

Journal

Issue 2

July 2006

Editor: Curlyjimsam



Ayeri
A real-life history

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Language of the Mulefa: a conlang by Philip Pullman.

Diachronics: their importance explored.

Using conlangs in your writing: Tzirtzi's advice.

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Contents

In this issue of the *Conlanger.com Journal*:

Page 4: The Editor writes ...

Curlyjimsam introduces this edition.

Pages 5-9: Ayeri – Menarano Amanaisa

This month's featured language.

Page 9 (lower): Script of the Month

A look at Sectori's 'Ukana'akau script.

Pages 10-12: Language of the Mulefa

The Editor explores the sketchy conlang presented in Philip Pullman's *The Amber Spyglass*.

Pages 13-14: A Diachronic Condition

The Editor presents his opinion on the importance of giving conlangs a history.

Pages 15-17: Using conlangs in your writing

Tzirtzi makes his recommendations on the use of constructed languages in fantasy texts.

Page 17 (lower): Fun and Games Update

What's happening with the answers to last issue's *Wordplay* crossword, our most recent poll and the 'reality conlanging' challenge.

Page 18: Reader's Review

Sectori evaluates *The World's Major Languages*, edited by Bernard Comrie.

Pages 19-22: ùmahalehe – Minimal Future English

Tzirtzi's entry to Sectori's Minimal Phonology Challenge.

Page 22 (lower): Corrections and Clarifications

An explanation of the things that went wrong in the last issue.

The Editor writes ...



To be quite frank, production of this issue hasn't gone nearly as well as I might have hoped. Things started off well – Guitarplayer submitting a lengthy article far quicker than I would have anticipated – but after that started to go downhill somewhat. Submissions were painfully low on the ground, and my school workload reached something of an all-time high. I ended up falling ill – very possibly as a consequence of working too hard – putting me further behind schedule. Last month's poll and competition received very few entries, and the situation with 'reality conlanging' (which, in case anyone has any suggestions, I would like to rename, as 'reality' clearly has very little to do with it) was so dire that I ended up contacting people individually to see if they would like to take part. Other people whose assistance was required may as well as been sucked into their conworlds for all the communication I could get with them – though more likely than not they've just been having some sort of personal problems leaving them unable to read my messages, and should that be the case I pray that the situation will improve soon.

On a less depressing note, may I extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who congratulated me on the last issue, as well as to those who *have* put something forward for publication. But I beg all readers to at least consider submitting something for the next edition – you can only get something out of reading it if people submit that something, and what might only take an hour of your time can make a big difference.

I do think there's some interesting stuff in this issue: some very nice articles by Guitarplayer and Tzirtzi, and it's worth taking a look at Sectori's book review as well. Tzirtzi's Ûmahalehe – of which we give a grammatical overview here – is also a very interesting language. Then there's the obligatory filler articles (admittedly some of them rather lengthy) by myself, because unfortunately we have not yet reached the point when I can get by just on other people's submissions.

Have fun,

Curlyjimsam

Curlyjimsam,
July 2006.

Ayeri – Menarano Amanaisa

Of all the languages created by members of the CBB, **Ayeri** by **Carsten Becker** (guitarplayer) has to be one of the most detailed. Here he discusses the process of the language's construction.

So I was asked to write an article on my current main project, Ayeri. What to write?

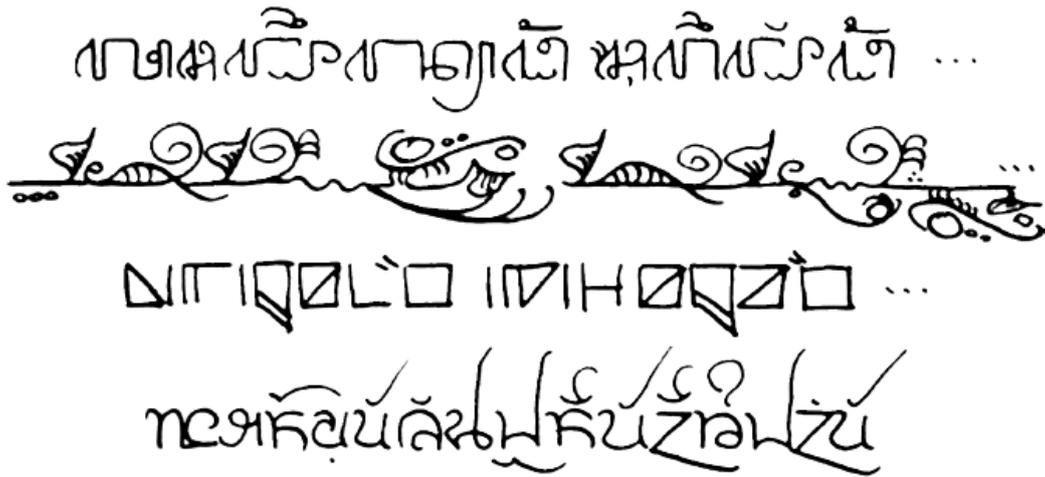
Well, first off, I want to talk about the what, where, why, when and how of the language's construction. You can also find some sentences at the end which you maybe find useful should you ever end up on the planet Areka by accident and need to make yourself understood. I was also asked to write something about the background of the various scripts I made for the language.

