

UNTIGHTENING YOUR CRYPTOTYPES

*Adding Covert Patterns, Advanced Oddities,
and Little Irrationalities to Your Conlang*

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Common Irregularities & Quirks

- irregular verbs
- noun classes/genders with irregular plural patterns
- verbal conjugational classes
- idioms, idiomatic constructions, conceptual metaphors
- polysemy (multiple meanings for a word)
- non-SVO syntax (VSO, OVS, SOV, V2)
- non-Indoeuropean morpho-syntactic alignment (e.g., ergative, split-ergative, trigger languages)
- “foreign” borrowings
- diachronic reflexes, sound-shifts

Advanced Irregularities & Quirks

- We will explore subtle irregularities, uncommon oddities, and hidden patterns in natural languages
- Focus will be on morphology, morpho-syntax, lexico-morphology
- Topics not covered in the Advanced Language Construction Kit or other common conlanging resources
- PURPOSE: To add greater verisimilitude/realism to your natlang-style conlang
- These components of natural language are often missing from conlangs

Advanced Irregularities & Quirks

- cryptotypes
- covert ergative and affective patterning
- covert middle voice patterns
- mono-active vs. co-active verbs
- verb conflation
- defective verbs
- fossil words, archaisms & fixed expressions
- ideophones
- lexico-semantic ranges
- lexical pairs
- folk etymology; back-formation; borrowings; phonosemantic matching
- morpho-semantic redundancies

“Cryptotype” — B.L. Whorf, 1936

- A covert morphological or lexical class with no overt morphological marking for the class
- Functionally important to the grammar, but its meaning is “submerged, subtle, and elusive”
- Native speakers are generally unaware of the class
- Native speakers are unable to explain the rule(s) for its application
- Example: completive particle “up” meaning “completely, to a finish,” e.g., *‘break it up, cover it up, eat it up, twist it up, open it up’*

Cryptotype Example

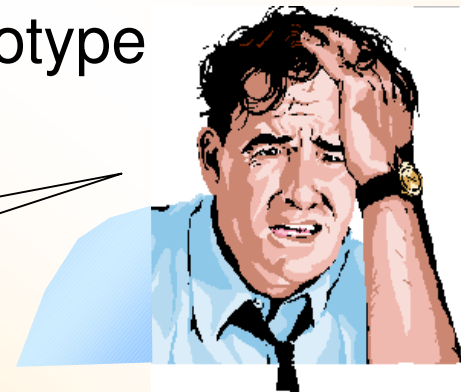
Completive: VERB (+ it) + 'up'

- E.g., 'break it up, cover it up, eat it up, twist it up, open it up'
- Applies to any one or two-syllable verb with accent on the first syllable, EXCEPT verbs referring to:
 - dispersion without boundary
e.g., **spread it up, *waste it up, *spend it up, *scatter it up, *drain it up, *filter it up*
 - oscillation w/o agitation of parts
e.g., **rock up a cradle, *wave up a flag, *wiggle up a finger, *nod up one's head*
 - nondurative impact with psychological reaction
e.g., **kill up, *fight up, *whack it up, *stab it up, *hate him up*

Reversative “Un-” as a Cryptotype

- Applies to transitive verbs of covering, enclosing, and surface-attaching
- e.g., ‘*uncover, uncoil, undress, unfasten, unfold, unlock, unroll, untangle, untie, unwind*’
- BUT NOT **unbreak, undry, unhang, unheat, unlift, unmelt, unopen, unpress, unspill, untighten*’
- Recently acceptable verb forms from the digital age suggest a *pragmatic* basis for the cryptotype
 - *undelete, unerase, unfriend, unlike*

Hell, I’ve been unfriended!



Another cryptotype: ordering of adjectives

- E.g., *large red house* vs. **red large house*
pretty French girl vs. **French pretty girl*
- “inherent” qualities/traits: *color, material, physical state (liquid, solid, soft, etc.), breed, nationality, function, use*
- “non-inherent” qualities/traits: *size, shape, position, evaluation (ethical, aesthetic, economic, etc.)*
- ungrammatical forms OK if tonic stress changed and context is one of comparison/contrast, e.g.,
“the French pretty girl and the Spanish pretty girl”

Other crytotypes: verbalizer/nominalizer suffixes

- -ize, -ate, -ify
 - Why *nationalize*, but not **nationify*?
 - Why not **abstractify*?
- -ness, -hood, -dom, -th
 - Why *redness*, but not **fatness*?
 - Why *widowhood*, but not **windowhood*?
 - Why *grow* → *growth*, but not *wither* → **witherth*?

