(Author: Babette Newsome)

Drinking ყავა in a Georgian Café

Georgian is a language, unrelated to English, spoken by just over 4 million people, mostly in Georgia, but also in Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. It is written in the beautiful Mkhedruli alphabet which is recognised in UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Can you match the Georgian words and phrases to their English translations and then write **sugar spoon** in Georgian?

1. ჩაი	a. coffee
2. შაქარი	b. sugar
3. საშაქრე	c. tea cup
4. საყავე	d. spoon
5. ყავა	e. coffee-pot
6. კოვზი	f. tea
7. ჩაის ჭიქა	g. sugar-pot

The British Academy cosponsors the UK Linguistics Olympiad, a competition for schools. Information and the problem solution at: **http://www.uklo.org/problems**

Drinking ყავა in a Georgian Café – Solutions

located at http://www.uklo.org/problems.

Answers:

1	f
2	b
3	e
4	g
5	a
6	d
7	c

'tea spoon' = ჩაის კოვზი

How to solve it

- #7 is the only Georgian example with two words, and 'tea cup' is the only two-word English form, so they probably match. Notice the careful use of hyphens in 'sugar-pot' and 'coffee-pot'!
- If #7 means 'tea cup', then it must contain the word for 'tea'. That must be #1, in spite of the extra letter in #7.
- #3 contains #2, and #4 contains #5; moreover in both #3 and #4 the extra letters are the same. So we can assume that these pairs are related. In the English we also find two related pairs: 'sugar'~'sugar-pot' and 'coffee'~'coffee-pot', so we can assume that these translate the Georgian pairs, with 'pot' translated by the extra letters. But which pair is which?
- Now look at the title of the problem, containing a Georgian word for something you can drink. This must be 'coffee', not 'sugar'. So #5 must be 'coffee', and the rest follows.
- The remaining word is #6, which must be 'spoon'. This is crucial for solving the bonus question, but you also have to build on the example of 'tea cup', where the word for 'tea' has an extra letter.

Background details

Georgian is not related to the Indo-European group of languages (to which the vast majority of languages in Europe belong thanks to a common ancestor), but belongs to the Kartvelian group of languages. It is part of the South-Caucasian languages sub-group of Georgian-Zan (also Karto-Zan) and is, as far as most linguists are concerned, unrelated to the nearby North-Caucasian languages.

The Georgian alphabet has 33 letters (it used to have 38) because it avoids 'di-graphs' such as the English <sh> combination representing a single sound (represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet as ʃ).

The script may be familiar to science fiction fans, however. Recently, the BBC adaptated China Miéville's novel *The City and the City*, and language consultant Alison Long from Keele University gave the characters from the fictional city of Ul Qoma the Georgian script for their language, Illitan. Illitan was invented initially by Miéville as part of the novel, but then developed by Long for the TV series. Long decided to use the Georgian alphabet because it looked so different from English and would convey an alien setting for the story.

You may recognise some of the Georgian words when given in Roman alphabet as they are loanwords (just as English borrowed "tea" and "coffee", so did Georgian).

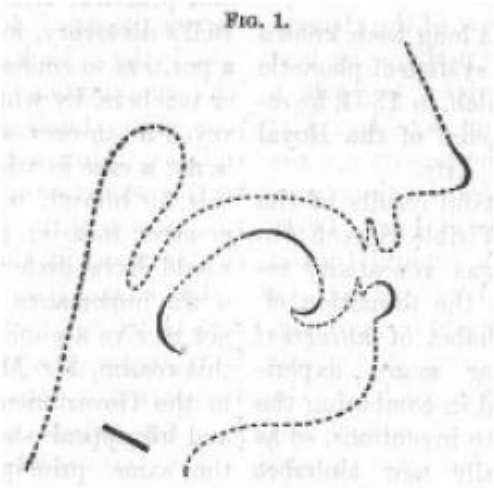
	Georgian	**Transliteration in Roman alphabet**	**English Translation**
1	ჩაი	chai	tea
2	შაქარი	shakari	sugar
3	საშაქრე	sashakre ('pot' = sa…e)	sugar-pot
4	საყავე	saq'ave ('pot' = sa…e)	coffee-pot
5	ყავა	q'ava [q' is a k-sound produced deep in the throat]	coffee
6	კოვზი	k'ovzi	spoon
7	ჩაის ჭიკა	chais ch'ika (notice -s on 'tea' linking it to 'cup'. This is your clue for 'sugar spoon'.)	tea cup

Visible Speech – problem and solution

(author: Daniel Harbour)

Who Am I?

