

## Conlang Creation

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The language of Ellendrí – an exercise in the creation of a constructed language (conlang).

One of the wonderful things about writing fiction, especially science fiction or speculative fiction, is that I can make my world as unique and different from the here and now of reality as I like. However, as my fictional universe diverged from realism as we know it, I began to understand that consistency in design equates to the reader's believability in my story. So back to the whole world building process ...

As I began writing, my characters evolved. They told me things about themselves, about the way they lived on their planet, Ellendrïa, and traveled through their local region of space, the L'Ellendrÿn. I learned that they are hermaphrodites, that their social, cultural, political, and ethical norms differ from ours, sometimes only by a little, and sometimes by a great deal. Not surprisingly, they speak a different language, one which reflects their world views.

At first, I tried to express some of these differences using English words, but this often led to awkwardness and obstructed flow in my story telling. After a while, I started creating words, giving them clear English definitions, and then continuing forward in my writing with this new “Ellendrian” vocabulary. I began building a glossary at the end of the novel, to help readers with this new language. However, as my number of “created” words increased, I realized that I needed to develop a consistent “feel” to Ellendrí, as well as some basic grammar rules for when I was stringing more than one of these new words together.

I already had some information regarding the nature of Ellendrí, based on my long view story perspective:

*Ellendrí is an extant form of Old Ellendorí. Ellendrí has been used as the trade language of the L'Ellendrÿn for over 8000 Terran years, and as a result, has been introduced to a number of the colonized worlds in the L'Ellendrÿn. The last contact between colonists on Terra and people who spoke Ellendrí was approximately 3000 Terran years ago, or roughly 1000 BC in Terran chronology. It shares commonalities with many of Terran's ancient Indo-European languages, particularly proto-celtic, with some word similarities to proto-germanic.*

As a result, I had been more or less consistently creating my Ellendrí words using an Irish Gaelic/Welsh flavor, with a little bit of Old Norse thrown in. What I now needed to do was construct many more words, with the same sort of “dialect”, and with a grammar that would seem reflective of the Indo-European flavor that I was establishing. Welcome to the art and science of [constructed languages](#)!

I have to say that while I can write reasonably well in English, I am no linguist. Luckily, a good many science fiction and fantasy writers, as well as a number of movie script writers, have had much the same problem – the need for a well-developed new language for a fictional universe. There is help! After some fumbling around on the internet, I came across [Vulgar](#) (strange name for a language generator!). I played around with their free version online for a little while, then happily paid them their \$14.95 US for their pro version and went to work.

Firstly, I took about 50 of my already existing words, entered them into Vulgar, and clicked “analyze word structure of your own language”. This effectively gave me a set of phonemes (e.g., word sounds) as a starting point. Then I ran a statistical analysis of the phoneme frequencies in my 50 words using [The Frequentizer](#). This gave me the “feel” of the language – how often, and in what word position, certain sounds occurred.

Now it was time for a little more research. I read up on [Irish phonology](#), [Welsh phonology](#), and [Sindarin](#), a conlang created by Tolkien which was based largely on Welsh, with influences by Old English and Old Norse. From these, I selected a few more phonemes (since my originally sample of 50 words was pretty small), and then fed the whole lot back into Vulgar, set the stress pattern to initial, the word order to VSO (verb-subject-object) based on Celtic languages, and pressed the

“Generate new language” button. In a few moments, Vulgar happily spit out 4000 words and a basic vocabulary. Wow!

Of course, this wasn't yet the final product. I made some adjustments to the grammar to suit my character's universe, changed the pronunciation of a couple of the phonemes, and found that even with 4000 words (generated from a list of English's 4000 most common words), I was still missing lots of words and needed to make more. These were created by running Vulgar's 4000 words through The Frequentizer, then using another word generating program called [GenWord](#) (which creates words based on phoneme frequency, but does not assign English meanings or create grammar) to produce new words as required.

For anyone who is curious, I posted the [Ellendrí grammar](#) and an [Ellendrí glossary](#) (very much a work in progress; please note that the parts of speech for some of the words that were generated by Vulgar are incorrect – I'm correcting them as I work through the glossary).

Lastly, I needed to figure out how to write the language of Ellendrí. For use in the text of the novel, I chose a Romanized alphabet with 33 characters and 6 consonant digraphs (two character combinations; e.g., ch, dh, lh, rh, th, wh) which accurately reflected the phonemes of Ellendrí. The 6 diphthongs (vowel digraphs) in the language were represented as they are in English (e.g., ae, au, ai, ei, oe, ui).

However, in reality, their written language would not have resembled our Roman alphabet in any way. So, for more accurate presentations, I developed a modified form of Tengwar, the alphabet created by Tolkien, with 39 characters. The Tengwar characters were edited and assigned to specific Ellendrí phonemes using the open source program [Fontforge](#). Ultimately, this generated a set of font files which I could use in word documents and on the internet.

Okay ... so what does this all look like???

