



United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad 2026

Round 1 Paper - Breakthrough Level

Welcome to UKLO, the examination of wondrous languages. Every year we give out a new challenge to students to test their language and problem-solving skills. Can you figure out how these languages work?

There are three languages to analyse for the Breakthrough competition:

- Q1: **Lithuanian** – *Michael Salter*
- Q2: **Naijá** – *Simi Hellsten*
- Q3: **Hangul** – *Daniel Titmas*

Instructions:

Please make sure you have the following materials:

- 1x Cover Sheet (this sheet); 1x Examination Paper (Questions 1 – 3);
- 1x Answer Sheet (2 pages);
- 2-3 blank sheets for rough working.

Once the examination is over, **return all sheets to your teacher**, including any sheets with your answers on. You are not permitted to remove any materials from your classroom.

Please **write your full name** on the top of every page of the Answer Sheet. 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.

We hope you enjoy exploring the fascinating world of language. Remember that if you don't immediately see a way into a problem, it's because you're looking in the wrong place. Keep looking at it from different angles, and you'll get there.

Problem 1. Lithuanian (5 marks)

Lithuanian is the official language of Lithuania, where it has around 2.5 million native speakers, though it is also has around 1.5 million native speakers elsewhere. It is an Indo-European language, meaning that it is distantly related to languages like English and Hindi.

Lithuanian uses *noun cases*, meaning that nouns have different endings depending on the role they play in a sentence. Many languages uses cases to different extents: some languages like Hungarian or Turkish use a lot of cases; English only uses cases in pronouns, to distinguish *I* vs *me* vs *my*.

A teacher decided to introduce her English students to the Lithuanian case system by constructing a series of English stories which displayed the different cases of various Lithuanian nouns. The stories below feature the Lithuanian nouns **vaikas** (child), **brolis** (brother), and **arklys** (horse) respectively.

Below are the three stories, with only the nouns above given in their Lithuanian forms:

1. Into the room walked a **vaikas**. There were two other **vaikai** on the other side of the room. The new **vaiko** face looked worried, while the other two **vaiku** faces looked confused. "What are you doing here?" they called to the new **vaikui**. The **vaikas** responded to the __ (a)__: "Your father sent me." "Why has father sent us a new **vaiką**? What are we supposed to do with a new **vaiku**?" "I feel the same," replied the new __ (b)__. "What am I supposed to do with two **vaikais** that I don't know?"
2. There are four **broliai** in my family, including myself. I never play with my eldest __ (c)__, but I play with the other two __ (d)__ quite a lot. I chase those two **brolius** around the house, and they chase me. My eldest **brolis** plays games on his computer all the time; that's my eldest __ (e)__ only pastime! I rarely even talk to my eldest __ (f)__. My other two **brolių** days are filled will all sorts of games, and my eldest **brolis** always complains to his other **broliams** that he can't concentrate with all the noise we make! I don't like my eldest **brolių**.
3. A: "What's your favourite animal?"
B: "Well, I like **arklius**. See that __ (g)__ over there?"
A: "That one? Normally __ (h)__ like humans, but that one **arklys** doesn't like people at all."
B: "But I used to have two __ (i)__ back home that looked like that one and they were both very nice."
A: "This __ (j)__ doesn't like people. With that __ (k)__ you won't even get over that ridge, let alone the next town."
B: "Really? That **arklio** body looks like it was made for people to ride."
A: "Pretty much all __ (l)__ bodies are made for that. But you have to treat them right."
B: "I used to give carrots to my two __ (m)__ back home. My guess is that this **arklys** likes them. Here, let's try giving this __ (n)__ a carrot or two."

Q 1.1 Fill in the gaps (a)–(n) on your answer sheet, using the words from the box below.

Warning: there are more words in the box than are needed!

arklys	arkliams	vaikams	vaiko	brolio
arklius	vaikui	arklį	broliams	broliu
arkliai	brolis	arklių	vaikas	vaikų
arkliui	arkle	broliais	broliui	arkliu



Problem 2. Naijá (5 marks)

Naijá, also called Nigerian pidgin, is a creole language spoken predominantly in Nigeria. It is the native language of around 5 million people, but has well over 100 million speakers in total. Despite most of its words coming from English, it is a language in its own right with its own (often very different!) grammatical rules.

