



# AILO

All Ireland Linguistics Olympiad  
*The Problem Solvers' Challenge*

## Round Two, Team Question Booklet

13<sup>th</sup> March 2018, DIT Grangegorman

2 Hours

Write your team's answers in the answer book provided

## Silly Ethiopian (AILO 2018 Team problem)

This problem is about Amharic, a member of the Semitic language family, and the official language of Ethiopia. It has 62m speakers, of whom 21.5m are native speakers. The writing system is a development of the Ge'ez writing system from the 9th century BCE. The text below is part of the story of Silly Mammo, a traditional and much-loved

children's tale, ቂሉ ማሞ ቪሊህ ማሞ KILU MAMO. There is a tradition of story-telling in Ethiopia, in which the children gather round the story-teller, in a circle sitting on the

ground. The story teller announces ተረጎ፣ ተረጎ TƏRƏTĪ, TƏRƏTĪ 'A story, a

story' to which the children rhyingly respond የላም በረጎ ሃገላሙ ለላም ለላም YƏLAMĪ BƏRƏTĪ, literally 'Cow shed', meaning roughly 'Tell us shed loads' (The phrase 'lost in translation' comes to mind).

Pronunciation: you don't need to know exactly how Amharic is pronounced to solve this problem, but the following hints will be helpful. The transcription used here is not quite standard, and does not necessarily give a very accurate idea of pronunciation – but it is consistent.

Amharic has seven vowels: the 'usual' five A,E,I,O,U and two central vowels, one short, transcribed here as Ə, or omitted altogether when it occurs at the end of a syllable, pronounced like the first and last vowels of 'opinion'; and one fuller central vowel, transcribed here as Ī, pronounced something like the exclamation 'urgh'. This too can sometimes be omitted at the end of a word.

Ge'ez has 34 consonant symbols to represent 24 different consonants in Amharic: some contrasts found in other languages using Ge'ez do not occur in Amharic, so for some sounds, effectively, there are a number of different symbols. However, for the purposes of this problem, these homophones have been transliterated differently. Also, not all of them occur in this data. Values are roughly as expected; a dot under a character indicates a more forceful pronunciation (actually, an 'ejective'). Both Ṁ and Ṇ are glottal consonants like the sound in 'uh-oh'.

Double consonants are distinctive in Ethiopian, but are not shown in the writing system (e.g. Mammo MAMO), and so are ignored here.

Here are the first few sentences of the story Silly Mammo, presented in Ge'ez with an English translation. The first sentence is also accompanied by a transcription. The transcriptions of the remaining sentences are shown below, but in a jumbled up order.

Q1. Your first task is to match up the Amharic sentences with their transcriptions.

1. በድኖ ጊዜ በኢትዮጵያ ሀገር የሚኖር ማሞ የሚባል ወጣት ነበር።

A. BƏDİNO GIZE BƏ?I TİYUPU YA HAGRİ YƏMINORİ MAMO YƏMİBALİ WƏTATI NƏBRİ.

A long time ago in Ethiopia there lived a boy called Mammo.

2. ማሞና እናቱ ወይዘሮ ጥሩነሽ የሚኖሩት ከአንድ ከተማ ትንላ ወጣ ብሎ በአንድ ደሰሰ ጎጂ ነበር።

Mammo and his mother Mrs Terunseh lived in a small tukul [grass hut] on the outskirts of the town.

3. ወይዘሮ ጥሩነሽ የሚተዳደሩት በሰው ቤት እንጀራ በመጋገር፣ እንጨት እየለቀሙ በመሸጥና ሌላም ያገኙትን ሥራት ነበር።

Mrs Terunseh made a living doing odd jobs, baking injera [flat bread] for other people, collecting and selling firewood.

4. ማሞ ሞን ምንም ሥራ እዳሁራም፣ እናቱ ሥራ መቆየት እይቸልም ብለው ይፈሩ ነበር።

Mammo however did not work, because his mother was afraid he could not hold down a job.

5. ከዝያም በላይ ማሞ የምዓብ ፍላጎቱ በጣም ብዙ ነበር።

However Mammo had a very big appetite.

6. ለቁርሰ የሶስት እንጀራ ፍትፍት።

For breakfast three pieces of injera with fitfit sauce.

7. ለምሳና ለራት ደዓሞ ሰድሶት ሰድሶት እንጀራ በሥጋ ወጥ

ከቅልጥም፣ ከአይብና እርጎ ጋር ነበር የሚበላው።

For lunch and dinner he ate six injeras with meat sauce and ayb [cheese].

8. ማሞ በጣም ጠንካራና ቁመናሙ ያማረ ጉብል ነበር።

Mammo was very strong and handsome.

9. እናቱ ትልቁ ደስታቸው ላቸው ማሞ ሲበላ ሞዩት ነበር።

His mother was always happy to see Mammo eat.

10. አንድ ቀን ወይዘሮ ጥሩነሽ ማሞን ጠርተው፤ ውድ ልጄ

ማሞ በጥሞና አድምጠኝ፤ የምልህንም ፈዕም።

One day Mrs Terunseh called to Mammo: Now listen carefully and obey me, my dear son, Mammo.

