Nuntar's

Conlangers' Crossword

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

The Editor writes …

My dear readers,

  The first thing to do in this section in this issue probably ought to be something I end up needing to do far more than I should, namely to apologise for the – ahem – slight delay. This is due to a combination of factors both within and without my control – largely having rather a lot to do in other areas coupled with general laziness, although there are certain areas in which I could shift the blame onto others were I in the habit of doing such. So, sorry. I'd love to be able to say it won't happen again, but that would probably be a promise that would be difficult to keep without formally ceasing publication altogether.

  Despite the *Journal*'s obvious inability to be regularly released on time (I think only two of the six issues so far have come out even close to when they were supposed to), something which is almost always mostly my fault, I was still the proud winner of the 2007 Special Award for Services to Conartistry on the Zompist Bulletin Board as a result of my work on this publication, which was needless to say rather pleasing. Strictly speaking, I was merely a *joint* winner of the award – which also went to 'saizai' for his tireless work on the organisation of the Language Creation Conference and other efforts to get conlanging into the real world – although I do have the benefit of being able to boast that I would have won outright if it hadn't been for the fact that I voted for Sai in this category myself. I do honestly believe he probably deserved the award more than I did – from my point of view producing an online magazine for half a year is not particularly difficult compared to the things he's managed – but perhaps others would disagree; if writing comes to me like swimming comes to a fish, then I have the organisational skills of a battered cod. Nevertheless, I still won alongside, and I think that I need to take this opportunity to thank everyone who voted, and also everyone who has contributed to the magazine in the past few months, without whom I doubt very much the *Journal* would be anything more than a muted idea or perhaps an uninspiring first issue.

  That said, it is fairly common for me to issue a plea in most issues for *more* people to submit articles if at all possible. It makes my job a lot easier for one thing – thus cutting back on the delays – and also I think adds a lot more variety to the publication rather than article after article by boring old me. If you have ideas for anything – anything at all, though preferably enough to fill at least a page – that seems worthy of inclusion, please please do consider writing it up properly and submitting it – my email address is curlyjimsam@aol.com. It *will* be appreciated, and it should help to make the *Journal* even better in future.

Thanks again to all,

Curlyjimsam,
January 2007.

Featured Conlang – Etora

By **Valeska Scholl** (aka **Jashan A'al**)

Adiiyo tach Osiyo
Adiiyo tach osiyo? Fet azhei ni adi;
Ba iäzhi alur mara chane ovash al'jelech leureucha tlatla
tach tacuch euzheforus bel iäfosh stin cagaa
hana stinef win soch meujeula?

To Be or Not To Be
Should I be, or should I not? This is my question;
Is it more appropriate to the mind whether one endures the projectiles of chaotic fate
or one grasps [one's] weapon against the sea of misfortune
and, by means of opposition, disperses it?

Began in mid-2005, Etora is a relatively young language with a very rich past. It grew primarily out of my unhappiness with Psharadi (aka Tsaran), which had been my main constructed language project for approximately ten years before. Psharadi had had its life – stages of Ancient, Classical, Middle, and Modern; dialects and influences; a constructed culture to go along with it. But languages are like children, and this one had grown into a mind of its own and had done things I hadn't planned and I wasn't terribly happy about. Attempting to correct its wayward behavior failed time and time again, so at length I abandoned the project and decided to start again with a 'better' language – Etora. (*Note:* Abandonment should never be attempted with real children.)

Etora inherited Psharadi's phonological system with minor changes, as well as the overwhelming majority of the Psharadi vocabulary. The structure in which these existed – the grammar – was a completely new beast. I worked on it extensively for approximately six months, at which time the grammar reached 86 pages, the language was 'frozen', and no further changes were made. This was done to let the language explore and test its abilities without the constant threat of change. It remained frozen for one year (until December of 2006). This frozen state is currently Etora 1.0, and is likely destined to be renamed was *Old Etora* in the future.

Primary Characteristics

Etora was purposefully designed as a naturalistic language. There is no attempt to be exotic or unusual, but rather to follow well-known and documented patterns of how languages of a specific typology work. It is SOV and head-final; adjectives precede nouns, adverbs precede verbs, and nouns precede their postpositions. The morphology tends to be somewhere between isolating and agglutinative. It has a relatively plain and unexciting phonology, consisting of ten vowels (including two nasal variants), three diphthongs, and contains only twenty-one consonants. ►

While the case system of Etora is relatively common – a standard four-case system with nominative, accusative, dative, and ablative, its noun-class system is not. Most words in Etora are inherently genderless, although there are some exceptions (primarily kinship terms), but all nouns are divided into three categories, called *animacies*: human, animate non-human, and inanimate. These are often 'instinctual' – all humans are, of course, of human animacy. However, while *ralan* ('lake') is inanimate, *ráro* ('river') is considered to be animate. The emotion of *cer* ('anger') is inanimate, but *wale* ('curiosity') is animate, and one's *azhi* ('mind, intellect') is human!

