Ex Nihilo Ad…

Language Creation Society

with Jim Henry, Jeff Jones, David J. Peterson, Erin Peterson, and Sylvia Sotomayor

69th Annual World Science Fiction Convention

Reno, Nevada

August 18, 2011
“At some point in the next century, the number of invented languages will probably overtake the number of surviving natural languages.”

-Cullen Murphy (October, 1995)
In the Beginning...

* Projected (mid 21st century)
Lingua Ignota

The first conlang.

Hildegarde von Bingen
(1098-1179)

Aigonz - God
Burizindiz - fire
Cliuanz - bone
Diriz - ring
Ermosiz - goldfinch
Flauriz - pelican
Gulsich - bucket
Harzima - field
Inimois - human
The Philosophical Languages

John Wilkins

Solresol
1827

Bâlaibalan
14th Century

1668

Ro Language

\[ \text{taq} \quad "\text{year}" \]

\[ \text{taqi} \quad "\text{annually}" \]

\[ \text{taqzaw} \quad "\text{century}" \]

\[ \text{taqzayo} \quad "\text{millenium}" \]
One Lang to Rule Them All

Esperanto vs. Volapük vs. Ido

- Idiom Neutral
- Spokil
- Bolak
- Mundolinco
- Adjuvilo
- Occidental
- Novial
- Sona
- Intal
- Mondial
- Interglossa
- Interlingua
- Frater
- Modern IE...

★ Culturally neutral.
★ Easy to learn.
★ Completely regular.
★ Western (vocabulary and structure).
★ Guiding socio-political ideals.
The Impact of the Internet

❖ 1995: Jeffrey Henning begins sending out the Model Languages newsletter.
❖ ~1996: Model Languages becomes Langmaker.com. Henning begins to catalog every known conlang on his site.
❖ 1997: The Auxlang list splits off from the Conlang list.
❖ 1999: The first conlang relay.
❖ 2004: The Conlang flag is created.
❖ 2006: The First Language Creation Conference.
❖ 2007: Language Creation Society founded.
❖ ~2009: No longer possible to keep track of the number of conlangs in any reliable way.
Why?

Pure enjoyment.
Best Practices

Mass Conlanger Collaboration

1991-2011

Today: What we’ve learned; how you can benefit thereby.
First Step

Form four groups.

Goal: To create a model conlang (plausibly human) incrementally from the ground up.
Sound System

Oral Stops
Nasal Stops
Fricatives
Affricates
Trills/Taps
Laterals
Glides
Vowels
Pronouns and Modification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
<th>Hawaiian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>él</td>
<td>hän</td>
<td>ia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>ella</td>
<td>hän</td>
<td>ia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>él/ella</td>
<td>se</td>
<td>ia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- oquichtli “man”
- noquich “my man”
- moquich “your man”
- toquich “our man”

his car
the man’s car
arabasınının
adam araba

red car
su carro rojo
makinë e kuqe
makinë e tij të kuqe

blue hat(s)
chapeau(x) bleu(s)
blue car(s)
voiture(s) bleue(s)

çocuk araba “the boy’s car”
çocuğun kırmızı araba “the boy’s red car”
Sound Change

je parle
tu parles
il parle
ils parlent

All languages change over time.

Sound change can be used to produce irregularities.
Ease of Articulation

- leaf > leaves
- hoof > hooves
- bath > bathe
- house > house

Daisuke Kinoshita gakusei sutoraiki

evde > “in the house”
tavanda > “on the ceiling”
örtüde > “on the roof”
topta > “on the ball”

yaktubu > yaktub “he writes” (indicative)
yaktuba > yaktub “that he writes” (subjunctive)
yaktubi > yaktub “let him write” (jussive)
Misapprehension

noctem > notte
lactis > latte
octo > otto
pectus > petto

realistic(ally)
fam(i)ly
comf(or)ta(r?)ble
gover(n)ment
lib(e)ral

publically
mischievious
triathlon

whiskey
money
honey
etc.

tobacky
Missoura
## New Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novel Root Creation</th>
<th>cialis, gleak, xerox, viagra (<em>also</em> pokedex, filk, <em>etc.</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compounding</td>
<td>capped heron, whistling heron, boat-billed heron, white-crested tiger-heron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affixation</td>
<td>computer &gt; computery, kitten &gt; kittenish, adjudicate &gt; readjudicate, smarmy &gt; smarminess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphorical Extension</td>
<td>hand (body part &gt; worker), run (physically &gt; make work), green (color &gt; inexperienced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduplication</td>
<td>like &gt; <em>like-like</em>, <em>kitap</em> “book” &gt; <em>kitapmitap</em> “books and related material”, ‘<em>au</em> “swim” &gt; ‘<em>au’au</em> “bathe”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Verbatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tense vs. Aspect</strong></th>
<th>sit, sat vs. <em>(k)e noho, ua noho</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person Marking</strong></td>
<td>sit<del>sits, brauche</del>brauchst<del>brauchen</del>braucht, canto<del>canta</del>cantas<del>cantan</del>cantamos~cantaís</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exponentence</strong></td>
<td>sit-s<del>sät, graf-o</del>e-graf-a, ua noho<del>ke noho nei, have eaten</del>will have eaten~will have been eaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language-Specific</strong></td>
<td>moods: optative, subjunctive, potential, jussive... voices: passive, middle... agreement, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More Aspect</strong></td>
<td>honorific: peer to peer, adult to child, child to adult evidentiality: first-hand knowledge, hearsay, none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Borrowing

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Phonological Modification</strong></th>
<th>lingerie &gt; “lawn juray”, front &gt; furonto, zaytuun &gt; aceituna, kitaab &gt; kitap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonological Incorporation</strong></td>
<td>film “film” &gt; aflam “films” (Arabic) kitabu “book” &gt; vitabu “books” (Swahili)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specificity and Generality</strong></td>
<td>mouton “sheep” &gt; mutton, sombrero, albondiga, salsa pantaloons (&lt; Italian theater character Pantalone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drift</strong></td>
<td>front &gt; furonto &gt; “reception desk” animation &gt; anime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rejection and Translation</strong></td>
<td>conical hat, rice hat, etc. (&lt; Chinese 斗笠 dǒuli) spring roll (&lt; Chinese 春卷 chūn jǔan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greetings, Farewells, Etc.

Goodbye > God be with ye

Aloha > love

Salvē > be healthy

Nǐ hǎo > you good

As-salaam ʿalaykum > peace upon you

Merci > mercēs “wages, fee, price”

Shukran > from root “to praise, to laud”

Thank > “good thoughts” > “thought”
To Have, to Need…

Verbs: I have..., I need...

Preposition/Phrase: ‘andii..., Ana bi’haajatin ila... (Arabic)

Mixed: J’ai... J’ai besoin de... (French)

Etymologies: tener “to hold”, besoin > “look after” (?), bi’haajatin “lack” (cf. English “want”), ‘and > “to resist, obstinate”, brauchen > “to use”
And…
That’s just the tip of the iceberg.

Thank you for participating!