

ANNOUNCING A NEW COURSE: LINGUISTICS 199, WINTER 2008

The Genius of the Linguistics Olympiads

Creating Language Tasks for High School Competitions

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Over the past thirty years, research in linguistics has led to a deeper understanding of language and dialect diversity, bilingualism, language learning by children and adults, language disorders, the relation between spoken and written language, and many other topics. Linguists have developed better theoretical tools for describing and understanding the structure of words, phrases, and discourses. An increasing number of linguists are conducting research that applies this new, deeper understanding of language to education. While some of this research has resulted in successful pilot projects in primary and secondary schools or in schools of education, in practice, approaches to language in the schools continue to rely primarily on traditional models of grammar and usage, models which do not reflect the many advances of linguistic science.

Kristin Denham and
Anne Lobeck 2008. *Linguistics
at School*, Cambridge
University Press.

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In this 1-credit course we will explore one way of raising the profile of linguistics among high school students and teachers. Language is a complex and fascinating aspect of human social behavior. It is the key element of culture which makes possible the organization and transmission of all other forms of cultural knowledge. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It is puzzling that high school students and teachers are often uninformed about this amazing field.

We will be looking at strategies for creating and evaluating linguistics problems for use in secondary school competitions known as Linguistics Olympiads. The "Genius" of these competitions is their potential for turning what many think of as an arcane sphere of knowledge into an engaging and challenging educational adventure.

The course will meet once a week for one hour, during which time problems from earlier competitions will be evaluated, and ideas for new problems will be discussed. The only assignment for the course will be to create one or more linguistics problems for possible use in future Linguistics Olympiads. Students will also have an opportunity to participate as staff in the 2008 North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad Open Competition in February. This is a hands-on, practical course that highlights a little-known and delightful face of linguistics.

See the reverse of this flyer for a sample problem.

Dr. Thomas Payne is co-chair of the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad (www.namclo.org). He has been involved with the Linguistics Olympiad movement in Russia, the USA and the International program since 1996.

Quechua

by Pilar Valenzuela. Copyright © 1999-2007, University of Oregon Department of Linguistics.

Quechua was the official language of the Tawantinsuyu or Inca Empire before the Spanish invasion of 1532. For hundreds of years Cuzco, in what is now Peru, was the capital of the Empire. The sentences below represent the variety of Quechua currently spoken by thousands of people in Cuzco and in the area around Lake Titicaca.

The following are some sentences in Quechua, with their translations in random order. Problem 1: Indicate which translation goes with each Quechua sentence by placing the letter of the correct translation in the space provided:

1. Siskuq chakranpiqa rurushansi kiwña. _____
2. Siskuq chakranpiqa wiñashanmi sara. _____
3. Antukaq chakranpiqa t'ikashanchá kiwña. _____
4. Antukaq chakranpiqa t'ikashanmi papa. _____
5. Siskuq chakranpiqa wiñashansi sara. _____
6. Antukaq chakranpiqa wiñashanchá papa. _____

Problem 2: Provide English translations for the following Quechua sentences:

7. Tumasaq chakranpiqa rurushanmi papa.

8. Istuchaq chakranpiqa t'ikashansi sara.

9. Kusiqa chakranpiqa t'ikashanchá papa.

10. Sawinaq chakranpiqa wiñashanchá kiwña.

11. Inashuq chakranpiqa rurushansi kiwña.

Translations in RANDOM order

- A. Potatoes may be growing in Antuka's field.
- B. Barley may be flowering in Antuka's field.
- C. Corn is growing in Sisku's field.
- D. I've heard corn is growing in Sisku's field.
- E. I've heard barley is yielding fruit in Sisku's field.
- F. Potatoes are flowering in Antuka's field.

The first UO student to send me a correct, original solution to this problem will receive a valuable prize, as well as priceless fame and fortune. Send your solutions to Tom Payne (tpayne@uoregon.edu).