Etoran verbs are required to agree with their subjects, and likewise inflect for animacy, person, and number. Perhaps unique to Etora is the fact that person agreement may appear either as a prefix or a suffix; most languages inflect only by means of one of the other (not both). *Sanwale* 'you sg. are curious' inflects by means of a prefix *san-*, but *Waleish* 'we are curious' inflects by mean of a suffix, *-ish*.

Other unusual features in the Etora verb system are the complete lack of verbal participles, such as *running* in 'The running cat' or *burned* as in 'the book was burned.' Etora must express these by means of relative clauses or passivization: *féli fa tandosh* ('cat who runs') or *sohalde ko-tlemellu* (book-the PERF-PASS-ignite). Etora contains three classes of verbs and various irregularities which serve to give the language a natural and realistic feel. The negative is also expressed via a regularly conjugated verb, *os.* The phrase *hidan osi* glosses literally as 'walk not-I', where the 'not' is, in fact, a conjugated verb.

Evolving Etora

After the 'unfreezing' of the language in December 2006, it became clear that changes would be made. My education in Syntax, specifically X-Bar Theory, prompted me to try to formalize Etoran syntax in a more complete and professional way. This turned out to be a catalyst. I realized while attempting to explain Etora's structure that the structure was deeply irregular in certain ways – such as the mixed suffix/prefix person agreement on verb. Some clauses were head-final and some were head-initial; ways in which sentences changed defied the 'normal expectations' of what one would find in a language. And since the goal of Etora was, above all else, to be realistic, I decided I would change the language to do away with some of these problems.

Additionally, the issue of vocabulary and etymology grew. Etora has a unique way of forming words via portmanteau – where *smoke* and *fog* grow together to make *smog* and so forth. However, when considering how the portmanteaus would come about, I realized there was (and never had been) any pattern determining how the words would mix and fuse, and that this manner of compounding would be very unrealistic for a language. Different speakers would make different portmanteaus, and while if you know what both a *dog* and a *house* are in English you can reasonably guess what a *doghouse*, it seems impossible that the portmanteau *djouse* would be intuitively recognizable. The vocabulary would need a reform – or at least some very strict rules.

▶

The changes will consist of formalizing the syntax and coming up with a way to preserve the characteristics most essential to the language, while improving and regularizing those of lesser importance. Etora will become a mixed-head language; noun phrases and the overall clausal phrase are head-initial, but adverbial phrases, postpositional phrases, and verbal phrases will be head-final. The suffix/prefix system of person agreement may be shifted to either one extreme or the other, if I cannot find a good way to reconcile the problems it presents. The order of elements in a sentence, and the conditions under which they move (and where they can move to) will be more precisely described.

Vocabulary is a harder nut to crack, as they say. The Etora corpus contains over 1000 entries, and it seems prudent to do all of the vocabularic tinkering at the same time. I may end up instigating a system of roots (or at least basic words) and rules for portmanteaus, or expanding the number of ways that Etora can construct new words (which right now is rather limited).

Lastly, it is much more difficult to describe a language without a culture than I imagined it would be. Fate may have it that 'New Etora' may develop a society of hypothetical speakers by the time it is complete.

One thing is certain: once Etora goes under the knife, the result will be significantly changed – but also more succinct, more realistic, and immeasurably more stable. Constructing a good language is a lot of work, but the personal sense of reward is well worth it.

Our Conscripts Need You

The Editor explains the lack of a featured script in this issue of the *Journal*.

Regular readers may have noticed by this point that one of our regular features, the Editor's Script Pick (called 'Script of the Month' prior to Issue 5) is not present in this edition of the *Journal*.

This is not intended to be a lasting trend, but the decision not to include a particular featured script in this issue was a conscious one on my part. Over the six months that the *Journal* has now been active, it has become increasingly more difficult to find scripts which I feel are worthy of recognition in our pages: indeed, this is not something which can even be said of all the scripts which *have* been featured. Additionally, some very good scripts have already been featured indirectly as part of the 'Featured Conlang' or in other articles, and in the interests of keeping as much variety as possible in the *Journal*, such scripts will in most cases not be eligible for their own features for some time (I must stress that I am not ruling out such future features entirely).

