

Regulations of the International Olympiad in Linguistics

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Whereas the faculty of using language is one of the most prominent defining characteristics of the human species, and curiosity towards language is natural and universal,

and whereas linguistic research is one of the foremost ways of learning about mankind and the language technologies are among the leading industries in a world intent to maintain its diversity in this age of global communication,

and whereas the popularisation of linguistics increases prestige of everyone's mother tongue and linguistic pluralism in general,

and whereas the sciences of language are but scantily represented in the curricula of secondary schools, yet the genre of the self-sufficient linguistic problem has shown a great capacity to attract the interest of secondary school students and recruit able young minds for careers in theoretical, mathematical and computational linguistics,

and whereas the art of running contests in solving such problems has, after decades of experience, reached a mature stage in several countries, and the potential for international co-operation in this field has been demonstrated by several visits of contestants, organisers and experts from Bulgaria to linguistic olympiads in Russia and *vice versa*,

and whereas international science olympiads are now organised in many fields and universally recognised as an outstanding method for discovering, encouraging and challenging talented young people,

the International Olympiad in Linguistics was devised and instituted on the twenty-second day of the month of December in the year two thousand and two.

1 Introduction

This document contains the regulations of the International Olympiad in Linguistics (IOL).

1.1 What Is the IOL?

The IOL is an annual international competition for students of schools for secondary education in solving, individually and in teams, self-sufficient linguistic problems. The competition requires no special knowledge, only familiarity with such fundamental concepts from linguistics and mathematics as are typically present in school curricula, as well as general culture and logical thought.

1.2 Aims of the IOL

The IOL pursues the following aims:

- To promote awareness of language, of the world's linguistic diversity, and of the essence of linguistics among secondary school students and the general public.
- To foster adolescents' skills in logical thinking and the creative application of general knowledge in problem solving.
- To acquaint students with the nature of the professions in the sciences and technologies of language and advertise these professions as a career choice.
- To encourage friendly relations, international understanding and a spirit of sportsmanlike competitiveness between young people interested in linguistics from all countries.
- To enhance the co-operation between teachers and experts involved in school linguistics and to motivate the launching of new linguistic contests worldwide.
- To stimulate the development and growth of the genre of the self-sufficient linguistic problem.

2 Organisation of the IOL

2.1 Time and Schedule

The IOL is held in the summer; the traditional time is between late July and mid-August. A typical schedule is as follows:

- Day 1: arrival, opening, briefing;
- Day 2: individual contest;
- Day 3: cultural programme;
- Day 4: team contest;
- Day 5: discussion of the problems, awards ceremony, closing;
- Day 6: departure

2.2 Delegations

Teams are invited for participation consisting of no more than four contestants and a team leader. The contestants must be students of a school for secondary education or have graduated from one in the year of the IOL. Ideally they should be chosen on the basis of participation in nation-wide (con)tests in linguistics or related fields, but *ad hoc* teams may participate as well.

Each participating country is entitled to send one team whose accommodation and full board for the duration of the IOL, as well as participation in the social and cultural programme, is covered by the host. A second team may participate at their own expense. Additional contestants or leaders, coaches, observers and accompanying persons may be received, if the local arrangements allow it, at the discretion of the Local Organising Committee.

All participants are responsible for the cost of their travel to the venue of the IOL, visa fees (where applicable), medical insurance and sundry expenses, as well as accommodation and board for any extra days spent in the host country.

2.3 Contests

The IOL includes an individual and a team contest, held on different days.

At the individual contest a set of five problems is assigned; the duration is six hours (the former may be altered by the Problem Committee, and the latter by the Jury, under compelling circumstances). There is no pause, although it is customary for refreshments to be served halfway through the period. Participants are asked to vote for their favourite problems, and the author of the winning problem receives a Solvers' Choice Award at the end of the IOL.

At the team contest the members of each team work jointly on a single problem set, sharing the work as they choose, and hand in a single script. The time allowed for this is three or four hours, at the discretion of the Problem Committee.

The problems are handed out to the contestants on paper and remain their property after the contest. Writing paper is provided by the Local Organising Committee. The use of any other paper is discouraged. Contestants are urged to bring their own pens or pencils, although the invigilators should have a supply to help out those whose pens run out of ink in mid-contest. Artificial aids such as pocket calculators and calendars should not be used. Any equipment that is essential for solving the problems should be made available to all by the Local Organising Committee.

