



Hong Kong Linguistics Olympiad  
香港語言學奧林匹克

en

## Fifth Hong Kong Linguistics Olympiad

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Problems

- Listen carefully to the invigilators and follow their instructions.
- The contest lasts four hours. The problem set consists of six pages and contains four problems. You may solve the problems in any order.
- You are not allowed to use any electronic device, written or printed material or other external sources of information during the contest.
- If you have a question about any of the problems, put up your hand and ask an invigilator. The invigilator will consult with the jury before answering.
- Rules for writing out solutions:
  - Do not copy the statements of the problems.
  - Write down your solution to each problem on a separate sheet or sheets.
  - Use only the front side of the answer sheet.
  - On each sheet, write your name, the number of the problem, and the page sequence of that sheet within the problem, e.g.:

Name	...
Problem #	4
Page #	1 / 3

Name	...
Problem #	4
Page #	2 / 3

Name	...
Problem #	4
Page #	3 / 3

(meaning first, second, and third sheet out of three for the fourth problem.)

Otherwise, your work may be mislaid or misattributed.

- Unless stated differently, you should describe any patterns or rules you identified in the data. Otherwise, your solution will not be awarded full marks.

**The problem set must be kept confidential until it is published on the official HKLO website. Do not disclose nor discuss the problems online until that date.**

**Problem 1 (25 points).** Here are some phrases in Romanian and their English translations:

<b>copilul micuț al cetățeanului viteaz</b>	<i>the small child<sub>M</sub> of the brave citizen<sub>M</sub></i>
<b>aptul cetățean al nepoatei moarte</b>	<i>the skilled citizen<sub>M</sub> of the dead niece</i>
<b>camarazii curioși ai sătulelor cetățene</b>	<i>the curious comrades<sub>M</sub> of the satiated citizens<sub>F</sub></i>
<b>viclenii nepoți ai înalților copii</b>	<i>the cunning nephews of the tall children<sub>M</sub></i>
<b>camarada smeadă a mireselelor flămânde</b>	<i>the pale comrade<sub>F</sub> of the hungry brides</i>
<b>nepoata vicleană a curiosului urs</b>	<i>the cunning niece of the curious bear<sub>M</sub></i>
<b>frumosul mânz al urșilor apți</b>	<i>the beautiful foal<sub>M</sub> of the skilled bears<sub>M</sub></i>
<b>goalele nomade ale micuței camarade</b>	<i>the underdressed nomads<sub>F</sub> of the small comrade<sub>F</sub></i>
<b>profesorul viteaz al hoților smezi</b>	<i>the brave teacher<sub>M</sub> of the pale thieves<sub>M</sub></i>
<b>sătuii studenți ai hoței înalte</b>	<i>the satiated students<sub>M</sub> of the tall thief<sub>F</sub></i>
<b>mireasa înaltă a flămânzilor profesori</b>	<i>the tall bride of the hungry teachers<sub>M</sub></i>
<b>moartele verișoare ale frumoaselor profesoare</b>	<i>the dead cousins<sub>F</sub> of the beautiful teachers<sub>F</sub></i>

(a) Translate into English:

1. **hoțul flămând al copilelor viteze**
2. **micuța cetățeană a mânjilor frumoși**
3. **studentele viclene ale înaltului nepot**

(b) Translate into Romanian:

4. *the brave cousins<sub>M</sub> of the dead foals<sub>M</sub>*
5. *the satiated thief<sub>F</sub> of the underdressed nomads<sub>M</sub>*
6. *the curious cousin<sub>F</sub> of the skilled child<sub>F</sub>*

If more translations are possible, write only one.

(c) Translate into Romanian in all possible ways:

7. *the small citizens<sub>M</sub> of the underdressed nomad<sub>M</sub>*

(d) In the last centuries, one consonant (that used to exist in Romanian) disappeared by merging with another consonant. Which sound was that and how is it pronounced nowadays?

△ Romanian belongs to the Romance branch of the Indo-European family. It is spoken by approx. 24 million people primarily in Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

A *foal* is a baby horse.

**j** = *s* in *vision*; **ș** = *sh* in *shop*; **ț** = *ts* in *cats*; **z** = *z* in *zap*; **ă** = *a* in *about*; **â** and **î** are vowels.

Two consecutive vowels form a diphthong. A single **i** at the end of the word is called a "non-syllabic **i**" and it does not behave like a vowel. In order to become a vowel, it needs to be doubled (compare **buni** – one syllable – and **copii** – two syllables).

The subscripts <sub>M</sub> and <sub>F</sub> refer to masculine and feminine, respectively.

