

Linguistics Competition

All the problems are intended for all contestants. The final score depends on your high school grade and on your score for each problem solved either completely or partially. For the upper three high school grades it is sufficient to solve any two problems completely, and for younger students it is sufficient to solve any one of them.

Problem 1. Here are English sentences and their romanized translations into the Beslenei dialect of the Kabardian language¹. Some sentences are omitted:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | I am selling you (pl.) the basket. | mater qəvəzoš'e. |
| 2. | We sold you (pl.) the dresses. | ž'anexer qəvetš'axe. |
| 3. | You (sg.) are selling me the dress. | ž'aner qəzəboš'e. |
| 4. | You (sg.) are selling us the basket. | mater qədəboš'e. |
| 5. | You (sg.) sold us the baskets. | matexer qədepš'axe. |
| 6. | You (pl.) are selling me the rooster. | adaqer qəzəvoš'e. |
| 7. | You are selling us the baskets. | matexer qədəvoš'exe. |
| 8. | ? | ž'aner qəvess'a. |
| 9. | ? | ž'anexer qəvədoš'exe. |
| 10. | You (sg.) sold me the roosters. | ? |
| 11. | You (pl.) sold us the dress. | ? |

Question. Fill in the gaps. Explain your reasoning.

Note. ə is a special vowel and q, x, š', ž' are special consonants of the Kabardian language.

Problem 2. Here are nine numbers and six of the corresponding numerals in the secret language of Ofenyas, Russian peddlers from the 19th century:

2, 20, 50, 200, 1 000, 10 000, 50 000, 100 000, 200 000

dekan kasukh, zdyu dekan(ov), zdyu pekhaly(ov) kasukh, kasukh(a), polpekhaly(a) kasukh, polpekhaly(a)

Question 1. Write the three remaining numbers in this secret language. Explain your reasoning.

Question 2. Write in numbers: poldekan(a), zdyu kasukh.

Question 3. There are two possible ways of expressing the number 500 in the secret language of Ofenyas. Provide both of them and explain your reasoning.

Note. *pol-* is Russian for 'half'. You may ignore the endings enclosed in parentheses.

Problem 3. Here are some genitive singular forms of Old English nouns denoting actions and their translations into Modern English. Stem and case ending are delimited with a hyphen.

| | | | |
|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|
| ryn-es | 'running' | fiell-es | 'fall' |
| help-e | 'help' | wræc-e | 'vengeance' |
| stenc-es | 'smell' | slāp-es | 'sleep' |
| luf-e | 'love' | hlynn-es | 'sound' |
| rac-e | 'explanation' | wār-e | 'agreement' |

Question. What are the endings of the genitive singular of the following Old English nouns?

| | | | |
|----------|---------|-----------|---------------|
| gif-... | 'gift' | strid-... | 'pace' |
| dyn-... | 'noise' | sæc-... | 'persecution' |
| sorg-... | 'care' | | |

Explain your reasoning.

Note. æ, ā, y are special Old English vowels.

¹Kabardian belongs to the West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) branch of the North Caucasian language family. It is spoken by approx. 1.5m people in the South of Russia as well as in some other countries.