

Ling 80K

Invented Languages: From Elvish to Esperanto

1. Administrative Information

Instructor:

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Logistics:

Website: Canvas

Prerequisites: none.

General education: This course fulfills the Textual Analysis general education requirement.

This is a course about constructed languages, the languages that people deliberately devise, and the way those languages relate to (or differ from) natural languages, the languages that arise from the self-organizing nature of human communities. Constructed languages are well-known in science fiction and fantasy literature as ways of contributing to the fleshing out of a novel world, but the history and purposes of constructed languages is much more complex. Part of this course's goal is to chart the various creations of these languages and understand what may unite and divide these forms of creation. We will focus on making clear in what ways the form of the language reflects the aesthetic, political, ethical, or interpretive intentions of the creators.

Our analysis of the form of these languages will be that of contemporary mainstream generative linguistics, the modern science of language, which focuses on describing and explaining patterns of variation in languages of the world. Using the tools of modern linguistics, we will analyze the properties of various constructed languages, and use that analysis to make clearer the form-intention connection.

We will look at several extant examples of constructed languages, but, in addition, we as a class will collaboratively build our own language (a “classlang”) to more fully understand the kinds of decisions language creators face and how they go about making them.

No previous work in linguistics is presupposed.

2 Learning Outcomes

The overall aim of this course is to give you tools to understand the linguistics and extra-linguistic features of constructed languages. Concretely, you should expect to learn:

- How to describe the attested sound inventories, word formation, and syntactic structures in natural languages as well as the relative frequencies of various patterns
- How constructed and natural languages are similar and different in these terms
- What aesthetic, ethical, and political goals have motivated the creation of constructed languages.
- How these constructed language creators connect their goals to the form of the languages they make.

3 Schedule

This course has two parallel threads. In the thematic (or learning) thread, you will learn about existing conlangs. In the classlang thread, you will work on concrete language construction tasks, including helping to build our class language (a classlang).

This course is almost entirely asynchronous; the majority of the content is from pre-recorded lectures. You will also have to interact with your discussion group a few times a week and meet with me and a few dozen students once during the session.

3.1 Learning Thread

The Learning Thread is comprised of 26 sections, organized into eight modules: historical overview and tour (1 section), basic sounds (5 sections), sound symbolism and change (3 sections), words (5 sections), syntax (2 sections), a language tour (3 sections), and conclusion (1 unit).

This course is an intensive 5-credit course, equal to 150 hours in a conventional classroom setting (including the time you spend preparing, studying, and completing homework assignments).

For the first set of modules, each unit consists of the following (with recommended times):

- 1-3 video lectures, each followed by a brief comprehension quiz [1/2 hr]
- a reading assignment, and possibly a video watching assignment [1 hr]

For the final modules, each unit is part of a series of structured language learning exercises (a running tutorial interspersed with short quizzes). In the seventh module, the interesting features of 3 languages (Toki Pona, Ladan, and Lojban) is very quickly presented. Each language should take roughly 1-2 hours to work through.

The ninth and final module will require you to translate a short story from our language (4.5 hours of work).

3.2 Classlang Thread

Beyond the material you will be learning, in each week of the course you will be asked to do some combination of the following activities:

- learn about and comment on an existing conlang [30 min]
- a concrete conlang exercise [1 hr]
- a series of assignments to add to our classlang [1 hr]

In addition, we will have three classwide discussions about our evolving classlang, with dates to be decided. You are required to participate in one of these meetings.

4 Requirements

This course has 6 graded requirements:

- participation (10% of grade)
- classlang assessments (10% of grade)
- language explorations (10% of grade)
- comprehension assessments (20% of grade)
- weekly activities (20% of grade)
- final translation/exercise (30% of grade)

I have used these percentages to arrive at the points for each assignment that are given on Canvas. To compute your grade, you just have to keep track of points on Canvas (no need to weight assignments).

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 97-100: A+ | 87-89: B+ | 77-79: C+ | 67-69: D+ |
| 94-96: A | 84-86: B | 74-76: C | 64-66: D |
| 90-93: A- | 80-83: B- | 70-73: C- | 60-63: D- |
| | | | 00-59: F |

4.1 Video Lecture

Each unit in the course contains a series of video lectures that synthesize the concepts in the reading. Most of them are followed by short comprehension questions to assess your understanding. Treat these videos like class lectures – find a distraction free space and take notes.

4.2 Readings

This course has three books:

- **Arika Okrent, *In the Land of Invented Languages: A Celebration of Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius*. Spiegel & Grau: 2010. (required)**
- David J. Peterson, *The Art of Language Invention: From Horse-Lords to Dark Elves, the Words behind World-Building*. Penguin: 2015.
- Mark Rosenfelder, *The Language Construction Kit*. Yonagu Books: 2010.

