The UK Linguistics Olympiad   2020

Round 1

Problem 9. Can Yukaghir? (25 marks)

Kolyma Yukaghir is a language once spoken in the Kolyma region in the far east of Russia, whose origin and relation to other languages is unknown. It is a dying language with only 5 fluent speakers in 2009. The language can be written in either the Cyrillic or Roman alphabets. Here are some Yukaghir sentences with their English translations.

1. met tudele inabulagī   I hated him.

2. adil numeget towkele ket'īm   The boy came with a dog from home.

3. tet metul juömek   You (sg) saw me.

4. tit abut ket'ītemet   You (pl) will bring a bag.

5. terike t'olhorogele miem   The old lady waited for the rabbit.

6. tut numege mitkele mietem   He will wait for us at home.

7. tut t'olhoro juötem   He will see the rabbit.

8. mit gōrakte tetul juötej   We will see you (sg) in town.

9. tet ahidūtejek   You (sg) will hide.

10. met t'obulge jaraje   I swam in the sea.

11. adil jaratej   The boy will swim.

12. met titul el miele   I didn't wait for you (pl)

Q9.1. On your answer sheet, translate the following into English.

a. t'olhoro adilget el ahidūj

b. tet gōrakte t'obul juötemek

c. terike numele inabulagīm

d. tut abutkele el ket'ītej

Q9.2. On your answer sheet, translate the following into Kolyma Yukaghir.

a. You (sg) swam in the sea.

b. We will wait for the rabbit.

c. The dog came with you (sg) from town.

d. He will wait for the dog.

e. You (sg) did not see us.

f. You (pl) will hate the house.

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Solution and marking.

Scoring: (max 33)

- 9.1: 1 point for each correct sentence element (marked by | … |). (max 13)
    - Insist on words having correct grammatical function (subject, object etc).
    - Insist on correct number for *you* (e.g. "you (sg)").
    - Accept synonyms (e.g. *home* for *house*, *bring a bag with him* for *come with a bag*)
    - Unfortunately, sentence 1d is incorrect: it combines pronoun 'he' with the verb form for 'we'.
- 9.2: 1 point for each completely correct word. (max 20)
    - Deduct 1 for wrong word order, but accept all correct words.

9.1a.	The rabbit | did not hide | from the boy
b.	You (sg) | will see | the sea | in town
c.	The old lady | hated | the house
d.	We/He | will not come | with a bag. Or: We/He |2 will not bring | a bag.
9.2a.	tet t'obulge jarajek
b.	mit t'olhorogele mietej
c.	tow tetkele gōraktet ket'īm
d.	tut towkele mietem
e.	tet mitul el juömek
f.	tit nume inabulagītemet

Commentary

- Word order is SOV
- Pronoun system is as follows:

	Sg	pl
1	met	mit
2	tet	tit
3	tut	n/a

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- Verbs are as follows (italicised are seen in Task 1)

verb	I -ed	You sg -ed	S/He -ed	You sg will	He will	We will	You pl will
hate	inabulagī		*inabulagīm*				2f
bring			ket'īm		*ket'ītej*		ket'ītemet
see		juömek		*juötemek*	juötem	juötej	
wait	miele		miem		mietem	2b	
Hide			*ahidūj*	ahidūtejek			
Swim	jaraje	2a			jaratej		

'not' = *el* just before the verb.

Nouns and pronouns occur in five cases:

	subj	obj	With/for*	from	In/at
boy	adil			adilget	
home		2f	*numele*	numeget	numege
dog	2c		towkele		
bag		abut	*abutkele*		
old lady	terike				
rabbit	t'olhoro	t'olhoro	t'olhorogele		
town				2c	gōrakte
sea		t'obul			t'obulge
me	met	metul			
you (sg)	tet	tetul			
him	tut		tudele		
us	mit		mitkele		
you (pl)	tit	titul			

* Also object of 'hate'

For 1st and 2nd person, for object add –ul, for with/for add –kele; for 3rd person with/for tut>tudele, other forms not shown.