

ቁዳታ ቶቶዞ~ጵላቶቶዞ
Living Your Language

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ቋንቋ ለምን ማለፍ? ~ What do I mean?

- ይህ ስራ ~ Fluency
- ይህ ስራ ~ Frequency
- ይህ ስራ ~ Viewpoint
- ይህ ስራ ለምን ማለፍ? ~ ይህ ስራ ለምን ማለፍ?
“May you dream in your language”

ጸላጥን ዘይገብሩ ብገለጽኩዎ

Why do this?

- ክፍላዊ ግልጽነት ምዃን
Personal satisfaction
- ክፍላዊ ግልጽነት ለተገባሪ ግብር
Personal enrichment
- ጥንቃቄ ግልጽነት ምዃን
Depth of story writing
- ግልጽ ግልጽነት ~ Spirituality
- ግልጽ ግልጽነት ምዃን ~ Bragging rights

ቁልቅ ማህጸን ~ Prerequisites

- ለዘላቂነት ጋር ጋር ጋር ጋር ~ Completeness
- ዘላቂነት ጋር ጋር ~ Enough words
- ማህጸን ጋር ጋር ~ Stability
- ለ ጋር ጋር ጋር ~ Usability
- ጋር ጋር ጋር ጋር ~ Self-investment

ኅለቶላላ ~ Challenges

- ህለቶላላ ለማህንጸድ ለሚያስፈልጉ ምሳሌዎች
Lack of learning materials
- ህለቶላላ ለማህንጸድ ለሚያስፈልጉ ሰዎች
Lack of people to practice with
- ህለቶላላ ለማህንጸድ ለሚያስፈልጉ ጊዜ፣ ምኅንጫ፣ ለማህንጸድ ለሚያስፈልጉ ምኅንጫ
Lack of time, motivation, focus
- ህለቶላላ ለማህንጸድ ለሚያስፈልጉ ምኅንጫ
Lack of self-confidence

ገረዳ፣ ገረዳ፣ ገረዳ፣

Words Words Words

- ሄረጎችን በመጀመሪያ ገንዘብ ገረዳ ገረዳ
Start with core vocabulary
- ለራስዎ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ
Study the words in your own life
- ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ
ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ
Find a tool that works for you
- ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ገረዳ ~ Use them constantly!

ለጥናት ለማግኘት

Use it over and over continually!

- ጥዕና ለጥዕና ለማግኘት ~ Morning Pages
- ጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት ~ Notes and Lists
- ጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት ለጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት
Translating and writing
- ጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት ለጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት
Sound recordings and videos
- ጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት ለጥናት ለጥናት ለማግኘት ~ Breathe the Language

ጥገታ ለሰጠው ሰው Real World Experience

- ጤንና ጥንቃቄ ስለሌላው ሰው ስህተት ስለሌላው ሰው
Focus and diligence aren't my strong points
- ገጽገጽ፣ ስራጽገጽ፣ ግብዓት ስራ ስራ ስራ
Journals, Notes, and shopping lists
- ስራ ስራ ስራ ~ Flashcards
- ስራ ስራ ስራ ~ Talking out loud
- ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ
Sharing the language with others
- ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ ስራ
Surrounded by the uninterested

ዘለ ሆካቶ ~ Questions

- ክለቶዞ~ቶቶሆኒላ ጾቶላቶቶሆኒላ
My website (sadly in need of updating)
<http://alurhsa.org>
- ለ ሆቶሆኒላ ሆኒላ ሆኒላ
Contact information

Email: tony@alurhsa.org or
halyihev@gmail.com

I'm on LCS member list, Conlang-L, Facebook,
Google+, VK, and Diaspora (in descending
order of activity)

Who am I?

Tony Harris, halyihev to those from the ZBB. Linux sysadmin, 4 kids, live in the woods in Vermont, work for CCV for the last 17 years,.

I've been conlanging for 37 years, almost all of that time on Alurhsa, my primary language.

I've been part of the conlanging community since I found Conlang-L in about 1996. Was on the ZBB and CBB for a while, now found on Conlang-L, the LCS lists, and the groups on Facebook and occasionally Google+.

And in case anyone is wondering, yes, that is a real tiger in my bio pic, from a place in Thailand near where my daughter lives. As a serious cat lover, it seemed appropriate.

Why this talk?