Other crytotypes: agent nominalization

- pickpocket = someone who picks pockets
- scarecrow = something that scares crows
- killjoy = someone who kills joy (?)
- But...
 - watchdog \neq someone who watches dogs
 - lovechild \neq someone who loves children
- And why not a “sellcar”, or a “huntwitch”?
- Romance languages:
 - Spanish: *tocadiscos, abrelatas, lavarropas*
 - Italian: *rompiscatole, rompighiaccio*

Other crytotypes: patient nominalization

- In English, used only with “good”/ “bad” and other evaluative adjectives, e.g.,

This car was a good buy.

That book is a boring read.

He was a lousy lay.

- So why not the following?

** This meal is a good eat.*

** His film is a boring watch.*

** Your conlang is a great speak.*

Other crytotypes: verbal manner nominalization

- In English, verbs nominalized to show manner:

That golfer has a mean slice.

I can't hit against his curve.

I don't care for Barbara Streisand's warble.

She admired his swagger.

- So why not the following?

* *I'm scared of his weave. [i.e., when he drives a car]*

* *He didn't seem to notice my gyrate.*

* *That butcher has a nice mince.*

* *The clown tried his usual corrupt on the children.*



Example from Hopi: Inceptive

- Different affixes used for different verbs
- Informants can't explain the different affixes
- Cryptotype based on what it is that's beginning:
 - *the act leading to the result [e.g., begin to tear], vs.*
 - *the resulting state [e.g., begin to be torn]*
 - Hopi verbs do not allow both forms
- Your conlang:
 - Allow either meaning in one consolidated form?
 - Allow one meaning or the other but not both?
 - Allow both meanings but with separate forms?

Example from Finnish: declension & comparison of adjectives

- Finnish adjectives decline for case & number in agreement with their nouns
- Finnish adjectives take comparison suffixes corresponding to English *-er* and *-est*
- BUT: a few Finnish adjectives can neither be declined nor compared:

aika *'doughty, mighty'*

aimo *'doughty, mighty'*

ensi *'first, next'*

eri *'separate'*

kelpo *'fit, serviceable'*

koko *'all, whole'*

pikku *'little'*

viime *'last'*

Poetry: Violating Cryptotypes and Semantic Constraints

- *How can I unlove you?*
- *Un-break my heart*
- *unking'd* (Shakespeare: Richard II)

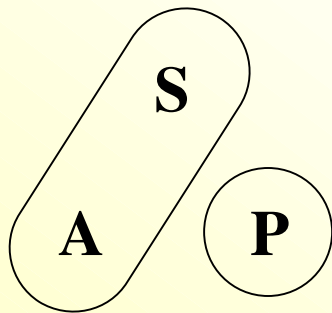
- We only see a cryptotype when the rule is broken

*Ssh! Don't let them know
about our cryptotypes!*



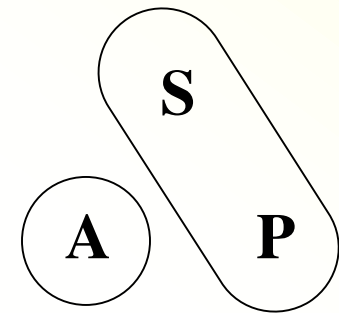
Covert Ergative Patterning

- Nominative-Accusative languages:
 - intransitive and transitive subjects marked the same [NOM case]; distinguished from transitive object [ACC case]
- Ergative-Absolutive languages:
 - intransitive subject and transitive object marked the same [ABS]; distinguished from transitive subject [ERG]



**ACCUSATIVE
LANGUAGE**

S = Intransitive Subject
A = Transitive Subject [**AGENT**]
P = Transitive Object [**PATIENT**]



**ERGATIVE
LANGUAGE**

Covert Ergative Patterning

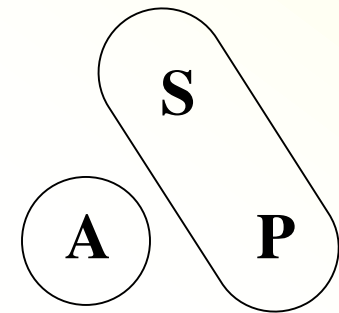
It is generally assumed that **NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE** languages do not display any **ERGATIVE** morpho-syntactical patterns.

But in fact...



Covert Ergative Patterning

- English **-able** suffix:
 - **-able** with intrans. verb = ‘able to X’ e.g., *perishable*
 - **-able** with trans’ve verb = ‘able to be X’d’ e.g., *passable*
- Deverbalized adjectives with **-able** can only refer to intransitive subjects or transitive objects, not transitive subjects
- **-ee** and **(e)d** suffixes are similar:
 - *retiree* (intransitive subject) vs. *nominee* or *parolee* (transitive objects)
 - *the well-dressed man* (intransitive subject) vs. *the accused man* (transitive object)



Covert Ergative Patterning

- Dutch “pseudo-passive”:
 - (1) Er fluiten jongens.
there whistle boys
Boys are whistling (there).
 - (2) Er wordt gefloten.
there becomes whistled
There is whistling / Someone whistled.
- Can only refer to animate activities; cannot be used for tea kettles or wind.

