



United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad 2026

Round 1 Paper - Advanced Level

Please read the instructions carefully before starting the examination. This examination can only be taken once, and is marked externally by hand.

There are five problems in the Advanced competition:

- Q1: **Seri** – *Claire Yen, illustrated by Max Fisher-Ayres*
- Q2: **Iñupiaq** – *Simi Hellsten*
- Q3: **Lezgian** – *Alison Craig-Greene*
- Q4: **Khana** – *Arvid Rosenberg*
- Q5: **Cantonese Braille** – *Simi Hellsten*

Instructions:

This examination will last **2.5 hours**, and must be done individually.

Please make sure you have the following materials:

- 1x Cover Sheet (this sheet); 1x Examination Paper (Questions 1 – 5);
- 1x Advanced Answer Sheet (3 pages);
- at least 3 blank sheets for rough working.

Once the examination is over, **return all sheets to your teacher**, including the Answer Sheet. You are not permitted to remove any materials from the examination.

Write your answers in **black or blue ink**, as your Answer Sheet will be scanned. If you make a mistake, put a line through your whole answer (e.g. ~~wrong answer~~).

If you need more blank paper for working, it must be provided. If you need to write some of your answers on blank paper instead of the provided Answer Sheet, indicate this **clearly** on the Answer Sheet and on the sheet with your answers on. You **must not** write your answers on the Examination Paper.

Please **write your full name** on the top of every page of the Answer Sheet, and any other sheets which contain your answers.

We hope you enjoy discovering the fascinating world of languages.

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Problem 1. Seri (15 marks)

Seri, or **cmiique iitom**, is a language isolate spoken by around 800 Seri people on the coast of Sonora, Mexico (pictured in red). Like in English, most nouns in Seri are accompanied by an article – a word meaning *the* or *a/an*. But articles in Seri behave quite differently to English, and they also convey information that isn't contained in their English translations.



A student learning Seri found that this extra information was contained in drawings describing the sentences. Below are twelve Seri sentences, with the student's drawings. For some sentences, an English translation is also given. These translations are not necessary for you to solve the problem, but just clarify the drawings.

1. **Cascareera cop haaho com iti mmazjij.**

The ladder cracks on the road.



2. **Cmaam quij hamazaj quij imaai.**

The woman makes the clay pot.



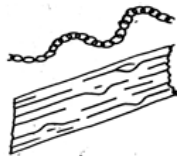
3. **Icamitc quih hast quij iti miih.**

The yarn is on the rock.



4. **Hehe com eenm-hacoaazj quih iicx moom.**

The wooden plank is near the chain.



5. **Ctam com maheemij.**

The man moves slowly.



6. **Comixaz quih intapolquim.**

The vine breaks.



7. **Caamjö quij poosj coi iti maheemij.**



8. **Ctam coi haxz coi imfizo.**



9. **Ctam cop icaaspoj cop imaai.**



10. **Hast coi halit quij innip.**



11. **Cmaam cop hehe cop imfizo.**



12. **Ctam quij hast cop iti miij.**



Q 1.1 Below are four more pictures 13–16 drawn by the student. Replace each gap (i)–(vi) with a single word to complete the Seri sentences. Two sentences are accompanied by an English translation for clarity. *Hint:* two of your answers to (i)–(vi) should be the same word!

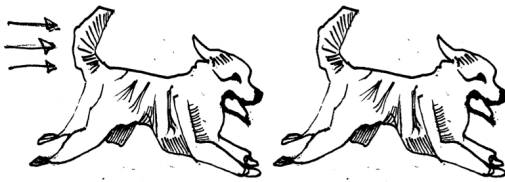
13. **Haxz** __ (i) __ **hast** __ (ii) __ **iti** __ (iii) __.
The dog is on the stone slab.



15. **Haxz** __ (v) __ **matax.**



14. **Haxz** __ (iv) __ **mojoz.**
The dogs flee.



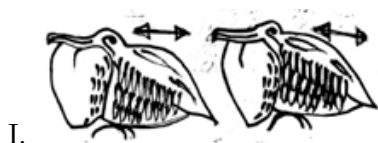
16. **Haxz** __ (vi) __ **mojoz.**



Q 1.2 Below are more Seri sentences 17–22, and some more pictures drawn by the student. Match up the Seri sentences to the pictures describing them. One sentence has two corresponding pictures, whereas the others only have one. Four of the pictures do not correspond to any sentence. You may be interested to know that the bird featured in F, G, and I is a frigatebird.