Here is a little bit of preview material from my novel, the ancient oath of the siathcára ceremony:

*As the Sun rises each day, I shall think of you.  
As the stars shine each night, so shall you be constantly in my thoughts.  
As night follows day, so closely shall we share our separate thoughts.  
I shall know you as completely as you shall know me.  
You shall be my anÿncára and best friend, my siathcára and companion, my beloved.  
This I swear to you.*

*As the blood of our hearts mingles, so shall our souls be one.  
As our hearts beat together, so shall our spirits be united.  
My loyalty shall be yours.  
My courage shall be yours.*

*The strength of my heart shall flow through your veins.  
When there is need, I shall be strong for us both.  
My sword shall be at your service, to fight at your side.  
The skills of my mind and body shall be yours to summon in need.  
My strength shall be the defense at your back.  
My power shall be the shelter for your soul.  
I shall be a shield for your heart and your hopes.  
This I swear to you.*

*There shall be no end of my love for you, for you and I shall dwell within one another forever.  
And when our time comes, we shall go to the beyond together.  
And if we be reborn, we shall meet and know and love again, and remember.  
This I swear to you.*

Shown below is the translation into Romanized Ellendrí. Click the media player to hear each verse spoken. The text-to-speech (tts) conversion was done using a free [online text-to-speech program](#) with the “Welsh English/Geraint” voice.

*Llása rílicae re Aw derairön aeaitÿ, rōngaw a ó a ö.  
Llása refÿenn ÿ resérien d'aere aeaitÿ, edhá nÿred státh ö no öförön ÿr a.  
Llása awtecae re aere ed derairön, edhá ermai rÿcar e öförön relle ÿr e.  
Dadaw a ö la rÿraÿdrÿl llása dadad ö av.  
Larad ö sn'anÿncára ÿr a nílor snari áwp ÿr a, snasiathcára ÿr a nílor snagennü ÿr a, snangtara ÿr a.  
Röthír a erc a ö.*

<http://oceanecology.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/part-1.mp3>

*Llása achecae re eni ó öejav ÿr e, edhá lare öanÿn ÿr e deden.  
Llása ructann aihá öejav ÿr e, edhá thre örynga ÿr e.  
Larÿre snawheder ÿr a ÿr ö.  
Larÿre sn'engendá ÿr a ÿr ö.  
Eichehare re whidrurÿan ó sn'ejav ÿr a mé öoc ÿr ö.  
Rar nÿrecae dra d'are, laraw a rev or noenfiloann ó erv.  
Larÿre snalhÿthÿth ÿr a de snaförid ÿr ö, eppei de snangé ÿr ö.  
Lare ÿ r'öt ó sn'ürÿ ÿr a nílor snaflaenÿ ÿr a ÿr ö ruitÿ no ad are.  
Larÿre snawhidrurÿan ÿr a ed dengennai de snaweno ÿr ö.  
Larÿre sn'itgÿr ÿr a ed d'úse or sn'anÿn ÿr ö.  
Laraw a ed desiath or sn'ejav ÿr ö nílor ödochasÿa ÿr ö.  
Röthír a erc a ö.*

<http://oceanecology.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/part-2.mp3>

*Oúare dra ó sn'itgaÿl ïr a or ö, or thogai ágÿ ö nílor a ïn ralh.*

*Nílor rar rÿphicae snanuda ïr e, íllai aihá e nÿth ad ÿdevír.*

*Nílor naingon larai e nada, edhangai naröv e nílor dadai naröv e nílor fílai naröv e, nílor naiveingai e.*

*Röthír a erc a ö.*

<http://oceanecology.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/part-3.mp3>

Finally, in Ellendrí script, this looks like:

?ása rílicae re **Aw** derairön aeaitÿ, rö?aw a ó a ö.

?ása refÿe? ÿ resérie? d'aere aeaitÿ, eðá ?ÿred stá? ö ?o öförö? ïr a.

?ása awtecae re aere ed derairön, eðá ermai rÿcar e öförö? re?e ïr e.

**Dadaw** a ö la rÿraydrÿl ?ása dadad ö av.

Larad ö sn'anÿncára ïr a ?ílor snari áwp ïr a, snasía?cára ïr a ?ílor snage?ü ïr a, sna?tara ïr a.

Rö?ír a erc a ö.

?ása axecae re eni ó öejav ïr e, eðá lare öanÿ? ïr e deden.

?ása ructa? aihá öejav ïr e, eðá ?re öry?a ïr e.

Larÿre sna?eder ïr a ïr ö.

Larÿre sn'e?endá ïr a ïr ö.

**Eixehare** re ?ídruríá? ó sn'ejav ïr a ?é öoc ïr ö.

Rar ?ÿrecae dra d'are, laraw a rev or nœnfiloa? ó erv.

Larÿre sna?ÿ?ÿ? ïr a de snaförid ïr ö, eppei de sna?é ïr ö.

Lare ÿ r'öt ó sn'ürí ïr a ?ílor snaflaenÿ ïr a ïr ö ??tÿ ?o ad are.

Larÿre sna?ídruríá? ïr a ed de?e?ai de snaweno ïr ö.

Larÿre sn'itgír ïr a ed d'úse or sn'anÿ? ïr ö.

Laraw a ed desía? or sn'ejav ïr ö ?ílor ödoxasia ïr ö.

Rö?ír a erc a ö.

*Oúare dra ó sn'itgaÿl ïr a or ö, or ?ogai ágÿ ö ?ílor a ïn ra?.*

*?ílor rar rÿ?ícaae snanuda ïr e, í?ai aihá e ?ÿ? ad ÿdevír.*

*?ílor ?ai?on larai e ?ada, eðá?ai naröv e ?ílor dadai naröv e ?ílor fílai naröv e, ?ílor ?aivei?ai e.*

*Rö?ír a erc a ö.*

My brush with linguistics has certainly made me more aware of my usage of the English language!

D'e?é rä a ö.