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WESTERN AUSTRALIA
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Announcing the 2nd Australian Computational and Linguistics Olympiad for Secondary Students

OzCLO is the *Australian Computational and Linguistics Olympiad*, a state and national competition for secondary students. It introduces students to language puzzles from which they can learn about the richness, diversity and systematic nature of language, while exercising natural logic and reasoning skills.

Linguistics is a wide-ranging discipline that explores the nature of human language. It's concerned with what languages have in common and how they are different, how they are structured, how they are learnt, how they are used in different cultures and societies, and how they change over time. The particular focus in OzCLO is on logical thinking as it relates to discovering how languages work. (A sample problem is attached.) No prior knowledge of other languages, linguistics or computer programming is necessary and the competition doesn't require the use of computers.

OzCLO was run for the first time - very successfully - in 2008, attracting teams from schools in Victoria and New South Wales. In 2009, OzCLO is expanding to cover most other states. Linguistics at UWA is organising the WA State Round and is looking forward to our best and brightest secondary students going on to compete in the National Round. There's even the chance that a national team will travel to represent Australia at an international competition later in the year. The other state competitions will be held at the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney, the Australian National University, Griffith University in Queensland, and the University of Adelaide.

Who?

The program is designed for students from Years 9 to 12. Past experience shows that there is appeal across humanities and science interests. Students who like language and languages, maths, computers, or natural sciences are likely to be interested in this competition. In fact, any secondary school student who enjoys the sample problems on the OzCLO website is a potential contestant! Secondary students don't usually know much about linguistics and computational linguistics, so they might not know if they are interested until they try a few sample problems themselves.

In the competition, all teams will complete the same tasks, but teams will be ranked within their age level: Junior (Years 9-10), or Senior (Years 11-12).

Australian Computational and Linguistics Olympiad Sample Problem: Kannada

by Mirjam Fried

Kannada is one of the major languages of India, spoken by more than 25 million people primarily in the South of the country, near Bangalore. It's a very old language and it uses its own writing system. For the purpose of this puzzle, the Kannada letters are transcribed using the Roman alphabet. The letters L, D, T, and N represent a special pronunciation with the tongue curled upward. Note that there is no translation for 'the' in Kannada.

mane 'house'	manege 'to (the) house'
peeTe 'market'	peeTege 'to (the) market'
tande 'dad'	tandege 'to dad'
roTTi 'flat bread'	roTTige 'to (the) flat bread'
chaTNi 'chutney (a relish)'	chaTNige 'to (the) chutney'
hakki 'bird'	hakkige 'to (the) bird'
taayi 'mother'	taayige 'to mother'
jooLa 'corn'	jooLakke 'to (the) corn'
pustaka 'book'	pustakakke 'to (the) book'
simha 'lion'	simhakke 'to (the) lion'
kalkatta 'Calcutta'	kalkattakke 'to Calcutta'
manushya 'man'	manushyanige 'to (the) man'
amma 'mom'	ammanige 'to mom'
huDuga 'boy'	huDuganige 'to (the) boy'
sneehita 'friend'	sneehitanige 'to (the) friend'

(a) Carefully examine the pairs of Kannada words on each line above. Which parts of the words in the righthand column correspond to the English word 'to'?

(b) Now, here are some new words in Kannada:

hamsa 'swan'
akka 'older sister'
tangi 'younger sister'

Study the examples above to work out how would you say:

'to (the) swan'

'to (the) older sister'

'to (the) younger sister'

Hint: In understanding how a language works, we often look at the individual sounds that make up the words and the kinds of meanings that the words have.