



United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad 2026

Round 1 Paper - Foundation 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 four languages to analyse for the Foundation competition:

- Q2: **Naijá** – *Simi Hellsten*
- Q3: **Hangul** – *Daniel Titmas*
- Q4: **Finnish** – *Masha Konoshenko*
- Q5: **Romanian** – *Vlad A. Neacșu*

Instructions:

Please make sure you have the following materials:

- 1x Cover Sheet (this sheet); 1x Examination Paper (Questions 2 – 5);
- 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.

Test Development Committee for R1 Advanced 2026: Julia Barron, Brendan Bethlehem, Max Fisher-Ayres, David Hellsten, Simi Hellsten (Chair), Rudolf Loewenstein, Eimear McKnight, Vlad A. Neacșu (Technical Editor), Daniel Titmas, Daniel Turaev, Babette Verhoeven, Claire Yen,

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.



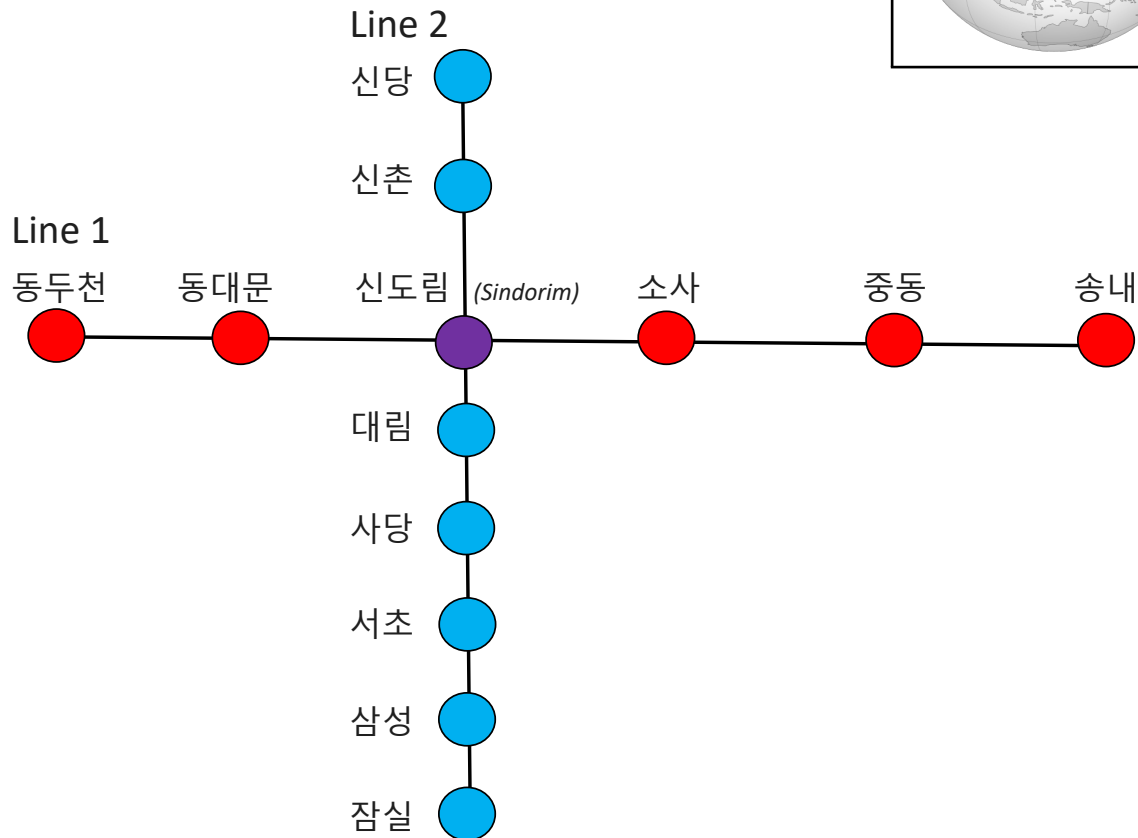
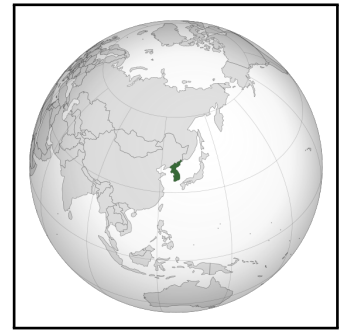
blê:d	<i>blade</i>	lê:d	<i>dull blade</i>
bódi	<i>body</i>	___(a)___	<i>attractive body</i>
brê:d	<i>bread</i>	rê:d	<i>stale bread</i>
kávàs	<i>canvas</i>	váskà	<i>cheap canvas</i>
mótò	<i>car</i>	mòtó	<i>luxurious car</i>
kàfú	<i>cashew</i>	ʃuká	<i>small cashew</i>
kòló	<i>craze</i>	lòkó	<i>inferior 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>
bàbádáfmí	<i>hand-me-down</i>	dǎfmíbábâ	<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>
mǎʃí	<i>machine</i>	ʃímâ	<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>
káʃkàrí	<i>pay-as-you-go</i>	kárikáʃà	<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. Seocho
9. Songnae
10. Dobong

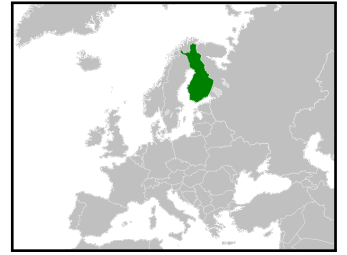
Q 3.3 Write the following names in Hangul:

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

Problem 4. Finnish (10 marks)

Finnish is the majority language of Finland, and the native language of around 5 million people around the world. It is a Uralic language, meaning that it is related to languages like Hungarian and Estonian, but not to English or most other European languages.