The currently two-and-a-half-year history of Ayeri started on the evening of a day at the beginning of December 2003. Actually, it started some time earlier, but the final decision to create this language was on that evening. The school I went to at that time organizes a bazaar for its pupils and their parents every year around the first Sunday of Advent. On my way back home from there, I passed by a woman who – I think – spoke Malay or something to that effect; whatever it was, it was certainly a South East Asian language. I did not stop to ask her because she was talking to somebody on the phone, and after all, I did not want to be unkind. I would not have had the courage anyway, I suppose. But ... what has this all to do with Ayeri? Well, I was a freshman then at the Constructed Languages' Mailing-List and had come across so-called 'trigger' languages there not long before. As usual, Tagalog was quoted as the typical example. Since I only knew about German, English and French at that time, what was said about Tagalog's alignment system struck me as odd. I did not understand it and wanted to know more about it. I must have had some thoughts about it stuffed in the back of my head, from where these thoughts would come to the surface every now and then – including on that day in December ... I had already created my second conlang, Daléian, but had become bored of it. Well, maybe you know that Tagalog is spoken in the Philippines (Eastern Asia!) – and this is the link to Ayeri and to what happened to me when I was walking home that evening in December: I quite liked the sound of whatever language it was and it reminded somehow of the sound I associated with Tagalog from the grammar examples. As I have already said, I was some kind of bored of Daléian, which by the way could pass as a basically Indo-European language with some additional odds and ends. Exploring a dimension of morphology that was unknown to me until that point seemed more tempting than working on further on Daléian. Most of Daléian's grammar was already finished so far anyway, except regarding the typical weakness of having too few words. A trigger system could definitely not have been implemented without a good deal of rearrangement. Also, I liked the sound of whatever that foreign language was, so a new phonetic inventory was necessary anyway. The decision was made: I needed to make a new language. And so I did. After some

starting difficulties I finally grasped the basic idea that is behind ‘triggers’. For that purpose I searched hard for a Tagalog grammar and eventually found one that explained it all, although dumbed-down for the average man on the street. Fortunately, the people at the mailing list did not become annoyed by all my questions. Neither did those of the Zompist Bulletin Board. Before the grammar became stable (so far), I went through several grammar changes: many initial thoughts were discarded; the word order, especially the one of the inner order of the various markers of the verb, was changed so that words would become at least a little shorter by detaching clitics; and more. Still the grammar is not perfect yet and certainly will never be; there are still illogical things that have to be changed. What for example has always bugged me about Ayeri is the perfect regularity of the grammar. It would be almost artificially regular if there were not similarly regular languages such as Turkish in the real world.

Well now, but what about the words? No language without words after all! Ayeri is an entirely *a priori* language, which means that it is not based on any other language, alive or extinct. That does not mean that one may not borrow features from other natural languages, though, since I think it is almost impossible to come up with something that has not been done by any other natural language already – the Conlang Mailing List coined the term *anadewism* (A Natlang Already Did, Except Worse) not without reason. However, I admit I have difficulties with creating words. I tried having words automatically generated with word generation scripts, but this did not satisfy me. I felt as if the words would not be part of me. They felt impersonal, sterile, artificial, and anyway just ‘not right’. No, generating words was certainly not the way to go. I tried to derive words by mangling existing words from a Tagalog word lists, but quickly abandoned this as well so that there are only a dozen words made that way in the dictionary. I am not the person who likes to steal, be it only mangled words from a natural language. I discovered that for me, the only way to go was translation. And so I have been translating up and down for a bit more than year now. Translation is also a good opportunity to find out grammatical weaknesses. Nearly anything is worth to be translated if it fits into the cultural setting of the language or can be made fit to it. So I took some parts of the Bible, various songs and poems; I participated in ‘Translation Challenges’, where for example short stories were to be translated; I even translated a whole computer program into Ayeri – and thus managed to raise my dictionary up to over 1,250 entries. And this is still not enough: it feels as though there are still thousands of words lacking. At least many words common to everyday life. Because the people at the ZBB liked Ayeri, I even rewrote the grammar, which was terribly overdue anyway, so that it fitted into what I called a ‘course book’: that is, a short tutorial in a couple of lessons containing an overview of the grammar, some vocabulary and an example text for each lesson.

Overleaf: examples of four different Ayeri scripts, from top: the original (based on Javanese), the Vine Script, the Square Script and the Round Script.