I am not saying that there are no suitable scripts left on the Internet – I expect very much that there are – but locating such scripts takes time, as does contacting their creators for permission to include articles, and given the somewhat rushed circumstances under which this issue of the *Journal* was produced I elected not to waste any more time in such a search. I hope that the lack of inclusion of a script feature in this edition will provide a motive to readers to produce their own scripts in future which better meet the criteria.

Prior to the release of Issue 5 of the *Journal* I laid out these criteria in a post on the Conlanger Bulletin Board, as follows:

'*Ideally featured scripts will:*

- Look good.
- Be well presented.
- Be imaginative.
- Contain details that conscripts normally lack – e.g. irregularities, detailed punctuation, diachronics, any other interesting features.
- Be accompanied by some form of lengthy examples.
- Have enough content in general to fill at least two pages of the publication.'

(from www.conlanger.com/cbb/viewtopic.php?p=21559, adapted)

Many scripts, obviously, fulfil one or more of these criteria, and in retrospect I think that to require all of them was slightly over-the-top: a particularly 'imaginative' script would be acceptable without the 'extra details' (although 'any other interesting features' could be taken to refer to a similar sort of thing), and I would be well prepared to accept a script that was comparatively unimaginative at face value if it were accompanied by some or all of 'irregularities, detailed punctuation, diachronics' etc. to an interesting, if

not hugely imaginative, standard. (Perhaps what I am trying to say here is not entirely clear. I believe that most con-creations can be termed 'interesting' without being 'imaginative' – for example, many or possibly most of the best conlangs do not incorporate many features that are wholly products of the creator's imagination, but are nevertheless interesting in that they are put together in an interesting and detailed way.)

Basically, it's easy enough to find scripts that are æsthetically pleasing. But, for me, a featured script should generally be more than a collection of characters that look good together, and show some originality on the creator's part in their design. This does require some skill – there are no doubt people who try again and again, always in vain, to come up with a script whose appearance they are happy with. But just as a good conlang needs to be more than a pretty phonology (or at least, a phonology that achieves whatever its creator's desired effect happens to be, whether that is 'prettiness' or whatever), a good conscript needs to be more than just a pretty set of letters. As an example, many of the conscripts found in popular books and films are certainly pleasing to look at, but are often basically ciphers of the Roman alphabet with little or no attention given to structure beyond the letterforms themselves and would almost certainly not be eligible to be featured on these pages.

No, we are looking for more than just artistic skill. Creating æsthetically-pleasing images is an artform in its own right, but conscripting (conscription?) should be more than that. It should be a reflection of some wider goal: to create a naturalistic script, in which case it should reflect features of natural scripts; to create a script to test the boundaries of what can be done within the written medium, in which case it should include some interesting and imaginative feature or features; to create a script ideal for a specific purpose, such as ease of writing or international communication. Granted, the 'specific purpose' of one of the third set of scripts could simply be to look good, although I believe this is verging too close to the wider visual arts to generally be worth considering for featuring in the *Journal*, unless of course the script in question is nevertheless possessed of features of particular interest (for instance, an imaginative method of combining the various characters or structural detail within the script that is secondary to the stated aim but still worthy of recognition). The three areas listed (they may be others) can be seen as analogous to the different types of constructed language that are produced.

We are looking for the 'imaginative' scripts (those which do things not seen anywhere else), and/or those which contain 'details which conscripts normally lack'. Again, among these sorts of details certain ones can be seen as analogous to the sorts of things often targeted in conlangs – 'irregularities', 'diachronics'. Many conscripts are boringly regular to one degree or another – something that real-life scripts, like real-life languages, generally tend not to be (an example is the redundant letters in the Roman alphabet – letters that are not only redundant in the languages the alphabet is used for today but were redundant in Latin itself). Real-life scripts have to resort to digraphs or accents, or have one grapheme representing a sequence of sounds longer than is generally represented by the graphemes of the script (Latin <X>). They don't make certain distinctions at all, or do make certain distinctions which have no parallel in the spoken language (again, Latin used both <C>

and <K>, but didn't mark long vowels). It is often not simply a case of 'vowels are not marked' or 'each letter represents a single syllable' – things tend to be more complex than this: Arabic *does* mark long vowels, albeit with letters otherwise used for consonants; the Japanese kana have separate characters for syllable-final /n/ among other deviations from the 'one syllable – one grapheme' rule.