The contests are not anonymous.

The Jury may ask contestants to fill out a brief questionnaire during the individual contest. The information from this questionnaire shall assist the Jury in the marking or be used for statistical purposes.

2.4 Languages

Contestants receive the statements of the problems and write the solutions in a language of their choice. It is assumed that all contestants will use the same working language at the individual contest that their teams have chosen for the team contest, but a contestant may opt for a language requested by another team.

All business of the IOL is conducted in such languages as are best understood, English being the default choice when a multinational audience is addressed. All diplomas and certificates must be written in English.

2.5 Awards

At each of the two contests the numbers of gold, silver and bronze medals awarded shall be approximately in the ratio 1:2:3, and the total number of medals shall be between one quarter and one third of the number of contestants (or teams). Since the actual number of medals awarded shall depend on the allocation of gaps in the sorted list of scores, the Local Organising Committee must be prepared for adjustments in this scheme.

It is also customary to award a prize for the best solution of each problem of the individual contest. In this, too, adjustments may be made.

Honourable mentions as well as other symbolic or substantial prizes may be prepared and awarded at the discretion of the Local Organising Committee.

All contestants who are not awarded a medal or an honourable mention shall receive a certificate of participation.

3 Bodies of the IOL

3.1 International Organising Committee

The International Organising Committee consists of the team leaders and members of the International Jury. At a convenient time during the IOL they hold a meeting to discuss and choose the venue of the next IOL, so that it can be announced officially at the closing. This meeting is led by the Chair of the Local Organising Committee.

3.2 Local Organising Committee

The Local Organising Committee is composed of representatives of the host country. It elects a Chair who must be experienced in the organisation of contests for secondary school students on a national or higher level.

It is the duty of the Local Organising Committee to:

- advertise the IOL well in advance and publish calls for applications;
- design (or commission the design of) a logo for the IOL;
- create and maintain a Web site with information on the IOL;
- answer expressions of interest from prospective team leaders and, if two or more are received independently from the same country, put the inquirers in touch with one another and encourage them to negotiate the size and composition of the delegation among themselves;
- receive registrations from team leaders and obtain accurate information on their itineraries;
- assist team leaders in the organisation of their journey by sending official invitations and providing information on the venue and the schedule upon request;
- advise the Problem Committee of the list of teams and working languages requested by them as soon as it is finalised, which must happen no later than ten weeks before the IOL.

The Local Organising Committee is also responsible for the local organisation of the IOL, which includes:

- choosing an appropriate venue for the IOL in the host country, whereby care shall be taken that equal living conditions are ensured for all contestants;
- planning and arranging the social and cultural programme;
- raising funds for covering the cost of
 - accommodation and full board for four contestants and a team leader from each participating country, as well as the Jury, for the duration of the IOL,
 - the participation of the abovementioned people in the social and cultural programme,

- honoraria for the authors of problems, the Jury and the invigilators,
- other technical expenses;
- raising funds for covering the cost of, and arranging or providing as the case may be,
 - halls for the opening, briefing, contests, discussion, awards ceremony and closing,
 - writing paper for the contestants, extra pens, as well as any special equipment required for the two contests,
 - refreshments during the individual contest,
 - medals, prizes and certificates;
- recruiting invigilators for the contests.

3.3 Problem Committee

The Problem Committee of the IOL has the mission of putting together the problem sets for the two contests. It is composed of specialists who have had the experience of doing the same for national competitions.

The Problem Committee is responsible for:

- authoring and soliciting high-quality linguistic problems for the two contests and having them evaluated by experts in strict confidentiality;
- composing a problem set for each contest, ensuring a level of difficulty that is appropriate for the IOL and independent of the language in which the problems are solved, and keeping them secret until the contests;
- editing a handout containing the statements of the problems for each contest, and another with the solutions, in each working language, ensuring the equivalence of all versions;
- advising the Local Organising Committee as early as possible of any special equipment that might be needed for the two contests.

The work of the Problem Committee for each instalment of the IOL is led by a Chair elected at the start of the season, preferably a representative of the host country.

3.4 International Jury

The International Jury are recruited among the most active members of the Problem Committee and affiliated experts who have the experience of working in juries of national linguistic contests or earlier instalments of the IOL. Members of the Jury who have not served on the Problem Committee should familiarise themselves with the problems as soon as possible, and likewise keep them secret.