Since I had already made various ciphers of the Latin alphabet during childhood, of which none survive today, I quite naturally (at least in my opinion) came up with various scripts for Ayeri as well, supposed to have been used during different periods of time. The first one I came up with was inspired by Javanese (www.omniglot.com/writing/javanese.htm). If you have a look at the script, you can see that the shapes of the letters look pretty similar to each other. Accordingly it was difficult for me to remember them, so a better script had to be made. During a boring evening alone at home in 2004, I came up with an alphabet based on vines which may be aesthetically pleasing, but which was not really useful on a daily basis. Next I designed an alphabet which was based on squares (second from bottom), as opposed to ellipses which had been used as the basic shape for the Daléian script (overleaf) which was then still written horizontally. However, this one seemed unsuitable to me, too, because it was too harsh for the flowing character of the language – although I still do not think it looks bad. But it was discarded as well in the end. It was clear to me that the Daléian script could *not* be used by the Ayeri people who are supposed to live a couple of thousand miles away from the Daléians, given that the Daléians only have 16th century-like technology. Spreading it by a technique analogous to television or even the Internet was definitely out. I decided that the Daléians do some trading with the Ayeri, but do not have any colonies around. Then, after some more time, in Summer 2005 I designed what has eventually emerged into the *Tahano Nuhikamu*, the ‘Round Script’. Granted, it does not look as round as the Daléian script, but it is still more round than the Square Script, *Tahano Nuhinyan*. I have stuck with the *Tahano Nuhikamu* ever since. The script was gradually extended so that you can now not only write Ayeri with it, but English, French and German and many other languages to various degrees of comfort besides. Since the *Tahano Nuhikamu* is based on various Asian scripts again, it became not an alphabet in the usual sense, but an abugida (that is, a syllabic alphabet, where vowels are marked with diacritics and the sound /a/ is usually included already in the letter). This was certainly also influenced by my general liking of Tengwar, the script of Tolkien’s elves, which was the first seriously constructed writing system I learnt to know. As for the experiences I had with the design of scripts,

either you are kissed by a muse or not. Fortunately, this seems to have been the case for the writing systems I have made so far, but do not believe that it is easy to come up with a good writing system just like that. Actually, I just cannot come up with something pleasing when I try too hard. I find it is rather the case for me that creativity comes in stages; that is, it comes and leaves as it likes and not as I like.



The vertical Daléian script.

I hope, through this article, that you have gained some insight into the processes that make and have made Ayeri the language it happens to be today. Ayeri has been my main language project for more than two years now and all attempts to start another language failed so far because I'm too much concerned with it. Call it some kind of addiction if you like.

Some Ayeri words and phrases

All transcriptions are in IPA.

Hello!	<i>Manayang!, Manisu!</i>	/,ma.na.'jan/, /ma.'ni.su/
Goodbye!	<i>Yomu eban!, Yomeban!</i>	/'jo.mu e.'ban/, /jɔ.me.'ban/
Yes.	<i>May.</i>	/maɪ/
No.	<i>Voy.</i>	/vɔɪ/
Excuse me.	<i>Kilāyang?</i>	/ki.'la:jan/
..., please.	<i>Pinyan, ...</i>	/pin.'jan/
Thank you.	<i>Angutāy.</i>	/,aŋ.gu.'ta:ɪ/

Language of the Mulefa

In the popular book *The Amber Spyglass*, the third part of Philip Pullman's celebrated *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the character Dr. Mary Malone meets and lives with creatures called *mulefa*, notable for having their own culture and, the focus here, their own language. This language isn't particularly detailed in the book but all the same it seems worth recording all the information that can be gleaned about it from the books here as a reference for conlang enthusiasts.

Features

Probably the language's most interesting feature, not generally found in human languages, is that spoken words are standardly accompanied by actions that encode additional semantic (and possibly grammatical) meaning. The mulefa themselves are trunked creatures, similar in this respect to elephants, and it is the movement of these trunks that gives this added meaning. To give the example quoted in the book, the word *chuh* (all words are given as they are approximately pronounced based on Mary's own interpretation) means 'water' when accompanied by a left-to-right sweep of the trunk, 'young shoots of grass' when it makes a quick flick to the left, 'rain' when the trunk is curled at the tip, and 'sadness' when curled under (p. 130, UK softback edition).

The language also seems to make extensive use of similes and metaphors, translated literally in the book as 'make-likes'. An example is the word *sraf* (when the word is first introduced, *sarf* is also given as a possible pronunciation), accompanied by a leftward flick of the trunk and similar in pronunciation to the word for 'light', being described in translation as 'like the light on water when it makes small ripples, at sunset, and the light comes off in bright flakes, we call it that' (p. 234).

Phonology

By analysing the few words of the language given in the text, and the mulefa's rendering of various English words, it is possible to draw up a vague representation of a sound system. The table below shows all known mulefa words (excluding those comprised from more than one root only given in literal translation), complete with likely phonetic analyses, based on the assumption that Mary speaks in a non-rhotic Oxford accent:

Mulefa Language	IPA	English	Page Reference
mulefa	[mulefa]	<i>mulefa</i> (a collective term)	93
chuh (trunk left-to-right)	[tʃu] or [tʃʊ]	water	130

Continued →

chuh (trunk curled at tip)	[tʃu] or [tʃʊ]	rain	130
chuh (trunk curled under)	[tʃu] or [tʃʊ]	sadness	130
chuh (truck flicking quickly to left)	[tʃu] or [tʃʊ]	young grass shoots	130
zalif	[zalɪf]	<i>zalif</i> , singular of mulefa	131
Atal	[atal]	personal name, meaning unknown	136
tualapi	[tualapi]	(presumably) birds, or a certain species of bird	136
sraf (or sarf)	[sraf] ([sarf])	sraf, 'Shadow-particles'	234
Sattamax	[satamaks]	personal name, meaning unknown	288

Additionally, the mulefa are known to have given the attempted pronunciations of the following *English* words, making it more likely that the involved sounds are also found in their own language:

English Word(s)	Mulefa's Pronunciation	IPA	Page Reference
grass	grass*	[gras]*	130
I am a human	ayama yuman	[ajama juman]	93
Mary	Merry	[mɛri]	93
Mary	Mary*	[mɛəri]*	130
river	river*	[rɪvə]*	130
seed-pot	seepot	[sɪpɒt]	93
sky	sky*	[skaɪ]*	130
thank you	anku	[aŋku]	129
tree	tree*	[tri]*	130
what are you	watahyu	[wɒtaju]	93

The mulefa's pronunciation of those words marked with an asterisk are not known to be accurate.