Covert Ergative Patterning

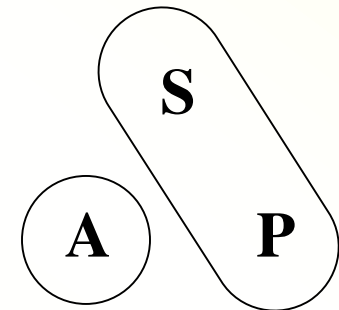
Turkish causatives : Case of object complement depends on transitivity of subordinate sentence:

1a. Adam koştu = *The man ran.*
man-NOM ran

1b. Adama koşturduk = *We made the man run.*
man-ACC ran-CAUS-we

2a. Adam kapıyı açtı = *The man opened the door.*
man-NOM door-ACC opened

2b. Adama kapıyı açtırdık
man-DAT door-ACC opened-CAUS-we
= *We made the man open the door.*



- Same pattern in Georgian and Quechua

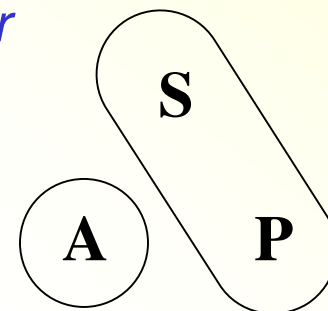
“Unaccusative” vs. “Unergative” Intransitive Verbs

“Unaccusative” intransitive verbs:

- Subject is semantic PATIENT, e.g.,
The snow melts. The vase broke. Our leader falls.
- Past participle modifies noun w/ active meaning, e.g.,
The melted snow, the broken vase, the fallen leader

“Unergative” intransitive verbs:

- Subject is semantic AGENT, e.g.,
Joe ate. The child sleeps. A girl shouted.
- Participle CANNOT modify noun w/ active meaning, e.g.,
**eaten Joe, *the slept child, *the shouted girl*



Compare use of resultative adverbial adjuncts:

*The water spilled onto the floor. / The vase broke into pieces. VS.
Joe ate full. / *She worked to death. / *He hammered to pieces.

Covert Affective/Experiencer Patterning

- **AFFECTIVE VERBS:**

- verbs of sensation, autonomic bodily states, involuntary physical reactions, unwilled mental/emotional states,

- e.g., *see, hear, feel, be hot, be cold, be afraid, yawn, itch, cough, blink, flinch, duck, fear, be surprised, love, hate*

- **NO AGENT**

- subject is “undergoer” [EXPERIENCER] of unwilled state/reaction where stimulus (“object”) may be completely unaware of the event, e.g., *I see you.*

- Some languages mark EXPERIENCERS overtly w/ **DATIVE OR AFFECTIVE** case, e.g., N.E. Caucasian

Covert Affective/Experiencer Patterning

- English: Passive construction preferred for mental state verbs, e.g.,
 - 1) I am ashamed.
 - ?? Something shames me.
 - * I shame.
 - 2) I was amused at his predicament.
 - ?? His predicament amused me.
 - * I amused at his predicament.
- Russian: Almost all mental state verbs are reflexive.

Covert Affective/Experiencer Patterning

- Finnish: Verbs of compulsion require subject to be in GENITIVE case (historically an old **dative** case)
pitää, täytyy, tulee = ‘must’; *on pakko* = ‘there is need (to)’
e.g., Minun *pitää mennä* = ‘I must go.’
- Verbs of hunger / thirst / being hot / being cold also require subject to be in GENITIVE case

Covert Affective/Experiencer Patterning

- English “like”: Accusative pattern is atypical compared to other languages, but note:

I like it.