ƎY contribuՈon to unƬerstanƬing lanЄuage was an alphabʅt used for tʃchʃЄ the Deaf. Its symbols are ƬiaЄrams of the sounds they stand for. I ƷiՈualised thʅ vocal ƆracƆ so:



and let orientaՈon depict where each sound is mʃde and ornaƎentation, how. I therefore discovered the moleculʅr nature of the sounds of sƆʃch—but my faƎe is far eclipsed by my sJn and his ubʃquʃtʅs spʃch ʃnvʅntiʅn. I am:

ʅωʅɑѡJѰƬʅ ƎʅωƷʃω Ǝʅω

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Solution

Located at http://www.uklo.org/problems.

Alexander Melvil Bell (in the International Phonetic Alphabet: /ælɛkzandə mɛlvɪl bɛl/).

How to solve the problem

One challenge in both constructing and solving this problem is that Bell's name has slightly different pronunciations in different English accents – for instance, in some accents the final <r> of <Alexander> is pronounced, while in others it is not. However, these differences are small, so the Received Pronunciation assumed here shouldn't cause many difficulties.

1. To read the name, you need vowels /æ ɛ a ə ɪ/ and consonants /l z n d m v b k/.
2. Of these, /v m d a ə ɪ/ are found directly in the text.
3. In addition, the text includes /š ž i p t ŋ g e/, which are not in the name.
4. Using 2 and 3, the following "deductions" are possible:

    - from nasals /m ŋ/ deduce nasal /n/
    - from labial and alveolar /m n d/ deduce labial /b/
    - from labial, alveolar and velar /p t ŋ g/ deduce velar /k/
    - from sibillant /š ž s/ deduce sibillant /z/
    - from high front vowels /ɪ e/ deduce mid front vowel /ɛ/
    - from high/mid front vowels /i ɪ ɛ/ deduce low front vowel /æ/

Background details

(From Wikipedia: Visible speech}

Visible Speech is a system of phonetic symbols developed by Alexander Melville Bell in 1867 to represent the position of the speech organs in articulating sounds. Bell was known internationally as a teacher of speech and proper elocution and an author of books on the subject. The system is composed of symbols that show the position and movement of the throat, tongue, and lips as they produce the sounds of language, and it is a type of phonetic notation. The system was used to aid the deaf in learning to speak.

In 1864 Melville promoted his first works on Visible Speech, in order to help the deaf both learn and improve upon their speech (since the profoundly deaf could not hear their own pronunciation).[1] To help promote the language, Bell created two written short forms using his system of 29 modifiers and tones, 52 consonants, 36 vowels and a dozen diphthongs:[2] they were named World English, which was similar to the International Phonetic Alphabet, and also Line Writing, used as a shorthand form for stenographers.[3]

Melville's works on Visible Speech became highly notable, and were described by Édouard Séguin as being "...a greater invention than the telephone by his son, Alexander Graham Bell".[3] Melville saw numerous applications for his invention, including its worldwide use as a universal language. However, although heavily promoted at the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan, Italy in 1880, after a period of a dozen years or so in which it was applied to the education of the deaf, Visible Speech was found to be more cumbersome, and thus a hindrance, to the teaching of speech to the deaf, compared to other methods,[4] and eventually faded from use.

Bell's son Alexander Graham Bell learned the symbols, assisted his father in giving public demonstrations of the system and mastered it to the point that he later improved upon his father's work. Eventually, Alexander Graham Bell became a powerful advocate of visible speech and oralism in the United States. The money he earned from his patent of the telephone and the sale of his Volta Laboratory patents helped him to pursue this mission.