It is also interesting to note that the mulefa seem unable to pronounce the English sounds [θ] and [h], as well as the cluster [dp], suggesting these do not exist in their own language (also *h* is found in transcription, it very possibly marks only a change in the quality of the preceding vowel).

Clusters the mulefa do seem to be able to pronounce include those in their own language (initial [sr], final [ks] and possibly final [rf]) and also medial [ŋk] and possibly initial [gr], [tr] and [sk] from English. A possible phonemic analysis of the language is as follows: *Continued* →

CONSONANTS	Labial	Coronal	Dorsal
Plosive/Affricate	/p/	/t /tʃ/	/k/
Nasal	/m/	/n/	
Fricative	/f/	/s/	
Liquid/Approximant	/w/	/l r/	/j/

[z] has been analysed as an allophone of /s/, as it is the only firm example of a voiced sound with a voiceless equivalent. Quite what the terms of the allophony are, however, are uncertain (under this description initial /s/ is [s] in *Sattamax*, but [z] in *zalif*) – it may involve a preceding particle or a certain trunk movement. Alternatively, it could be posited that sounds like /b d g v/ do exist phonemically but are not found in the sample (possible examples of the latter two are found in the mulefa's attempt at English); /z/ would also then be phonemic.

The precise value of /r/ is even more uncertain than that of other sounds: it could be one of a number of different rhotics. [ŋ] has been analysed as an allophone of /n/ before /k/ - it is also possible that the language has only one phonemic nasal (/m/ with [ŋ] as an allophone), as no example of [n] is given. *anku* could also have been pronounced with a coronal rather than velar sound anyway – the transcription does not make this clear.

Any other consonant sounds are not found within the sample.

VOWELS	Front	Back
High	/i ɪ/	/u ʊ/
Mid	/e ε/	/o/
Low	/a/	/ɑ ɒ/

/ə/ has been discarded (at least phonemically) as its existence cannot be definitely confirmed. /o/ is not found in the sample, but has been included for reasons of symmetry. /ɒ/ could also at very little stretch have a value closer to /ɔ/.

For the mulefa, trunk movements are also an important 'phonological' aspect. We know for definite four movement sequences, and can hypothesise about two more: left-to-right, right-to-left, quick left-to-right, quick right-to-left, curled at tip, curled under. There may be more, but there is no evidence of these. A **(s)(C)(r)V(r)(C)(s)** syllable structure (or similar) does not seem unlikely. Plosive+plosive clusters, at least, may not occur medially.

Additional vocabulary

In addition to the words given above, the mulefa also have words translated *make-like* ('metaphor', p. 234), *night-picture* ('dream', p. 452) and *wise one* (a term for 'leader', p. 452). There is no word for 'climb' (p. 284).

A Diachronic Condition

If I could give one piece of advice to a newbie conlanger looking for realism, it would very likely be this: make sure your language contains at least some historical information.

There are a number of reasons for this opinion. Perhaps most obviously, it makes things far, far easier when one decides one wishes to realistically create some relatives – or even dialects – for one’s language. I know I’m not the only conlanger to have spent many years creating a language, decided I wanted to create relatives, and ended up faced with the horrible tasks of working out sound changes and so forth *backwards* – Mark Rosenfelder (alias ‘Zompist’) is probably a well-known example. In my case, I actually gave up in the end, even with the help of the incredibly useful ‘Reverse Sound Change Applier’, and decided to completely rework the language (Vixen, in case you’re wondering) from its historical ancestor forwards – though maintaining a fairly significant amount from the language’s previous incarnations. On the other hand, there is a certain amount of good feeling associated with successfully working out changes backwards and then forwards again – I’ve probably never got a bigger kick out of conlanging than when I successfully worked out the first sentence of Vixen’s relative Monronese, after what must have been several hours’ work. Yes, several *hours*, for one short (five-word) sentence. I, for one, don’t really feel that the unthinkably vast amount of work that would have been necessary to create the language in something close to entirety would have been worth the jubilation I’d have got out of it.