Many – most? – conscripts completely lack any sort of history, as if they had been created entirely from scratch; in real-life however, as Wikipedia claims, '*almost all known writing systems are descended from the Ancient Near Eastern scripts of the late 4th millennium, or from the Chinese script (if the latter is accepted as an independent innovation)*' (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_writing#Invention_of_writing). Surely, therefore, if one is aiming for a realistic conscript (as most of the conscripters who read this magazine I believe probably are), having – in the context of the script's setting – this conscript appear by itself out of thin air somewhat defeats the object. The point is exemplified further when numerous different conscripts are found within a conworld with no relationship between themselves – if almost all of Earth's writing systems are interrelated, surely in any given conworld one cannot expect there to be a vast number of script families (where 'family' includes script isolates). The answer is graphological diachronics – and I'm talking about real diachronics here; I believe that just as one should not develop conlangs that look a bit similar and call them 'related', one should not just develop scripts that are formed along similar lines and claim a relationship between them, but rather work out a proper evolutionary tree – although admittedly the similarities and differences between related writing systems do not seem to be as clear-cut as those between related spoken languages.

Diachronics are, I believe, equally important in settings where only one writing system exists, without any relatives. For one thing, fully-fledged alphabets do not seem to be capable of emerging from nothing. Writing systems in the real world seem to develop ultimately from vague 'picture writing' and symbols which are largely based on meaning rather than just sounds (for instance, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese writing), progressing to syllabries, abjads and abugidas before becoming true 'alphabets'. It seems almost ridiculous to expect that a writing system in a conworld would just emerge fully formed with a near perfect one-to-one phoneme-grapheme correspondence, or even one where graphemes mark syllables or where vowels are omitted. Put simply, conscripts, like natural writing systems, should go through stages of development. The shapes of graphemes should not, in general, be entirely arbitrary – in most cases, when a character is first created its shape tends to be chosen for a particular reason – a representation of something in real life that is connected to something in the language itself. For example, in a language where the word for 'cow' is *ka*, the representation for this word might represent a cow itself, or the grapheme for the syllable /ka/ or the phoneme /k/ might be based on a similar representation.

Even a more 'primitive' system should be given some history and evolution, if it is established in the conworld setting that the system has been in use for several hundred years: scripts, like spoken languages, change over time. Another benefit of treating a script diachronically is that it helps to

introduce some of the irregularities discussed above, just a giving a conlang a history can help make it irregular in certain ways – for example, a script might have two letters for a single sound as a result of a historical phonological merger. Thus most of the scripts best suited for inclusion in the *Journal* should have some kind of history – even if it is not to be detailed in the article itself – and yet, as far as I am aware, most scripts don't. For guidance, I included an article by myself on the different types of changes which seem to affect writing systems in the very first issue of the *Journal*.

The other 'interesting feature' listed in the list of criteria given above was 'detailed punctuation'. Unlike diachronics and irregularities, this is not something that I believe really ought to be included in the vast majority of scripts intended as naturalistic – for the simple reason that punctuation – especially punctuation of any great complexity – is not present in many real-life writing systems. That does not mean, however, that it cannot be included in a conscript if one so desires, and if one does so desire it is a very good way of making one's script more interesting, and, therefore, more likely to be featured in the *Journal*.

I have yet to see a conscript that even really comes close to mimicking the level of complexity of punctuation found in the modern-day Roman alphabet. In English, we have at least a dozen different punctuation marks, all with fairly complex usage rules (indeed, there is no universal standard for many such rules), that may well take longer to learn 'correct' usage of than any other part of the written language, and that many people never fully achieve. It might be fair to say that the feature of English most often wrongly applied is not its spelling system, as might commonly be thought, but its punctuation system. If English spelling is massively more irregular than anything most conlangers dare to attempt in their orthographies, what does that say about its punctuation? Admittedly, it's not particularly 'irregular' as such, it's merely rather complicated. A conscript that even began to come close to this sort of complexity in its punctuation – with its own rules on what punctuation marks are used where – would be an impressive feat. It would be possible, indeed, to surpass the level of complexity found in Roman punctuation – to make many of the distinctions easily produced in speech we must resort to different font styles (italics, bolding, underlining or capitals – themselves the sorts of features that many conscripts have no parallels for) and many more it is difficult to distinguish at all: for instance, a sarcastic tone. At the same time, however, I must again reiterate that most natural writing systems do not reflect this level of complexity in their punctuation, and that in our case it is something that has developed only slowly over hundreds of years. Again, diachronics are all-important.

The other criteria listed seem fairly self-explanatory – I ask for 'lengthy examples' so as not to be restricted by shorter texts or mere tables of graphemes which, I find, cannot give a full 'feel' of the creation. The final point, about having 'enough content in general to fill at least two pages of the publication', ought to follow naturally from the other criteria – that is, if one has created an interesting script with plenty of imaginative detail and at least one 'lengthy example', the content ought to fill two pages without any problem.