It is the duty of the Jury to:

- explain the rules of the contests to the students and their leaders during the briefing;
- answer any questions that contestants may have on the statements of the problems during the contest;
- mark the scripts after each contest and
 - produce a sorted list of scores, on the basis of which medals are awarded,

- nominate recipients of prizes for best solutions of individual problems and other special awards;
- compose an unofficial ranking of teams by the average score in the individual contest;
- arrange a discussion of the problems and their solutions after the contests.

The work of the Jury is directed by a Chair elected prior to the beginning of their work, preferably a representative of the host country. Usually the same person chairs both the Problem Committee and the Jury.

4 Other People

4.1 Team Leaders

The duties of team leaders include:

- communicating to the Local Organising Committee their intent to bring a team (or two) to the IOL at the earliest possible date and no later than the announced deadline;
- confirming this intent by the deadline and informing the Local Organising Committee of the language(s) their students wish to work in;
- helping the invigilators, if deemed desirable, during the seating of the contestants before each contest;
- assisting the Jury, if need arises, in reading illegible handwriting or, in the most extreme of cases, translating some passages from the scripts;
- functioning as invigilators during the team contest, if necessary;
- taking care of their students' well-be(hav)ing throughout their entire journey and acting as mediators between them and the organisers during the IOL.

Team leaders must not have taken part in the work of the Problem Committee for this instalment of the IOL as members or experts, nor may they be in the Jury. They must have a working knowledge of English. Expertise in linguistics is desirable but not required.

4.2 Invigilators

Invigilators are appointed for the duration of the individual contest, during which time they are responsible for:

- taking care that the contestants can work through the allotted time in peace, without anyone distracting their attention (except the Jury, if absolutely necessary, and then for the shortest time possible), and that they are provided with writing paper and pens;
- preventing and suppressing any attempts at
 - communication between a contestant and anyone other than the Jury (in accordance with the established procedure) and the invigilators themselves,
 - use of unauthorised tools and sources of information;
- contacting the Jury, should a contestant so require or any unforeseen situation arise;
- assisting the Jury in collecting the scripts and ensuring that all paperwork is in order.

5 History of the IOL

The first linguistic olympiad for secondary school students was organised in 1965 in Moscow on the initiative of Alfred Zhurinsky (1938–1991), eventually a prominent philologist but then only a fifth-year student of linguistics, and under the guidance of the mathematician Vladimir Uspensky. The Olympiad, farsightedly called Traditional since its very beginning, was regularly held at the Moscow State University from 1965 until 1982. In 1988 the Olympiad was resumed at the Moscow State Institute for History and Archives (now the Russian State University for the Humanities), and since 1989 it has been organised jointly by the two institutions. Since 1996 a mirror of Moscow's Traditional Olympiad in Linguistics has been held in Russia's northern capital by St Petersburg State University.

Linguistic contests have also been held regularly in Bulgaria since 1982, being organised by the Union of Bulgarian Mathematicians and the Ministry of Education. In more recent years analogous events were launched in Oregon (US) and the Netherlands. At the same time teams of award-holders of the Moscow Olympiad in Linguistics competed successfully in Bulgaria and *vice versa*, which demonstrated the potential for international co-operation in this field. Thus was born the idea of the IOL.

The following table presents a summary of the participation in the first seven instalments of the IOL (2003–2009):

Number	Year	Venue	Country	Countries	Teams	Participants
1	2003	Borovetz	BULGARIA	6	8	33
2	2004	Moscow	RUSSIA	7	11	46
3	2005	Leiden	NETHERLANDS	9	13	50
4	2006	Tartu	ESTONIA	9	13	52
5	2007	St Petersburg	RUSSIA	9	15	61
6	2008	Sunny Beach	BULGARIA	11	16	67
7	2009	Wroclaw	POLAND	17	23	86

Teams from these 21 countries have participated in at least one of the first seven IOLs: Australia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, India, Ireland, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Roumania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the US.

6 Other Documents

These Regulations are supplemented by:

1. Regulations of the Problem Committee of the IOL;
2. Regulations of the International Jury of the IOL;
3. Instruction for Invigilators at the Individual Contest of the IOL.