

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2018

Round 2 Problem 5 Mayangna

Mayangna is a Misumalpan language spoken in Nicaragua and Honduras by around 8,700 speakers. A **pipante** is a small wooden boat rowed with shovels and a **guapote** is a type of edible freshwater fish, sometimes called a wolf cichlid.

Here are some Mayangna sentences with their English translations:

1. kuring man yaihmat yak yamtasyang.	<i>I do not make a pipante next to you.</i>
2. yang dakiwan ulamak balna kaswi yang mikit yak.	<i>My master eats clams above me.</i>
3. kubamhni balna mukus balna yayamwaski witingna yanimak taanit yak.	<i>The owls do not make clouds in front of their farm.</i>
4. yangna dikitna yak witing palani dakaasman.	<i>You do not hear his raft under us.</i>
5. man kammapani wainiku man mamat yak buwi.	<i>Your company shakes the moon above you.</i>
6. yang kuringki yaihnit yak wakurusni balna buknina kurahtayang.	<i>I open the scorpions' book next to my pipante.</i>
7. man walamabis yang pinkisil talwaski witing daniwan balna yaihnitna yak.	<i>Your son does not see my pencil next to his masters.</i>
8. mukusni balna witing sunipai balna yak dakakaawi palani kinit.	<i>The clouds hear her spiders under the raft.</i>
9. man sumalu balna kisauri kakaswi yang dangkit yak.	<i>Your dogs eat coriander behind me.</i>
10. man mumalalah yang yaihkit yak kastasman.	<i>You do not eat your guapote next to me.</i>
11. was supai balna tānitna yak dakaaman.	<i>You hear water in front of spiders.</i>
12. yamak yak yang titinghi wakisa talwi.	<i>My grandmother sees a banana at a farm.</i>

Q.5.1. Translate these sentences into English:

13. waiku dakaayang man damat yak.
14. ulamakni man kubamhma yaihnit yak buitaman.
15. man wakimasa talasyangna yang walakibis balna taanitna yak.

Q.5.2. Translate these sentences into Mayangna:

16. Our masters do not open the clouds in front of us.
17. You make the dog's raft next to the water.
18. I shake pencils above your (pl) grandmother.

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Solution and marking.

Scoring (max 31)

- 13-15: 3 points for each correct sentence. (max 9)
 - 1 less for each wrong word, till zero.
- 16-18: 1 point for each correct word. (max 22)
 - No half marks.

13	I hear a moon below you.
14	You shake the clam next to your owl.
15	We do not see your banana in front of my sons.
16	yangna dakinawan balna mukusni balna kurarahwaski yangna taakitna yak.
17	wasni yaihnit yak sunilu palani yamtaman.
18	pinsil balna buitayang manna titinghmana minit yak.

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Commentary

Syntax

(PP) S O (PP) V (PP) word order

PP (marked by locative marker *yak*) can appear in all positions except between S and O.

Nouns

Definite + possessive markers for nouns are infixes with the nouns. There is no phonological rule for the location of the infixing, but instead each word has a specific location where all infixes go. For example, the word *su-lu* (dog) has all infixes placed in between the two syllables (e.g. *sunilu* = the dog, *sukilu* = my dog, etc).

Plural is expressed with the word *balna* which follows the word.

	1st person	2nd person	3rd person
Singular	-ki-	-ma-	-ni- (also the definite article)
Plural	-kina-	-mana-	-nina-

In the case of the location words, the plural affix -na- is suffixed (e.g. mi-**ki-t-na**).

Possession: Possessor + Possessee (marked as above)

Two location words also undergo vowel harmonising in the 2nd person (mi-ma-t > *mamat*, di-ma-t > *damat*).

Verbs

positive negative	1st	2nd	3rd
Singular	-(ta)yang -(ta)syang	-(ta)man -(ta)sman	-wi -waski
Plural	-(ta)yangna -(ta)syangna	-(ta)manna -(ta)smanna	as 3s but with stem reduplication

In the 3rd person plural, the final syllable of the stem is reduplicated:

tal > *tatal*

yam > *yayam*

(bui > *bubui*)

kurah > *kurarah*

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kas > kakas

dakaa > dakakaa

The syllable coda/vowel length is deleted in the reduplication. The -ta- suffix is not present in the verbs *hear* or *see* (the fact they are both verbs of perception is actually a coincidence).