

Your name:

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2020

Round 1



Problem 5. Hello Mongo! (15 marks)

Mongo (also known as Nkundo or Lomongo) is a Bantu language spoken by the Mongo peoples of the central Democratic Republic of the Congo. Presently, there are around 400,000 native speakers spread out over a large area around the Congo river.



Below is a table showing for a few Lomongo verbs the different inflections (forms) they take to show grammatical differences. The contrasts are similar to those in our verb *to be*: **imperative** (*Be good!*); **with you** (*You are good*); **with he/she** (*She is good*); **with they** (*They are good*).

Note that

- <ḁ̥> is a consonant pronounced like the <dʒ> in the English word *edge*.
- <ŋ> is a consonant pronounced like the <ng> at the end of the English word *sing*.
- <e> and <ɛ> are different.
- <o> and <a> are different.

imperative	with you	with he/she	with they	English
bota	oota	aota	baota	'beget'
kamba	okamba	akamba	bakamba	'work'
imed̥ḁ̥za	wimed̥ḁ̥za	imed̥ḁ̥za	bimed̥ḁ̥za	'consent'
usa	wusa	usa	busa	'throw'
bata	oata	aata	baata	'get'
ɛna	wɛna	ɛna	bɛna	'see'
isa	wisa	isa	bisa	'hide'
ḁ̥zila	oḁ̥zila	aḁ̥zila	baḁ̥zila	'wait'
ina	wina	ina	bina	'hate'
bina	oina	aina	baina	'dance'
asa	wasas	asa	basas	'search'
san̥ga	osan̥ga	asan̥ga	basan̥ga	'say'

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Q5.1. Fill in the blanks in the table below.

imperative	with <i>you</i>	with <i>he/she</i>	with <i>they</i>	English
bakisa	(1)	(2)	(3)	'add'
(4)	wanda	(5)	(6)	'begin'
solola	(7)	(8)	basolola	'chat'
ponama	(9)	aponama	(10)	'elect'
(11)	oowa	(12)	(13)	'cure'
(14)	(15)	aalusa	(16)	'turn'
longa	(17)	(18)	(19)	'win'

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Solution and marking.

Scoring: (max 19)

- 1 point for each correct word. No half marks.
 - Don't penalise using <a> for <a>.

<i>imperative</i>	<i>2nd sg.</i>	<i>3rd sg.</i>	<i>3rd pl.</i>	<i>English</i>
bakisa	(1) oakisa	(2) aakisa	(3) baakisa	'add'
(4) anda	wanda	(5) anda	(6) banda	'begin'
solola	(7) osolola	(8) asolola	basolola	'chat'
ponama	(9) oponama	aponama	(10) baponama	'elect'
(11) bowa	oowa	(12) aowa	(13) baowa	'cure'
(14) balusa	(15) oalusa	aalusa	(16) baalusa	'turn'
longa	(17) olonga	(18) alonga	(19) balonga	'win'

Commentary

The prefixes for the different inflections are as follows:

<i>imperative</i>	with you	with he/she	with they
Ø- (i.e. no prefix)	o-	a-	ba-

There are three rules for changing the word after adding a prefix, but crucially they **need to be applied in the following order**:

- 1) if there is an [o] before another vowel, change the [o] to a [w]
- 2) if there are two consecutive vowels, the first vowel is deleted
- 3) if there is a [b] between two vowels (or more simply if there is a vowel before a [b]), the [b] is deleted

Another way of thinking about it: distinguish vowel- or consonant-initial stems, and vary the form of the prefix:

- vowel-initial: prefix = w-, a-, ba-
- consonant-initial: prefix = o-, a-, ba-
 - but delete initial b after a prefix
- In all cases, delete a vowel if immediately followed by another vowel.