

Your name:

# The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2016



## Problem 8. Somali verbs (20 marks)

Somali is spoken by approximately 16.6 million people in Somalia and neighbouring countries in East Africa.

The table on the next page shows two past-tense forms for a number of Somali verbs. These forms show whether the verb's subject is 'I' or 'he'. The challenge for you is to work out how these forms are related to each other. To help you, here are some notes on how the letters are pronounced:

- Vowel sounds are much as in English.
  - A double vowel indicates that the vowel is long.
- Consonants are also as in English except for
  - the 'guttural' consonants produced at the back of the mouth (in Latin, guttur means 'throat'):
    - <q><sup>1</sup>: a voiced uvular plosive, like a 'g' but pronounced at the back of the throat.
    - <kh>: a bit like the 'ch' in Scottish *loch* but pronounced at the back of the throat.
    - <x>: a voiceless pharyngeal fricative, hard to describe, but a bit like a heavy 'h'.
    - <c>: same as x, but voiced.
    - <'>: a glottal stop, like the sound in the middle of *uh-oh* (IPA ?).
  - <dh>: a single sound (a 'retroflex' d, produced by curling the tongue-tip back)

As in English, <sh> is a single sound, as in *shell*.

**Question 8.** Some cells in this table are empty except for a row-column identifier (e.g. '3a'). Fill the corresponding cells in the table on the answer paper.

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<sup>1</sup> <...> is the standard notation for letters, in contrast with /.../ or [...] for sounds.

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	(a) 'I read', etc.	(b) 'He read', etc.	(c) meaning
1	akhriyay	akhriday	read
2	aragay	aragtay	saw
3	<b>3a</b>	bartay	taught
4	ba'ay	ba'day	was destroyed
5	baajiyay	<b>5b</b>	prevented
6	baaqay	baaqday	announced
7	baxay	baxday	left
8	bi'iyay	<b>8b</b>	destroyed
9	bilaabay	<b>9b</b>	began
10	<b>10a</b>	cuntay	ate
11	cabay	cabtay	drank
12	cararay	carartay	ran away
13	daaqay	<b>13b</b>	grazed
14	dhacay	<b>14b</b>	fell
15	dhisay	dhistay	built
16	diiday	diiday	refused
17	dilay	dishay	killed
18	faraxay	<b>18b</b>	was happy
19	gaadhay	gaadhay	reached
20	galay	<b>20b</b>	entered
21	go'ay	<b>21b</b>	cut
22	<b>22a</b>	heshay	found
23	horjeeday	horjeeday	opposed
24	kacay	<b>24b</b>	rose
25	keenay	keentay	brought
26	korodhay	korodhay	increased
27	qaaday	<b>27b</b>	took
28	tagay	tagtay	went
29	xidhay	<b>29b</b>	closed
30	walaaqay	<b>30b</b>	stirred

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3a	5b	8b
9b	10a	13b
14b	18b	20b
21b	22a	24b
27b	29b	30b

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## Problem 8: Somali verbs (20 marks)

3a baray	5b baajiday	8b bi'iday
9b bilaabtay	10a cunay	13b daaqday
14b dhacday	18b faraxday	20b gashay
21b go'day	22a helay	24b kacday
27b qaaday	29b xidhay	30b walaaqday

Scoring: one point for each completely correct form. No half marks. (max 15)

### Comment

The 'I form' (column #a) is formed by adding <ay> to the stem, while the 'he form' (column #b) is formed by adding <tay> to the stem, but with some changes:

- <t> changes to <d> after <q> (#6, 13, 30), <c> (#14, 24), <x> (#7, 18), and <'> (#4, 21), the guttural consonants; the examples for <c> require the solver to recognize that <c> acts like its voiceless counterpart <x>, as no example ending in <c> is given.
- <y> disappears before the added <t>, which changes to <d> (#1, 5, 8)
- <l+t> changes to <sh> - a very strange change!!! (#17, 20, 22)
- <d+t> or <dh+t> drops the <t> (#16, 19, 23, 26)