My second reason for stressing the importance of diachronics is that, quite frankly, they add realism. I’m not sure it’s possible to really come up with a truly realistic language with no idea of the history behind it. It doesn’t matter if you want to create relatives or not – a language’s past makes it what it is today. Diachronics help to explain the irregularities and the oddities. Why does English /dɪvaɪn/ have /dɪvɪnɪti/ as a derived form? Why are the singular and plural forms the same for the second-person pronoun? Where the hell did all those strong verbs come from? You won’t find the answers to these questions in the present – you’ll find them in the past. A conlang that doesn’t contain similar ‘weirdness’ lacks reality; but if it contains the weirdness without the (historical) explanation it lacks reality as well, because these things generally come from somewhere – though obviously, something had to be just ‘invented’ at some point. This should be the case in your languages, as well. There has to be a point where things are either a) completely regular and ‘normal’, or else b) the irregularities were pulled out of thin air. But if you want as much reality as possible, put that point far, far back in the past, so that the current incarnation of your language hopefully has most of its peculiarities drawn from somewhere. Because, to reiterate, the peculiarities *with* history are generally superior to those without – certainly, you don’t want too many of the latter (people will sometimes do strange things with no apparent motivation, of course).

You may well ask, however: ‘if I’m going to have to display a

language at some point in history that isn't wholly realistic, why not just make that language in the present?' My answer to this is that you *don't* have to display the most artificial stage of your conlang. For me, a proto-language is very much something to be kept private – one analogy I like to think of is that however much you publicly display your babies, you probably won't go around conceiving children outside of the privacy of your own home. You create the oldest stage of the language in private, and only publicly display what it grows into. Neither do I tend to advertise the changes between different stages of a language or language family – I will only display different synchronic incarnations of related languages or a language at various different points (generally only those within recorded history, and not anything that in real life would require reconstruction), and not what happened between those incarnations. Of course, if you wish to do it differently, that's up to you – but my view is, if people really want sound changes or a proto-lang, they can bloody well work them out themselves. I will, however, occasionally reference a certain change or 'reconstructed' proto-word in grammar documents, to help illustrate a point – but these are never more than tiny windows into the totality of my creation.

The third (and final, due to time and space constraints) reason I will give for the significance of language history is quite simply that it can be quite enjoyable. Though I cannot locate the exact quote, I seem to remember Mark Rosenfelder writing of the enjoyment arising from creating a language with its own unique 'feel' simply by applying a certain set of changes, and I myself have had this experience. On the other hand, I must admit that the novelty of inventing long lists of sound changes has now worn off, and it does tend to get rather boring (morphosyntax is more fun – I reference the memorable afternoon of 'beating up' Proto-White-Vixorian's fairly complex morphology through application of phonological change and analogy) – but try not to let that put you off. Even with what can seem at the time unnecessarily hard work, the end result is just as pleasurable, if not more so.

Remember that diachronics is about more than just sound changes. Certainly, they are a big part, but I have read 'advice' that seems to suggest that all one needs to do to create a language's descendant is to stick its lexicon through a computer program, work out how the morphology would be affected, and make sure the name is changed throughout the grammar document. Changes in pronunciation *cannot* adequately describe the differences between Old and Modern English – there are plenty of other things at work, like lexical borrowing, semantic shift and analogy. And remember also that although sound changes are almost completely regular, it is only *almost*. Always allow for a few exceptions to your sound change code.

One thing that might put people off diachronics is that it can make revision an awful lot harder. You don't just change one set of word endings, you change dozens. But I generally find that as long as grammar documents are laid out coherently, making changes across a whole language family can be relatively easy – certainly when compared to having to create a proto-language backwards. Don't worry about it.

Using conlangs in your writing

Tzirtzi offers some advice for would-be fantasy novelists.

Many people come to conlanging and conworlding through reading and writing fantasy and science fiction. Indeed, the initiator of the high-fantasy genre, J.R.R. Tolkien, stated that he wrote only to present his languages and world readably. Conlanging, then, is crucial to the fantasy writing, and although there are many other reasons to conlang and ways to present it, it is one of the principal ones.

So: how do they do it? It's easy enough to write a piece in which your characters speak in a conlang, and the action takes place in a conworld – but as anyone who has read some fantasy online knows, it's another matter entirely to make this work. It is all too easy to leave the reader with a vague and stereotyped idea of your world, and simply annoyed, rather than intrigued, by the characters' constant chattering in other languages. The façade of the setting is left thin, and languages and other references simply slow the writing down. The real problem with including languages into your fiction comes down to a simple dilemma: your characters are never going to be speaking English, or anything like it – but your readers only understand English. If you include too little, your world will seem contrived and little thought-out; if you include too much, your readers will simply get bored and give up on you.

There are various ways of dealing with this. The most well known, and most typically high-fantasy, is to have a 'common' language. That is, an auxiliary language known by all of the various peoples that may interact in your writing, and used whenever they want to talk to each other. This method can be very easy to implement, and neatly side-steps the problem of language presentation: you simply use English whenever Common is being spoken, and as it is attached to no single culture, it should have little negative impact on your presentation of your concultures and world. Tolkien used this method, and probably most modern high-fantasy authors followed in his footsteps. Certainly, it has become one of the staple features of stereotypical fantasy – whether in novels, online RPGs, or offline RPGs such as D&D.

However, the great majority of the time, it is not a good method. Only partly due to its great popularity, it is instantly recognised by readers as contrived and unimaginative, and has strong connotations of uninspired and entirely derivative trash-fiction. Even were this not the case, it gives you very limited opportunities to present your world and cultures. If everybody is speaking Common, an effectively background-less language, then the only opportunities you will have are when other languages are being spoken – and the purpose of the Common method is to allow these to be incomprehensible – and when characters of different native background speak Common to each other. In these cases, you could let some speech patterns from their native tongues creep into their use of the auxiliary language. But even this is somewhat contrived, as if Common is so widely spoken with such a purpose, there would be unlikely to be much

regional variation. And, with many characters of many different backgrounds, readers are simply unlikely to notice specific speech-patterns of given races.