I have considered Alurhsa “the language of my soul” almost since I started on it all those years ago. With one small interruption, I have had it with me all that time. And yet, as much as I can use it, I haven't felt truly fluent in it, particular when I have compared my usage with what Jim Hopkins can do in Itlani. So, since I just turned 50 this year, I decided it was time to really push and reach that point where I wasn't just good at it, but could really feel like the language was living inside me, like I was “breathing” the language.

Fair warning: I'm not a heavy Powerpoint user, I love to talk, not point. So the slide deck is more of an outline with no glitz, and I intend to take the difficult road and hold your attenting, right before lunch, by talking to you.

Also, since this is about living your language, the slides are all bilingual! And, I will be speaking at least those short bits of Alurhsa, plus some, through the presentation. This is both to show you that it can be done, and to encourage you to not just create languages, but to use them, to live them!

So what is this “Living your Language”?

Fluency - a vague term! What is it? The ability to say the things you want to say without unusually long pauses for thought or other signs of distress. But that can be a wide range.

“Can you explain how interest rates influence inflation in your target language? This is the latest silly “fluency test” challenge someone gave me. It’s silly because I really can’t for the life of me do this in English, and I do hope my English counts as fluent :) By the criteria of some purists, I’m not even fluent in English, given that I often pause in normal speech, there are certainly topics I can’t talk about at length due to lack of specialized vocabulary, and I don’t inject big complex words into my speech all the time.” (Benny Lewis, fluentin3months.com)

“Don’t follow other people’s elitist rules; when you can do what YOU want to do in the language then you are getting somewhere. Have fun with it, make friends with it, LIVE your language enjoying communication every step of the way, and more complex conversations that you DO want to have will come with time!” (Benny Lewis, fluentin3months.com)

Frequency - meaning, you find ways to fit your language into your life regularly and often.

Viewpoint - meaning you can look at the world around you in the way a native speaker of your language would, whatever that might mean to you.

“May you dream in your language!” - Saw this post by Inara Tabir in the Conlex group on FB. “Conlex” is a term used to mean a conlang done with the specific purpose of being a fully working language in which its creator intends to achieve fluency. This, to me, is a sign of “living your language”, when you know it well enough that you actually have dreams in it.

It must be said that this isn't for the faint of heart. It does take time, effort, and dedication to become so fluent you can “live” in your language. So why do it? What's your goal? If you don't have one that holds your heart, you won't make it to fluency.

* Self-fulfillment. It is an accomplishment, and a rare one.

“Those who want to be fluent in their language must be in love with it and have the motivation provided by deep personal investment. It is very similar to the learning a natlang. If I am learning a tribal or national language simply to prove a thesis or test certain linguistic assumptions, I will have little motivation to learn the language thoroughly. If however I am really in love with the people and the culture expressed by the language, I will immerse myself in it every waking moment. I will never be able to get enough of it.”
(Jim Hopkins)

* Personal enrichment - learn it as one's primary mode of self-expression. This is a sort of Sapir-Whorf reason, but still seeing the world through different eyes (or different words) brings a new and refreshing perspective.

* “In this sense, I have found that conlanging is inseparable from conworlding. Languages express culture. For a conlanger, that could mean expressing one's inner self, one's inner culture. It gives a true feeling of freedom in self-expression and this within itself engenders motivation.” (Jim Hopkins)

* “If one's conlang is esthetically pleasing to its creator and enjoyable to speak, hear, and write, then using the language brings its own reward.” (Jim Hopkins)

* So.. do you like your language? If you don't like it, don't enjoy the feel of it, learning it to fluency is going to be hard.

* Power and depth in story writing. The more you know the language, the more you can feel the language, the more you will be able to write, in depth, about it and the culture that speaks it.

* Spirituality - “Developing the theme of “language of one's soul or inner artistic self (for the non-metaphysical)” I think is crucial.” (Jim Hopkins)

* Bragging rights - yes, this too is a reason, though it can't be the only one. But still, if you are motivated by competition or being able to tell others of your achievement, it is true that achieving fluency in your language is something to brag about, at least with fellow conlangers.

Completeness - if your language consists of a basic grammar outline, and a couple hundred words, you're probably not ready to do this. You need a language that has some heft. Klingon, for example, would probably be tough to do this with. I could not do this with Tariatta, yet. But at the same time, through many of the techniques I used to gain fluency with Alurhsa, and that Jim used to gain fluency in Itlani, you can take a less complete language and grow it into one with the power to express your life..

