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’


- 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 cryotype: 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 *nationify*?
  - Why not *abstractify*?

- ness, -hood, -dom, -th
  - Why *fatness*?
  - Why *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 ≠ someone who watches dogs
  - lovechild ≠ 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]

S = Intransitive Subject
A = Transitive Subject [AGENT]
P = Transitive Object [PATIENT]
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 instrans. 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. Adamı 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
• 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)
  
  \(\text{pitää, täytyy, tulee} = \text{‘must’}; \text{on pakko} = \text{‘there is need (to)’}\)
  
  e.g., \(\text{Minun pitää mennä} = \text{‘I must go.’}\)

- 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 frío.

• Valence changes / agent suppression as reflection of affective state, e.g., Spanish:

  \[
  \text{Se me perdió la cartera.}
  \]
  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.

I sure could use some co-activity.
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
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.*)
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.*
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 “desempolpear”
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 / Potró partire / Je pourrai partir*

• Example from other languages:
  – Spanish *soler (be used to...)* pres. indic., pres. subjve., & 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), slychać (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 onomatopoetic 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: *lúc đục* ‘sound of blunt objects colliding’
    [disagreements/conflicts in a group or organization]
  – Tamil: *viru-viru* ‘brisk/spicy/exciting’
    *mozu-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:
  \( \text{ipo} \quad \text{nahatakaye owto hona} \)
  emerging-into-open he-came-out village to
  ‘Coming into the clearing, he arrived at the village.’

  \( \text{to} \quad \text{ky} \quad \text{hati} \quad \text{kamara} \)
  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.
  – Get me my wallet.
  – I don’t get it.
  – He’s getting old.
  – I’ll try to get there on time.
  – You’re going to get it!
  – Were you able to get him?
  – I get ten euros an hour.
  – 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 voix.*
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 < * ruthless
- 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:

  *páflagaukur* ‘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’

* Je voudrais des “frites français” s.v.p.
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 [ethnonymn] + \( ta \) = ‘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
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>NUCLEUS</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative or interrogative</td>
<td>modal</td>
<td>tense, aspect, mode</td>
<td>NUCLEUS</td>
<td>formant</td>
<td>plural or participle</td>
<td>formant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- “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: ḡēnan ‘cloud’ → ḡenān ‘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’
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.’
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
  khœdz  ask
  lrät  command
  hig  demand
  vex  fail
  shübu  force, make something happen
  tharkh  help
  ängkri  hope
  ebeg  plan
  øvlø  plot
  yël  proceed
  ñtsa  promise
  thi~  require
  berras  begin, start
  kontör  struggle
  bleisau  tell
  dhësk  try, attempt
  änä  wait
  mos  want
  møzer  wish, desire
Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Himmaswa (Lee Wilson)

- All verbs belong 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**
- ut 'write'
- kiadap 'burn'
- kyang 'use'
- loh 'pull; draw'
- diang 'speculate; consider'

**PERFECT Verbs**
- beuon 'split; divide'
- mjurgen 'discover; find out'
- mpua 'grab; seize'
- gliañ 'die'
- gnop 'stop; cease'

**STATATIVE Verbs**
- ket 'be red'
- panglor 'be in good health'
- sgung 'be the same'
- ngeuo 'be out in the sun; be uncovered; be exposed'
- tgerng 'own; possess'
Interesting Oddities in Conlangs: Himmaswa (Lee Wilson)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stative Verbs</th>
<th>Non-Stative Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taiyng</td>
<td>heat speak; say (dynamic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tgerng</td>
<td>ptiah have; hold (dynamic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pjak</td>
<td>gliañ die (perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tgerngtai</td>
<td>lohtai recall; bring to mind; remind (perfect)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So untighten and covertize your conlang, oddify it up, and make it a good speak!