A slightly different, but – I hope you will agree with me – potentially much more effective method, is to base the presentation of languages on your principle character(s) perception. This is easiest if you have a single, preferably first-person, main character – but it can still be done with a more varied cast. Basically, the idea of this method is – if your character speaks it, then it *can* (but doesn't have to) be translated into English. The most obvious route down which to go with this method is to always and unquestioning translate your protagonist's native language (and therefore thoughts) into English, but let the way you write their voice be very much affected by the patterns of their language. You don't then necessarily have to state what language it is the character is speaking – and certainly not until it becomes appropriate to the story to do so. Then, when you encounter other languages, they are translated or not dependant on how much of them your character understands. If your character is just as fluent in them as their native tongue, then you should probably normally translate. Again, let the voice in translation be greatly influenced by the language which they are actually speaking. The problem with this comes down to making it clear to your reader that your character really is speaking another language. Some authors do this through typesetting and style – italics for one language, plain for another, or even different fonts. Personally, I think this tends to look messy – but that's only an opinion. Another way is to prefix any new block of speech with an untranslated section. This section should be short, and without important content – just enough to remind the reader that actually, these characters are speaking another language. Greetings, exclamations, and maybe conjunctive phrases are all appropriate to this function.

The third situation, then, is when your character does not speak, or speaks very little of, the language being spoken. This, of course, is the easiest case, for you simply write down what they hear and how they react to it. If they understand none of the language – then you will simply be writing the language along with your character's thoughts. If they understand a little, then you may want to write the language along with your character's attempted translation. You may even want to detail this, describing your character understanding only certain words, or being unable to make sense of certain passages.

The final method I will examine is that of directly translating *none* of the speech, but giving it all in its original form, perhaps followed by a summary in English – your character's thoughts. This is the method most challenging for readers, but also allows you to put the most of your language into your writing. You have to remember that your readers will probably quite quickly bore of reading (to them) nonsensical text, and will just read the English. If using this method, it may be advisable to regularly resort to indirect speech – it is less immediate than direct speech, but rather more immediate than indirect translations.

I have mentioned the idea of letting your English be affected by the language actually being spoken several times above, and I will end by

considering how this may be done. The first thing to remember is that most of the time, you are not trying to present English as spoken by someone learning it. Your character is probably speaking completely fluently – your translation should reflect this. This means that word order, although the most obvious thing to use, is probably inappropriate. To your readers, it will simply sound either clumsy or silly. The same goes for any other method that would compromise the grammar of English – not using plural forms, verb agreement, etc. These will make your character sound as if they are speaking badly. Instead, the features to look at are common phrases, and idiomatic expressions. If your language has a very distinct and commonly used type of compounding, then use it in English! If exclamations in your language always refer to body-parts of the speaker – then so they should in the translation. Or whatever it happens to be. Also, any words that you cannot directly translate – whether they be cultural items and concepts, or simply very specific lexical items that English lacks – then leave them untranslated. However, you must be careful with this method. If you use a word once, and never refer to it again, then translate it – your readers won't be able to get an idea of what it means unless you then tell them, which will sound contrived. If you want to do this, then the words must be used regularly, to let your readers get a feel for their meaning.

Fun and Games Update

Crossword

Unfortunately, we have been unable to contact Graig for the answers to last issue's *Wordplay* crossword. We will make every attempt to print them in a future edition.

Poll

Last issue's results – *Should the Journal include lessons in natlangs or conlangs, or both?*:

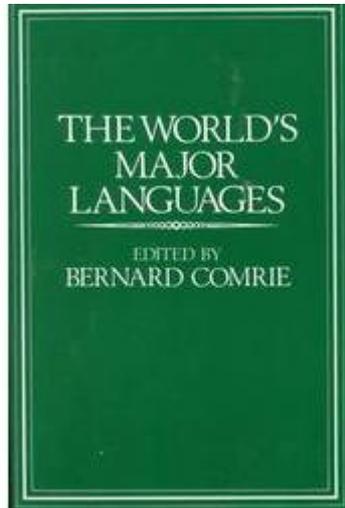
Turnout for this poll was unfortunately rather low, but upon deliberating on the results – and considering his own opinions – the Editor has concluded that the best bet is to include lessons in *both* natural and constructed languages. So: should you have anything to submit, go ahead.

'Reality conlanging'

Tzirtzi and Ceresz were chosen as the participants in the first 'reality conlanging' challenge, and are hopefully currently hard at work – their finished work should be printed in the August edition of the *Journal*. The Editorship has also decided that perhaps 'reality conlanging' isn't such a good name, and any alternative suggestions would be welcomed.

Reader's Review

Sectori recommends one of his purchases.



At \$44, it's not the cheapest book ever purchased for me, but Bernard Comrie's *The World's Major Languages* certainly lives up to (even surpasses) its value. It features detailed sections on, predictably, the world's major languages. It includes features on German, French, Spanish (including a brief section on 'dialects', including Catalan), Russian, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Tamil, Hausa, Thai, and even Yoruba.