11. ከአሁን ጀምሮ ሥራ እየፈለክ መስራት አለብህ።

From now on you must work.

12. እኔ እንደቀድሞዬ ለመሥራት አቅሜ እየደከመ ነው፤ እሉት።

I am getting old and too tired to work as I used to, she said.

13. እሺ እማማ፤ የምቸለውን ሁሉ እሠራለሁ ለመመሆኑ ሥራ፤ እንዴት ነው የሚገኘው፤ እለ ማሞ።

Yes Mama, I will work as hard as I can, but how can I find [work], said Mammo.

B. KƏZĪYAMĪ BƏLAYĪ MAMO YƏMİŒABĪ FĪLAGOTU BƏŦAMĪ BĪZU NƏBRĪ.

C. ?ĪNE ?ĪHDƏKĎIMOYU LƏMŚĪRATĪ ?ĪKĪME ?ĪYƏDKƏM NƏWĪ, ?ĪLUTĪ.

D. LƏKURĪS YƏSOSĪTĪ ?ĪHĒĞƏRA FĪTĪFĪTĪ.

E. ?AHDĪ KƏH WƏYĪZRO ŦĪRUNŚ MAMOĒ ŦRĪTƏWĪ : WĪDĪ LĪĒE MAMO BƏŦĪMONA ?ADĪMĪŦƏŅĪ, YƏMĪLĪHĪHMĪ FƏŚĪMĪ.

F. ?ĪŚĪ ?ĪMAMA, YƏMĪĈĪLWĪH HULU ?ĪŚRALHU LƏMƏMHONU ŚĪRA, ?ĪHDETĪ NƏWĪ YƏMIGƏŅƏWĪ, ?ĪL MAMO.

G. ?ĪNATU TĪLĪKU DƏSTAĈWĪ LAĈWĪ MAMO SIBLA MOYƏTĪ NƏBRĪ.

H. MAMO MOĒ MĪHƏMĪ ŚĪRA ?ĪDAŚURAMĪ, ?ĪNATU ŚĪRA MƏKƏYƏTĪ ?ĪYĪĈLĪMĪ BĪLMU YĪFRU NƏBRĪ.

- I. MAMONA ?ĪNATU WƏYĪZRO ?ĪRUNŠ YƏMINORUTĪ KƏ?AHDĪ KƏTMA TĪHƏL WƏTA BĪLO BƏ?AHDĪ DƏSASA GOĞI NƏBRĪ.
- J. LƏMĪSANA LƏRATĪ DƏSAMO SƏDĪSTĪ SƏDĪSTĪ ?ĪHĞƏRA BƏSĪGA WƏTĪ KƏKĪLĪTĪMĪ, KƏ?AYĪBĪNA ?ĪRĪGO GARĪ NƏBRĪ YƏMIBLAWĪ.
- K. KƏ?AHUH ĞƏMĪRO ŠĪRA ?ĪYƏFLƏKĪ MƏSĪRATĪ ?ĪLBĪHĪ.
- L. WƏYĪZRO ?ĪRUNŠ YƏMITƏDADRUTĪ BƏSWĪ BETĪ ?ĪHĞƏRA BƏMGAGRĪ, ?ĪHƏÇƏTĪ ?ĪYƏLQƏMU BƏMŠTĪNA LESAMĪ YAGŅUTĪH ŠĪRATĪ NƏBRĪ.
- M. MAMO BƏTAMĪ TƏHĶARANA QUMNAMU YAMAR GUBĪLĪ NƏBRĪ.

Q2. Here are some individual words from the text in transcription and translation, but again the order has been jumbled. Which ones go with which? In one case (J), no translation is given. What do you think it might be?

1. KĪLĪTĪMĪ	A. Ethiopia	a. ነበር
2. LƏ	B. for	b. እሺ
3. NƏBRĪ	C. meat sauce	c. እናቱ
4. ŠĪRA	D. mother	d. ቅልጥም
5. TĪYUPUJA	E. Mrs	e. ሥራ
6. WƏYĪZRO	F. (he) said	f. ወይዘሮ
7. YƏSOSĪTĪ	G. three	g. ትዩዲያ
8. ?ĪLU	H. work	h. የሰነት
9. ?ĪNATU	I. yes	i. ለ
10. ?ĪŠI	J. ???	j. እሉ

Q3. Transcribe the following short passage, as best you can.

በሚቀጥለው ጊዜ እንዳልሸኝ አደርጋለሁ።

I'll do as you said, next time.

Q4. Although the texts here contained lots of different letter symbols, there are many more that happened not to occur in this text. Nevertheless you should be able to predict how they would be pronounced. How do you think the following symbols should be transcribed?

a    b    c    d    e    f    g    h    i    j

ሊ    ሤ    ሱ    ሽ    ቻ    ዢ    ዉ    ቺ    ደ    ጭ

Briefly explain the feature(s) of the writing system that in principle enable you to answer this question (even if you don't get them all right).

Make a chart showing the individual symbols that have featured in this problem, with their transcriptions. The chart should be organized in a systematic manner.

Q5. Write down any vocabulary items you can identify (you can write them in transcription) and anything you have noticed about the grammar of this language: word order, prefixes, suffixes (=endings), agreement, and so on.