

# Tutorial letter 201/2/2012

**Language and Communication Skills  
Acquisition in an African Language 2**

**AFL1504**

**Semester 2**

**Department of African Languages**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

This tutorial letter contains the feedback answers to  
Assignment 01

BAR CODE

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**Important note:**

Please note that although there are only 40 questions, the mark you obtain for the assignment will be converted to a mark out of 100.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Dear Student

This tutorial letter contains **feedback on Assignment 01**. The multiple choice questions for this assignment were the same for all the languages. We trust that our explanations will give you clarity in instances where you chose the wrong options. The correct option is given first, followed by explanations, where necessary, as to why the other options were wrong.

## 2 CONTACT DETAILS OF LECTURERS

Should you have any questions, please contact the lecturer responsible for the language you have chosen for this module. Their names appear below.

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### 3 ANSWERS TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. When a group of languages such as the Bantu languages share the same characteristics, they are known as ...

Correct option: (2)

- (1) A social organisation has specific aims in communities, but their members are not bound together because they have certain linguistic characteristics in common.
- (3) One of the features of the Bantu languages is that they make use of a concordial system whereby agreement is established between elements in a sentence, but this criterion cannot be used to designate the relationships between groups of languages.
- (4) Just because there are certain linguistic features which are common to the Bantu languages, this does not make them a sharing community.

2. Considering the political situation in South Africa, why has the term 'African languages' become more acceptable than 'Bantu languages'?

Correct option: (3)

- (1) The advent of the new democracy had nothing to do with the popularisation of the term 'African languages' instead of 'Bantu languages'.
- (2) The internationally accepted term for linguistic and classificatory purposes is 'Bantu languages', not 'African languages'.
- (4) The reason for the preference of 'African languages' to 'Bantu languages' was purely a political one, and does not relate to where the languages originated.

3. The name that has been given to the original language from which all the Bantu languages are believed to have developed is:

Correct option: (4)

- (1) The Great Lakes is an area in Central Africa where the Bantu languages are thought to have originated, but there is no such thing as a Great Lakes language.
- (2) An original language may alternatively be called a parent language, but this is not the name given by researchers to the original language of the Bantu languages.

- (3) 'Kgalagadi' is not the name of the original Bantu language, but refers to one of the first Bantu-language speaking groups that reached Southern Africa.

4. Which of the following statements best describes the purpose of this module?

Correct option: (3)

- (1) It is clearly stated in the guide that learning an African language will not benefit you should it remain an intellectual exercise only. The purpose of the module is also not to prepare the learner for scientific writing but to acquire communicative skills.
- (2) This module is not intended for mother-tongue speakers – they would already have mastered pronunciation and comprehension skills in their language.
- (4) Technical passages and advanced grammatical structures are not appropriate for a beginner's course. We introduce you to the literature of the languages through everyday vocabulary in children's stories which have easy-to-follow story lines and simple sentence constructions.

5. When you want to learn to speak in an African language, it is advisable to ...

Correct option: (2)

- (1) It is not advisable for you to attempt to use complicated sentence constructions and grammatical structures, because you are bound to make mistakes. What counts more at this stage is for you to be able to formulate grammatically correct sentences, no matter how simple they may be.
- (3) You are encouraged to express yourself in the idiom of the language right from the start – if you don't, your language use will be stilted and unnatural, even incomprehensible to the listener.
- (4) By first formulating your message in a non-African language, you might be using sophisticated concepts and words or advanced constructions. As a beginner you are not in a position yet to render these issues in good grammatical expressions in the African language and the result will probably be poorly formulated sentences and incorrect usage of vocabulary items.

6. Children's literature is suitable for adult learners of a language because ...

Correct option: (2)

- (1) It is not true that children's literature always contains only dialogues; it may also include narratives, songs, etc.
- (3) It is not true that children's literature has challenging and complex themes or many central characters. On the contrary, the stories mostly focus on a limited number of main characters so as to keep the child's attention.
- (4) The stories may make use of a lot of repetition, but the second part of the statement is not true. Tenses, moods and sentence constructions are normally kept uncomplicated to match the level of understanding of the child.

7. Which well-known proverb (paraphrased in English below) expresses the African philosophy regarding the importance of the social group?

Correct option: (1) (See paragraph 1.4 in your guide)

8. Which option contains words whose meanings first have to be specified before they can be translated into an African language?

