

Tenth International Olympiad in Linguistics

Ljubljana (Slovenia), 30 July – 3 August 2012

Individual Contest Problems

Do not copy the statements of the problems. Write down your solution to each problem on a separate sheet or sheets. On each sheet indicate the number of the problem, the number of your seat and your surname. Otherwise your work may be mislaid or misattributed.

Your answers must be well-argued. Even a perfectly correct answer will be given a low score unless accompanied by an explanation.

Problem #1 (20 points). Here are some sentences in the central dialect of Dyirbal as well as their English translations:

1. **bayi yaɾa ɲunʒaymuɲa baŋgu gurugugu biŋgunman.**
Booze is making the man that is always being blamed tired.
2. **balan yabu bimabanʒalɲaymuɲa baŋgul yaɾaŋgu guliŋgu ɲunʒaɲu.**
The strong man is blaming the mother that is always following death adders.
3. **balan waymin bambun baŋgu ʒagaŋgu ʒamiman.**
Sugar is making the healthy mother-in-law fat.
4. **bala yila wura baŋgul bargandu biŋgundu guniɲu.**
The tired wallaby is searching for the little feather.
5. **balan malayigara baŋgu garandu biŋgunman.**
The smoke is making the scorpion tired.
6. **bala gurugu baŋgul ɲumaŋgu munduŋgu dimbaɲu.**
The offended father is carrying the booze.
7. **bayi midin baŋgun bimangu malayigaraguninaymuɲagu banʒan.**
The death adder that is always searching for scorpions is following the possum.
8. **bayi gubimbulu biŋgun baŋgu gurugugu ʒagunman.**
Booze is making the tired doctor fall asleep.
9. **bala garan baŋgul biɲʒiriɲu banʒan.**
The lizard is following the smoke.
10. **balan duɲan baŋgul yiriɲʒilagu guniɲu.**
The dragonfly is searching for the stinging tree.
11. **bala ʒuga baŋgun yabuŋgu ɲaʒilmuɲagu dimbaɲu.**
The mother that is always being ignored is carrying the sugar.
12. **bala diban ʒagiɲ baŋgul gubimbulugu ʒamiŋgu bilmban.**
The fat doctor is pushing the big stone.
13. **bala garan baŋgun waymindu dibanbilmbalɲaymuɲagu buɾan.**
The mother-in-law that is always pushing stones is looking at the smoke.
14. **balan baŋgay waɾu baŋgun bundiɲu ʒagiɲu guniɲu.**
The big grasshopper is searching for the bent spear.
15. **bayi biɲʒiriɲ biŋgun baŋgul ɲalɲagaŋgu mugurugu buɾan.**
The quiet boy is looking at the tired lizard.
16. **bayi ɲuma guli baŋgul yaɾaŋgu banʒalmuɲagu munduman.**
The man that is always being followed is offending the strong father.

(a) A linguist thought there was an error in one of the Dyirbal sentences above. In fact there is no error. The explanation for what seemed strange to him is that one of the animal species is regarded as “old women” in one of the myths of the Dyirbal people. Which animal is it? What did the linguist consider to be an error?

(b) Translate into English:

17. **balan ɲalɲga baŋgul ɲumaŋgu guniymuŋagu bambunman.**

18. **bala diban bilmbalmuŋa baŋgun biɲɟiriɲɟu guniɲu.**

19. **bayi bargan baŋgul yaɾaŋgu gubimbuluŋuŋanaymuŋagu baɲan.**

(c) Here are three more Dyirbal words:

bayimbam — grub, caterpillar;

mugunanɟa — aunt (mother’s elder sister);

muŋga — loud noise.

Translate into Dyirbal:

20. The little wallaby is looking at the dragonfly.

21. The aunt that is always being followed is bending the feather.

22. The sleeping possum is ignoring the loud noise.

23. The caterpillar is searching for the man that is always carrying stones.

⚠ The Dyirbal language belongs to the Pama–Nyungan family; it is a dying Australian Aboriginal language spoken in northeast Queensland.

ɲ = *ng* in *hang*.

ɲ ≈ *ni* in *onion*; **ɟ** is a stop (as **d**) articulated in the same place in the mouth as **ɲ**.

A death adder is an Australian venomous snake. A wallaby is a small animal, related to kangaroo. A possum is an Australian arboreal marsupial. Stinging trees are a genus of shrubs and trees with stinging hairs, some of which are dangerous to humans. —*Artūrs Semeņuks*