

# 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	Mê aje mẽ ikuru kêt
We are not decorating you guys	Mê 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,