I had not intended to write half this much, but I still hope it has all been considered. With any luck, it will be the inspiration for some conscripts truly worthy of inclusion.

ConCommentary

Rik Roots's column.

Conlang Spotlight: Klingon
Originally posted at rikfiles.blogspot.com on December 26th, 2005.

In conlanging terms, if the 19th century can be seen as the search for an idealised international auxillary language (such as Solresol or Esperanto) and the twentieth century can be considered as the development of conlangs for fantasy and storytelling – Tolkien's languages, for instance – then what of the twenty-first century? What sort of conlanging experience can we expect over the course of the next 100 years?

I think we can already see signs of where the art and practice of conlanging are moving, and the roots of this movement lie in the last twenty years or so of the twentieth century. Role-playing games became very popular in the 1980s – partly as a result of the success of Tolkien's books, but mainly because publishers and game manufacturers found ways of popularising and standardising the game playing experience. The development of the internet and world wide web in the 1990s helped increase the popularity of role-playing fantasy, to such an extent that today there are whole virtual worlds, with virtual societies and virtual economies flourishing online. For some people, these venues are more 'real life' than real life itself!

According to his biographers Humphrey Carpenter and Tom Shippey, the central tenet driving Tolkien to write his novels was not just the story – an ancient history for England – but also the languages: place names and titles would lead to sketches which outlined how such names developed, which in turn could be incorporated into the greater stories of the *Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. When role-playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons began to take on some of the feeling of Tolkien's creations, some people wanted more of an immersive feeling – either through learning a few words of Quenya or Sindarin, or by developing new conlangs for use in their games.

Suddenly, conlanging had a purpose.
Because RPG manufacturers discovered that adding a smattering of conlang to a game could help give players a more interesting gameplaying experience. A conlang could become part of the package – for instance, the D'ni language, script and counting system in the Myst series of computer games.

Alongside all this a television phenomenon was transferring to the movies. When *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* rolled onto the big screen in 1979, few believed that this would be the start of a renaissance, yet the film was successful and led not only to further movies but also to a host of spin-off TV series.

The premise of Star Trek is the meeting of human and alien cultures. The original TV shows, and the first movie, assumed that all humans and all aliens spoke – in effect – English. Nobody considered that any other language (natural or constructed) should be used because the target audience was not

likely to understand. Alien scripts did have a place in these shows, but only as decoration.

But then somebody at Paramount Pictures decided that some of the alien species *should* speak a non-English language, and various grunts and hisses made their way onto the soundtrack. Then for the second movie someone decided that these sounds ought to have a bit of coherence to them to make them more believable. Enter Dr. Marc Okrand, a linguistics professor in California. His first work with the studio was to re-dub the Vulcan scenes, though this was not a working conlang as such. Even so, the studio was so impressed with the effect of including 'Vulcan' in the film that they hired Dr. Okrand to develop sounds and phrases suitable for Klingons to speak in the third movie.

The result of Dr. Okrand's work for this commission was more than just sounds and phrases: the language he produced was reasonably complete, with grammar and syntax. It met the studio's requirements in being sufficiently harsh and alien sounding (to English speaker's ears). It was also good enough for some fans to decide that it would be fun to learn the language, a wish the Good Doctor obliged by producing a Klingon-English dictionary in 1985, and extended and repubished in 1992. Other Klingon-based books followed in the 1990s.

And thus was born one of the most successful conlangs the world has yet seen. Klingon is probably more popular than Esperanto at the moment. The language has its own website – the Klingon Language Institute at www.kli.org. It has it's own literature, including a translations of some of Shakespeare's plays. It has its own (unofficial) conscript as well as one of the most hideous Latin transcriptions yet invented. It is, in short, a successful conlang.

So what of the language itself?

Klingon benefitted from Dr. Okrand's earlier work on Native American languages – this is not another Euroclone language! The sounds of the language are harsh, gutteral and short for a specific purpose, namely to help characterise the race of aliens that speak the language - and as such they are entirely successful for their purpose. The grammar and syntax are also worth a closer look, if only to see that there are many patterns languages can take. Klingon marks both the subject and direct object on the verb, and has a rather wonderful system of affixes for both nouns and verbs. The script is different enough to make it interesting both from an aesthetic and from a demonstrative point of view – though interestingly the script you see in the films and spin-offs has nothing to do with the language.

The best introduction to the language is no doubt Dr. Okrand's dictionaries though the KLI website is also very useful, providing both some online lessons and links to places where people can get together online to help each other learn the language.

