

I Make Languages (and you can too)

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Slides:

<http://conlang.org/toorcamp.pdf>

Conlang = Constructed Language

A language

can communicate what's needed

(Usually) for human use

not programming

Made intentionally

neologisms / jargons don't count

Lots of motivations

A posteriori conlang

Derived from existing language(s)

alt-historic

“What if Japan invaded Scotland?”

accessibility

“What's easiest (for Europeans) to learn?”

laziness

“Why bother making a new grammar?”

A priori conlang

Made up **from scratch**

philosophical / logical

“Etymology = ontology”

personal aesthetic

“*Qapla'* sounds cool”

do something new (caveat: ANADEW)

“A verbless language?”

Artlang = Artistic language

Teonaht (*a priori*)

Keyst, helepmivarn! ta nikkyam perim uom ihhai rrõhhõnt,
uom ihhai ferrefib, uom ihhai oy preib ven elepmibjo.

Consider: there are books that are secret, books that are
lost, and books that are known and well-read.

Spoken by cat-people in an alternate world

Has very elaborate attached culture

Total dictatorship, no intention to be learned

Mainly for author's personal enjoyment

Auxlang = Auxiliary Language

Esperanto (*a posteriori*)

La abeloj havas felon, sed ili ne taŭgas por karesi.

Bees have fur, but they're no good for petting

Very widely spoken (for a conlang) - 100k~2M

Actual living language now (~1k native speakers!)

Very Eurocentric :(

Flamewar magnet (“Highlander syndrome”)

Engineered / Philosophical language

Ithkuil (*a priori*)



Oumpeá äx'ääuktëx

On the contrary, I think it may turn out that this rugged mountain range trails off at some point.

Maximum information density

Highly structured

Top-down design

Partially con-

Korean writing (*Hangul*)

created & instituted by king overnight

Modern **Hebrew**

was dead for centuries, then back-derived

Signed Exact English (*SEE*)

combination of English grammar & ASL vocab

French ?

regulated by l'Académie française (... or they try)

etc

How do I **start**?

Scope

names? phrases? full language?

Genre

art, aux, enge, etc

Aesthetic

phonaesthetics, conculture, etc

Defining feature(s)

insert cool idea here

Let's pretend...

Full scale *a priori* artlang

Language: “Drytok”

People: “Drushek”

aliens

low tech

no vocal chords



Step 1: Phonology

[Phonetic] inventory – what sounds?

p t q p' t' q' s' z' n k' r' f s l z c x h r p* t* z* k* o

Clicks! Ejectives! But no voice = few vowels. :(

/Phonemic/ inventory – what “sounds the same”?

ignore aspiration; t^hore “=” store

Phonotactics – what goes in a syllable?

'Syllable' built on (semi)vowels: x h r o

Onsets: TBD on experimentation (choking hazard?)

Step 2: Orthography

Optional!

(Usually) map sounds to written symbols, ish

... or maybe sound *and* meaning, à la Chinese

(Bonus points) make a font?

Cheap: <http://fontifier.com>

Hardcore: RYO? \$\$\$ for FontLab Studio?

For now: Simple (?) Romanization

/tr/ -> r, /!/ -> z*, etc

Step 3: Morphosyntax

What goes where with what?

1st big choice – Basic Word Order:

SOV - 男は犬を見た。

SVO – The man looked at the dog.

VSO – Ua nana ke kane i ka 'īlio.

.... etc.

2nd – Isolating? Synthetic? Agglutinating?

Lots more...

Thomas Payne – *Describing Morphosyntax*

Step 4: Translate something

Traditional: The Babel Text (Genesis 11:1-9)

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech...

Artsy: Pick a poem (e.g. North Wind and the Sun)

Concultural: Make your own

V2&=sx:w.q't. s'.s' pr.np'. D5^Q5=V2&=zn.t'.z* P4&^D1>>tf.p*.o.

Those two, the Great Wind and the sun, with respect to 'their' strength were arguing...

Step 5...N,000,000: **Revise**

Languages change over time

make proto-Dritok? hillbilly Dritok?

You think of new cool tweaks

make Dritok a signed language too?

The old stuff is now “ungrammatical”

Dritok is actually now *r'.z*w.*

You've got gaps

How *do* you handle subordinate locative clauses in middle voice anyway?

Step X: Publish

Write some stories in it

Put a writeup online

Do a Conlang Relay

like “Telephone” / “Chinese Whispers”

... but translating to a new language at each step

P.S. Guess what? Donald Booser's *Dritok* exists.

<http://kryslan.pbworks.com/Dritok>

<http://podcast.conlang.org/2009/02/dritok-the-sound-of-no-voice-speaking>

Me?

Gripping language w/ Alex Fink

STFW & YouTube (saizai)

communicated through touch

undetectable

full language, not just Masonic handshakes

e.g. metaconversation

Internet resources

CONLANG mailing list @ Brown

Zompist Bulletin Board

Omniglot

LCS Podcast & Conference (subscribe!)

Recent books, too

Sarah Higley – *Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language*

Arika Okrent – *In the Land of Invented Languages*

Want more?

conlang.org

[/press.php](http://conlang.org/press.php) = lots of info

podcast.conlang.org

conference.conlang.org

library.conlang.org