Correct option: (2)

Before words like 'sister' and 'aunt' can be translated into an African language, the translator needs to know how these people are related to the family. There are no single equivalents of relationship terms, e.g. with regard to 'sister' one would first need to know whether it is someone's older or younger sister that is being referred to. 'Aunt' is also translated differently if she is the mother's sister or the father's sister, etc. Options (1), (3) and (4) have unique referents and hence do not need to be specified in order to find their translation equivalents.

9. Compared to Western culture, African cultures developed a greater variety of colour terms for domestic animals. What could the reason for this be?

Correct option: (4)

If something is of great cultural importance, societies are bound to develop more specific terms, as is the case here with colours and colour combinations for domestic animals (particularly cattle). In the light of the above determining factor, the other options cannot be considered as valid.

10. The ceremony which marks the end of the mourning period of a widow is called ...

The correct option is (3) (See paragraph 1.4 in your guide)

11. Certain observations can be made from the way sentences are constructed. For example, the use of the expression 'I was dropped by my knife' (passive form) instead of 'I lost my knife' (active form) in an African language, is indicative of:

Correct option: (1)

The only explanation for the use of the passive form instead of the active form, is a psychological or social one. Hence it has nothing to do with incompetence of speech or personal preferences for a specific form or to impress others. The speaker does not want to expose him-/herself to society as the guilty party and hence directs blame away from him/her by using the passive form. Instead of saying that he/she lost the knife (through negligence), it is rather the knife which decided to desert its owner.

12. Which one of the following is NOT a characteristic feature of traditional African folklore?

The correct option is (3)

In this question you had to identify a statement which is NOT true of traditional African folklore and the only inaccuracy occurred in option (3), because folklore was carried over orally from one generation to the next, without it ever being recorded in writing.

13. Folklore as verbal art includes the following genres:

Correct option: (4)

The other options are incorrect, because they contain genres which are not reckoned as part of traditional folklore, i.e. games, journalistic reports, folk dances, court dialogue, initiation ceremonies and rituals.

14. Which scenario would best describe the typical traditional setting for the telling of folktales?

Correct option: (2)

The other options all contain at least one element which is not traditionally the case, e.g. (1) grandfather as narrator instead of the grandmother, telling stories before supper instead of after supper when everyone is relaxing; (3) the women still grinding corn instead of relaxing with the rest of the family; (4) telling stories in a bedroom instead of at the fireside and the time of day should be the evening and not the morning.

15. One of the important functions of folktales is to ...

Correct option: (4)

- (1) There are many functions of folktales, one of them being to warn against evil practices, such as cannibalism. However, the list is not limited to cannibalism. Cannibalism is just used as an example of any evil practice which should be avoided.
- (2) The focus is not on animals with human character traits, but rather on what they stand for and the message they bring across. In a fictional world, human traits are often ascribed to animals.
- (3) Teaching children to look after their younger siblings is an example of a lesson of social responsibility, but it is not the only lesson conveyed by folktales. Lessons can take on many different forms and are not restricted to this specific situation.

16. What is the significance of the expression *keleketla* (Northern Sotho) or *qoi* (Southern Sotho) with which the audience frequently interrupts a narrator during the telling of a story?

Correct option: (4)

The purpose of the audience's response line conveys the exact opposite to what is stated in options (1), (2) and (3): The audience does show respect by uttering the response line and wants the narrator to continue with his/her story. The frequent interruption signals encouragement, not protest.

17. What is the purpose of a story structure which is open-ended?

Correct option: (1)

- (2) When a story structure is open-ended, there is no strong or definite conclusion. The reader is purposely left wondering as to what the end of the story might have been and to make his/her own inferences.
- (3) In an open-ended story structure, the author's intention is not to convince his/her readers to adopt his/her views, but to think about the issues of life and come to their own conclusions.
- (4) An open-ended story structure does not aim to provide answers to the questions of life.

18. When we say that a folktale is marked by certain characteristic formulae it means that it ...

Correct option: (3)

- (1) This option does not give an answer as to what is meant by formulae in a folktale (i.e. beginning, audience's response line and conclusion). The statement is also incorrect, because narrators are allowed a certain amount of flexibility and creative freedom when narrating a story and do not have to tell it as they heard it.
- (2) The fact that folktales are marked by formulae has nothing to do with any prescriptions regarding the choice of themes. As said in (1) above, the narrator is allowed to exercise a certain amount of creative freedom.
- (4) This is a true statement about folktales, but it does not answer the question as to what is meant by the expression that 'folktales have formulae'.

