Questions for the interview

There are different kinds of questions as you will see. These are for now a basis; I will probably ask further questions depending on your answers.
Just so you know, I've never watched any show on which you have worked on… So my questions are based on almost nothing (if it's not on some interview like the one for Vanity Fair…)
I don't know if you speak French but for some questions, I've put the question also in French because I find it to be clearer; but I'll try to avoid that as much as possible

Also, don't hesitate to give examples, to make the points clearer. They can only make my teacher and I happy.

- Briefly present yourself (Age, nationality, origins, job, etc)

- My name is David Peterson. I'm 39 years old and American, born in Long Beach, California in the United States. I am a language creator, or conlanger (note the spelling).

- What did you study in high school? What did you study in university?

- We don't specialize in high school in the United States. I attended UC Berkeley where I received a bachelor's degree in English (what we call the study of literature) and a bachelor's degree in Linguistics. I then went to UC San Diego where I received a master's degree in Linguistics.

- How did you come to know linguistics and what do yo particularly appreciate about it? What is your favorite field of study?

- My mother told me about linguistics, which I hadn't heard of, and I discovered a course on linguistics at my university that would fulfill a general university requirement, so I took it. After that I enjoyed it so much I decided to add linguistics as a field of study. I found it fun to study many different languages at once, after a few years of studying individual languages on my own. My favorite field of study is literature.

- What jobs have you had in your career (linked to linguistics or not)? Did they/one of them have a significant impact on what you wanted to do for a living?

- My first job was a sandwich maker at a sandwich shop called Togo's. After that I worked very briefly at a storage library in Berkeley called the Northern Regional Library Facility. During graduate school I served as a teaching assistant for a number of different university linguistics courses at UC San Diego. After I left graduate school I taught freshman composition at a community college called Fullerton College for two years. Since 2009 I've been a professional language creator and have worked on more than 20 shows and films. I didn't intend that to make a living being a language creator, but it's worked out that way so far—at least for the past 11 years. I may not be able to do it one day, at which point I'll do something else.

- Do you have other professional activities other than colanging?

- Everything I earn is directly related to conlanging, be it creating languages for shows or films, writing books about those languages, or speaking at universities about my job.

- What pushed you to be a colanger? What do you (really) like about your job?

- I started creating languages in colleges when I thought up the idea of creating my own language. That was in 2000. I've continued to do it ever since because I've continued to enjoy. Note that a conlanger is not someone who necessarily makes money: Just someone who creates languages. I created languages for ten years before I got a job to do so. I never expected I would have a job creating languages, since no one in history before me has earned their living creating languages. It wasn't something I planned for or pursue. After all this time, the thing I enjoy most about the job is creating the language itself—more so even than using it.

- By the way, could you define your job as a colanger?

- My job as a conlanger (short for constructed language maker) is to create one or more languages for a production according to the specifications of the producers, writers, and/or director. After I've done that, my job is very similar to that of a translator, except that I have to continue to create words in the language to be able to translate new material.

- What are some languages you created and for which series/film ?

- I can verify that the list here is accurate: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_J._Peterson

Series/movies	Languages

Questions about your job in general:

- What is involved in creating a language? What do you have to take into account?

- A language comprises every aspect of its phonology and grammar, and sometimes a writing system. The conlanger must create every sound and syllable and every word of the language.

- When creating a language, are sociolinguistics taken into account? How so?

- Whether they are or not, they are there. No language exists in a vacuum.

- When you have to write a text in one of your fictional languages, do you have to translate it from English to Dothraki (or are you given the key ideas)? If you have to **translate**, do you sometimes have to significantly change the script for some reasons? What reasons would these be?

- Most of the time I am given dialogue to translate. It's rare that I'm allowed to write the dialogue on my own. I am generally given artistic license to translate the line as I see fit, so long as it retains the sense of the original. The reasons for doing so are, for the most part, that English is a dense language, with a lot of meaning packed into each syllable. The languages I create are often not as dense as that, which means that turns of phrase often need to be employed to achieve the same effect.

- Do you also create alphabets to your created languages? If so, do you pick and choose from different languages? Have you ever created *letters*?

- I have often created scripts for my languages, though I don't always get to for the shows and films I work on. Those I have created scripts for are *Defiance, Star-Crossed, Bright, Another Life, The Witcher, Shadow and Bone*, and probably a few others I'm forgetting. If you simply pick and choose letters from other languages you're not creating a script. That's nothing more than a cipher. When I create scripts, I create them, and that includes glyphs.

- Do some of your languages use ideograms, pictograms and/or phonograms?

- None of the languages I've created for shows do so, because the time required and cost would be extensive. I've done so for my own languages before, though.

- Do you use the phonetic alphabet so that the cast and crew pronounce the words correctly? Do you work by their sides to help them with the pronunciation?

- No. The cast and crew can't read the phonetic alphabet, so I have to use my own method. Plus, I record all the lines on MP3, so all they need to do is listen and repeat. More often than not I do not work with the actors. When I do, they do better.

About Dothraki:

- From which languages or which language families have you inspired yourself? Or is Dothraki a language isolate (*isolat*)?

- Dothraki is an a priori language, which means that it does not draw any grammar or vocabulary from any existing language. This is appropriate, as the world in *Game of Thrones* is not our world, but a fictional one.

- Do you inspire yourself from dead languages?

- Same answer as above.

- What linguistic elements have you drawn out of the languages you inspired yourself from (if there are some)? *Quelles spécificités linguistiques avez-vous retiré des langues qui vous ont inspiré (s'il y en a) ?*

- Same answer as above.

- What are some specificities proper to Dothraki?

- All languages have elements in common with all other languages. The difference is whether or not they're related. For example, in France you can say *Je vais a manger* for "I'm going to eat". In Spanish you can say *Voy a comer* for the same construction using the same conjugation of the same word and the same preposition. This isn't surprising because the two languages are related, and the construction derives from the same source. However in French also you would say *J'ai mangé des pommes* for "I ate apples". In Finnish, you use a very similar construction in *Söin omenoita*, where *omenoita* is not written as a direct object, but as a kind of genitival construction—very similar to *des pommes* as opposed to *les pommes*. It would be silly to say that the Finnish was inspired by the French, though. The two languages aren't related. They just happen to do the same thing.

That is also the case with Dothraki. Everything that happens in Dothraki happens in some other language—or many other languages—but not on purpose: Just as an accident of its history. Dothraki has five noun cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, allative, ablative) and three tenses (past, present, future). Its adjectives agree with its nouns in case and number, and the adjectives have several degrees of comparison. Dothraki has some auxiliaries used for specific moods, and its general word order is SVO.