above, I predict that the equivalent of Sentence 31 (*selu* ‘He/she/they dance’) in Dialect II will form two cases:

(i) *selu* ‘He/she/it dances’
(ii) *selua* ‘They dance’

In Dialect I, the verb *selu* remains in base form regardless of whether the dropped pronoun is singular or plural, because verbs there agree only with objects (which aren’t present in Sentence 31). However, in Dialect II, verbs agree with subjects when there is no object. Therefore, even when the subject is omitted, we should still see two different verb forms depending on whether the subject is plural or not.