

Second International Olympiad in Theoretical, Mathematical and Applied Linguistics

Russia, Moscow, August 2–6, 2004

Individual Contest. Solutions

Problem No.1

The direct object is expressed by a verb prefix (*i* - for first person, *a*- for the second person). There are different rules of expressing the subject in affirmative and negative sentences. In affirmative sentences, the subject is expressed by a separate pronoun (*ba* for the first person, *ga* for the second person). In negative sentences, the subject is expressed by the same prefixes as the direct object, which are connected to the verb (if it is intransitive) or to the *je* particle, which is positioned before the verb (if it is transitive and the prefix slot is already instantiated by the object prefix). In the negative form, the verb has an additional suffix consisting of *r* + the last vowel of the stem, and a negative particle *kêt* is positioned after the verb. The plural is expressed by the *mê* particle, which is positioned after the separate pronouns but before the respective prefixes.

Assignment 1.

Aje ikuru kêt	You are not devouring me
Ba mẽ aku	We are devouring you <i>or</i> I am devouring you guys
Irêrê kêt	I am not swimming

Assignment 2.

You guys are not devouring us	Mẽ aje mẽ ikuru kêt
We are not decorating you guys	Mẽ ije mẽ anhêrê kêt
We are dancing	Ba mẽ to
I am devouring you	Ba aku

Problem No.2

It is easy to see that each English title contains the word *threatens*. Therefore, all translations must have something in common. Indeed, every title says something about an undesirable possibility, expressed by different verbs in the translations. One should suppose that *threatens* is a verb acting as the predicate in every English title. The titles may be divided into two groups:

- 1) Sentences in which the object of the predicate indicates a desirable situation which is likely not to happen, which is bad (1, 2, 6, 8, 10)
- 2) Sentences in which the object of the predicate indicates an undesirable situation which is likely to happen, which is bad (3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11)

So, the English verb apparently has two opposite meanings: "to endanger something" and "to be fraught with something". One can only tell which meaning is used in a given phrase by its context, but the titles have no context. Hence, one has to look for the translator's mistakes where it is unclear whether the situation expressed by the object is desirable or not. Apparently the situations «project funding» (1), «start of shipping season» (2), «peace process» (8) and «public security» (10) are normally desirable, while the situations «cholera outbreak» (3), «collapse of peace talks» (4), «mass piracy» (5) and «food shortages» (11) are undesirable. As for the situations of «tax reform», «arrival of reinforcements to besieged city» and «early elections», they may be either desirable or undesirable with a commensurate probability,

depending on the point of view. If one's point of view is opposite to that expressed by the translator, one can get the needed translations:

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| 6. Population Crisis in Lilliput Threatens Tax Reform. | 6. Population Crisis in Lilliput Fraught with Tax Reform. |
| 7. Sudden Weather Change Threatens Arrival of Reinforcements to Besieged City. | 7. Sudden Weather Change Endangers Arrival of Reinforcements to Besieged City. |
| 9. Unexpected Event in Country of Houyhnhnms Threatens Early Elections. | 9. Unexpected Event in Country of Houyhnhnms Endangers Early Elections. |

Problem No.3

Consider the four English words: beard, widow, word, red, and the four corresponding Latin words: barba, vidua, verbum, rubrica. Note that all of the English words contain the *d* sound. Since this sound is the only one occurring in all four words, and since it sounds closest to *dh*, it would be natural to assume that it is this very sound that replaced *dh* in the Latin words cognate to the English ones. At the same time, three of the four Latin words have *b* in that position, and only one of them has *d* there. As for the rest of the words, one of them contains a *b* (glabra), and four of them contain a *d* (dīvidit, mandere, mordāx, mediocris). Five words remain unexamined: fūmus, fracēs, fovēre, falx and fingo. If one notes that all these words begin with an *f*, and in all words with a *b* it is positioned either before or after an *r*, one can distribute the words into three groups with respect to different cases of the assumed transition of *dh* into other sounds:

- 1) At the beginning of a word, *dh* was replaced by *f*.
- 2) After or before *r*, *dh* was replaced by *b*.
- 3) In the remaining cases *dh* lost its aspiration and was replaced by *d*.

Assignment 1. The *dh* sound could not have occurred in mordāx: there is neither an *f* nor a *b* in this word, and the *d* cannot be the result of *dh* transition, since next to *r*, *dh* would have yielded *b*.

Assignment 2. The *dh* sound could not have been there in brevis (at the beginning of the word *dh* would have yielded *f* even before *r*, as in fracēs); in gurdus (after *r*, *dh* would have yielded *b*); and in dēbeo (at the beginning of the word *dh* would have yielded *f*, and in the middle, in the absence of *r*, it would have yielded *d*).

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Problem No.4

In the Lakhota words that appear in the problem and the assignments there are pairs and triples of words differing in fricative consonants, which may be sibilants (*s*, *z*), hushes (*š*, *ž*), or velars (*x*, *ɣ*), with voiceless consonants corresponding to their voiceless variants, and voiced consonants corresponding to their voiced variants. These data may be summarized in a table:

words with sibilant fricatives	words with hushing fricatives	words with velar fricatives
kīza	Kīža	
‘a single high-pitched tone sounds’	‘a blending high-pitched tone sounds’	
	Žata	
	‘it (e.g. a road) forks into two parts’	
suza	Šuža	xuɣa
	‘it is badly bruised’	