Because make no mistake, this language is driven by its fanbase. Paramount Pictures has no interest in the language beyond making occasional use of it in its products. And Dr. Okrand seems to have taken little interest in the language for the past few years – his latest excursion into the world of entertainment was producing a language (Atlantean) for the Disney Studios film *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*.

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Klingon, in my view, is a demonstration of where the future of conlanging may well lie. Tolkien's *secret vice* will not be secret in the 21st century; nor will it be a vice – a shameful thing to admit to. Rather, there will continue to be a demand for constructed languages in works of fiction, in films, in other entertainment outlets – Enya's latest album includes a number of songs written in what she claims to be a collaborative conlang between her lyricist and herself.

Why? Because people – fans – like a bit of wierdness in their commodity, and constructing a language for a specific product helps give it that edge of wierdness. One day, maybe, conlangs may be bought and sold in the marketplace. One day I expect we'll see litigation over conlang copyrights and patents, perhaps even accusations of plagiarism. Conlanging, in the twenty-first century, is going to lose its innocence.

Is this a pity? Yes and no, I think. No, because it's nice to see conlanging get the recognition it deserves – a good conlang, well developed and robust, deserves to find wider and more appreciative audiences. And yet yes also, because to me conlanging will always be an artform, an exploration of words and structures and the very basis of language itself, and sometimes these endeavours are best left untouched by commercial expediency. I remain convinced that Dr. Okrand could have produced a superb conlang for the Klingons to speak if it had been born from his necessity to conlang rather than from his contract with a major film studio. But *ïscuu vosalbizhuu cohmap taabrasee ïsel*, as we say in Gevey.

On Cases: What's Next?

The second part of a series of articles by **Sectori**.

Now that you've figured out your conlang's morphosyntactic alignment (see the first instalment of this series in Issue 5 of the *Journal*), whither are you going to go next? As I'm sure you've seen, there are a great many other cases than nominative, accusative, dative, ergative, absolutive, and dechticaetiative. To name just a few, there's instrumental, comitative, locative, allative, ablative, subessive, superessive …   We're going to leave off of the last few for now, and talk about the non-locative/motion-related cases.

Let's begin with the most basic: the oblique.

The oblique case is typically part of a two- or three-case system (nominative and oblique, for example, or nominative, accusative, and oblique). Oblique is just a fancy word for 'everything else', basically. For example, Old French had two cases, nominative and oblique. The nominative covered the subject of the sentence (and a few other, very limited cases), and the oblique covered everything else: objects of verbs, prepositions, etc. Hindi's oblique is much the same. Tocharian had two main cases, nominative and accusative, and then an oblique stem, from which could be derived a variety of prepositional cases (next article). Sometimes, however, the oblique case just is not enough.

►

The **instrumental** case is fairly common in Slavic languages, and once was a feature of the Germanic languages (including Old English) as well. It describes instrument or means, e.g. *I sprayed the wall **with paint***. Polish uses the instrumental to describe nationality or occupation as well: he is a teacher. I happen to be a fan of the instrumental case, though I often expand its uses beyond those listed here (which is perfectly fine to do).

The **genitive** is a very common case, appearing in (for example; as per Wikipedia), Arabic, Azeri, Bengali, Belarusian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Erzya, Estonian, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek, Icelandic, Inari Sami, Latin, Lithuanian, Manchu, Northern Sami, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Sanskrit, Serbian, Skolt Sami, Slovak, Slovenian, and Tsez. Just to name a few. The genitive case at its most basic describes possession, e.g. ***my** dog*, ***the teacher's** pet*. Greek expands the genitive to include the ablative (to be covered in the next article), i.e. motion away from a source.

The **comitative** case is simple: it describes accompaniment, i.e. presence with: *I walked **with you***. The comitative seems to be a common trait of the Finnic languages (e.g. Finnish, Estonian, Sami …). It can also describe presence with (physical or otherwise), e.g. *I am with him **at his house***, *I agree **with Halyihev***.

The **benefactive** case is a little odder. It's partially a split form of the dative, dealing with indirect objects with 'for', e.g. *I bought this **for you***. However, it can also take on connotations of 'because of' or 'for the intended result of', e.g. *I would sell my soul **for a house***, *I did it **for you*** (i.e. 'because of you').

The **vocative** case is the case of direct address. In my opinion, it is best described by example. The best is that eternal quotation of Caesar: *Et tu, **Brute***? 'Brute' is the vocative case of 'Brutus', one of Caesar's 'friends'. A literal translation of the above would be, 'And you, O Brutus?' The vocative also appears in more mundane circumstances, e.g. *come here, **James***.