All of these are available online, both as physical books and electronic titles. It's fine to get whatever edition is handy. The first book (by Okrent) is **required** and includes crucial information that isn't covered in lectures. The other two are **optional**, and cover similar material to that covered in lectures, and you may purchase one or the other if you want some textual

versions of the content. I recommend the Peterson and Rosenfelder because otherwise there really isn't a textbook that covers that technical material of the course. I think both the Rosenfelder and Peterson have pluses and minuses. The Rosenfelder is more technical, the Peterson more conversational. But neither is technically required.

In addition, as indicated above, the course will also require additional supplementary articles/book extracts will be available on Canvas (on the "Readings" section of "Files"). I will draw from the required reading for the online assignments.

Finally, we will watch a recent movie about language construction at the start of the course. You can watch this video either through Amazon Prime or the [UCSC library](#).

4.3 Participation

Your participation grade is 10% and is determined by how actively you are involved in the intellectual life of the class (classlang exercises, online discussions, live meetings, and office hours).

As 3% of participation, you will be asked to participate in ONE live, synchronous meeting via Discord/Zoom. I will schedule three 1 hr meetings for the whole class, dates and times provided [here](#). These will focus on our class language, but you are more than welcome to raise issues as well. The meetings will be conducted via Discord and Zoom. Information on using Discord is available on the Canvas coursesite. Again, you are required to come to ONE of these three meetings (but are more than welcome at all of them).

As 3% of participation, you will be asked to post comments to our online discussion group (roughly weekly).

Finally, I will ask you each to complete two online experiments during the session, for a total of 1% of your grade. These will be no more than 30 minutes each; more information about this is available on Canvas (under "Experiments").

4.4 Classlang assessments & Language Explorations

You will be asked to add to our classlang roughly weekly. These assignments are separate from the video/reading quizzes. They will be worth 10% of your grade. Your explorations of existing conlangs in modules seven will be 10% as well.

4.5 Comprehension Assignments

Each unit will feature assignments to assess comprehension of the lecture and assigned readings. The assessments will consist of multiple choice and matching questions principally, but may

feature short answer questions. Assessments are designed to be completed in at most a one 1 hour sitting. These questions will amount to roughly 20% of your grade.

4.6 Weekly Activities

In addition to comprehension quizzes, you'll have more open-ended tasks each week (e.g., looking in dictionaries online and thinking through the implications or doing translations). These will be worth 20% of your grade.

4.7 Final Response

The final response will be a summative exercise, asking you to integrate your newfound knowledge to more precisely critique a constructed language. The final will consist of a final translation exercise and a short essay (under 700 words).

4.8 Late Work Policy

No late work will be accepted for this course. Because this is an online course, the material covered in quizzes is presented right after it is due, which means that there is no possibility of making that work up. However, the workload is pretty evenly distributed across the quarter, so if you happen to miss a small assignment, it will likely not be a huge deal.

5 Expectations about communication and deadlines

I will communicate with you via Discord or Canvas. On my end, I promise to post all the assigned readings, assignments, and any updates promptly. On yours, I expect you to enable whatever settings allow you to receive Discord and Canvas updates most efficiently. My advice is that you route everything to non-digest email as well as check the Canvas page for this course daily, but making sure that you receive my updates promptly is your responsibility.

6 Getting Help: Office hours

Because this course is online, it is important to me that we create as many opportunities for you to talk with us. We have virtual office hours throughout the week. If none of these is a workable option for you, please email us. I am happy to accommodate reasonable requests.

7 DRC Accommodations

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment,

preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, we would also like to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. We encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

8 Academic Honesty

As always, the work you complete for this course must be your own work and must meet basic standards of honesty. Be sure and familiarize yourself with University policies and procedures related to Academic Integrity: <https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academicintegrity>. We will apply these policies very strictly.

While we encourage you to meet with each other and talk with each other, it's important that your work is your own. That means that your words have to be yours and yours alone. It also means that when you get an idea from someone else, credit them.

8.1 Matters of Etiquette

In this class, we treat each other with respect and compassion. That means we do not show annoyance at someone else's confusion, nor laugh at people's questions (unless intended).

If you feel like you're being systematically marginalized, please let one of us know.

Finally, a brief word about email: I try to respond to email as quickly as possible, but I have a life outside this classroom. Here are my promised response latencies: a) during the week, 24 hours; b) during the weekend, by Monday morning. That means, in particular, that I will guiltlessly file away hurried questions to me on Thursday evening or Friday morning. I'm sorry to be so harsh, but I found out the hard way that otherwise I'm besieged with messages while trying to eat breakfast.

