

Language Puzzles

Fall 2019

Hi, everyone! My name is Evan Hochstein, and I'm very excited to share languages and language puzzles with all of you! I first heard about all this through the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad (NACLO), which is a long and intimidating name for a very fun competition structured all around puzzles. I competed in NACLO all 4 years of high school, and I hope you will try it out.

In the way of introduction, I'm from Austin, Texas (yeehaw), and my language of choice in middle and high school was Spanish. In college, I have chosen to start again from scratch, and I am learning classical hieroglyphic Egyptian. And some people think learning *Latin* is useless... Feel free to pick my brain about any language, however — I love all of them.

Now some information about the class.

Topics

- Week 1: English-based, number system, phonology, sound change, writing system, Rosetta Stone, matching
- Week 2: Rosetta Stone, matching, phonology/morphophonology, scripts, directional systems
- Week 3: no translation, hard matching, possession, hard number system, cultural difference, morphology

Note: All of our puzzles come from NACLO (nacloweb.org) except for one or two. For each puzzle, I might walk us through it, or have you work in small groups, or see what you can do on your own. Also, I probably won't get to all of the topics, but they're all in your packets for you to explore.

Suggested Puzzles

At the back of your packets, there will be a list of puzzles that are similar to the ones in your packets so you can practice the skills we've built up in class and see the same concepts applied in different languages and styles. These puzzles are not required, but I think you will enjoy them. Even if a puzzle is difficult and you don't figure out "the trick" or you miss something, taking the time to really work at these puzzles will help you make the most gains, and if you actually make a breakthrough and solve a difficult puzzle after a long time, it's that much more rewarding (plus you'll be on the lookout for that trick if it ever appears again).

If you ever have any questions, feel free to contact me at evan.hochstein@yale.edu.