**It is liked by me.* [not tolerated as AGENT]

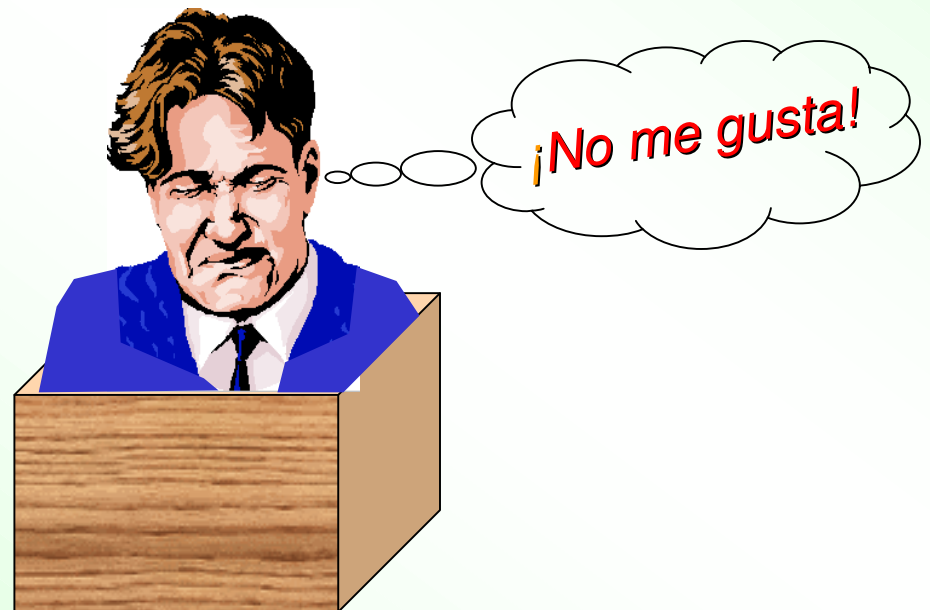
It pleases me. [reinforces EXPERIENCER role]

- Other languages:

– *Me gusta.*

– *Mi piace.*

– *Es gefällt mir.*



Covert Affective/Experiencer Patterning

- Other examples:
 - *I am cold / Mir ist kalt / J'ai froid / Tengo frio.*
- Valence changes / agent suppression as reflection of affective state, e.g., Spanish:

Se me perdió la cartera.
REFL 1.sg.DAT lose-3.sg.PRET the wallet
I lost my wallet.

[Literally: 'the wallet lost itself to me']

Covert Affective/Experiencer Patterning

- Finnish negative sentences
 - direct objects declined for **PARTITIVE** not **ACCUSATIVE**
 - subjects of following verbs declined for **PARTITIVE**:
ole- 'exist', *näky-* 'be seen', *kuulu-* 'be heard'
- Russian neg. sentences: dir. object in **GENITIVE**
- English negation in non-causal sentences:
 - 1a. *A car passed by.* 1b. ?? *A car didn't pass by.*
 - 1c. *No car passed by / Not a car passed by.*
 - 2a. *Something happened.*
 - 2b. * *Something didn't happen.* 2c. *Nothing happened.*

Covert “Middle Voice” Patterning

a.k.a. “ambitransitives,” “labile” verbs

- *Robert flies the airplane beautifully.*
⇒ *The airplane flies beautifully.*
- *The manager opened the store at 8 a.m.*
⇒ *The store opened at 8 a.m.*
- *The engineer increased the pressure.*
⇒ *The pressure increased.*
- *I molded the soft clay easily.*
⇒ *The soft clay molded easily.*

Covert “Middle Voice” Patterning

Exceptions are haphazard (i.e., a cryptotype)

1. ***Father painted the fence yellow.***

⇒ * *The fence painted yellow.*

(But: *The fence came out yellow.*)

2. ***I noticed a storm on the horizon.***

⇒ * *A storm noticed on the horizon.*

(But: *A storm came into view on the horizon.*)

3. ***We keep scissors with the sewing supplies.***

⇒ * *Scissors keep with the sewing supplies.*

(But: *Scissors belong with the sewing supplies.*)

4. ***Fans buy beer a lot at baseball games.***

⇒ * *Beer buys a lot at baseball games.*

(But: *Beer sells a lot at baseball games.*)

Covert “Middle Voice” Patterning

How will your conlang handle “middle voice”?

- use of reflexive morphology, e.g.,

Se habla español aquí.

Le livre se vend bien.

- use of “dummy”/impersonal pronoun?

Man spricht deutsch hier.

On parle français ici.

- overt middle-voice morphology
e.g., Turkish, Swahili, Ancient Greek

- a cryptotypic class of “labile”/“ambitransitive” verbs?

Covert “Middle Voice” Patterning

Consider having diachronic reflexes of former middle-voice morphology, e.g.,

- “deponent” verbs in Latin and Swedish
Passive voice morphology but active voice meaning
- Use of different auxiliary verb with participles of unaccusative vs. unergative verbs
French, Italian, German, Dutch, Early Mod. English

Co-Active Verbs

1a) I found an old man. ⇒ I found an empty can.

1b) I met an old man. ⇒ * *I met an empty can.*

2a) I threw the ball at Sam.

⇒ I threw the ball at the window.

2b) I threw Sam the ball.

⇒ * *I threw the window the ball.*

3a) I performed in front of her.