Orientation and Course Introductions

(start here first! **Complete this material by July 26th**)

Content

Read

- All material in Orientation Module
- All material in Course Introductions Module

Submissions (due: **July 26th**)

Quizzes

- Orientation Quiz (does not count toward grade)
- Survey for Synchronous Sessions (4 pts)
- Introducing Yourself (3 pts)

Assignments

- Add a Canvas Profile Picture (0 pts)
- Canvas Practice: Upload a file (3 pts)
- Canvas Practice: Upload a sound file (3 pts)
- Add a Zoom profile picture (0 pts)
- Join Discord (3 pts)
- Zoom Practice: Chat (3 pts)

Discussion Posts

- What's your "office" like? (3 pts)
- Introducing Yourself (1 pt) [note that this is distinct from the quiz]
- Conlang comment: Dovahzul vs. Animalese (3 pts)

Orientation and Course Introductions Total: 26 pts

Cumulative Total: 26 pts

At the end of each module's schedule, I give the total points for that module and the cumulative total for the whole course up to that point. Totals include points for only required assignments; extra credit points are not included in the totals. Your grade is directly reflected by how many points you have. To find out how you're doing, simply take the number of points you have (required assignments + extra credit) and divide it by the cumulative total.

Class 1 [2 modules!!!]

Content

Watch

- Conlanging* movie (link on Canvas)
- A Tour of Languages
- Intro to the IPA
- English Consonants

Read

- Peterson, Introduction and ch. 1
- Bianco (2004)

Submissions (due: **July 28th**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for Language Tour (5 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Bianco (2004) (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Conlanging movie (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Intro to the IPA (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for English Consonants (5 pts)

Exercises

- What type of classlang (poll) (4 pts)
- What's your group name? [Group Assignment] (3 pts) **coordinate!!!**

Discussion Posts

- Favorite language in "Conlanging" (3 pts)

Class 1 Total: 27 pts

Cumulative Total: 53 pts

Class 2

Content

Watch

- English Vowels
- Articulation
- Places of Articulation
- Manners of Articulation
- Consonant Grid

Read

- Peterson, ch. 1

Attend

- First Classlang online meeting scheduled for **Monday, August 1, 8-9 pm** [zoom link]
 - TOPIC: what kind of language we should make

Submissions (due: **August 2nd**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for English Vowels (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Articulation (4 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Places of Articulation (5 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Manners of Articulation (5 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Consonant Grid (2 pts)

Exercises

- What type of consonants (poll) (4 pts)
- Transcription Quiz (4 pts)

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: aUI vs. Solresol (3 pts)

Class 2 Total: 30 pts

Cumulative Total: 83 pts

Class 3

Content

Watch

- Inventories
- Example Inventories - Klingon
- Example Inventories - Dothraki
- English Vowel Articulation
- Example Vowel Inventories

Read

- Peterson, Introduction and ch. 1

Attend

- Second Classlang online meeting scheduled for **Thursday, August 4, 6-7 pm**
[zoom link]
 - TOPIC: what kind of consonants we should use

Submissions (due: **August 4th**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for Inventories (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Example Inventories - Klingon (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Example Inventories - Dothraki (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for English Vowel Articulation (5 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Example Vowel Inventories (9 pts)

Exercises

- Words: Beautiful, Ugly, Soft, Harsh (13 pts)

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: Na'vi, Esperanto, and the Idea of Community (3 pts)

Class 3 Total: 37 pts

Cumulative Total: 120 pts

Class 4

Content

Watch

- Phonotactics 1
- Phonotactics 2
- English phonotactics
- Quenya Phonotactics
- Dothraki Phonotactics
- Intro to Sound Symbolism
- English Sound Symbolism
- Beautiful Sounds
- Navigating an Interactive IPA Chart and Pronouncing Your Word

Read

- Rosenfelder, pp. 40-50
- Okrent, ch. 4-5

Submissions (due: **August 9th**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for Phonotactics (4 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Phonotactics 2 (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Quenya Phonotactics (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Dothraki Phonotactics (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Intro to Sound Symbolism (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for English Sound Symbolism (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Beautiful Sounds (1 pt)
- Comprehension Quiz for Okrent Ch. 4 & 5 (2 pts)

Exercises

- Make some words #1 (10 pts)
- Pronounce your word #1 (5 pts)
- Make some words #2 (10 pts)
- Pronounce your word #2 (5 pts)
- Three Sayings in Classlang [Group Assignment] (20 pts) ← due August 12th, but start earlier

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: Sindarin (3 pts)

Class 4 Total: 48 pts

Cumulative Total: 173 pts

Class 5

Content

Watch

- From Concepts to Words
- From Concepts to Words, Pt2
- What is Morphology
- Ways of Making New Words
- Borrowing: Klingon & Elvish
- Borrowing & Building: Esperanto & Ido
- Where to borrow from

Read

- Peterson, ch. 2
- Okrent, ch. 9, 22

Attend

- Third Classlang online meeting scheduled for **Friday, August 12, 2-3 pm** [zoom link]
 - TOPIC: What should our morphology be?

