

Your name:

# The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2017



## Problem 9. The Goat, the Mother and the Wardrobe (25 marks)

Abkhaz is a Caucasian language predominantly spoken by around 100,000 people in the disputed territory of Abkhazia, and by a few thousand people in Turkey, Georgia, Syria, Russia, and Jordan. Among other things, it is known for having an extraordinary number of consonants (58 in the literary dialect). Here are some Abkhaz sentences in simplified transcription and their English translations. ( $h^w$ ,  $\int^w$ ,  $p^w$ ,  $ch^w$ ,  $k^w$ ,  $\int, k^w$ ,  $ʒ^w$ ,  $k'$ ,  $c'$ ,  $t\phi'$ ,  $x$  and  $\varkappa$  are consonants, and  $\text{ə}$  is a vowel.)

The god is wearing the apron.	Anch <sup>W</sup> a apərah <sup>W</sup> a a <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
The mothers are wearing the trousers.	Anch <sup>W</sup> a ajk <sup>W</sup> a rə <sup>ʃ</sup> op'.
The squirrel is wearing the hat.	Ae <sup>ʃ</sup> axəlpə a <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
You (sg) are wearing the hat.	Axəlpə b <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
You (pl) are wearing the felt boots.	Ajmsək <sup>W</sup> a <sup>ʃw</sup> ə <sup>ʃ</sup> op'.
The mother is wearing the cherkeska <sup>1</sup> .	An ak' <sup>w</sup> əm <sup>ʒw</sup> ə l <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
We are wearing the shoes.	Ajmaak <sup>W</sup> a ha <sup>ʃ</sup> op'.
I am wearing the shawl.	Ak'asə s <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
The old men are wearing the coats.	Atah <sup>W</sup> madach <sup>W</sup> a ac'at <sup>ϕ'</sup> k <sup>W</sup> a r <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
The sons are wearing the cherkeskas.	Abach <sup>W</sup> a ak' <sup>w</sup> əm <sup>ʒw</sup> ək <sup>W</sup> a r <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
The girl is wearing the felt boots.	Adzəab ajmsək <sup>W</sup> a lə <sup>ʃ</sup> op'.
The billy-goat is wearing the trousers.	Ab ajk <sup>W</sup> a a <sup>ʃ</sup> op'.
The old man is wearing the apron.	Atah <sup>W</sup> mada apərah <sup>W</sup> a i <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
The billy-goats are wearing the cherkeskas.	Abk <sup>W</sup> a ak' <sup>w</sup> əm <sup>ʒw</sup> ək <sup>W</sup> a r <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.
The squirrels are wearing the shawls.	Ae <sup>ʃ</sup> k <sup>W</sup> a ak'asək <sup>W</sup> a r <sup>ʃw</sup> up'.

**Q.9.** On your answer sheet, translate the following into English or Abkhaz:

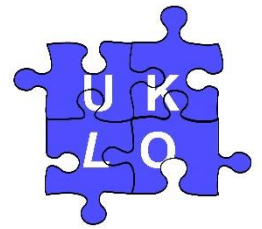
1. Adzəabch<sup>W</sup>a ajmaak<sup>W</sup>a rə<sup>ʃ</sup>op'.
2. Aba ajk<sup>W</sup>a i<sup>ʃ</sup>op'.
3. Ak'asək<sup>W</sup>a <sup>ʃw</sup>up'.
4. You (sg) are wearing the cherkeska.
5. The nanny-goat is wearing the shawl.
6. The gods are wearing the felt boots.

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<sup>1</sup> The cherkeska is an item of traditional Caucasian clothing, a single-breasted collarless coat.

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## Answer sheet for Problem 9. Abkhaz

9.1	4
2	5
3	6

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## Solution and marking.

### Scoring (max 18)

- 1-3: 2 points for each correct **sentence**. (max 6)
  - 1 for only one mistake.
  - ignore trivial variation (e.g. 'plural').
- 4-6: 2 points for each correct underlined word, 1 for each other word. (**max 4 x 2 + 4 = 12**)
  - 1 for an underlined word with more than half the target word correct.
  - ignore minor copying errors e.g. p ~ p' or ə ~ a ~ e.
  - insist on the correct order of words.
- Score positively – give credit for each target Abkhaz word, ignore extra non-target words.
  - But in Abkhaz insist on correct affixes and order;
    - if A ... B should be B ... A, accept A but not B.
  - Insist on correct number (singular/plural) and tense/aspect in English.
  - Accept an English noun only if its grammatical function is right.
  - Reject active-passive exchanges even if the meaning is the same.
  - But accept minor copying errors in Abkhaz.
- Score generously – if different scores are possible, choose the highest.

1. The girls are wearing (the) shoes.	2	4. Ak'wəmɜ́wə <u>bɪ'wup'</u> .	3
2. The son is wearing (the) trousers.	2	5. Ab ak'asə <u>ɪɪ'wup'</u> .	4
3. You (pl) are wearing (the) shawls.	2	6. <u>Anch'wak'wa</u> ajmsək'wa <u>rəɔp'</u> .	5

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## Commentary

The grammar here is simplified from real Abkhaz grammar.

- Sentences have the word order SOV, where the subject may be omitted if the agent is indicated by the personal endings.
- Nouns are sorted according to human/non-human, where human nouns take the plural suffix  $-ch^w a$ , while non-human nouns take  $-k^w a$ , and human and non-human subjects take different verb forms.
- Verbs are of the form: subject marker + verb root, where the subject marker varies for person and gender. The subject markers found in the data are as follows:

person, gender	singular	plural
1	s	ha
2	bə	ʃ <sup>w</sup> ə
3 masc	i	r
3 fem	l	rə
3 non-human	a	r

The problem presents three main challenges:

Challenge 1: Unlike the English translation, the Abkhaz contains two different verb roots for 'wear', according to where on the body the clothing is worn:  $-ʃ^w up$  is used for clothing worn on the upper half of the body, and  $jop$  for the lower half. Candidates have to notice this semantic difference, to know which root to use in their Abkhaz sentences in 1.2.

Challenge 2: The singular word for 'god',  $anch^w a$ , coincidentally looks like a plural (identical, in fact, to the plural 'mothers'). The third part of 1.2 requires the candidate to realize this and add a real plural ending onto 'god', to form the plural  $anch^w ak^w a$  'gods'. The verb prefix  $a-$  in the first example shows that Gods are non-human (perhaps counterintuitively, given people's often anthropomorphic idea of gods), so they take  $-k^w a$ .

Challenge 3: No word for 'nanny-goat' is given, and so candidates should take the step of using the word for 'billy-goat' with feminine endings on the verb (which requires noticing that the verb varies according to the gender of the subject).