⇒ I performed in front of the wall.

3b) I entertained her.

⇒ * *I entertained the wall.*



Co-Activity In Your Conlang?

How Will Your Conlang Handle Co-Activity?

- Overt morphology (e.g., affixes) to distinguish mono-active verbs from co-active counterparts
- Lexical distinctions patterned as a cryptotype (as in English and other languages)
- Eliminate the distinction, i.e., all verbs capable of being used mono- or co-actively based on context
- Utilize a morpho-syntactical construction, e.g.,
I “en-found” an old man,... meaning
I found an old man and he found me, i.e., We met.

Verb Conflation

- Overtly stated verb indicates a **secondary** semantic sense e.g.,
 - MEANS/INSTR — *He **bicycled** south.*
 - MANNER — *She **dolled** herself up.*
 - LOC./DESTINATION — *They're **shelving** the books.*
 - PATIENT — *I **dusted** the table.*
 - PURPOSE/GOAL — *Would you **look in on** the stew?*
 - RESULT — *The plane **crashed** into the sea.*
- The primary verbal sense is covert and not predictable

Verb Conflation

1. He bicycled south.
(= He **traveled** south *by means of bicycle.*)
2. She dolled herself up.
(= She **made herself appear** *in the manner of a doll.*)
3. They're shelving the books.
(= They're **placing** the books *on the shelf/shelves.*)
4. I dusted the table.
(= I **cleaned/removed** *dust* from the table.)
5. Would you look in on the stew?
(= Would you **go** to the kitchen *to look at the stew.*)
6. The plane crashed into the sea.
(= The plane **flew** into the sea *and (thus) crashed.*)

Verb Conflation

- The primary verbal sense is covert and not predictable, e.g.,
 - *I dusted the table with a cloth.* [REMOVE] vs.
 - *I dusted the cake with sprinkles.* [APPLY / COVER]
 - *I handed her that book.* [GIVE]
 - *I shouldered the burden.* [CARRY]
 - *I fingered the switch.* [MAINTAIN CONTACT]
- Inability to predict covert primary sense gives rise to semantic (poetic?) ambiguity, e.g.,
 - *Let's "apple" today.*

Verb Conflation

How will your conlang handle verb conflation?

- Covertly and haphazardly/unpredictably like English
- Avoid it, e.g., the Romance languages
 - He bicycled south = *Viajaba al sur en bicicleta*
 - I dusted the table = *Quité el polvo de la mesa**
 - He danced across the room = *Atravesó la sala bailando*
 - (Occasional exceptions, e.g., *Descends-moi mes lunettes.*)
- Using specialized morphology to indicate primary sense (e.g., directionals/adverbial morphemes in Georgian and NW Caucasian languages)

* or use “*desempolvar*”

Defective Verbs

- Absence of future tense forms for English modals, e.g., *can, must*
 - * *I'll can leave = I'll be able to leave*
 - but: *Podré partir / Potrò partire / Je pourrai partir*
- Example from other languages:
 - Spanish ***soler*** (*be used to...*) pres. indic., pres. subjv., & impf. only
 - French ***dégeler*** (*to thaw*), Italian ***bisognare*** (*to be necessary*) used only in 3rd.sg.
 - Italian ***succedere*** (*to happen*), only in 3rd.sg./3rd.pl.
 - Portuguese ***colorir*** (*to color*) has no 1st.sg. present form
 - Russian ***победить*** (*to win*) has no 1st.sg. future form
 - Polish ***widać*** (*be evident*), ***słychać*** (*be audible*), infinitive form only
 - impersonal verbs pertaining to weather in many languages

Phono-semantic ideophones (sound symbolism, mimetic words)

- Undeclinable words conveying sensory events
- Often onomatopoeic and/or reduplicative
 - English: *yackety-yak*, *hippety-hoppity*, *gobbledy-gook*, *yadda-yadda*, initial *shm-* substitution [from Yiddish]
 - Japanese: *doki-doki* ‘excitement’, *kira-kira* ‘glitter’
 - Vietnamese: *lục đục* ‘sound of blunt objects colliding’
[disagreements/conflicts in a group or organization]
 - Tamil: *viru-viru* ‘brisk/spicy/exciting’
mozhu-mozhu ‘smooth to the touch’
loda-loda ‘sound of pebble rattling in a can’
[= a person who won’t shut up]

Morphological ideophones (specialized adverbial complements)

- Highly constrained adverbial particles used with only one or two words, e.g., from Hausa:
 - **wur** / **jir** / **zur** used only with *jā* ‘red’, e.g., *jā wur* / *jā jir* / *jā zur* ‘red as can be, blood-red’ [vs. **shar** used only with *kōrē* ‘green’ -> *kōrē shar* ‘bright green’]
 - **sak** used only with *arēwa* ‘north’ & *kudu* ‘south’, e.g., *arēwa sak* ‘due north’, *kudu sak* ‘due south’
 - **butuk** used only with *fitō* ‘come out; emerge’, e.g., *yā fitō butuk* ‘he emerged stark naked’
[‘nakedness’ = *tsirāra*]

Morphological ideophones (specialized adverbial complements)

- English profane adverbial complements:

*What the hell/the f**k have you done?*

*I don't f**king believe this!*

The hell you say! / The hell you are!

