

International Linguistics Challenge

Information Flyer

Edition of 2026

1 What is ILC?

1.1 Vision, Mission, and Values

Language shapes how we think, communicate, and connect with others. Linguistics studies the patterns and structures that govern human communication: from syntax and phonetics to semantics and pragmatics. Understanding language scientifically opens doors to fields like language technology, cognitive science, cultural preservation, and education.

The International Linguistics Challenge gives students the opportunity to develop analytical reasoning, explore linguistic phenomena, and study language scientifically beyond the classroom. By combining education with challenge, we aim to spark genuine interest in linguistics and guide students toward careers in research or applied linguistics.

ILC welcomes students from every country and background, regardless of their school or prior linguistic training.

1.2 What makes ILC unique?

While ILC includes competitive elements, our primary goal is to engage students with linguistics and encourage deeper investigation into language. ILC offers varied problem types that build understanding through analytical application. Key features of ILC include:

- **Global Reach**: ILC is an international competition from the start. Participants worldwide work on the same linguistic challenges, ensuring fair evaluation and building connections across borders.
- **Digital Accessibility**: Using online platforms, we enable participation from students in all regions, regardless of geography or school affiliation. While educator support helps, self-motivated learners can participate independently.
- **Comprehensive Linguistic Coverage**: ILC covers the breadth of linguistic study, not just one subfield. The competition addresses areas including syntax, semantics, phonetics, morphology, pragmatics, discourse analysis, language acquisition, and language typology. Problems include both theoretical analysis and data-driven puzzles requiring systematic reasoning.
- **Connection to Current Research**: Advanced ILC problems draw on concepts from recent scholarly publications, giving participants exposure to

authentic linguistic research. This connects classroom knowledge with ongoing work in the field.

- **Various Challenge Levels**: Problems are designed for both linguistics students and newcomers. Difficulty ranges from accessible exercises that reinforce core principles to advanced challenges that introduce unfamiliar problem types and require nuanced analysis. This provides an appropriate challenge for participants at all levels.
- **Regional Networks & Ambassadors**: ILC supports the development of local student communities interested in linguistics. The Ambassador Program enables students to motivate classmates, coordinate regional activities, and build groups focused on linguistics.

2 Who can participate?

Current high school and university students from all grades and countries are invited to participate. We have three age categories:

Junior: 10th Grade and below (and < 16 years of age)

Youth: 11th to 13th Grade (and < 19 years of age)

Senior: 1st Year College/University and higher (or ≥ 19 years of age)

Students from all age categories will receive the same problems in all rounds. However, the number of problems required to advance differ based on your age group. As some problems involve data analysis in English, fluency in English is helpful. A reliable internet connection and access to a computer are necessary for participation and submission.

My age or grade changes after the submission deadline. Which group do I belong to?

Your grade/age on the day of the Qualification Round submission deadline determines your age group for the entire competition duration.

Do I have to be a student to participate?

Yes, participation is open to students currently enrolled in high school, college, or university. If you are in a transitional period (e.g., gap year between high school and university) and intend to begin university studies soon, you are also welcome to participate.

3 Why participate?

The International Linguistics Challenge is primarily an educational program that helps students strengthen and demonstrate their analytical abilities through linguistic challenges. To encourage participation, we offer certificates, awards, monetary prizes, and international recognition. The prizes are worth 1,500 USD in total: 700 USD in cash prizes (listed below), plus partner program scholarships, awards, and certificates.

3.1 Prizes and Awards

Every participant receives a certificate acknowledging their effort. In the Final Round, exceptional performance is recognized with Bronze, Silver, or Gold Honours. The top students in each age category receive 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Prizes, while National Awards are presented to the highest-scoring participants from each country.

Senior:

1st Prize:	125 USD	Cash Prize, Special 1st Prize Certificate
2nd Prize:	75 USD	Cash Prize, Special 2nd Prize Certificate
3rd Prize:	50 USD	Cash Prize, Special 3rd Prize Certificate

Youth:

1st Prize:	110 USD	Cash Prize, Special 1st Prize Certificate
2nd Prize:	70 USD	Cash Prize, Special 2nd Prize Certificate
3rd Prize:	50 USD	Cash Prize, Special 3rd Prize Certificate

Junior:

1st Prize:	100 USD	Cash Prize, Special 1st Prize Certificate
2nd Prize:	70 USD	Cash Prize, Special 2nd Prize Certificate
3rd Prize:	50 USD	Cash Prize, Special 3rd Prize Certificate

We further honour the following achievements, which are outlined in the sections below:

National Awards: Special National Award Certificate

All Finalists: Participation Certificate with Bronze, Silver, or Gold Honour

All Participants: Official Participation Certificate
+ Special Honour for Digital Submissions

What is the ”Special Honour for Digital Submissions”?