—Vlad A. Neacșu

**Problem 2 (25 points).** Below is given an inscribed lead tablet discovered in 1994 in Alicante, Spain. It shows a text in the Iberian language, written in the Levantine system:



Below are given, in random order, the Latin transcriptions of 13 of the words that appear on the tablet. One of the words contains a mistake!

arbais, aurelen, bantaškalir, bantubailkunmí, belštaukui, beřenultiteš, iumabeleš, kitei, kuteńnanišil, šebifin, sonai, taubaštetaš, toroš

(continued on next page)

- (a) Write the correct transcription of the word containing the mistake in Latin script.  
 (b) Here are 4 more words which appear on the tablet. The transcription is incomplete. The gaps are marked by ..., which may mark one or more letters.

d. ...uki...ře                      e. keke...r...ban                      f. ...n...le...s                      g. n...i

Write the full transcription of these words.

- (c) The number 31 appears somewhere on the tablet. Below are given some more numerals in the same notation system:

a.                       b.                       c. 

Write them using Arabic numerals.

- (d) Write the Latin transcription of the remaining words, in the order in which they appear on the tablet.

△ Iberian is an extinct unclassified language which used to be spoken in the regions of present-day Spain and France around the 1st c. AD.

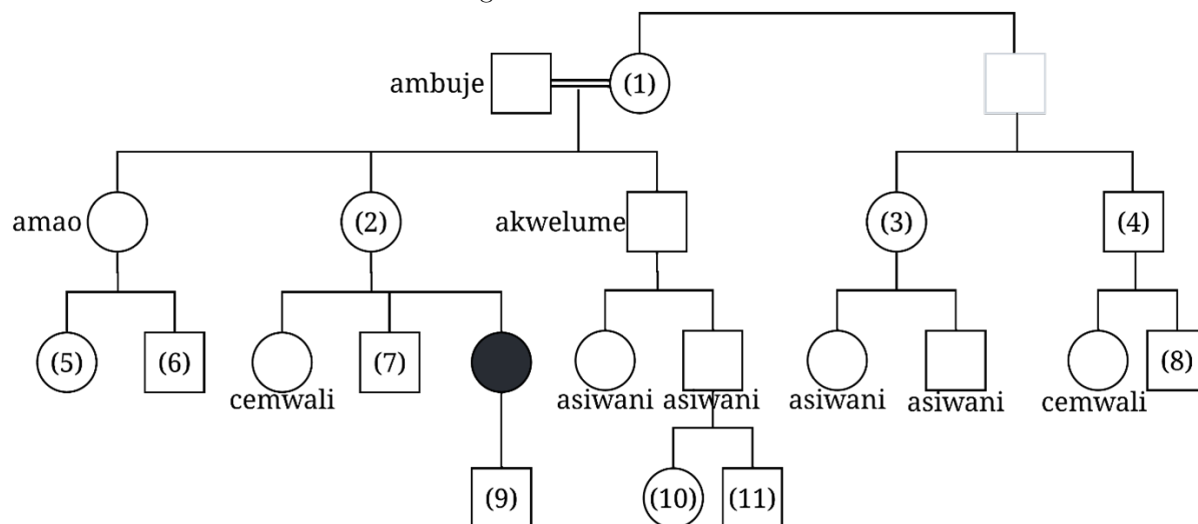
ř, ś, and ř are consonants similar to r, s, and m, respectively.

—Vlad A. Neacșu

**Problem 3 (25 points).** Reading a book about Yao people and the Yao language, you stumble across a chapter explaining the different meanings of kinship terms with other kinship terms:

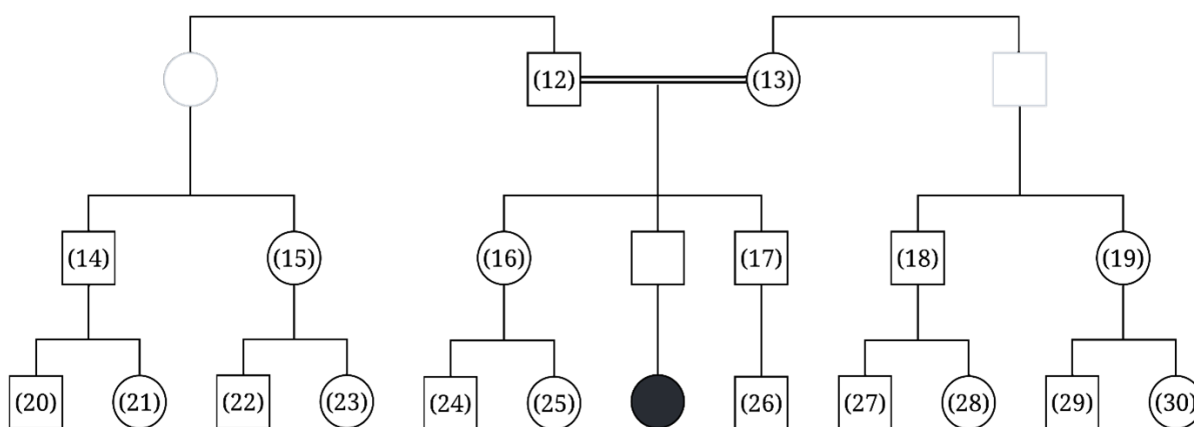
Kinshp term	Description
<b>ambuje</b>	<i>atati jua amao amao jua atati atati jua atati amao jua amao</i>
<b>atati</b>	<i>acimweni jua atati mwanache ŵandu jua akwelume jua amao mwanache ŵandu jua atati ŵakongwe jua amao</i>
<b>atati ŵakongwe</b>	<i>cemwali jua atati mwanache ŵakongwe jua akwelume jua amao mwanache ŵakongwe jua atati ŵakongwe jua amao</i>
<b>amao</b>	<i>cemwali jua amao mwanache ŵakongwe jua atati ŵakongwe jua atati mwanache ŵakongwe jua akwelume jua atati</i>
<b>akwelume</b>	<i>acimweni jua amao mwanache ŵandu jua atati ŵakongwe jua atati mwanache ŵandu jua akwelume jua atati</i>
<b>acimweni</b>	<i>mwanache ŵandu jua amao mwanache ŵandu jua atati</i>
<b>cemwali</b>	<i>mwanache ŵakongwe jua atati mwanache ŵakongwe jua amao</i>
<b>asiwani</b>	<i>mwanache jua atati ŵakongwe mwanache jua akwelume</i>
<b>mwanache</b>	<i>mwanache jua mwanache ŵandu jua akwelume mwanache jua mwanache ŵandu jua acimweni</i>
<b>yisikulu</b>	<i>mwanache jua mwanache</i>

