The UK Linguistics Olympiad   2020

Round 2

Problem 3. A toad's miao (20 marks)

Below is a famous Miao folk tale, "The Pimpled Toad who was Wise," written in the Large Flowery Miao language, which is spoken by about 300,000 people in Weining Autonomous County, Guizhou, China. Large Flowery Miao is generally written in two different scripts: either in the *Pollard* script, created in 1904 by the English missionary Samuel Pollard, or in Miao Pinyin, which uses Roman script. The version below is in the Pollard script.

The next version is an English translation of the "The Pimpled Toad." Of course, not every word in the English translation has an equivalent word in Miao; on the other hand, some English words may be translated by more than one Miao word. Also, note that constructions of the

form "I want to eat you / you want to eat me" are written in Miao as "I want to eat your flesh / you want to eat my flesh."

> ### The Pimpled Toad that was Wise.
> They say that a crow went to meet a pimpled toad. The crow said, "Toad, I want to eat you." The toad said, "You want to eat me, but my flesh is very bitter. If you want to eat me, you want to carry me over there, to the stream, to the bank of the pool of water. Wash me in water, then eat to get my flesh." The crow replied, "Toad, I want to eat you, so there!" The crow stretched his head upwards, laughing *ha-ha*. The toad jumped, hopped down to the pool water, and was gone. The crow waded in the water to seek the toad, sought him, but did not get him. The crow simply stretched his head, cawed, and said, "Ah-ah, all for nothing! Ah-ah, all for nothing!"

Finally, here is the Miao Pinyin transcription. However, there are some changes:

• The sentences, including the title, are in random order.

• Five of the sentences have been divided into two parts.

• Punctuation has been removed.

• The numbered blanks (*e.g.* __18__) mark places where one or more words are missing.

A. tái __1__ jỳ áo ⁿtrīeh tái jìeu ⁿtrīeh hì táo	J. __10__ bí-xá dlò hà-hà
B. jỳ __2__ yā não gū ⁿghãi yā drìh gū dlá ⁿdrũ	K. tái jìeu tlíe tlw̄ bào lái __11__ áo lèu
C. tú __3__ jĩ̌-tá jìeu	L. tái lí-á lí-mù __12__ lí-fáo ghá hì
D. gū yā não jỳ ⁿghãi __4__	M. á á __13__ bè-lá-lá
E. tú lí-á __5__ jìeu	N. tái lí-á __14__ lái lí-fáo
F. gū yā não jỳ ⁿghãi	O. tái á-jìeu hì jỳ __15__ não gú __16__
G. nỳ hì gù tú lí-á __6__ ⁿjíh tái jìeu lú-lì	P. víe gū ⁿghãi íeh tá-tìe
H. ⁿzā __7__ drài __8__ táo gū ⁿghãi	Q. lái __17__ lái á-ⁿtú bào áo
I. á-jìeu lú-lì __9__ báo-táng	

See the notes and the question on the next page.

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Notes

- The diacritics (accent marks) ´, `, ¯, ˜ written over vowels represent tones
- *ieh* and *w* are vowels/vowel sequences
- *gh*, *dl*, *tl*, *dr*, and *tr* are consonants
- ₙ (e.g. $^n t$) marks nasalization of the following consonant, that is, air flow escapes through the nose and the mouth simultaneously during the production of the consonantal sound.

Q3. On your answer sheet, write the word or words missing from gaps 1-17.

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Solution and marking.

Marking (max 34)

- 2 for each correct answer, 1 with one wrong letter
- accept ɑ or a
- accept n for ^{n}
- insist on correct tones
- reject extra words, e.g. *jáng lái for 14*

1	**lí-á**	7	**áo**	13	**bè-lá-lá á á**
2	**já**	8	**não**	14	**jáng**
3	**lí-á**	9	**gù**	15	**yā**
4	**lài**	10	**dráo**	16	**^{n}ghãi**
5	**hì**	11	**bào**	17	**^{n}tú-dlĩ**
6	**mào**	12	**jáng**		

Commentary

Pollard Script:

• Consonants are written with large letters, vowels with small diacritics.

• The position of the diacritic around the letter gives the tone: directly above = ¯, top right = ´, right = ˜, bottom left = `.

• Nasalization is marked with the letter C (*n*) before the consonant.

• The components of compounds are written separately.

Miao Grammar:

• Word order is generally SVO, modifiers after modified

• Zero copula

• Tense not explicitly marked—past tense generally assumed

· *tai* and *tu* both used to mark noun phrases