Words in Naijá also uses different sounds and letters to English. The letters **ɛ** and **ɔ** represents vowels similar to **e** and **o** respectively; **ʃ** = *sh* in *shop*. The symbol **:** after a vowel indicates that it is a long vowel. The symbol **~** above a vowel marks that it is a nasal vowel, like French ‘*an*’, ‘*en*’, ‘*un*’. Naijá is also a tonal language, like Mandarin: the symbols **´**, **`**, and **^** above a vowel mark high, low, and falling tone respectively.

The table below contains some pairs of words in the Wafi variety of Naijá, with a possible English translation, to demonstrate one of these differences.



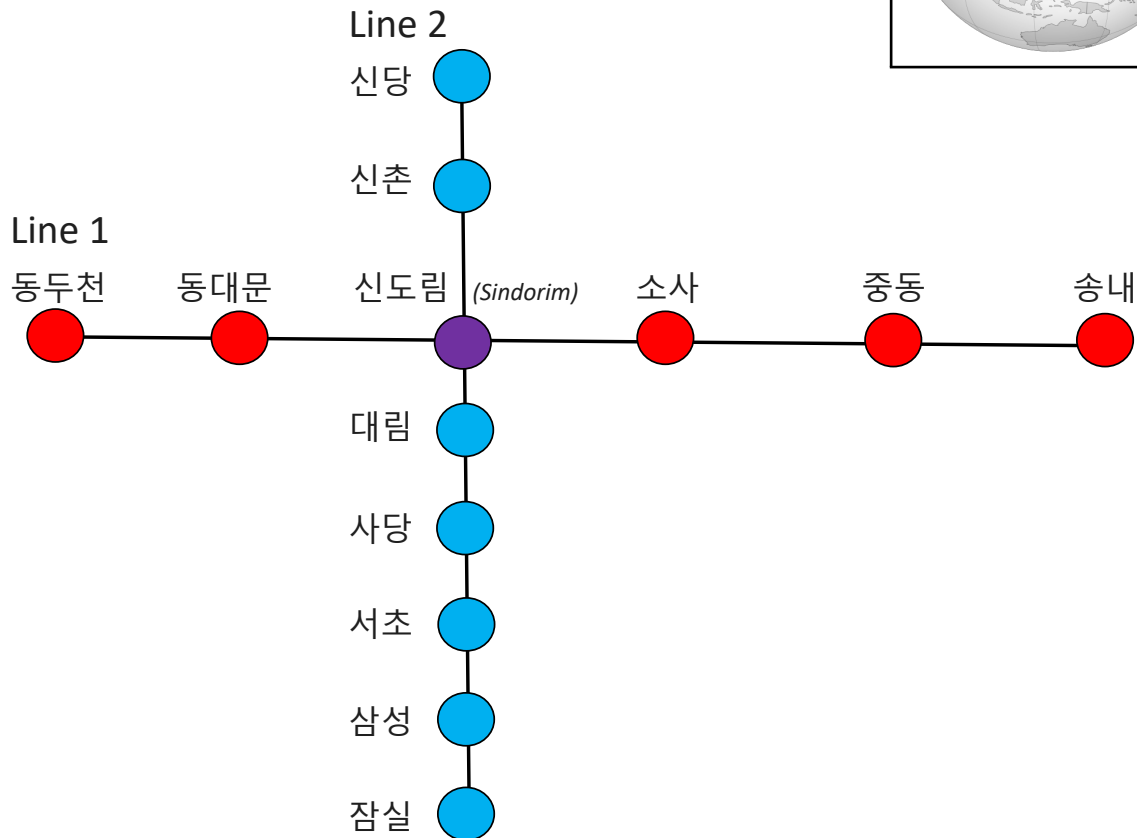
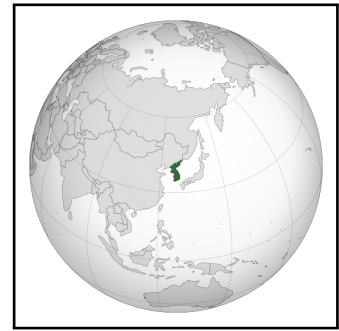
blê:d	<i>blade</i>	lê:d	<i>dull blade</i>
bódi	<i>body</i>	___(a)___	<i>attractive body</i>
brê:d	<i>bread</i>	rê:d	<i>stale bread</i>
kávàs	<i>canvas</i>	váskà	<i>cheap canvas</i>
mótò	<i>car</i>	mòtó	<i>luxurious car</i>
kàfú	<i>cashew</i>	ʃuká	<i>small cashew</i>
kòló	<i>craze</i>	lòkó	<i>inferior craze</i>
fádà	<i>father</i>	fádá	<i>reverend father, priest</i>
pàpá	<i>father</i>	___(b)___	<i>trendy older man</i>
fû:d	<i>food</i>	___(c)___	<i>bland food</i>
___(d)___	<i>gateman</i>	mǎgét	<i>bad gateman</i>
glô:v	<i>glove</i>	___(e)___	<i>ugly glove</i>
bàbádáfmî	<i>hand-me-down</i>	dǎfmîbábâ	<i>ugly hand-me-down</i>
bàbàlávò	<i>healer</i>	___(f)___	<i>ineffective healer</i>
kétò	<i>kettle</i>	tókè	<i>cheap kettle</i>
láp̣tô:p	<i>laptop</i>	tóplâ:p	<i>fake laptop</i>
mǎʃî	<i>machine</i>	ʃîmâ	<i>worse machine</i>
bòbó	<i>man</i>	bóbò	<i>trendy young man</i>
mǎmá	<i>mother</i>	mámà	<i>powerful woman</i>
pástò	<i>pastor</i>	tópàs	<i>bad pastor</i>
káʃǎkàrì	<i>pay-as-you-go</i>	kárikǎʃǎ	<i>useless pay-as-you-go</i>
___(g)___	<i>person</i>	pèsí	<i>extraordinary person</i>
strî:t	<i>street</i>	trî:t	<i>unremarkable street</i>
tô:	<i>toe</i>	ô:	___(h)___
tívî:	<i>TV</i>	___(i)___	<i>fake TV</i>
lédì	___(j)___	lèdí	<i>educated</i> ___(j)___
___(k)___	___(l)___	záfri	<i>broken</i> ___(l)___
bâ:k	___(m)___	â:k	<i>fake</i> ___(m)___