- Hixkaryana:

ipo *nahatakaye owto hona*

emerging-into-open he-came-out village to

‘Coming into the clearing, he arrived at the village.’

to *kay* *hati* *kamara*

dropping he-did-it HEARSAY jaguar

‘The jaguar dropped down (e.g. from a tree).’

Lexico-semantic Ranges

- Words with large idiosyncratic semantic range
- No one-to-one correspondence w/ other languages: e.g., English *get*

get = *obtain/receive*

get = *understand*

get = *procure*

get = *become*

get = *bring*

get = *arrive*

get = *earn/achieve*

get = *be punished*

get = *establish communication with*

get = *passive or middle voice substitute*

Lexico-semantic Ranges

- Italian translations of “get”

- I **got** it yesterday.

L'ho ricevuto ieri.

- **Get** me my wallet.

Portimi il portafoglio.

- I don't **get** it.

*Non lo **capisco**.*

- He's **getting** old.

***Diventa** vecchio.*

- I'll try to **get** there on time.

*Tentarò di **arrivare** a tempo.*

- You're going to **get** it!

*Ti **farai sgridare!***

- Were you able to **get** him?

*Hai **potuto parlare con lui?***

- I **get** ten euros an hour.

***Guadagno** dieci euro all'ora.*

- Can you **get** me some money?

*Può **procurarmi** del denaro?*

- A lot of cars **get** sold on Sundays.

***Si** vendono molte macchine la domenica.*

Lexico-semantic Ranges

- Modals, e.g., English *can*
 - can = be permitted to *“You can go now.”*
 - can = have the potential to or possibility of
“It can flood this time of year.”
 - can = have opportunity to
“I can ask about it when I arrive.”
 - can = have physical capacity/ability to
“Can you touch your toes?”
 - can = offer to *“I can sing for you if you like.”*
 - can = know how to, e.g., *“I can swim”* [saber/savoir]
- Romance: *I can see you* =
Te veo / Ti vedo / Je te vois.

Complementary Lexical Pairs

Seen in sentence patterns which contrast positive vs. negative polarity

- *Do you have some/any children? I have no children.*
- *I didn't see you at all / *I saw you at all / I did see you.*
- *Have you ever...? / I have never...*
- *Do you still love her? / * I don't still love her. / I no longer love her / I don't love her any more.*
- *Hai freddo qualche volta? / Non ho freddo mai.*

Unpaired Words

Expected related or un-affixed word doesn't exist

disgruntled < * *gruntled*
feckless < * *feckful*
inert < * *ert*
ruthless < * *ruthful*
uncouth < * *couth*
unkempt < * *kempt*
dishevelled < * *shevelled*

Folk Etymology

Words derived by false etymological assumptions:

female: < French *femelle* (diminutive of *femme*) phonologically analogized to *male* by semantic association

penthouse: < Mid.English *pentis* < Anglo-Norman *pentiz* 'attached building' < Latin *appendicium* 'appendage'; analogized to *house*

crayfish: phonologically analogized to *fish* from *Middle English crevis* < Anglo-Norman *creveis* 'crayfish'

chaise lounge: < French *chaise longue* 'long chair' phonologically (or orthographically?) analogized to *lounge* based on its function

hammock: German *Hängematte*, Dutch *hangmat*, Swedish *hängmatta* all literally meaning 'hanging mat' as folk-etymologized from Spanish *hamaca*.

