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The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2020

Round 2



Problem 3. A toad's miao (20 marks)

Below is a famous Miao folk tale, “The Pimpled Toad who was Wise,” written in the Large Flowery Miao language, which is spoken by about 300,000 people in Weining Autonomous County, Guizhou, China. Large Flowery Miao is generally written in two different scripts: either in the *Pollard* script, created in 1904 by the English missionary Samuel Pollard, or in Miao Pinyin, which uses Roman script. The version below is in the Pollard script.



Y⁻ ɛ_{nc} L^u L_n ɟ_u ʝ^u T^{ɔ̃}.

ɛ_ɔ ɲ_n ɟ_u T^u Lⁿ Y⁻ ɟ_u ɛɛ^r T^u ɛ_{nc} L^u L_n. T^u Lⁿ Y⁻ ɲ_n, ɛ_{nc},
ɟ̃^u ǎ^u ɛ_u ɟɲⁱ. T^u Y⁻ ɛ_{nc} ɲ_n, ɛ_ɔ ǎ^u ɛ_u ɟɲⁱ, V^{nc} ɟ̃^u ɟɲⁱ
Y⁼ T⁻ T_{nc}. ɛ_ɔ ɛ⁻ ǎ^u ɛ_u ɟɲⁱ, ǎ^u ɲ_r ɟ̃^u Δ⁻ ɟɲ^u, L^u ɟɲ^u Δⁿ,
L^u Y⁻ ɟɲ^u ɟ_u Y^u, ɟ⁺ Y^u ɲ_u ɛ_u T^u ɟ̃^u ɟɲⁱ. T^u Lⁿ Y⁻ ɛⁿ T⁻,
ɛ_{nc} ɟ̃^u ǎ^u ɛ_u ɟɲⁱ L_i. T^u Lⁿ Y⁻ ɛ^{ɔ̃} L^u Lⁿ ɲ^u T^u ɲⁿ ɟ⁻
Δ_o ɲ_u ɲ_u. T^u ɛ_{nc} Δ^{'nc} Δ^u ɟ_u L^u ɟ_u Y^u L_ɛ.
T^u Lⁿ Y⁻ ɛ_ɔ Y^u ɟ^{̄̄}, T^u ɛ_{nc}, ɟ^{̄̄} ɲⁿ T^u. T^u Lⁿ Y⁻ Lⁿ ɟ_u ɛ^{ɔ̃}
Lⁿ ɲ^u ɲ⁻ ɲ_n, Y⁻ Y⁻, ɟ_ɔ L⁻ L⁻, Y⁻ Y⁻, ɟ_ɔ L⁻ L⁻.

The next version is an English translation of the “The Pimpled Toad.” Of course, not every word in the English translation has an equivalent word in Miao; on the other hand, some English words may be translated by more than one Miao word. Also, note that constructions of the

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form “I want to eat you / you want to eat me” are written in Miao as “I want to eat your flesh / you want to eat my flesh.”

The Pimpled Toad that was Wise.

They say that a crow went to meet a pimpled toad. The crow said, “Toad, I want to eat you.” The toad said, “You want to eat me, but my flesh is very bitter. If you want to eat me, you want to carry me over there, to the stream, to the bank of the pool of water. Wash me in water, then eat to get my flesh.” The crow replied, “Toad, I want to eat you, so there!” The crow stretched his head upwards, laughing *ha-ha*. The toad jumped, hopped down to the pool water, and was gone. The crow waded in the water to seek the toad, sought him, but did not get him. The crow simply stretched his head, cawed, and said, “Ah-ah, all for nothing! Ah-ah, all for nothing!”

Finally, here is the Miao Pinyin transcription. However, there are some changes:

- The sentences, including the title, are in random order.
- Five of the sentences have been divided into two parts.
- Punctuation has been removed.
- The numbered blanks (e.g. 18) mark places where one or more words are missing.

A. tái <u>1</u> jỳ áo "trīeh tái jìeu "trīeh hì táo	J. <u>10</u> bí-xá dlò hà-hà
B. jỳ <u>2</u> yā nǎo gū "ghǎi yā drìh gū dlá "drũ	K. tái jìeu tlíe tlw̄ bào lái <u>11</u> áo lèu
C. tú <u>3</u> jǐ-tá jìeu	L. tái lí-á lí-mù <u>12</u> lí-fáo ghá hì
D. gū yā nǎo jỳ "ghǎi <u>4</u>	M. á á <u>13</u> bè-lá-lá
E. tú lí-á <u>5</u> jìeu	N. tái lí-á <u>14</u> lái lí-fáo
F. gū yā nǎo jỳ "ghǎi	O. tái á-jìeu hì jỳ <u>15</u> nǎo gú <u>16</u>
G. nỳ hì gù tú lí-á <u>6</u> "jǐh tái jìeu lú-lì	P. víe gū "ghǎi íeh tá-tìe
H. "zā <u>7</u> drài <u>8</u> táo gū "ghǎi	Q. lái <u>17</u> lái á-"tú bào áo
I. á-jìeu lú-lì <u>9</u> báo-táng	

See the notes and the question on the next page.

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Notes

- The diacritics (accent marks) ´, ` , ¯, ~ written over vowels represent tones
- *ieh* and *w* are vowels/vowel sequences
- *gh*, *dl*, *tl*, *dr*, and *tr* are consonants
- *n* (e.g. *ⁿt*) marks nasalization of the following consonant, that is, air flow escapes through the nose and the mouth simultaneously during the production of the consonantal sound.

Q3. On your answer sheet, write the word or words missing from gaps 1-17.

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Solution and marking.

Marking (max 34)

- 2 for each correct answer, 1 with one wrong letter
- accept *a* or *a*
- accept *n* for *n*
- insist on correct tones
- reject extra words, e.g. *jáng lái* for 14

1	<i>lí-á</i>	7	<i>áo</i>	13	<i>bè-lá-lá á á</i>
2	<i>já</i>	8	<i>nǎo</i>	14	<i>jáng</i>
3	<i>lí-á</i>	9	<i>gù</i>	15	<i>yā</i>
4	<i>lài</i>	10	<i>dráo</i>	16	<i>"ghāi</i>
5	<i>hì</i>	11	<i>bào</i>	17	<i>"tú-dǐ</i>
6	<i>mào</i>	12	<i>jáng</i>		

Commentary

Pollard Script:

- Consonants are written with large letters, vowels with small diacritics.
- The position of the diacritic around the letter gives the tone: directly above = $\bar{\quad}$, top right = $\acute{\quad}$, right = $\tilde{\quad}$, bottom left = $\grave{\quad}$.
- Nasalization is marked with the letter *C* (*n*) before the consonant.
- The components of compounds are written separately.

Miao Grammar:

- Word order is generally SVO, modifiers after modified
- Zero copula
- Tense not explicitly marked—past tense generally assumed
- *tai* and *tu* both used to mark noun phrases