The lesson that I intended to share, but seem to have run out of time for, was that it's perfectly fine to expand the uses of a case. For example, the Greek dative absorbed the Proto-Indo-European instrumental and locative cases, and the genitive took in the ablative. Latin went a different root, wherein the ablative absorbed the locative and instrumental. I have used the instrumental to show the comitative, the dative for benefactive, and dative for locative, as well as a multitude of other combinations. When in doubt, pick something that seems to make sense. If nothing seems to make sense, don't be afraid to be somewhat arbitrary. In many ways, that's what conlanging is all about – being able to make an arbitrary decision about your language.

The third and final article in Sectori's series will be featured in the next issue of the *Journal*.

Want to have your own article featured in the *Journal*?
We will be only too happy to consider your submissions.

If you have any articles or ideas for articles that you or another person could write, please contact the Editor at <u>curlyjimsam@aol.com</u>.

The Amazing Adventures of
Colin the Conlanger
Instalment III

By Curlyjimsam

Instalment II ended, roughly: As Nooblanger Ned spoke the door of the office opened with a menacing creak: "prepare 2 meet" – a dark shadow fell over the room – "the ogoneks!"

Colin inhaled very audibly in fear; the other members of the LangGang looked at him in undisguised annoyance.

"Please don't do that," said A sternly. "It doesn't help."

"I'm sorry," said Colin, who was now shaking.

"No, seriously," said B, more kindly. "We've met ogoneks before. If you show yourself to be afraid, they will use that to their advantage."

"mwahahaha!" said Nooblanger Ned, apparently just for the heck of it. "he is rite 2 b afraid. v soon – v soon indeed – u wil all meet an untimely demise"

"Untimely demise, eh?" asked A. "Did you get that off the telly? Bit too imaginative for you, I would've thought …"

"silence fool!!!111!!!"

A raised his eyebrows. "Sorry, I find it difficult to take orders from someone who not only uses exclamation marks far in excess of what is required but actually managed to realise a fair few of them incorrectly. And it would have been better if you'd used a comma."

"There's no time for arguing now," said E in his or her deep voice. "Look!"

Colin, along with the others, looked. The ogoneks appear to have arrived. Through the door stormed one, then two, then three massive, bloated figures, not unreminiscent of potatoes on legs.

"did u c how i kept dem outsied 4 a bit in order 2 hieghten teh suspense" said Ned, again using a construction that was apparently supposed to be a question although it didn't fully resemble one.

"Brilliant!" said A sarcastically. "Only one problem, Ned – it simply gave us more time to think through our battle plans."

Colin hadn't thought about battle plans at all. It seemed to him that the best thing to do would be to teleport out – or however it was they had come in – as soon as possible. Apparently this same thought wasn't on the minds of the other LangGang members. Colin gulped.

One of the ogoneks let out an earsplitting roar, and Colin stepped back in horror, his ears splitting. The monstrous creature was heading right towards him, opening a gaping mouth that although completely devoid of teeth was nevertheless highly frightening.

"Don't show itself that you're afraid!" shouted D. Colin somehow managed to hear him, despite his split ears, and did his best to assume a

non-scared expression. The fact that he was visibly shaking didn't help, and the ogonek continued to advance.

"mwahahaha!" said Ned again, apparently this time to 'hieghten teh suspense', as he would have put it. Colin found this highly annoying.

"I'm about to be eaten here by an oversized bipedal tuber and all you can do is make rubbish attempts at an evil laugh!" he shouted. Nooblanger Ned stopped laughing, and looked at him; more importantly, the ogonek stopped advancing and did the same.

"Well done," said B encouragingly, "stand up to them, that way they won't hurt you."

"I wasn't standing up to them though, I was standing up to N–"

"It doesn't matter." A cut across him. "Come on, we're wasting time. Ogoneks, listen to me."

As if they were in some way bound to follow his orders, the monsters turned towards him.

"n0!" shouted Nooblanger Ned, "i am ur master."

The ogoneks appeared not to have heard him. "I'm so sorry, Ned. They clearly don't associated the word 'ur' with being a marker of the second-person possessive."

Nooblanger Ned, perhaps realising that unless he was prepared to modify his orthographic conventions he was out of luck, turned and fled through the door. The ogoneks' eyes darted towards him.

"Go on," said A, and the three creatures also made through the exit, one at a time. The LangGang stood, watching them leave, when the last of them had forced his way through the doorframe, Colin asked:

"What happened? Why did they follow him? Aren't you going to do something?"

"They detected his fear, they will sort him out for us – we don't need to do anything," replied D, cleverly managing to answer all three questions at once. "What you saw there was not the ogoneks' natural form: as you know, usually they are simply small diacritical marks found on vowel letters – the name is the diminutive of the Polish for 'tail'. They took the mutant form we saw today because of the way in which Nooblanger Ned abused them – after they have finished with him, they should return to their usual, peaceful forms."