Q 2.1 Fill in the gaps (a)–(m) in the table. Your answer to (h) should consist of two words; all other answers should be a single word. When two gaps are labelled with the same letter (as with (j), (l), or (m)), the same word can fill both gaps.

Problem 3. Hangul (10 marks)

Korean is usually written in the Hangul alphabet, which was created in the 15th century. One important feature of Hangul is that it arranges letters into blocks, where each block represents one syllable.

Here is a map of part of the subway system of Seoul, the capital of South Korea, showing lines 1 and 2. They intersect at **Sindorim** (신도림), the station in purple.



Here are five peoples' journeys on the subway:

- Seojun went from Sosa to Daerim, which was two stops, including a transfer;
- Minji went from Sadang to Sinchon, which was three stops;
- Haerin went from Sindang to Samseong, which was six stops;
- Mingyu went from Sadang to Dongducheon, which was four stops, including a transfer;
- Nayeon went from Jamsil to Jungdong, which was seven stops, including a transfer.

Q 3.1 Using the station map, write the names of the following stations in the Latin alphabet:

1. 대림
2. 잠실
3. 송내
4. 동대문
5. 사당

Q 3.2 Two of the following stations are featured on the map. Which two?

6. Seongsu
7. Misa
8. Secho
9. Songnae
10. Dobong

Q 3.3 Write the following names in Hangul:

11. Namu
12. Minji
13. Seojun
14. Cheolsu