Submissions (due: **August 11th**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for From Concepts to Words (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for From Concepts to Words, Pt2 (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for What is Morphology (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Ways of Making New Words (1 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Borrowing: Klingon & Elvish (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Borrowing & Building: Esperanto & Ido (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Where to borrow from (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Okrent Ch. 22 (2 pts)

Exercises

- What should the morphology be? (poll) (8 pts)
- Three Sayings in Classlang [Group Assignment] (20 pts) (due Aug. 12)

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: Heptapod B - The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Part 1 (3 pts) (due Aug. 12)

(as of 08.05.22)

Class 5 Total: 49 pts

Cumulative Total: 222 pts

Class 6

Content

Watch

- A little about verbs
- Verbal participants
- Verbal change
- Verbal agreement
- Noun Morphology
- Noun Morphology: Specificity
- Noun Morphology: Case
- Noun classes

Read

- Peterson, ch. 2
- Rosenfelder, pp. 59-71

Submissions (due: **August 16th**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for A little about verbs (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Verbal participants (4 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Verbal change (5 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Verbal agreement (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Noun Morphology (1 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Noun Morphology: Specificity (1 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Noun Morphology: Case (1 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Noun classes (2 pts)

Exercises

- Volapuk Morphology, Part 1 (23 pts)
- Modify your words [group assignment] (100 pts) (due **August 18**) [group assignment]
- Alternative Assignment for Class Meetings OR Classlang Participation (36 pts)

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: Heptapod B - The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Part 2 (3 pts)

Class 6 Total: 180 pts (= 54 + 100 for group assignment + 36 for Classlang participation)

Cumulative Total: 402 pts

Class 7

Content

Watch

- Language Change
- Comparative Method
- Comparative Method: Valyrian
- Comparative Method: Elvish
- Writing Systems

Read

- Peterson, ch. 3
- Rosenfelder, pp. 40-50
- Okrent, ch. 9 & 10

Submissions (due: **August 18th**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for Language Change (1 pt)
- Comprehension Quiz for Comparative Method (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Comparative Method: Valyrian (1 pt)
- Comprehension Quiz for Comparative Method: Elvish (2 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Writing Systems (2 pts)

Exercises

- Morphology Practice (6 pts)
- Your Name in Tengwar (3 pts) (due Aug. 19)
- Choose a saying! [Group Assignment] (10 pts) (**due Aug. 19**) [group assignment]

Discussion Posts

- Our Classlang Writing System (3 pts) (due Aug. 19)

Class 7 Total: 30 pts

Cumulative Total: 432 pts

Class 8

Content

Watch

- Syntax-Basic Word Order
- Syntax- Headedness and Constituency
- Intro to Loglan/Lojban

Read

- Rosenfelder, pp. 71-79
- Burton et. al, Ch. 6
- A Taste of Toki Pona
- Okrent, Ch. 18-20

Submissions (due: **August 23rd**)

Quizzes

- Comprehension Quiz for Syntax-Basic Word Order (4 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Syntax- Headedness and Constituency (3 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Syntax- Headedness (2 pts)
- Toki Pona Exercise #1 (1 pt)
- Toki Pona Exercise #2 (4 pts)
- Toki Pona Exercise #3 (4 pts)
- Comprehension Quiz for Okrent Ch. 18-20

Exercises

- Translation Practice (10 pts)
- Practice Translating Your Saying [Group Assignment] (5 pts) (**due Aug. 23**)

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: Ptydepe (9 pts)

Class 8 Total: 42 pts

Cumulative Total: 474 pts

Class 9

Content

Read

- A Taste of Lojban
- Okrent, Ch. 22

Submissions (due: **August 25th**)

Quizzes

- Laadan Exercise #1 (3 pts)
- Laadan Exercise #2 (4 pts)
- Laadan Exercise #3 (1 pts)
- Lojban Exercise #1 (3 pts)
- Lojban Exercise #2 (2 pts)
- Lojban Exercise #3 (4 pts)
- Lojban Exercise #4 (1 pts)

Exercises

- Reflecting on Toki Pona, Laadan, and Lojban (12 pts)

Discussion Posts

- Conlang comment: palawa kani (3 pts) (EXTRA CREDIT)

Class 9 Total: 30 pts

Cumulative Total: 504 pts

Class 10

Content

Watch

none

Read

none

Submissions (due: **August 26th**)

Exercises

- Final Translation (80 pts)
- Final Translation of Saying [Group Assignment] (20 pts)
- Reflection on Classlang (120 pts)
- Tell Our Story! (15 pts)

Discussion Posts

none

Class 10 Total: 235 pts

Cumulative Total: 739 pts