

Silly Ethiopian (AILO 2018 Team problem) Solution

Q1

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
I	L	H	B	D	J	M	G	E	K	C	F

Q2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
C	B	J	H	A	E	G	F	D	I
d	i	a	e	g	f	h	j	c	b

Item J/a is a past tense marker – anything similar is OK (e.g. ‘was’, ‘did’).

Q3

Ideally:

BƏMIKṬṬĪLWĪ GIZE ʔĪHDALŠŃĪ ʔADRĪGALHU.

but Ə can be included in various places

BƏMIKƏṬṬĪLƏWĪ GIZE ʔĪHƏDALƏŠƏŃĪ ʔADƏRĪGALƏHU.

Don’t forget the full stop.

Q4.

(a) LI (b) ŠE (c) SU (d) ŠE (e) ČA (f) ZI (g) WI (h) ĞU (i) RE (j) ČE

The symbols all represent syllables (consonant + vowel), with the vowel (in most cases) represented in the same way, as a mark attached to the consonant symbol. The symbol for the consonant on its own (or with Ə) represents the bare consonant symbol.

The only ‘full set’ that we see in the data is for M:

Ṁ M(Ə) ṀṀ MU ṀṀ MI ṀṀ MA ṀṀ ME ṀṀ MĪ ṀṀ MO

In addition, symbols for (some) related sounds are marked by a kind of ‘roof’, for example

S ~ Š ሰሻ, T ~ Ṭ ተፕ, N ~ Ṇ ነፕ, D ~ Ğ ልጀ (Ğ is [dʒ] as in *injera*) – there are several other such pairs which did not happen to occur in the data.

Altogether there are 34 different consonant symbols, each with 7 different variants (for the 7 vowels), giving 238 basic ‘letters’, though there are several other special letters on top of that. Despite this, because the writing system is somewhat systematic, it is no harder to learn than our own alphabet (where letter shapes are essentially unrelated).

Here are the symbols that occur in the text. The obvious way to present them is in a 28x7 table (6 of the 34 rows are not represented in the data). Bonus marks can be given for a thoughtful presentation order, eg alphabetic, or phonetic.

Cells marked in yellow represent characters that are given in the blurb or in the first sentence. Grey characters are the ones in Q4.

	Ə	A	E	I	O	U	İ
ʔ		አ		ኢ			እ
B	በ	ባ	ቤ				ብ
G	ገ	ጋ		ጊ	ጎ	ጒ	
D	ደ	ዳ	ዴ			ድ	ደ
Ḡ			ገግ	ገጊ		ገጒ	ገጊ
H		ሀ			ሆ	ሁ	ሀ
W	ወ			ወ			ወ
Z	ዘ		ዘ	ዘ		ዘ	ዘ
Ḫ	ኀ						
T	ተ	ታ				ቱ	ተ
Č	ቸ	ቻ					ቸ
Y	የ	ያ				ይ	ይ
K	ከ	ካ	ክ				
Ḳ	ቀ			ቀ	ቆ	ቀ	ቀ
L	ለ	ላ	ሌ	ሊ	ሎ	ሉ	ለ
M	መ	ማ	ሜ	ሚ	ሞ	ሙ	ም
N	ነ	ና	ኔ		ኖ	ኑ	ን
Ñ	ኘ		ኙ	ኚ		ኛ	
S	ሰ	ሳ		ሲ	ሶ	ሱ	ስ
ʃ		ሻ					ሶ
P							
Ṗ					ፆ		
F	ፈ						ፍ
Č	ጩ		ጪ				
R	ረ	ራ	ሪ		ሮ	ሩ	ረ
Ś	ሠ		ሡ			ሣ	ሠ
Š	ሸ			ሺ		ሻ	
Ṭ		ጠ					ጡ

Q5 is open-ended.

*words from Q2

NOR live

BAL be called (named)
BƏTİMO listen (imperative)
NƏB(Rİ) past tense marker *
NƏWİ present state marker
TƏDADR make a living
ŞİRA work *
ĞABI sthg to do with appetite
BLA eat
TRİTƏ called (spoke to)
?ADİMİTƏŃİ obey me
?İL say *

AYİBİ ayb (cheese)
BƏTAMİ very
FİTİFİTİ fitfit sauce
GIZE time
HAGRİ boy
KİLİTİMİ meat sauce *
KILU silly
KUMNAMU handsome
KURİS breakfast
KƏH day
MAMO Mamma
MGAGRİ other people
MİSA lunch
MOH not
MOYƏTİ happy
RATİ dinner
SƏDİSTİ six
TİHƏL tukul (grass hut)
TİRUNŞ Terunseh
TİYUPUYA Ethiopia *
TƏHKARA strong
TƏRƏTİ story
TİRUNŞ Terunseh
WİDİ LİDE dear son
WƏYİZRO Mrs *
YƏLAMİ BƏRƏTİ cowshed
YƏSOSİTİ three *
?AHDİ one
?İNATU mother *
?İŞI yes *
?İMAMA mama
?İĞĞƏRA injera

Pre/suffixes

BƏ(ʔI)- in
 KƏ- in/with
 LƏ- for *
 YƏ(MI)- some verb property
 -H vocative
 -İ he + past
 -LA
 -NA and
 -U he + past
 -UTİ she +past
 -Wİ