I'll run through some of the features:

- Each includes a section describing phonology and orthography. Some use IPA, some don't. Some of the best are the sections on Hindi/Urdu and Vietnamese (which seems to essentially be in IPA).
- Each section contains a detailed section on the grammar of each language. There are a few sections that particularly stand out: Tamil and Latin are quite excellent, describing the rather complicated grammar of those two quite well.
- The sections with non-English scripts have very good descriptions of some of the scripts. The sections on Arabic scripts leave something to be desired, and the sections about Devanagari don't cover conjuncts, but they serve well enough. The best sections are the description of Japanese kana and the page with the Tamil syllabic alphabet.
- The bibliography sections, for those interested, are long enough that they could provide some further reading if desired.

Overall, an excellent book. I'd give it probably 4.5/5 stars, but maybe closer to 5/5. 4.75/5, perhaps?

The World's Major Languages is available from all good online bookstores, including Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Ùmahalehe – Minimal Future English

Sectori's Minimal Phonology Challenge of last issue met with depressingly little response. The one person who did submit something was **Tzirtzi**, and we reproduce part of his language – derived from modern-day English by regular sound change – here.

Phonology

The basic consonant (top) and vowel (bottom) phonemes are as follows:

	Labial	Coronal	Glottal
Plosive	p	t	
Nasal	m		
Fricative			h
Liquid	y	l	

Front	Central	Back
e	ɜ	u

In this document, /y/ is written <y>; and /ɜ/ <a>.

Ùmahalehe also has a pitch accent. It has four forms: flat high, flat low, falling, and rising, falling on a single stressed syllable in every word. Any syllable may be stressed, though certain affixes may move it. However, if it comes on the first syllable, it can never naturally be falling or rising. Note that this accent affects the intonation of the entire word, not only the stressed syllable. Thus, in a two-syllable word with a second syllable stress the accents would be expressed MH, ML, MF, MR; but in a three syllable word with a final syllable stress they would be expressed as MMH, MML, HMF, LMR.

Orthographically, the accents are written as follows: flat high <á>; flat low <à>; falling <ã>; and rising <â>.

The accent may shift in form after certain prefixes, if it naturally comes on the first syllable. Prefixes either cause a flat low to become falling but leave a flat high unshifted, cause a flat high to become rising but leave a flat low unshifted, or never affect the accent. Prefixes of the first type are marked ¹, of the second type ², and of the third type left unmarked.

Syllable structure is (C)V. This is never deviated from, even in foreign borrowings (which are very rare). Two identical vowels may not follow one another unless one is accented (otherwise they are simply reduced to one).

Verbal morphology

All verbs in Ùmahalehe conjugate for three tenses, two numbers, three persons in the plural and four persons in the singular. It also has an

infinitive form. The tenses are Present, Past, and Future; the Future is expressed with a prefix, the Present and Past with a suffix. All person/number combinations are expressed with a prefix. The basic paradigm is *lâyü*, 'love', in the table below. This is called the simple conjugation.

Stem: *lâyü* (love)
 Infinitive: *tälâyü*

Number	Person/ Gender	Present	Past	Future
Singular	First	<i>mulâyüha</i>	<i>mulâyüta</i>	<i>mulalâyü</i>
	Second	<i>yelâyüha</i>	<i>yelâyüta</i>	<i>yelalâyü</i>
	Third F.	<i>halâyüha</i>	<i>halâyüta</i>	<i>halalâyü</i>
	Third M.	<i>helâyüha</i>	<i>helâyüta</i>	<i>helalâyü</i>
Plural	First	<i>yulâyüha</i>	<i>yulâyüta</i>	<i>yulalâyü</i>
	Second	<i>yelâyüha</i>	<i>yelâyüta</i>	<i>yelalâyü</i>
	Third	<i>talâyüha</i>	<i>talâyüta</i>	<i>talalâyü</i>

In addition to the personal prefixes shown in the paradigm above, there is a subordinate personal prefix *hu*⁻¹, marked instead of person on verbs in subordinate clauses.

There are two other conjugations, the *s*-stem conjugation and the connected conjugation. Irregular verbs are rare, as the verbal system has undergone a very large amount of simplification and regularisation. The part of the system most prone to irregularity is the past tense forms of verbs, which occasionally preserve earlier irregular stems. An example of this is the verb *húlata*, meaning hold or have, which has the stem *hélata* in the past tense. The most common of all irregular verbs is the verb *pè* 'to be', which is regular only in its formation of the infinitive from the stem.

Nominal morphology

There are 11 noun classes in Ûmahalehe, each covering a rough semantic grouping and distinguished by a prefix. These often distinguish words that would otherwise have become homophones, or were already homophones. For example, *haemahealëta* means 'light' as a noun, but simple *léta* means 'light, bright' as an adjective.

Plurals are formed in two ways. The first is with the unstressed suffix *-ha*, for example, *hutatumãtauha*, 'tomatoes', from *hutatumãtau*, 'tomato'. The second is a change in the form of the class prefix.

