

IOL Team Report

In July 2013 we travelled to Manchester UK for the 11th International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL) as one of the teams representing Australia. We were 4 of 146 contestants from 26 different countries around the world. The experience was amazing: it was really inspiring and motivating to interact with people from so many different backgrounds, and the time we had was unforgettable.

Throughout the week we participated in organised activities and had the opportunity to attend fascinating lectures on linguistics, such as analysing the language patterns of *The Simpsons* characters, how dictionaries are put together, and the errors in programs like Google Translate. We also had the opportunity to visit Manchester city, take a canal tour, and find out more about the city's history. Apart from this, the IOL committee had plenty of interesting activities such as charades, quizzes, even an audio language trivia competition.



(At the Opening Ceremony, (l-r) Alexandra Grant, Rebecca Day, Laura Boyle, Martyna Judd)

On the second day of our stay in Manchester, we completed the gruelling 6-hour Individual Contest which, surprisingly, passed faster than we thought it would. The problems included a translation task in Yidni, an indigenous Australian Aboriginal language spoken in our home-state Queensland, and Tundra Yukaghir, where we had to match English words to their Tundra Yukaghir equivalents. Who would have thought of expressing ‘snoring’ as ‘nose thunder’, or ‘horse’ as ‘domesticated deer?’ Pirahã was a complex phonetic problem, while Muna (full of Monkeys, Ants and Demons) challenged our understanding of sentence structures. The voted favourite, ‘Telepathy’, was a nice change from the mind-boggling syntax and grammar problems. It looked at the relationship between word associations and brain activity. We were all so excited when Martyna was awarded a Bronze Medal.

The Team Contest was truly challenging. We were given a huge two-page list written in Ancient Georgian and we had 4 hours to figure out what the list was and to translate it into English. You might like to challenge yourself by viewing the problem at: <http://www.ioling.org/booklets/iol-2013-team-prob.en-gb.pdf>.

Overall the experience was extraordinary and we are very grateful to have had the opportunity to represent Australia at the competition. There are several people without whose support we would not have been able to make the most of this incredible trip.

We would like to thank:

- Nathaniel Mitchell from Griffith University, for his dedication and enthusiasm in training us for the competition and teaching us about linguistics;
- Dr Andrea Schalley, Chair of the Queensland Organising Committee of OzCLO;
- The IOL and the UK Linguistics Olympiad organising team;
- Mr Peter McGrath, our school coordinator who sparked our interest in the competition and organised QASMT's participation in the event;
- Ms Rebecca Shadbolt, our teacher who supported us at the OzCLO finals;
- Michele Grant, our team leader, for organising the trip and travelling with us to Manchester;
- Our parents, for all their support throughout the whole OzCLO and IOL experience.

Report by: Laura Boyle, Rebecca Day, Alexandra Grant, Martyna Judd