

International Linguistics Challenge 2025

(Qualification Round)

Solutions: Problems A–E

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Problem A: Phonetic Transcription

Given examples: *small* /mɪkə/; *stone* /tʃon/.

Transcriptions (1–10):

1. *to sing*: /ʃɪnɪŋ/
2. *river*: /nərə/
3. *to carry*: /plutʃən/
4. *long*: /fʌntʃ/
5. *tree*: /tɪlə/
6. *cold*: /gələn/
7. *to sleep*: /burak/
8. *house*: /dresəl/
9. *to break*: /ravik/
10. *bright*: /ʌsəu/

Problem B: Word Boundaries

Below are the sentences transcribed in IPA with **word boundaries marked by spaces**.

11. *The long river carries the small cold stone.*

/funts/ nara mikä gelun tʃon plutʃon/

12. *The small bright bird sings.*

/mika lasau gosap ſinu/

13. *The tall child breaks the tree easily.*

/gopni mo tile loraiv ſavik/

Problem C: Word Order and Plural Morphology (Dialect I)

(a) Basic word order.

The basic clause pattern is **SOV** (Subject–Object–Verb). In transitive sentences, the verb comes last and the object comes immediately before the verb: *kanabi telum feru* ‘women boy see’ and *lomu telum huni* ‘dog boy chase’.

In intransitive sentences, the verb also comes last: *kanabi ſelu* ‘women dance’ and *panon ſelu* ‘mountains dance’.

So Language X places the verb in final position, with the object preceding it when present.

(b) Plural noun formation.

Plural is marked with a suffix whose form depends on the final segment of the noun:

- If a noun ends in a **consonant**, the plural suffix is **-i**:
kanab ‘woman’ → *kanabi* ‘women’; *telum* ‘boy’ → *telumi* ‘boys’.
- If a noun ends in a **vowel**, the plural suffix is **-n**:
lomu ‘dog’ → *lomun* ‘dogs’; *pano* ‘mountain’ → *panon* ‘mountains’.

This is a straightforward case of **suffixal number marking** (plural suffixes attached to the noun).

(c) Translation (Dialect I).

The mountains study the women and the dogs.

panon kanabi o lomun baraa

Why: Word order is SOV, so *panon* is the subject and the verb appears at the end. The object is a coordination *kanabi o lomun*. The verb appears as *baraa* because (as shown in Problem D) the verb agrees with a plural object in Dialect I.

Problem D: Verbal Agreement (Dialect I)

(a) Verbal agreement system.

In Dialect I, verbs show **number agreement with the direct object** (object agreement). The agreement is expressed by the suffix **-a** on the verb when the object is plural:

- If the object is **singular**, the verb has its basic form (no **-a**): *feru* ‘see’, *huni* ‘chase’, *bara* ‘study’.
- If the object is **plural**, the verb takes **-a**: *feru-a* ‘see-PL.OBJ’, *huni-a* ‘chase-PL.OBJ’, *bara-a* ‘study-PL.OBJ’.

This is confirmed by minimal contrasts where only the object number changes: *kanab kura bara* ‘woman studies the star’ (singular object, no **-a**) vs. *kanab kuran baraa* ‘woman studies the stars’ (plural object, **-a**).

Likewise *lomu telum huni* ‘dog chases the boy’ vs. *lomu kuran hunia* ‘dog chases the stars’.

(b) Translation (Dialect I).

The bird sees the river and the trees.

gosap nara o tlen ferua

Explanation: *tlen* ‘tree’ ends in a vowel, so its plural is *tlen-n* → *tlen*. The coordinated object *nara o tlen* is plural overall, so the verb ‘see’ takes **-a**: *feru-a* → *ferua*. The sentence keeps SOV order.

Problem E: Dialectal Variation (Dialect II)

(a) Agreement system in Dialect II; similarity and difference.

Dialect II still uses **-a** as an agreement marker, but the distribution differs from Dialect I. The Dialect II data show:

- In **intransitive** clauses, **plural subjects** trigger **-a** on the verb: *kanabi ferua* ‘women see’ and *panon ferua* ‘mountains see’.
- In **transitive** clauses, **plural objects** trigger **-a** on the verb: *lomu panon ferua* ‘dog sees the mountains’.
- A plural subject does *not* force **-a** in a transitive clause when the object is singular: *kanabi telum feru* ‘women see the boy’ (no **-a**).

Similarity: Both dialects mark **plural objects** on the verb with **-a** in transitive clauses.

Difference: Dialect II also marks **plural subjects** with **-a** in intransitive clauses, whereas Dialect I does not (Dialect I has *kanabi selu* without **-a**).

(b) Prediction for the Dialect II equivalent of (31).

In Dialect I, *selu* can mean ‘he/she/they dance’ because the intransitive verb does not show subject number.

In Dialect II, intransitive verbs *do* mark plural subjects with **-a**. Therefore, with a dropped pronominal subject we predict:

- **selu** = ‘he/she dances’ (singular subject)
- **selua** = ‘they dance’ (plural subject)