Most nouns may take either one of these plural formations. The

choice of formation depends on several factors. Originally, the class formation was used not for plural but for a type of augmentative formation, generally with substantives of quantity or magnitude as opposed to definable number. For example, the noun *meteyehaêmata* meaning ‘sand’ had two plural forms: *meteyehaêmataha*, meaning multiple independent bodies of sand, and *meteyeheahaémata*, meaning a large amount of sand. *meteyeheahaémataha*, meaning multiple independent and large bodies of sand, may also have existed. However, this system has broken down in all but very formal language, and the class plural system has come to be the most naturally used plural formation, the suffixed plural marked being perceived as a sign of class or education. Indeed, in very formal speech hypercorrection sometimes marks all plurals, including mass nouns, with *-ha* or even using both markings in all cases.

The possessive or genitive form is marked with the prefix *uyu-*. This prefix comes before the class suffix and never has any effect on the accent. For example, *uyuhamumàta*, ‘of (a) mother’ or ‘(a) mother’s’, from *hamumàta*, ‘(a) mother’.

When prepositions are used before nouns, the noun’s class prefix moves to the preposition; these forms are often irregular.

Diachronics

Despite the development of the pitch accent, the vast phonological simplification of the language resulted in a great number of homophones. As is observable in other languages where such circumstances have occurred, this problem was to some extent solved by the creation of a great number of compounds. Verbal forms were often compounded with a typically connected nominal or other verb, the principal always coming the second element of the compound. For example, the words from ‘keep’, ‘tap’, and ‘cap’ would have become homophonic (in the form **tépa*) and so were compounded with words from ‘safe’, ‘beat’, and ‘down’, giving the forms *haeyutêpa*, *petatépa*, and *hetatépa*.

Example text – the Lord’s Prayer:

Hamuhâta èyu húha yutùma Héyuma,
 Hamumèmu Yù héha haéhalata,
 Hamutâmatatale Yù hehatámuha,
 Yutayùhe Yù petùha,
 Haemahaûma Àta lèha yutùma Héyuma,
 Tutě hematatùyuha èha èyu payutatè hutapàleta,
 Heamayutùyuha èha èyu haupatùhayu haúmaha
 Lèha yuheamayutùyuha leyupâhamaha huhahamahâheha èha,
 Tàuma témupataha èha,
 Amaheâteta tehalètaha èha yutayùyulumu èyula,
 Patùha meteyetà tâmatatale mà yutatà heatalumapêyu mà yutatà tàlule tèa
 yù,
 Letamău mà ulayuheayulèyu,
 Amèma.

Continued →

Gloss:

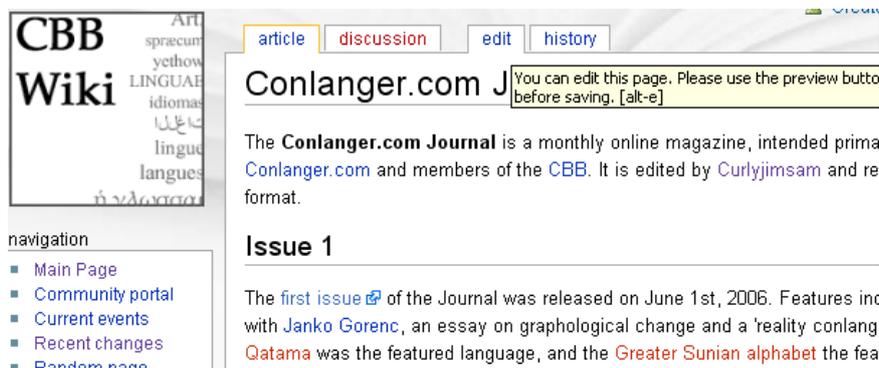
VII.Father our who-be II.in Heaven
VII.name your is sacred
VII.country your he.come.Pr
II.will your pas.do.Pre
X.in Earth like II.in Heaven
Today Ø.give.Pr we our daily VIII.bread
Forgive.Pr we our X.because-of sin.PI
Like we.forgive.Pr V.person.PI Sub.trespass.Pr we
NEG Ø.tempt.Pr we
Instead Ø.lead.Pr we II.from evil
Because VII.the kingdom and II.the power and II.the glory be.3PI you(rs)
Now and forever
Amen

More information on Ûmahalehe can be found online at www.placid-acid.com/filesforoffsite/minimal.pdf.

Corrections and Clarifications

- The last issue was indeed intended to have been published in June, not July as initially suggested on page 2.
- The CBB IAL was not started in 2004, as stated on page 18 of Issue 1, but in 2005.
- Any other typos are probably just that. We apologise for being pathetically bad at proofreading.

The CBB WIKI WANTS YOU to contribute articles!



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the CBB Wiki page for "Conlanger.com Journal". The page title is "Conlanger.com Journal" and it includes a warning message: "You can edit this page. Please use the preview button before saving. [alt-e]". The page content describes the journal as a monthly online magazine, intended primarily for Conlanger.com and members of the CBB. It is edited by Curlyjimsam and reformat. The page also features a section for "Issue 1", which mentions that the first issue was released on June 1st, 2006, and features an essay by Janko Gorenc on graphological change and a 'reality conlang' Qatama, along with the Greater Sunian alphabet.

Click that Edit button! Make Aszev happy!