WƏṬA BİLO (BƏʔAḨDİ) DƏSASA GOĞI on the outskirts of town
 BƏSWİ BETİ baking
 ʔİḨƏÇƏTİ ʔİYƏLQƏMU BƏMŞṬİNA LESAMİ YAGŃUTİḨ collecting and selling
 firewood
 ʔİDASURAMİ
 (MƏ)QOYƏTİ ʔİYİČLİMİ BİLMU YİFRU could not hold down
 KƏZİYAMİ BƏLAYİ
 YƏMİŞABİ FİLAGOTU (BƏṬAMİ) BİZU had a (very) big appetite
 DƏŞAMO
 BƏŞİGA WƏṬİ
 ʔİRİGO GARİ
 YAMAR GUBİLİ
 TİLİKU DƏSTAČWİ LAČWİ
 YƏMİLİHİHMİ FƏŞİMİ
 KƏʔAHUḨ ĞƏMİRO from now on
 ʔİYƏFLƏKE MƏRİRATİ ʔİLBİHİ you must

1A. BƏDİNO GIZE BƏʔI TİYUṬUYA HAGRİ YƏMINORİ MAMO YƏMIBALİ
 A long time in Ethiopia boy? he lived Mammo he named
 WƏṬATİ NƏBRİ.
 past
 A long time ago in Ethiopia there lived a boy called Mammo.

2I MAMONA ʔİNATU WƏYİZRO ṬİRUNŞ YƏMINORUTİ KƏʔAḨDİ KƏTMA
 Mammo-and mother Mrs Terunseh they lived in one small
 TİḨƏL WƏṬA BİLO BƏʔAḨDİ DƏSASA GOĞI NƏBRİ.
 Tukul in one past
 Mammo and his mother Mrs Terunseh lived in a small *tukul* [grass hut] on the outskirts
 of the town.

3L. WƏYİZRO ṬİRUNŞ YƏMITƏDADRUTİ BƏSWİ BETİ ʔİḨĜƏRA BƏMGAGRİ,
 Mrs Terunseh make a living injera for people
 ʔİḨƏÇƏTİ ʔİYƏLQƏMU BƏMŞṬİNA LESAMİ YAGŃUTİḨ ŞİRATİ NƏBRİ.
 worked past

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

4H. MAMO MOH MIHƏMI ŠİRA ?İDAŠURAMI, ?İNATU ŠİRA MƏKOYƏTİ
Mammo not however work mother work
?İYİÇLİMİ BİLMU YİFRU NƏBRİ.
past

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

5B. KƏZİYAMI BƏLAYİ MAMO YƏMİŞABI FİLAGOTU BƏTAMI BİZU NƏBRİ.
Mammo very past
However Mammo had a very big appetite.

6D. LƏKURİS YƏSOSİTİ ?İHĞƏRA FİTİFİTİ.
For breakfast three injera fitfit
For breakfast three pieces of *injera* with *fitfit* sauce.

7J. LƏMİSANA LƏRATİ DƏŞAMO SƏDİSTİ SƏDİSTİ ?İHĞƏRA BƏŞİGA WƏTİ
For lunch-and for dinner six six injera
KƏKİLİTİMİ, KƏ?AYİBİNA ?İRİGO GARİ NƏBRİ YƏMIBLAWİ.
with meat sauce with ayb and past he ate
For lunch and dinner he ate six *injeras* with meat sauce and *ayb* [cheese].

8M. MAMO BƏTAMI TƏHKARANA KUMNAMU YAMAR GUBİLİ NƏBRİ.
Mammo very strong-and handsome was
Mammo was very strong and handsome.

9G. ?İNATU TİLİKU DƏSTAČWİ LAČWİ MAMO SIBLA MOYƏTİ NƏBRİ.
Mother Mammo eat happy was
His mother was always happy to see Mammo eat.

10E. ?AHDİ KƏH WƏYİZRO TİRUNŠ MAMO? TRİTƏWİ :
one day Mrs Terunseh Mammo called
WİDİ LİDE MAMO BƏTİMONA ?ADİMİTƏŃİ, YƏMİLİHİHMİ FƏSİMİ.
Dear son Mammo listen -and obey-me
One day Mrs Terunseh called to Mammo: Now listen carefully and obey me, my dear son, Mammo.

11K. KƏ?AHU? ĞƏMİRO ŠİRA ?İYƏFLƏKE MƏRİRATİ ?İLBİHİ.
work
From now on you must work.

12C. ?İNE ?İHDƏKDIMOYU LƏMŠİRATİ ?İKİME ?İYƏDKƏM NƏWİ, ?İLUTİ.
to work pres she said
I am getting old and too tired to work as I used to, she said.

13F. ʔİŞI ʔİMAMA, YƏMİČİLWİḤ HULU ʔİSRALHU LƏMƏMHONU ŠİRA,
Yes mama work

ʔİḤDETİ NƏWİ YƏMIGƏÑƏWİ, ʔİL MAMO.

pres said Mammo

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

Q3. BƏMIḶTİLWİ GIZE ʔİḤDALŠŃİ ʔADRİGALHU.

I'll do as you said, next time.