17. **Cset coi matax.**
 18. **Yahjij quih matax.**
 19. **Ctam cop hast quij innifz.**

20. **Caamjö quij halit quih iti miij.**
 21. **Icamitc quih cascareera com iti miih.**
 22. **Cset quij hehe coi innip.**



Q 1.3 Below are two more pictures 23–24 drawn by the student. The sentences are accompanied by an English translation for clarity. Give the Seri sentences corresponding to the drawings.

23. *The woman is near the pencil.*



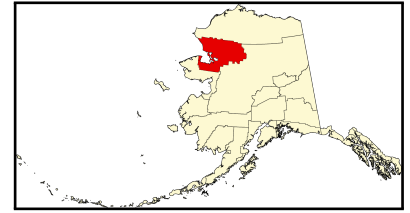
24. *The rope hits the bush.*



[The remainder of this page is intentionally left blank.]

Problem 2. Iñupiaq (20 marks)

The Inuit are a group of Indigenous peoples native to northern Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Their language varies across the continent; this problem is based on the dialect of Northwest Arctic borough, Alaska (pictured in red), where an Inuit might refer to themselves as an **Iñupiaq** (pl. **Iñupiat**).



Most languages, including both English and Iñupiaq, have processes that allow speakers to create new words from old words, with different but related meanings. For example, English *-er* turns a verb into something or someone that does the verb (e.g. *washer*, *drinker*, *helper*), and *-able* makes an adjective meaning *possible* (e.g. *doable*, *drinkable*). This process is regular enough that you know what *helpable* and *doer* mean, even if you have never seen the words before.

On the next page are some sets of Iñupiaq words, each with one or more English translations. The words in these groups are all related to each other by processes similar to the English processes described.

Blanket-tossing is a game involving tossing someone into the air by bouncing them off of a dried animal skin, which can make a loud snapping noise. *Sinew* or *tendon* is the tissue which joins muscle to bone; many pre-industrial societies dried it to use as thread. A *skin boat* is a traditional Iñupiat boat, where the sides are made from seal skin stretched over a wooden frame; a *steamboat* is a boat with an engine powered by burning coal to generate heat. A *shaman* is a person in traditional Iñupiat religion believed to be able to interact with the spirit world. A *reindeer* (also known as *caribou*) is a species of deer common across the north of Eurasia and North America, and the primary species of deer found inside the Arctic circle; they are similar in size and appearance to the red deer found in the UK, though typically with a grey-brown coat.

- Q 2.1** Fill in the gaps (a)–(l).
- Q 2.2** The *white-winged scoter* or **killalik** is a species of sea duck found mostly in Alaska and Canada. What is the literal translation of its Iñupiaq name?
- Q 2.3** Many Iñupiat children play a game that translates as *little devil*. What is the Iñupiaq name of the game?
- Q 2.4** Given that the word **kikmik** can refer to the heel part of the foot, which type of footwear is now known as **kikmikpalik** in Iñupiaq?
- Q 2.5** The Iñupiaq words **uqsrunguaq** and **uqsrupiaq** refer to two kinds of oil commonly used by the Iñupiat. One refers to oil made from pressing the seeds of the castor plant native to tropical regions, and the other refers to oil made from animal fat, often seal. Which is which? Suggest two-word literal translations of each word.