Here are some sentences in spoken Finnish and their English translations:



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Sä otit kupin. | <i>You took the cup.</i> |
| 2. Mä söin salaatin. | <i>I ate the salad.</i> |
| 3. Me ostettiin viulu. | <i>We bought the violin.</i> |
| 4. Sä joit kahvin. | <i>You drank the coffee.</i> |
| 5. Me myytiin lamppu. | <i>We sold the lamp.</i> |
| 6. Mä ostin sellon. | <i>I bought the cello.</i> |
| 7. Sä söit tomaatin. | <i>You ate the tomato.</i> |
| 8. Mä maksoin pianon. | <i>I paid for the piano.</i> |
| 9. Mä toin huilun. | <i>I brought the flute.</i> |
| 10. Me syötiin salaatti. | <i>We ate the salad.</i> |
| 11. Sä myit talon. | <i>You sold the house.</i> |
| 12. Me saatiin kuppi. | <i>We got the cup.</i> |
| 13. Sä otit kuitin. | <i>You took the receipt.</i> |
| 14. Me paistettiin liha. | <i>We fried the meat.</i> |
| 15. Sä maksoit kakun. | <i>You paid for the cake.</i> |
| 16. Mä paistoin kalan ja kanan. | <i>I fried the fish and the chicken.</i> |

Q 4.1 Translate into English:

17. **Me otettiin kakku.**
18. **Sä sait viulun.**
19. **Mä myin pianon.**
20. **Me tuotiin kala ja kuitti.**

Q 4.2 Translate into Finnish:

21. *You brought the lamp.*
22. *We drank the coffee.*
23. *I took the meat.*
24. *We paid for the cake and the tomato.*

Problem 5. Romanian (15 marks)

Romanian is the official and main language of Romania and Moldova. Romanian is part of the Eastern Romance sub-branch of Romance languages. It is also spoken as a minority language by stable communities in the countries surrounding Romania (Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, and Ukraine), and by the large Romanian diaspora. In total, it is spoken by 25 million people as a first language.

Here are some phrases in Romanian and their English translations. **ă** = *ea* in *pearl*, **â** ≈ *u* in *but*, **ș** = *sh* in *shop*, **ț** = *ts* in *cats*. The letter **i** in the end of words is not a full vowel, but it marks the palatalisation of the previous sound.



albină	<i>bee</i>
un an	<i>1 year</i>
o pâine	<i>1 loaf of bread</i>
un actor	<i>1 actor</i>
o capră	<i>1 goat</i>
două nopți	<i>2 nights</i>
zece ani	<i>10 years</i>
o mie patruzeci de lupi	<i>1040 wolves</i>
o mie două sute nouăsprezece gândaci	<i>1219 cockroaches</i>
două sute una plăceri	<i>201 pleasures</i>
două mii optzeci și una de case	<i>2081 houses</i>
douăzeci și trei de pâini	<i>23 loaves of bread</i>
două mii patru sute șase ore	<i>2406 hours</i>
treizeci și unu de ani	<i>31 years</i>
trei sute optzeci și doi de lupi	<i>382 wolves</i>
patru mii trei case	<i>4003 houses</i>
patru sute cincizeci și una de capre	<i>451 goats</i>
patru mii șapte sute nouăzeci și unu de englezi	<i>4791 Englishmen</i>
cinci sute doisprezece actori	<i>512 actors</i>
cinci sute douăzeci de capre	<i>520 goats</i>
șase mii cincizeci și cinci de salate	<i>6055 salads</i>
șase sute cincizeci și patru de minuni	<i>654 wonders</i>
șaptezeci și două de pâini	<i>72 loaves of bread</i>
opt mii trei sute cincisprezece albine	<i>8315 bees</i>
nouăzeci și doi de gândaci	<i>92 cockroaches</i>
nouă mii șase sute treizeci și două de albine	<i>9632 bees</i>
nouă sute șaptezeci de actori	<i>970 actors</i>

[This problem continues on the next page.]

Q 5.1 Translate into English:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. șase capre | 3. șapte sute de actori |
| 2. treizeci și opt de salate | 4. șase mii una minuni |

Q 5.2 Translate into Romanian:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 5. <i>1 house</i> | 8. <i>218 hours</i> |
| 6. <i>17 years</i> | 9. <i>3601 bees</i> |
| 7. <i>152 Englishmen</i> | 10. <i>5127 salads</i> |

Q 5.3 Here are two more plural nouns in Romanian. For each of them, write the singular form. If you think multiple options are possible, provide them all.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 11. pilote (<i>duvets</i>) | 12. pitici (<i>dwarfs</i>) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Q 5.4 The Romanian title of the famous *One Thousand and One Nights* is **O mie și una de nopți**. However, this title is not grammatically correct. What would the correct form be?