Back-Formation, a.k.a. juncture loss, juncture metanalysis

- Neologisms based on misinterpreted morpheme boundaries, especially in borrowings, e.g.,

veggieburger < *hamburger* < German *Hamburg* + *er*

apron, umpire < Middle English *napron, noumpere*

Persian: *shatranj* ‘chess’ a.k.a. “100 worries’ *shat*
‘hundred’ + *ranj* ‘worry’; < Sanskrit *chaturanga* ‘chess’

Swahili: *matenda* ‘bartender’ < *batenda* ‘bartenders’
vitabu ‘books’ < *kitabu* ‘book’ < Arabic *kitābun*
(ba-/vi- are plurals; ma-/ki- are the corresp. sg. forms)

Arabic *al-* ‘the’: *alcove, algebra, alchemy, albacore,*
albatross, alfalfa, alcohol

Phono-Semantic Matching

- Foreign borrowings camouflaged to look like native words, e.g., Icelandic:

páfagaukur ‘parrot’ < *páfa* ‘pope’ + *gaukur* ‘cuckoo’ to camouflage Danish source word *papegøje* ‘parrot’

eyðni ‘AIDS’ < *eyða* ‘destroy’ + *-ni* [nominalizer]

brokkál ‘broccoli’ < *brok* ‘cotton grass’ + *kál* ‘a plant from the genus Brassica’ to camouflage English (and ultimately the Italian) source word

tækni ‘technology; technique’ < *tæki* ‘tool’ + *-ni* [nominalizer] to camouflage Danish source word *teknik*

- Chinese: *léidá* ‘radar’ (literally: ‘thunder’ + ‘reach’)

Semantic Shifts in Borrowings

- English:
 - *French fries, rendez-vous*
- Italian:
 - *il toast* ‘cheese melt [sandwich]’
 - *il camping* ‘the campground’
- Spanish:
 - *el smoking* ‘the smoking jacket’



Morpho-semantic Redundancies

- English:
 - *everyone / everybody*
 - *anyone / anybody*
 - *no one / nobody*
- Italian:
 - *ciascuno / ognuno* ‘everyone’
- Spanish imperfect subjunctive forms:
 - *cantara / cantase*

Fossil Words, Fixed Expressions and Archaisms

- Fossil words, e.g.,
 - *fro, ado, amok, bated, beck, bygones, craw, dint, eke, bandy, hale, jetsam, ken, loggerhead, mettle, offing, shrift, ulterior, vim, wreak, yore*, SPANISH: *so*
- Fixed expressions, e.g.,
 - *be that as it may, before you know it, to tell you the truth, all of a sudden, neither here nor there, it's up to you*
- Archaisms, e.g.,
 - *whilst, hence, thusly, hitherto*

Other Morpho-syntactic Quirks

- English negation with “do”: *I sing* → *I do not sing*
- German word order with modals & subordinate clauses
- Spanish personal “a” e.g., *Veo a Juan*.
- Portuguese definite article before personal names
- Russian absence of “be” in present tense forms
- Italian & French: Past participles inflect for number and gender if object precedes verb but not otherwise
- German da- forms are selective, e.g., **darohne*
- French/Italian/Catalan locative and partitive pronouns
- Romance: poss. adjectives not used with body parts
- Russian verbs inflect for gender and number (but not person) in past tense only

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Ndak Ta (Aaron Toivo)

- Ndak Ta: “Strange” Particle *ta*
 - applicable to almost any part of speech
 - with verbs, imparts DYNAMIC aspect
 - with non-verbs, meaning is not always predictable
 - not highly productive
- Examples:
 - ‘to be’ + **ta** = ‘to become’ ‘to have’ + **ta** = ‘to get’
 - **maundi** ‘person’ + **ta** = ‘one’s spirit and/or mind’
 - **Ndak** [ethnonym] + **ta** = ‘language & culture of the Ndak’ (i.e., their dynamic aspect)

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Jamna Kopiai (Aaron Toivo)

- Regular verbs follow a slot-based structure

P1	P2	TC	NUCLEUS	S1	S2	S3
negative or interrogative	modal	tense, aspect, mode	NUCLEUS	formant	plural or participle	formant

- “Naked” Verbs:
 - unable to take stem formants
 - argument structure lexically determined
 - do not take most prefixes
 - includes copular verbs and other frequently used verbs, plus many loanwords
 - historically derived from small class of intransitive-only verbs when other verbs were default transitive

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Tmašare? (Jan Strasser)

- Argument postposing
 - move core arguments to the end of the clause
 - not common; employed as rhetorical device in storytelling and upper-register speech
 - used colloquially to convey enthusiasm or surprise
- Restrictions on use:
 - if agent of trans. clause is postposed, the patient must be postposed as well or omitted entirely
 - ditransitive clauses: recipient postposed only if theme also postposed; if not, recipient is converted into a benefactive applicative

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Alashian (Martin Posthumus)

- Broken plurals in N. Alashian
 - Broken plurals are semantically plural but singular morphologically : **ǰēnan** ‘cloud’ → **ǰēnān** ‘clouds’
 - S. Alashian adds **-yā** affix to render these nouns morphologically plural
 - This **-yā** affix looks like a feminine singular affix, thus causing feminine singular agreement
- Restrictions: **-yā** affix not used
 - with animate nouns
 - when singular ends in **-ā** (= singulative form of a mass noun, e.g. **šarrā** ‘strand of hair’ from **šār** ‘hair’)