19. A characteristic feature of praise poems is that ...

Correct option: (2)

- (1) Praise poems are intended for adults, not for children.
- (3) Praise poetry has a specific purpose, i.e. to honour a respected person or an object of beauty, but not to encourage collaboration in manual labour. The latter is achieved through the singing of songs.
- (4) The composers of a single poem are usually not known, and over time, many different composers may have contributed to a particular poem.

20. Rhythm in African poetry is achieved by ...

The correct option is (1)

- (2) Rhythm is not dependent on the stanzas being of equal length.
- (3) The African languages do not make use of stress to create rhythm.
- (4) Vowel and diphthong sounds are used to create rhyme, not rhythm – the African languages do not have diphthong sounds or a wealth of vowels to create rhyme, especially end-rhyme.

21. Which option makes an INCORRECT assertion regarding how rhyming is achieved in African poetry?

Correct option: (4)

Option (4) is the only incorrect statement about how rhyming is achieved in African poetry. Words in the African languages are structured differently and are not conducive to end-rhyming as in the case of English or Afrikaans with their wealth of vowel and diphthong sounds.

22. Proverbs are phrases that perform a specific function in a community, namely to ...

The correct option is (1)

- (2) This option refers to riddles, not proverbs.
- (3) Proverbs are not like folktales or riddles which serve to entertain, but rather to impart wisdom, warning or encouragement at given moments.
- (4) Other genres like songs or riddles serve to combat boredom, not proverbs.

23. Which of the following linguistic devices would a composer of praise poetry AVOID?

Correct option: (1)

Options (2), (3) and (4) are devices which a composer can usefully employ for effect. The composer has a reasonable amount of freedom of expression and may manipulate the syntax of the language, but it should be done in such a way that the expression still has a pleasing effect on the reader/hearer and doesn't become forced or unnatural.

24. Riddles play an important educational role because ...

Correct option: (3)

- (1) The fact that riddles are usually introduced by a stereotyped phrase such as *Thai* (Northern Sotho) or *Qashi-qashi* (Xhosa) has nothing to do with their educational importance.
- (2) The physical setting in which riddles are propounded, as in the evening around the fire, also says nothing about the educational value of riddles.
- (4) The fact that riddles may take the form of simple statements, is just a matter of language use, but does not highlight their educational value.

25. If a mother in African culture wants to sing her baby to sleep, which elements would most likely characterise her lullaby?

Correct option: (2)

A lullaby is a song which is supposed to put a baby to sleep. Therefore any rhythm or noise that would counteract this purpose, as described in options (1), (3) and (4), would not be conducive to calming the baby for it to go to sleep.

26. Which one of the following genres of folklore has a rigid structure, i.e. it does not allow the author to exercise his/her creative freedom?

Correct option: (3)

Proverbs should be used as they are. On the other hand, creative freedom is possible in folktales, songs and praise poems, which means an author can use his/her own initiative and add his/her own flair to enhance the rendition of his/her performance or narration. Even idioms/idiomatic expressions may be changed to suit the syntax or tense of a sentence, e.g. *go bolaya naga* 'to run away' (Northern Sotho) may be changed to *ba tlo bolaya naga* 'they will run away'.

27. The function of idioms as linguistic forms is ...

Correct option: (2)

People use idioms to render their expressions more effective and to add colour to their speech. Idioms may be used as a polite way of saying things.

- (1) Idioms belong to a community and are not composed in honour of someone.
- (3) Riddles, rather than idioms are used to train the youth to be observant and to develop their intellectual skills.
- (4) Idioms are not a form of entertainment to be recited when the extended family relaxes together at night. They are used by individuals as and when the need arises in a particular situation to bring a point across more effectively.

28. Many of the images used in proverbs stem from traditional settings and customs. This implies that ...

Correct option: (4)

Proverbs were created based on images from traditional settings and customs. Even though people may not find themselves in these traditional settings anymore, the proverbs still have an impact today. Options (1), (2) and (3) all express statements which are true of proverbs in general, but they do not refer to the traditional way of life or cultural factors which have given rise to many of the proverbs.

29. The purpose of a comprehension test is to establish the following:

Correct option: (1)

The other options test abilities which do not fall within the expected outcomes of a comprehension test.

30. In translations the aim is to produce texts that are meaningful and stylistically well-formed. This is achieved by ...