Participants whose submissions are written using a professional typesetting tools (e.g, TeX) receive a special honourary note on their certificates.

Who will receive National Awards?

We honor the top three participants from each country who achieve at least 50% of total Final Round points. These students receive a National Award certificate, and the list of top national participants will be published on our website.

3.2 Awards for Ambassadors

Each year, we recognize our most dedicated ambassadors through special awards. Awards are based on the number of students they recruit, documented outreach activities, and community involvement:

1x ILC Ambassador Award for Most Overall Participants:	Given to the ambassador who encouraged the most students to register for ILC.
1x ILC Ambassador Award for Most Finalists:	Given to the ambassador who helped the most students qualify for the Final Round.
ILC Ambassador Award for Exceptional Engagement:	Given to ambassadors who show strong dedication by organizing activities, motivating students to explore linguistics, or providing significant assistance to ILC participants.

3.3 Awards for Schools

Recognizing the important contribution of educators and institutions in developing linguistic talent, ILC offers three categories of school recognition (non-monetary):

1x ILC School Award for Most Participants:	Given to the school with the most registered students in the Qualification Round.
1x ILC School Award for Most Finalists:	Given to the school with the most students advancing to the Final Round.
ILC School Awards for Excellence:	Given to schools showing strong overall student achievement, creating a supportive environment for participants, or demonstrating strong dedication to linguistics education through ILC.

How do schools participate to win these awards?

Schools automatically participate when students register using the school's name. Please ensure all students enter the school name accurately and consistently. We also encourage teachers from participating schools to register on our educator platform.

3.4 Further Achievements

Participation in international competitions like ILC supports personal development and strengthens academic credentials. It provides an opportunity to sharpen analytical abilities, engage with linguistic phenomena, and connect with peers who share an interest in language science.

Global Network: Participants and award recipients join the international ILC community: a network of motivated students worldwide. This community supports collaboration, shared learning, and lasting connections. Connection information is provided to qualified participants.

Opportunities (e.g., Research Programs, Scholarships): The ILC team shares information about relevant international and regional opportunities, including research programs, scholarships, linguistics conferences, language documentation projects, and related competitions. This information reaches qualifying participants directly and through our community platform.

Regional Meetups & Events: The ILC team organizes meetings and workshops in various regions. All participants are invited to attend and connect with fellow language enthusiasts.

Do I receive a hard copy of the certificate(s)?

Hard copies of certificates will be mailed to all 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Prize winners. All other participants, including finalists receiving Honours, will receive high-quality digital certificates (PDF) featuring permanent verification IDs, accessible via:
`https://lingchallenge.org/verify`

4 Process and Rounds

The International Linguistics Challenge has three stages: the Qualification Round, Pre-Final Round, and Final Round. Each stage presents challenges that test and develop your linguistic analysis and problem-solving skills.

4.1 Qualification Round

The Qualification Round is the competition's entry point. It contains five linguistic problems (A through E), designed to be accessible while covering diverse linguistic topics. Each problem is worth 5 points. To advance to the Pre-Final Round, you need minimum scores of: 15 points (Junior), 17 points (Youth), or 20 points (Senior). All participants receive participation certificates. The Qualification Round has no registration or participation fees.

Qualification Round Deadline

The submission deadline for the Qualification Round is **Sunday, 17 January 2027**, 23:59 UTC+0. This deadline is strictly enforced, so please plan accordingly.

Problems

Problems in the Qualification Round cover foundational linguistic concepts, analytical reasoning, and pattern recognition in language data. They provide challenges for participants at all experience levels. All problems are analytical, requiring systematic thinking and linguistic insight.

Solution and Submission Information

Participants must prepare a solution document containing written analyses and explanations for all problems. Solution documents may be submitted in either of two formats:

- Digitally typed solutions (recommended), using LaTeX or a standard word processor.
- Clear scans or photographs of handwritten solutions. Multiple pages must be merged into a single PDF.

Showing your analytical process clearly for all problems is important. You can earn points for demonstrating sound reasoning and methodology, even if your

final answer is incorrect. Your solution document should explain your linguistic analysis, pattern identification process, and the logic behind your conclusions.

When submitting your solution, a participant account is automatically created. Access your account using credentials you set up during submission: https://lingchallenge.org/login. Please verify that your solution document uploaded successfully.

Enter your name, school, city, and date of birth accurately during registration, as this information appears on all certificates.

Announcement of Results

Qualification Round results will be announced on Monday, 1 February 2027. Participants will be notified via email and through their online participant accounts. Performance reports and certificates will also be available through the participant account at: https://lingchallenge.org/login.