At the same time, you find a diagram showing a section of the family tree of a girl named Yohanna (shaded circle in the figure below). The name under each person represents the kinship term she uses to refer to them. Some words are missing:



(a) Fill in the blanks (1—11).

(b) Now that you understand how the Yao kinship works, you're trying to test your knowledge assigning the proper kinship terms in the following kinship tree:



Fill in the blanks (12—30).

(!) No additional explanation besides the answers is required, nor will be marked.

△ Yao belongs to the Bantu branch of the Atlantic-Congo language family. It is spoken by approx. 3.1 million people in Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

ŵ is a consonant.

○ = female    □ = male    == = marriage    | = son/daughter    ┌ = siblings

—Vlad A. Neacșu & Tung-Le Pan

**Problem 4 (25 points).** Here are some sentences in Epun and their English translations:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. <b>Midebiniz sminus fa vakvelopiz.</b>   | <i>Some kings kiss the walruses<sub>M</sub>.</i>                       |
| 2. <b>Avetius fa koviniz gub midep.</b>     | <i>The children<sub>M</sub> don't love this queen.</i>                 |
| 3. <b>Tak huspat asa hielo?</b>             | <i>What have they<sub>M</sub> looked at?</i>                           |
| 4. <b>Asa hahielogus pelidiniz.</b>         | <i>Some tortoises<sub>F</sub> haven't looked at them.</i>              |
| 5. <b>Guza hakakolgu gub kodin.</b>         | <i>This child<sub>F</sub> hasn't seen her.</i>                         |
| 6. <b>Panibu imnikin.</b>                   | <i>A cat<sub>M</sub> doesn't come.</i>                                 |
| 7. <b>Osozegu guza midepiz.</b>             | <i>She doesn't catch (any) queens.</i>                                 |
| 8. <b>Tak hagupat gub kodin kakol?</b>      | <i>What has this child<sub>F</sub> seen?</i>                           |
| 9. <b>Afa bozudin avetigu gub imnip.</b>    | <i>The teacher<sub>F</sub> loves this cat<sub>F</sub>.</i>             |
| 10. <b>Tak upat fa vakvelin osoze?</b>      | <i>What does the walrus<sub>M</sub> catch?</i>                         |
| 11. <b>Fa pelikopiz nisa hosozenis.</b>     | <i>We have caught the tortoises<sub>M</sub>.</i>                       |
| 12. <b>Afa pelipiz bozudiniz havetigus.</b> | <i>Some teachers<sub>F</sub> have loved the tortoises<sub>F</sub>.</i> |
| 13. <b>Imnikiniz hapanibus.</b>             | <i>Some cats<sub>M</sub> have come.</i>                                |
| 14. <b>Fa kovin binapu.</b>                 | <i>The child<sub>M</sub> returns.</i>                                  |

(a) Translate into English:

15. **Tak haguspat panib?**
16. **Nisa havetigu guza.**
17. **Imnipiz nisa hakakolnis.**

(b) Translate into Epun:

18. *The walrus<sub>F</sub> kisses us.*
19. *This king hasn't come.*
20. *Some cats<sub>F</sub> don't look at a child<sub>F</sub>.*
21. *The queens have loved the tortoise<sub>M</sub>.*

(c) Translate into Epun in all possible ways:

22. *What have they loved?*
23. *What returns?*

(d) Based on the information given, you cannot translate the following sentence into Epun. Why?

24. *She doesn't see the teacher<sub>M</sub>.*

△ Epun is an invented language, deliberately devised to contain constructions which violate universal grammatical principles.

**ch** = *ch* in *chop*

The subscripts <sub>M</sub> and <sub>F</sub> refer to masculine and feminine, respectively.

—Vlad A. Neacșu, based on a problem by Adina Dragomirescu

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Good luck!