

## Problem 2. Taa (20 marks)

The Taa language is spoken by around 2,500 people in Botswana and Namibia. Taa is famous for being the language with the largest number of distinct sounds in the world— according to some counts, it has over 160. It includes a wide variety of click consonants (like the sound of tsk or tut in English), marked by the letters !, |, ||, †, and ′. For example, the name of the language, **!Xóǀ** has a click itself.

Below are some sentences in Taa with their English translations. Note that *buchu powder* is a medicinal mix of herbs. **ǎ**, **aǎ**, **ǻa**, **ae**, **ua**, **uǻ**, **ue**, and **uǔ** are vowels, and the symbols **ó**, **ò**, **ô**, and **ō** mark tone.



1. **èh |ǎ gǻǎ ní káni kǎ dtshǎǎ**  
*His duck wants the buchu powder.*
2. **èh à gùm kǎ èh |ǎ †ǎǎ tǎ dàǎ à |nǻa kǎ**  
*He ate his bone that the polecat looked at.*
3. **ǎ |ǎ dàǎ ||quǎ ní dt'kx'àba ke èh |e bòkòsè**  
*My young polecat is stuck in his box.*
4. **|ǎ gǻǎ ní ||qhúa káni ke bòkòsè !xae**  
*Does the duck not want the big box?*
5. **ǎ à kùhm ke dàhbe te ní dt'kx'àba kǎ †ǎǎ ke**  
*I touched the mudwasp that is stuck to the bone.*
6. **|é èh ní ||xúǔ kǎ dtshǎǎ**  
*Does he throw away the buchu powder?*
7. **|é dàhbe ||qhae à ||qhúa kùhm kǎ ||xàǎ |ǎ †gúǎ**  
*Did another mudwasp not touch the men's egg?*
8. **qáe ní ||qhúa káni kǎ ||gà'ǎ !xaǎ tǎ à kùhm ke dō'le ||que kǎ**  
*The woman does not want the big springbok that touched the new grass.*

**Q 2.1** Translate the following sentences into English:

9. **|é ǎ à gùm ke dàhbe ||que te à káni kǎ †gúǎ ke**
10. **|ǎ ||xàǎ ní ||qhúa gùm kǎ dtshǎǎ tǎ ǎ à kùhm kǎ**
11. **qáe |ǎ ||gà'ǎ tǎ èh ní |nǻa kǎ à dt'kx'àba ke dō'le**

**Q 2.2** Translate the following sentences into Taa:

12. *Do I throw away the polecat's big bone that is not stuck to my new box?*
13. *Does the young woman that I looked at eat the new buchu powder?*
14. *He did not want another egg that the men touched.*
15. *Did another springbok that doesn't touch the polecat throw away the duck's egg?*

**Q 2.3** Explain your solution.

**Problem 2. Taa Answers**

2.1	9. <i>Did I eat the young mudwasp [that wanted the egg]?</i>
	10. <i>Do the men not eat the buchhu powder [that I touched]?</i>
	11. <i>The woman's springbok [that he looks at] was stuck on the grass.</i>
2.2	12.  é n̄ n̄   xũ + kã dàã  ã ðãã !xaã + tã n̄   qhúa dt'kx'ába + ke n̄  e bòkòsè   qye kã [4]
	13.  é qáe   qye + te n̄ à  núa ke + n̄ gùm kã dtsháã   qyã [3]
	14. èh à   qhúa káni + kã ðgúã   qhaã + tã   xàã à kùhm kã [3]
	15.  á   gà'ã   qhaã + tã n̄   qhúa kùhm + kã dàã kã + à   xũ kã gãã  ã ðgúã [4]

**Q 2.1** Max 9. For each sentence, award 3p if correct; 2p with one mistake; 1p with two mistakes. A mistake includes e.g. wrong tense, missing question, misattributed relative clause, etc.

**Q 2.2** Max 14. In each region separated by a +, award 1p if correct.

**Q 2.3** Max 23. 11p for syntax; 8p for gender agreement; 4p for verbal markings.

## Problem 2. Taa Explanations

### 1. Word order:

- S V **kV** 0
- Question: |**ǂ** ...
- Relative clause: **tV ... kV**
- Noun + (Adjective) + (Relative Clause)
- Tense + (Neg) + Verb
- Possessor + |**V** + Possessed

### 2. Gender agreement:

- Nouns are divided into two classes: Class 2 (ending in **-ǂ**) and Class 3 (ending in **-e**).
- Pronouns: **ǂ** = 1SG, **ǂh** = 3SG, both of which are in Class 3.
- Final vowel of adjective agrees with the head noun
- |**ǂ** agrees with the subject
- **kV** precedes the object and agrees with it
- **tV ... kV** agree with the head noun
- |**V** agrees with the possessed noun

### 3. Verbs:

- **ǂ** for the present, **ǂ** for the past
- The negative particle is **ǂǂhúǂ**

#### Additional notes:

Actually, Taa has five noun classes, and it is often difficult to determine the noun class from the form of the noun. However, the above rule is generally true, and the nouns in this problem reflect it.

In Taa, fundamentally toneless syllables are assigned surface tones through a process involving tone classes. Each noun belongs to one of two tone classes (class I or II), which affects the tone of any modifiers that lack an inherent tone (class I nouns assign mid tones to all syllables of all modifiers; class II nouns assign a low tone to the ultima and a high tone to the penult, if there is one). Furthermore, verbs take a tone class as well, producing similar phenomena.

To avoid this complexity, in the above analysis, fundamentally toneless syllables are marked without tone.

#### References and further reading:

- Traill, A. (2009). *A !Xóǂ Dictionary*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Volume 9 of Quellen zur Khoisan-Forschung.