aglakpak	capital, uppercase letter	nunanguaq	map
aglaun	pen, pencil	nunalik	land-owner
aglauraq	__(a)__	nuyanguaq	wig
__(b)__	rubber, eraser	paula	__(i)__
aqu	1) stern, rear of the boat 2) beaver	paulaiyaun	cleaning pipe (for gun, oven)
aquun	rudder	qaḡruq	bullet, ammunition
ikniq	fire	__(j)__	bow and arrow
iknipiaq	campfire	qīlaun	knitting needle
iknilik	steamboat	qīlaktaq	1) garment made of strips of rabbit skin knitted together 2) hand-woven sack of grass
__(c)__	food cooked on a campfire	qipmiq	dog
__(d)__	flint	qipmiuraq	puppy
iñuk	__(e)__	suḡḡuk	dirt or bugs in water
iñulik	inhabited place	suḡḡuiyaun	water filter
__(f)__	mannequin, puppet, doll	tiḡmiaq	goose
ivalu	1) thread 2) dental floss	tiḡmiaqpak	1) bald eagle 2) golden eagle
ivalupiaq	dried sinew, tendon	tuunḡaq	devil, Satan
kigiñaq	face	tuunḡaqtaq	demon, evil spirit
kigiñanguaq	__(g)__	tuunḡaqtalik	shaman supplied with a spirit
killak	hole	tuttupiaq	reindeer
killaiyaun	sewing machine	tuttuqpak	horse
mapkuq	blanket-tossing skin	umiaq	boat (any kind)
mapkuqtaq	crack (sharp, snapping sound)	umiapiaq	skin boat
__(h)__	whip	__(k)__	ship
nakasruk	bladder	__(l)__	1) king, rich person 2) captain of a boat
nakasruḡuaq	bottle, glass jar		

Problem 3. Lezgian (20 marks)

Lezgian is a Nakh-Daghestani language spoken by the Lezgin people in southwestern Russia and northeastern Azerbaijan, with about 630,000 speakers as of 2020.

Below are some Lezgian nouns given in two forms, along with their English translations. The absolutive form is used for the subject of an intransitive verb or object of a transitive verb, and the ergative form is used for the subject of a transitive verb, but this is not relevant to the solution of the problem. Some absolutive forms are not given, but they do exist.



Note that *crimson* is a colour. **ü** is a vowel pronounced like **i** but with rounded lips; **c'**, **č**, **č'**, **ğ**, **k'**, **q'**, **š**, and **ž** are consonants.

absolutive	ergative	meaning	absolutive	ergative	meaning
sew	sewre	<i>bear</i>		güzgüjri	<i>legends</i>
iwi	iwidi	<i>blood</i>	c'ap	c'apadi	<i>manure</i>
jac	jacra	<i>bull</i>	nek	__(l)__	<i>milk</i>
	__(a)__	<i>bulls</i>	ğüč'	ğüč're	<i>moth</i>
dewe	__(b)__	<i>camel</i>	ğüč'er	__(m)__	<i>moths</i>
dewejar	dewejri	<i>camels</i>	q'aludi	__(n)__	<i>muddy thing</i>
gazar	gazardi	<i>carrot</i>		__(o)__	<i>muddy things</i>
žehredi	žehreda	<i>crimson thing</i>	rang	__(p)__	<i>paint</i>
__(c)__	žehreburu	<i>crimson things</i>		lifre	<i>pigeon</i>
__(d)__	__(e)__	<i>donkey</i>	lifer	liferi	<i>pigeons</i>
__(f)__	lamari	<i>donkeys</i>	ğer	ğeredi	<i>saliva</i>
__(g)__	sečkidi	<i>election</i>	__(q)__	üc'üda	<i>salty thing</i>
__(h)__	__(i)__	<i>elections</i>	üc'übur	üc'üburu	<i>salty things</i>
	makandi	<i>home</i>	nük'	__(r)__	<i>small bird</i>
makanar	makanri	<i>homes</i>	gum	gumadi	<i>smoke</i>
balk'an	balk'andi	<i>horse</i>	žiw	__(s)__	<i>snow</i>
__(j)__	__(k)__	<i>horses</i>	buğ	buğadi	<i>steam</i>
güzgü	güzgüdi	<i>legend</i>	šeker	__(t)__	<i>sugar</i>

Q 3.1 Fill in gaps (a) – (t).

Problem 4. Khana (25 marks)

Khana is an Atlantic-Congo language spoken by the Ogoni people of Rivers State, Nigeria (pictured in red). It has around 450,000 native speakers, but it is also considered the prestige variety of the Ogoni languages, so has many second-language speakers.

Below are some sentences in Khana with their English translations. Note that the *kola nut* is the seed of the *cola tree*, traditionally chewed for its stimulating effects. *Yam* is a long edible tuber, similar in appearance to a sweet potato. **gb**, **kp**, **j** and **ʔ** are consonants; **ε** and **ə** are vowels.

The symbol **ɔ̃** over a vowel indicates that it is pronounced with airflow through the nose. Khana also has a tonal system, but for simplicity this has not been marked.



