Klingon 101:
Linguistics via
Constructed Languages

Explore UT
March 4, 2006

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What is Linguistics?

- Semantics/Lexicon
  - Word meaning
- Phonetics/Phonology
  - Sounds
- Morphology
  - Word building
- Syntax
  - Making words into sentences
- Sociolinguistics
  - The interaction of language and society
What is a Constructed Language?

• Codes & Naming Languages
  • Morse code, *Watership Down’s* “Lapine”
  • Most fictional languages are naming languages

• Modified Natural Languages
  • Yodish

• Fictional/Plot-driven Languages
  • Klingon, Vulcan, Láadan
  • Tolkien’s languages

• Auxiliary Languages
  • Esperanto, Ido, Novial
So, how do these two fit?

• The “four subfields” of linguistics are not easily separated in natural languages.

• Constructed languages (ConLangs) allow each subfield to be addressed without the “noise” encountered in natural languages.
Course Layout

• 2 sections: SWC and non-SWC
• “Traditional” homeworks
  • Language exercises using Klingon and Esperanto
  • SWC: 3 short essay papers
  • Final project or research paper
• Online homework
  • Discussion board on LiveJournal
  • Searching for new ConLangs
  • Created our own class ConLang
• Class Participation
  • Large participation grade (15~20%)
Semantics ~
Codes & Naming Languages

• Klingonaase (the other Klingon language)
  – John M. Ford’s *The Final Reflection*

• Lingua Ignota
  – St. Hildegard von Bingen

• Lapine, the Language of the Rabbits
  – Richard Adams’s *Watership Down*
    • *embleer* stinking
    • *elil* enemies
    • *frith* the sun (personified)
    • *inle* moonrise
    • *hrair* an uncountably large number
    • *rah* prince, leader, chief rabbit
    • *Frithrah!* An exclamation (lit. “The Lord Sun”)
Phonetics/Phonology & Writing

- What do letters sound like?
  - Using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

![THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 1993)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Postalveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Pharyngeal</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p b</td>
<td>t d</td>
<td>t d</td>
<td>c j</td>
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<td>Nasal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>φ β</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>θ ð</td>
<td>s z</td>
<td>ʃ ʒ s z</td>
<td>θ j x y</td>
<td>χ k h f</td>
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<td>Lateral fricative</td>
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<td>Approximant</td>
<td>u j</td>
<td>r l</td>
<td>j w</td>
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<td>Lateral approximant</td>
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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.
• **Klingonaase:**
  • *kh’ex* :: corpse
  • *kilaan* :: unit of time

• **Gargish**
  • Ultima game series, Origin Systems
  • Latin derived
  • Excellent orthography
  • *p, b, m, f, v, u* (across)
  • *p, t, ch, kl, k* (down)
Morphology

• **SolReSol**
  - Only 7 syllables, based on musical scale
    - do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si

• **Láadan**
  - **Speech Acts**
    • *Bíi* :: declarative  *báa* :: question
    • *Bó* :: command  *bóo* :: request
    • *Bé* :: promise  *bée* :: warning
  - **Evidentials**
    • *wa* :: perceived by speaker directly
    • *we* :: perceived by speaker in a dream
    • *wáa* :: assumed false by speaker b.c. speaker distrusts source of information
• Yodish
  • “Sleeping he was.”

• Klingon
  – “yaS legh puq”
  • yaS :: officer
  • legh :: see/saw
  • puq :: child
  – “The child sees/saw the officer.”
    • Klingon is Object-Verb-Subject (OVS)
Sociolinguistics… the grab bag

• The sociolinguistic aspect covers nearly everything else.
  – Auxiliary languages intended for world communication
  – Theoretical implications behind different ConLangs
  – Who creates ConLangs and Why?
  – What makes a ConLang “good” or “bad”?
Auxiliary Languages (AuxLangs)

• AuxLang Boom ~1850-1930
• History of “the World” (aka Europe)
• Why an AuxLang?
  – Natural Languages have “cultural baggage”
  – Easily learnable by everyone
• Problems with AuxLangs
  – Overly simple: SolReSol
  – Euro-centric: Esperanto, Ido, Novial
  – Carry their own “cultural baggage”
• Current & Future state of AuxLangs
  – Esperanto & the E.U.
Linguistic Theory & ConLangs

• Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
  – “linguistic determinism”
  – “linguistic relativism”

• Sexist Language
  – Láadan, the Woman’s Language
    • Suzette Haden Elgin, Native Tongue Trilogy

• Pragmatics & Metaphor
  – Darmok
    • Star Trek: The Next Generation, season five, episode 202

• Phonosemantics
  – Magic Languages: Abracadabra, Theban, etc.
Who creates ConLangs and Why?

- **Writers**
  - J.R.R. Tolkien
    - Wrote books to showcase languages

- **Gamers**
  - Ultima
    - Gargish
  - AD&D
    - Tons of fan-languages

- **ConLanging as a Hobby**
  - The vast majority of ConLangs are “hobby languages”

- **Linguists**
  - Test linguistic theories
    - Language acquisition
    - Computational linguistics
Critical Evaluation of ConLangs

• What was the purpose of the language?

• Are all four linguistic subfields considered?

• Are any oddities of the language explained?

• Does it claim to be something it is not?
So, how did it all work out?

• Wonderfully!
• Even so, there were problems:
  – LiveJournal participation was a bit uneven
  – Required readings were all online
  – Didn’t require a basic Klingon or Esperanto workbook
  – Final projects varied widely in scope and complexity
Final Projects of Note:

- Evan Wilson’s translation of a stanza of “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” into SolReSol
- Ellen Julstrom, Carlie Zumwalt, & Troy Ruldolph’s “UT Recruitment Video” in Klingon
- Andrew Adey’s creation of “The Gi’th Language”
- Taylor Hardee’s “Klingon Flashcards”
- Norman Friis’s creation of a Lojban orthography
- Karen Brown’s “Dual Translation…”
- Lasse Christensen’s Orthographic extensions for Láadan
LIN 312: Invented Languages: Klingon and Beyond…

• Instructor: Doug Bigham
• E-mail: dsbigham@mail.utexas.edu
• Course Websites:
  https://webspace.utexas.edu/bighamds/LIN312/LIN312WebHome.htm
  http://community.livejournal.com/lin312_klingon/

• Sections: 42990, T/Th, 8-9:30am (SWC)  
  Fall 2006 43015, T/Th, 3:30-5pm