How many words is enough? Hard to answer that. How many words do you need to do most of what you do in your life? Also, you may have a lot of words, but if they aren't the words you use every day, you will need to grow that vocabulary as you embark on this.

“Kozhensonsaós or Gatekeeping. Basically, hard to get things into the language and hard to get them out. Carefully and conservatively weighing every change you want to make either by additions or subtractions. This will give the language stability (aúr) to the language and stop you from frivolously tinkering with it endlessly. This allows you, the creator, and your friends, to learn the language without always having to worry about keeping up with the latest trendy revisions. The language then grows organically, slowly, and consistently.” (Jim Hopkins)

3. “Adopt the “Authenticity – Canon Policy” (ACP). When considering any new grammatical structure, expression, or word, allow yourself to get a feel for whether or not it is authentic. Does it fit in the language, with what you know of the culture or environment of the speakers of the language. Keep it in the "holding tank" of your mind for a few days or weeks. This is the “gate-keeping” function of conlanging. Before you let something new into the language make sure it “feels” right. If it feels as if it truly fits then bring it officially into the canon of the language. Keep the rule that canonical items cannot be frivolously or arbitrarily changed or removed – they have weight, only a serious reason will allow them to be altered. This will stop you from endlessly tinkering with the language to the point that it never stabilizes. This makes it easier for you and others to learn the language and allows the language to grow organically around a stable core. Be a strict gate-keeper, "Hard to get in, hard to get out." (Jim Hopkins)

Usability - By this I primarily mean it's a language *you* will use. The sound and feel of it is pleasing to you. It can express things in a way you find meaningful and powerful. Language is primarily a tool for communicating your thoughts, needs, and wants and if you see it that way you are much more likely to create words out a desire for self-expression rather than finding word creation a terrible tedium only to be avoided. Sound and Meaning together lead to storytelling, poetry, journaling and other forms of using the language out of enthusiasm and self-expression.

Self-Investment - As I say, this isn't for the faint of heart. It's an investment of your time, your energy, and your soul to pour yourself into the language, and, if you will, to believe in the language, enough to invest the time and energy to learn it and live it.

Learning materials - Yeah, there aren't any unless you make them. This is a problem only if you see the only way of learning a language being through tightly scripted materials and methods.

People - I have had someone say it is not possible to really learn a language that nobody else speaks. I dispute that with people who learn extinct languages or who teach themselves languages spoken somewhere other than where they're living. Harder to do? Sure. Impossible? Not at all.

Time, motivation, focus. These are really tough ones for me. I have a busy job and a busy life, and lots of interests (or ADD, hard to tell which!). But you can still do it because working on the language in lots of little bits of time can really accomplish a lot!

Self-Confidence - This is my toughest challenge, personally. Can I really do this? Is this a good use of my time? What will others think of me? I am too lazy, undisciplined, disorganized. I don't really have any language ability compared to so very many people. How do I overcome this? One little goal at a time.

Attitude - find the easy bits first. Learn to say/write something. Don't worry so much about perfect grammar or pronunciation. Begin, somewhere, anywhere, but actually begin!

Small, specific goals - Big, massive, broad goals are a lot harder to achieve. But lots of little specific goals, not so bad. Don't set a goal like "Good command of general vocabulary". Set a goal of "Learn words for objects in the kitchen by end of day". Or "write one full paragraph on any random topic every single day this week". Something you can do, accomplish, and feel good about. Go for something where you can have a short timeline so you can feel the accomplishment, which in turn helps your attitude and your morale.

Deadlines - "A goal is a dream with a deadline". Remember that "someday" doesn't exist, it's always just some blurry point in the distance. But if you go for specific, achievable goals due in specific time frames, these add up. Each goal may look inconsequential, and each timeline may be short, but added up, they will help you achieve fluency.

Away from the safe-haven! - Talk. Out loud. Even if it's just stupid short things, like pointing at the table and saying your language's word for table, then at the chair and saying that. Basically none of this is going to work unless you actually start using the language. Talk to your cat or dog (the cat will probably ignore you, the dog won't care what you say as long as you look like you're paying attention to him/her). Talk to yourself in the shower. Whatever it takes.

"the only way to speak a language is to open your mouth and say something," and "you should speak from Day 1 and not worry too much about making mistakes." (Benny Lewis)

And write. Stories, essays, whatever. 1 paragraph. Even if you feel like it'll make your brain melt and you feel utterly incompetent like you don't know how to say anything in the language. Use it. Yes, it's slow at first, but you really do gain speed if you keep it up.