Correct option: (3)

- (1) A word-for-word translation does not necessarily give the intended meaning in the target language and is often not stylistically well-formed.
- (2) A literal translation of individual words often leads to misunderstandings.
- (4) Idiomatic translations are not divorced from the context, but take the context into consideration for maximum comprehension.

31. The danger of a passage that is translated too freely is that ...

Correct option: (3)

- (1) Spelling errors can occur in any text – they are unrelated to the type of translation approach used.
- (2) & (4) The length of a passage or the number of paragraphs is not necessarily a criterion against which a too free translation should be measured.

32. As a beginner acquiring an African language, you are strongly advised to do the following when writing an essay:

Correct option: (2)

- (1) Avoid long sentences with a variety of moods and tenses. Rather stick to short, well-planned sentences and one mood and tense, if possible, to minimise the chances of making mistakes.
- (3) You will only complicate matters if you first draft a perfect essay in your first language (e.g. English) with the aim of converting it in the same style into an African language. Remember that some things cannot be said exactly in an African language as they are said in English. The inability to translate the English version will frustrate you, as you will not yet have the necessary linguistic skill to do so.
- (4) Avoid topics which require you to coin new words and to use specialised vocabulary. You will get more marks for everyday vocabulary and simple sentence constructions which are correct, than for innovative ideas which you cannot express adequately.

33. What is an ESSENTIAL requirement for any dialogue?

Correct option: (1)

- (2) Not all dialogues necessarily have an opening line with a greeting.
- (3) Not all dialogues necessarily end with people bidding farewell to each other.
- (4) Visual contact is not a requirement for a dialogue to take place – think of a telephone conversation, for example, where there is no eye-contact.

34. Pictures can be very useful in foreign language learning, because ...

Correct option: (4)

- (1) Using pictures and sign language without any grammatical instruction on how to form sentences about a picture would be a fruitless exercise.
- (2) This statement contains an inaccuracy, because the vocabulary and topics which a picture can trigger or generate are infinite in principle.
- (3) Drawing a picture if you fail to express yourself is not an acceptable alternative to acquiring a new language.

35. The common terms used to describe the phenomenon whereby people use words from another language or change over to another language in the course of their conversation are ...

Correct option: (4)

The other options contain expressions which are specific to other phenomena.

36. In which of the following television programme types are you most likely to encounter the use of the standard form of a language?

Correct option: (1)

The formal, standard language is most likely to be used in the reading of news bulletins, unlike in dramas, game shows and talk shows, where people are not so much concerned about speaking a pure version of their language, but rather concentrate on communicating in a natural way in their day-to-day interaction with others.

37. If you watch a news bulletin which is presented in one of the Sotho languages, what would you focus on in order to find out which of the three Sotho languages the news reader is using?

Correct option: (2)

A reliable way of identifying the language in which the news is presented, is by looking out for vocabulary items unique to one of the Sotho languages.

- (1) Interviewees can be of any language background and the language they use cannot be an indication of the main language in which the news bulletin is presented.
- (3) Facial expression or the way the news reader is dressed cannot reveal the language which is being used.
- (4) Although some names, particularly surnames, are typical of a certain language, this criterion cannot be used as an indication of the language used by the news reader, since there are many exceptions.

38. The radio can be used very effectively to ...

Correct option: (1)

- (2) The radio is especially suited for visually handicapped people as they do not have to use their sight to follow conversations or listen to music on the radio. Hearing impaired people, however, cannot benefit from the radio as the radio is an auditive medium, making use of sound waves to reach its listeners.

- (3) The radio is a non-visual medium and cannot teach pre-schoolers how to read and write. Face-to-face contact would be needed for this.
- (4) The radio, being a non-visual medium, does not require décor, costumes, make-up or physical surroundings to be effective. It evokes these images and settings by sound and voice.

39. What has been the main reason in recent years for the increase in the production of African language texts on products and matters of public concern, such as health, arts, etc.?

Correct option: (3)

The other options are inappropriate reasons as to why government has been placing emphasis on the production of texts in African languages.

40. Why is it such a daunting task for computer programmers to design software in an African language?

Correct option: (4)

- (1) There is no such thing as the ideal or most user-friendly African language for the internet. If the technology is there, nothing will hinder programmers to design software in any of the African languages.
- (2) In today's time developing special symbols for specialised fields is not a problem for programmers.
- (3) This statement is simply not true. If the technology is there, the software can be developed.

**TOTAL: [40]**

Your AFL1504 lecturers