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Reisu (Karen Badham)

Different copular verbs for different senses of “be”

- **kutu** ‘to exist’ -- *Ei geki, mo ei kutu.* ‘I think, therefore I am.’
- **kuala** ‘to be the same, as in identity’
-- *E kuala denu.* ‘He is the baby.’
- **luta** ‘to belong to a specified class/group’
-- *Eisa luta emodo.* ‘We are people.’
- **maino** ‘to have/show a specified quality/characteristic’
-- *Denu maino gura.* ‘The baby is hungry.’
- **reiki** ‘to consist of; be made of’
-- *Laza reiki aa xusu.* ‘The ocean is all water.’
- **lamu** ‘to be like, or have specified significance’
-- *E lamu komonaxi.* ‘He’s (like) a lion.’

Ei geki, mo ei kutu.



Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: High Eolic (Jona Fras)

- Small class of object-demoting verbs requiring the patient to be in GENITIVE case
- Distribution of 2 “truth-value focus” particles :
 - express speaker’s conviction of event’s factuality, despite potential doubt by addressee
 - different positioning of these particles, sometimes together, create various subtle meanings:
 - *did + VERB*
 - *although...*
 - *on the contrary...*
 - *may + VERB ... but still/nevertheless...*
 - *on the one hand ... but on the other hand...*

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Gómáin (Zachary D. Hart)

- When the subject or an object of the main clause syntactically controls a following relative clause, the infinitive verb of the relative clause is preceded by **st**:

Dëbekpaloing oJagäldhin st avi bek ru w owohweich.

dë-bekpal-oing o-Jagäldhin st avi bek ru w o-w-ohweich

1s-persuade-PST ACC-John in go:INF with DAT.1p.INCL to DAT-0-arena

I persuaded John to go with us to the arena.

- Verbs requiring **st** before a following infinitive are:

vøk *allow, permit*

khøedz *ask*

lft *command*

hig *demand*

vex *fail*

shübu *force,*

make something happen

tharkh *help*

ängkri *hope*

ebeg *plan*

øvlø *plot*

yl *proceed*

rtsa *promise*

bekpaloi *persuade, convince*

thi~ *require*

berras *begin, start*

kontör *struggle*

bleisau *tell*

dhesk *try, attempt*

ända *wait*

mos *want*

møzer *wish, desire*

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Himmaswa (Lee Wilson)

- All verbs belongs to one of 3 distinct aspectual classes: **DYNAMIC**, **PERFECT**, and **STATIVE**.
- The verb's aspectual class may limit the aspectual markers which can be applied to it
- In some cases the aspectual class determines the specific interpretation of the verb's meaning
- Semantic similarities exist between verbs of different aspectual classes

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Himmaswa (Lee Wilson)

DYNAMIC Verbs

- 𐄎 ut 'write'
- 𐄏 kiadap 'burn'
- 𐄐 kyang 'use'
- 𐄑 loh 'pull; draw'
- 𐄒 diang 'speculate; consider'

STATIVE Verbs

- 𐄓 ket 'be red'
- 𐄔 pang'lor 'be in good health'
- 𐄕 sgung 'be the same'
- 𐄖 ngeuo 'be out in the sun; be uncovered; be exposed'
- 𐄗 tgerng 'own; possess'

PERFECT Verbs

- 𐄘 beuon 'split; divide'
- 𐄙 mjurgen 'discover; find out'
- 𐄚 mpua 'grab; seize'
- 𐄛 glian 'die'
- 𐄜 gnop 'stop; cease'

Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Himmaswa (Lee Wilson)

- **STATIVE** verbs are the most restricted in terms of permitted associated morphology
- Most likely class to have lexical counterparts in other classes, e.g.,

Stative Verbs

ꠘꠞꠟ **taiyng** speak; converse

ꠘꠞꠟꠘ **tgerng** own; possess

ꠘꠞꠟꠘꠟ **pjak** be dead

ꠘꠞꠟꠘꠟꠘꠟ **tgerngtai** remember; know

Non-Stative Verbs

ꠘꠞꠟꠘꠟ **heat** speak; say (dynamic)

ꠘꠞꠟꠘꠟꠘ **ptiah** have; hold (dynamic)

ꠘꠞꠟꠘꠟꠘꠟ **gliañ** die (perfect)

ꠘꠞꠟꠘꠟꠘꠟꠘꠟ **lohtai** recall; bring to mind;
remind (perfect)

PATCHES
the Cat says:

***So
untighten and
covertize your
conlang, oddify it
up, and make it a
good speak!***