4.2 Pre-Final Round

Students who advance from the Qualification Round proceed to the Pre-Final Round, which features more demanding problems. At ILC, each stage builds on previous learning, so expect concepts from the Qualification Round to reappear in new contexts in Pre-Final problems.

The Pre-Final Round is a supervised exam lasting 60 minutes. It contains three problems:

- 1 Foundational Problem (4 points): Comparable to the difficulty level of the Qualification Round.
- 1 Advanced Problem (6 points): Requires more complex analysis and linguistic understanding.
- 1 Research Problem (8 points): Based on a scholarly paper you receive before the exam. Topics may include syntax, semantics, phonetics, or sociolinguistics.

The maximum score is 18 points. To qualify for the Final Round, you need at least 6/8/10 points. Clearly explaining your analytical approach is essential for all problems and significantly affects your score.

Exam Process

In the preparation phase, the research paper is released on Friday, 26 February 2027. You may use translation tools and AI to help understand it. The exam window runs from Sunday, 28 February 2027 to Tuesday, 2 March 2027. You may take the exam at any point during this window using a computer, laptop, or phone. The exam must be supervised by a teacher (recommended) or by ILC using an online supervision system. After the exam, you have 10 minutes to scan and upload handwritten solutions.

For full details, see the Pre-Final Round Information document: Pre-Final Round Information

Registration and Costs

Qualifying participants can register for the Pre-Final Round through their participant account (https://lingchallenge.org/login). Running a worldwide competition involves significant expenses for evaluation, infrastructure, and content creation. We charge a registration fee of 27 EUR for the Pre-Final Round to sustain ILC's operations.

This registration fee covers resources needed to operate the competition globally, including evaluation and logistics. **Financial assistance is available** for students facing financial constraints. No additional participation fees apply. For more information on financial aid visit this page.

Pre-Final Round Registration Deadline

The registration deadline for the Pre-Final round is Tuesday, 23 February 2027.

4.3 Announcement of Results

Pre-Final Round results will be announced on Monday, 15 March 2027 via email and the participant portal.

Can I participate only in the Qualification Round?

Yes, you can participate solely in the Qualification Round and receive your certificate. However, you would not proceed to the subsequent rounds or be eligible for finalist awards.

4.4 Final Round

Students who perform well in the Pre-Final Round advance to the Final Round: a 30timed online examination consisting of mixed short-answer and multiple-choice questions.

The exam covers diverse linguistic topics, including concepts from the Qualification and Pre-Final Rounds, as well as content related to the Pre-Final Round research paper. Questions are allocated 1–5 minutes each. Final placements, honors, and prizes are determined primarily by Final Round performance. Tied scores are broken using Pre-Final Round results (and if needed, Qualification Round results).

Final Round Date

All Final Round exams will take place on Tuesday, 30 March 2027.

Scheduling Your Time Slot

The Final Round exam takes place on a single day. Finalists must select a specific time slot in advance through their participant account: `https://lingchallenge.org/schedule-exam`. All time slots are scheduled in the evening in the participant's local time zone.

Online Supervision

The exam is taken from home and monitored using an **online supervision system**. No teacher supervision is required or permitted. To take the exam, participants need:

- A computer, laptop, or phone with a webcam (exam device)
- A phone with a camera and microphone (supervision phone)
- A valid government-issued ID or passport

Finalists access the exam at: `https://lingchallenge.org/exam`

Result Announcement

The final results of the competition, including winners and honors, will be announced
on Monday, 5 April 2027.

4.5 Timetable and Deadlines

Please find the key dates for ILC below. Note that all deadlines are at 23:59 UTC+0. While unlikely, dates are subject to minor adjustments if necessary.

Qualification Round:

Sunday, 17 January 2027:	Submission Deadline (Qualification Round)
Monday, 1 February 2027:	Announcement of Results (Qualification Round)

Pre-Final Round:

Tuesday, 23 February 2027:	Registration Deadline (Pre-Final Round)
Friday, 26 February 2027:	Release of Research Paper (Pre-Final Round)
Sunday, 28 February 2027 – Tuesday, 2 March 2027:	Exam Window (Pre-Final Round)
Monday, 15 March 2027:	Announcement of Results (Pre-Final Round)

Final Round:

Tuesday, 30 March 2027:	Day of the Final Round Exam (Final Round)
Monday, 5 April 2027:	Announcement of Results (Final Round)

5 Information for Teachers and Schools

Educators, institutions, and parents are encouraged to promote ILC as an enrichment activity for students interested in linguistics and language analysis. ILC's main aim is to inspire students to engage with scientific inquiry and provide a platform for talented individuals to demonstrate and develop their abilities. We offer tools and materials to help teachers incorporate the competition into educational settings and support participants.