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Pia gbo de na εreta apεε zĩã. | The dogs eat my eight slices of yam. |
| 2. Baε ka wa yaε nia akpo zĩããde. | Two wives buy four yams to eat. |
| 3. Pia dẽẽ wa muε zĩ bee mũũ. | Their eyes see one fist. |
| 4. Wa oʔoo apεε mãã fε zĩ ãkpo mĩã. | Their five splashes of water kill one flame. |
| 5. Ka gbĩ εreba bee būũãyaε. | The mother wants seven kola nuts to buy. |
| 6. Baε bee dẽẽ mε muε aba kẽ. | My two eyes see just the egg. |
| 7. Ye wa εre aba lob akpo kaaniaəb. | His wife has just ten logs to burn. |
| 8. Na ka yib na iniĩĩ ãkpo asã. | My mother steals my six broom handles. |
| 9. Ka oo aba ye zĩ ãpεε zoo. | The mother sells just his one piece of coconut. |
| 10. Tə ye tεre taa apεε mĩĩ. | His leg drops three splashes of blood. |
| 11. Pia yəə muε baε akpo mεεba mε. | The snakes see my two arms. |
| 12. Aninia ka tε de εreta bee asuu. | Nine fathers eat eight seeds. |

Q 4.1 A student learning Khana translated *my heart* as **na jniε**. They were told by their teacher that, although people would understand them if they said this, it was incorrect. Instead, they should have said **jniε mε**. Give a short sentence explaining why.

Q 4.2 Translate into English:

13. Pia wa wa tεre aba pia na būũ.
14. Lob ka tε gbĩ oʔoo akpo kaaniaoo.
15. Pia mεεba ye εre nia apεε mãã.
16. εreba ka ka fε aba na zĩ ka yəə.

Q 4.3 Translate into Khana:

17. Nine sparks [=splashes of fire] burn my two legs.
18. Their fists have six pieces of kola nut to steal.
19. His three dogs want my eight coconuts to eat.
20. His eyes see just one egg.

Problem 5. Cantonese Braille (25 marks)

Cantonese is the prestige variety of Yue Chinese, spoken in Hong Kong, Macau, and parts of southern China. It is a tonal language – the Hong Kong and Macau dialects distinguish 6 tones. It is usually written using Chinese characters, but other writing systems exist, including many romanisations (systems using the Latin alphabet).

A Braille system for Cantonese is also used in Hong Kong. Braille is a tactile writing system for the visually impaired. Each Braille character consists of up to six raised dots arranged in a 3×2 grid. In this problem, raised dots are marked with larger dots, and positions where there are no raised dots are marked by smaller points.

Hong Kong has 18 administrative districts, given in English and Cantonese using a romanisation as 1–18 below. The phrases a–o below are the Cantonese names of 15 districts written using Braille.



- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Central & Western, jūng sāi | a. |
| 2. Eastern, dūng | b. |
| 3. Islands, lèih dóu | c. |
| 4. Kowloon City, gáu lùhng sìhng | d. |
| 5. Kwai Tsing, kwàih chīng | e. |
| 6. Kwun Tong, gūn tòhng | f. |
| 7. North, bāk | g. |
| 8. Sai Kung, sāi gung | h. |
| 9. Sha Tin, sā tīhn | i. |
| 10. Sham Shui Po, sām séui bōu | j. |
| 11. Southern, nàahm | k. |
| 12. Tai Po, daaih bou | l. |
| 13. Tsuen Wan, chyùhn wāan | m. |
| 14. Tuen Mun, tyùhn mùhn | n. |
| 15. Wan Chai, wāan jái | o. |
| 16. Wong Tai Sin, wòhng daaih sīn | |
| 17. Yau Tsim Mong, yàuh jīm wohng | |
| 18. Yuen Long, yùhn lóhng | |

Q 5.1 Match the romanised versions of the district names 1–18 to the corresponding Braille versions a–o. If the Braille version of the name is not given, draw a cross in the corresponding box.

Q 5.2 Using Cantonese Braille, write the Cantonese names of the three districts not in list a–o. Draw one Braille character in each box provided – there may be more boxes than you need. Only draw the raised (larger) dots (e.g. a cell with no raised dots should be left blank).

Q 5.3 The Cantonese name for Macau is written in Braille as