Core Vocabulary - "The language learning process involves the use and memorization of words, structures, and sounds; however, emotions, colors, images, and memories are also involved and contribute to what I call a "language core." Acquiring this language core is extremely important if one wants to keep the language alive in their head, even long after not having used it. Moreover, it takes time to build a language core, so attempting to speed through the learning process with multiple languages can cause language cores to overlap, or simply prevent even one from forming." (Luca Lampariello, <http://www.thepolyglotdream.com/learning-more-than-one-language-at-the-same-time/>)

There simply are a core set of words without which you aren't going to feel functional in the language. Numbers, pronouns, conjunctions, and the like, plus a basic set of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs.

The trick is... which ones? Numbers, pronouns, conjunctions, and to some extent adverbs are a relatively small and fixed set, and probably not too hard to identify. But how do you select a set of nouns, adjectives, and verbs as core? Yes, there are lists, but if you never have anything to do with a farm, then farm vocabulary won't be much use to you at first. Same with other categories.

Words in your own life - I'm going to advocate for learning the words that you will use in your own daily life. This list can be a bit of a chore to compile, and will take some thought, and time. But, if you make a point, for say a week, to keep track of items you see and use around you at home, school/work, and during normal tasks like shopping or church, and of the actions you do at these, then list that out as a set of basic, core vocabulary along with the basic adjective pairs like good/bad, and colors, you now have a huge chunk of the vocabulary you will want to know in your language in order to "live" in it.

Tools - There are a ton of these. Mnemosyne, AnyMemo, take your pick. Or, if you're old fashioned, 3x5 cards make a great way to make study lists and carry them with you.

As for where to get words, if the above suggestions aren't enough, pick up a copy of "First 1000 words in X" or Barron's vocabulary series, as these have nicely categorized sets of words.

Use them! - I cannot stress this enough. Having great tools, lists of important core words, and a well-developed language you love, won't make you fluent. The only thing that makes you comfortable in a language is **using** it. A lot. Often. Whenever you can find a way to work it into your life, do it.

Morning pages - these are a technique from "The Artist's Way" by Julia Cameron. As a way of encouraging creativity, clearing out the mind, and letting your creative self come out, she recommends writing 3 pages, longhand, of literally whatever pops into your mind, every morning.

I suggest that three pages, in your conlang, is a whole lot of writing. Now, if you're retired and have long, leisurely mornings, then go for it, as I'm sure it'll help. But, even if you drop that to one page, and go with a small format notepad, the act of committing to write one page every morning, even if it's meaningless drivel, will get you in the habit of **using** the language, which is the all-important key.

Notes and lists - Do you have meetings? Classes? Go to church? Attend workshops or conferences? Try to take your notes in your language. Even if you just do 1/10th of the notes to start with, you're using the language in a context that is important to you, and those words will stick. Then, later, go back and have a look at your notes and pick out a dozen words you didn't know (and thus couldn't take the note in your language), and study those intensely until you know them. In this way, you will build up your vocabulary, and get used to using the language in a life context. Same thing for lists. Do shopping lists, or to-do lists, in your language. And only in your language. Then work from them as you're doing your shopping or tasks.

Translation and writing - Both useful tools, but a bit more concentrated. At the same time, translation is a great way to get used to actually wording things in the language. Start with smaller, simpler pieces. Elementary school age text books and readers are good for this. Or, if you have textbooks for learning a natlang, take the short readings and conversations out of those and translate them. Yes, cultural context can be a problem here! But probably no more so than if you are translating a conversation or a story from a remote so-called primitive tribe in New Guinea into English or French. Writing is doing your own original work, in this case. The vast majority of my writing has been journals, in fact I'm not comfortable doing these in any language **but** Alurhsa now.

Sound and video - These, for me, were really stepping out of my comfort zone. But I think they are one of the most important tools. If you find you're feeling uncomfortable or not ready for the sort of random monologues of talking out loud to your cat or dog or in the shower, then practice first by taking something you've written (short!) and recording yourself speaking it. Also, consider recording a fair amount of that in order to provide yourself with the opportunity otherwise unavailable to you of actually **hearing** your language spoken!

Breathe the language! - in other words, make it natural, unconscious, just something you do.

Resources:

Fluent in 3 Months (Benny Lewis) <http://fluentin3months.com>

<http://www.lingholic.com/>

The Great Hall of Conlexology (on Facebook)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/384249394990697/>