5.1 Special School Awards

We recognize the important role of educational institutions and teachers by presenting special awards to schools with high participation levels and strong student achievement. These awards celebrate dedication to developing linguistic talent (details in Section 3.3).

5.2 Teacher Login and Resources

We encourage teachers to register for the dedicated ILC Teacher Portal (https://lingchallenge.org/teacher-login). This platform offers tools to:

- Monitor student progress, access results, and retrieve certificates.
- Manage and supervise the Pre-Final Round examination for your students.
- Facilitate group registration payments for the Pre-Final Round when appropriate.

Teacher registration is available here: https://lingchallenge.org/teacher-registration

If you wish to establish an ILC or linguistics club at your institution, integrate ILC problems into your teaching, or require promotional materials such as flyers and posters, please visit our website or reach out directly.

6 Ambassador Program

As an international competition, ILC relies on dedicated ambassadors to connect with students across institutions, communities, and nations. Ambassadors serve as regional representatives, promoting ILC, helping with event organization, and building a community focused on linguistics. This position offers an opportunity to strengthen leadership and communication skills, enhance your CV or résumé, and experience the satisfaction of helping others discover linguistic science.

6.1 Requirements

Candidates must be at least 14 years old, have genuine enthusiasm for linguistics and language study, and commit time to promoting ILC and related activities in their region. Note: Ambassador certificates are awarded to those showing active contribution, typically measured by engaging at least one participant through to the Pre-Final Round.

6.2 Responsibilities and Benefits

Ambassador responsibilities include:

- Encouraging students to participate in ILC.
- Informing schools, language clubs, and community organizations about the competition.
- Optionally organizing regional events, workshops, or study sessions focused on linguistics.
- Serving as a regional contact point and ILC representative.

Benefits of becoming an ILC Ambassador include officially representing the competition, gaining valuable leadership experience, and making an impact in your community. Official ambassadors receive access to a personal management dashboard and an optional ILC email address.

Potential ambassador activities include:

- Using social media to share ILC announcements and linguistic content.
- Introducing ILC to educators, school administrators, or student organizations.

- Starting or supporting extracurricular linguistics clubs or language analysis groups.
- Organizing information sessions, linguistics workshops, or problem-solving practice sessions.

6.3 Special Awards for Ambassadors

Each year, we recognize exceptional ambassadors for their commitment and impact. These awards highlight individuals who have gone above and beyond in fostering participation and organizing activities that advance linguistic engagement (details in Section 3.2). While recognition is valuable, your main motivation should be inspiring fellow students.

6.4 Application Process

To become an official ILC Ambassador, complete the online application form. The selection process has two phases. In the first phase, submit a CV or résumé with a brief statement describing your motivation and plan for promoting ILC in your region. In the second phase, selected candidates complete a short problem set and submit an introductory video of about five minutes. The ILC coordination team reviews all applications.

Apply here: `https://lingchallenge.org/application`

7 Further Information

7.1 Submission Status Page

All registered participants get access to a personal online account. Use this portal to manage submissions, view results, access performance reports, and download certificates. Account access: https://lingchallenge.org/status

7.2 Further Materials and Documents

Visit our official website for additional resources for promoting the International Linguistics Challenge. Available materials typically include:

- Information Flyers (such as this document)
- ILC Posters (Digital/Printable formats)
- Official ILC Logos and Branding Resources

7.3 Newsletter and Notifications

Subscribe to ILC notifications through our website to receive updates on competition deadlines, upcoming events, relevant linguistics opportunities, and other important announcements.

7.4 Social Media Page

Follow our social media channels for updates, announcements, and content related to ILC and linguistics. Support our community by sharing posts and encouraging others to participate!

Connect with us: www.facebook.com/lingchallenge

And Instagram: www.instagram.com/lingchallenge

7.5 Contact and Questions

For questions, feedback, or issues about ILC, first check our online FAQ section or contact your regional ILC ambassador if one is active in your area (ambassador list available on our website). You can also contact the central ILC team via email: info@lingchallenge.org

7.6 Organizers and Partners

The International Linguistics Challenge is an independent initiative run by a dedicated team focused on advancing linguistics education. View the complete

team online: https://lingchallenge.org/team. The main coordinators for this year's competition are:

- Program Coordinator: Dr. Rami Aly, coordinator@lingchallenge.org
- Team Coordinator: Fabian Schneider, team@lingchallenge.org
- Content Editor & Consultant: Dr. Sana Kidwai, kidwai@lingchallenge.org
- Outreach Coordinator: Stefan Amberg, outreach@lingchallenge.org

We thank all coordinators, volunteers, and partners whose commitment makes the International Linguistics Challenge accessible to students worldwide.