"They're going to kill him?" asked Colin, shocked – despite the fact that one of Ned's ogoneks had apparently come very close to eating him alive, he still didn't think the poor man deserved death.

"Don't worry," said B. "Just prevent him from creating any more languages for a while, hopefully." She smiled. "Even more hopefully they'll stop him altogether. We've been fighting him as long as I can remember."

A broke in. "You might have noticed that although this is only a small office all five of us plus Ned and the three of them managed to fit in here. That was partly a result of Ned's bad conworlding skills – a complete lack of logic, among other things – and partly a result of the fact that the ogoneks' true forms are much smaller, if that makes sense."
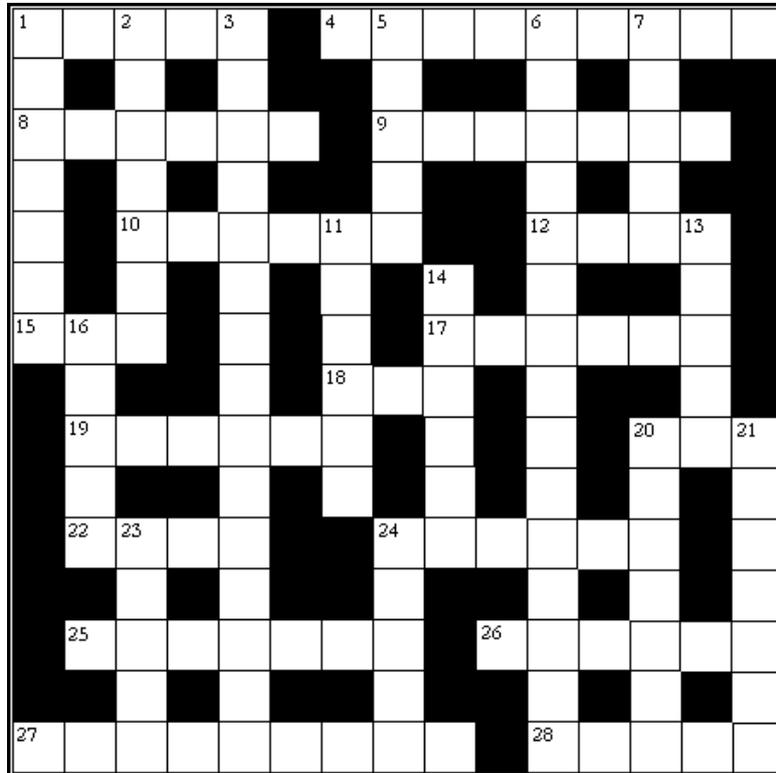
It didn't, but Colin nodded.

"Are we going then?" asked E. "The conlanging world needs us."

"Yes, we're going," said A. "Come on, everyone."

'The Amazing Adventures of Colin the Conlanger' will return in Issue 7.

Conlangers' Crossword

By **Nuntar**.

CLUES:

Across

1 Present king of Verduria (5)
4 Conlang created by Aszev (9)
8 Sound made at the back of the mouth, like [q] (6)
9 Said of a word that has fallen out of use (7)
10 Reference to the context of an utterance (6)
12 Sleep not to be confused with punctuation? (4)
15 Conjunction (3)
17 Example word for lateral affricate (6)
18 What conlanging is an example of! (3)
19 Periodic change in weather conditions (6)
20 Girl's name (3)
22 Word taken from another language (4)
24 Good-mannered and friendly (6)
25 Continent where Arêndron is spoken (7)
26 "__ Ignota" was arguably the first conlang (6)
27 Language spoken in Pelym, Vyat etc. (9)
28 Conlang created by Jashan (5)

Down

1 Language spoken in Vayna, Valaqenta etc. (7)
2 Vowels such as [o], [u], [y], but not [e] (7)
3 'Thank you very much' in 11 down (8,7)
5 Maiden name of Harry Potter's mother (5)
6 (Philosophical) case usage expressing the directing of feelings towards another (7,8)
7 Expression that cannot be translated literally (5)
11 Joint winner of the ZBB's 2006 Best Orthography award (6)
13 Conlang created by Egein (5)
14 Case used in Latin for the indirect object (6)
16 Sound made with airflow in the nose (5)
20 Used in extended IPA for 'fast speech' (7)
21 Conlang created by aanimo (7)
23 The ZBB's favourite animal! (5)
24 Third letter of the Greek alphabet (5)

Answers to be printed in the next issue of the *Journal*.