Language Creation Journal

Samuel Pearce

November 28, 2021

Contents

1 Introduction

When I set out to create this language, its main goal was to be as small as possible, in the sense that there were very few vocabulary to learn. At first, I figured I might attempt this by simply limiting the number of words to an arbitrarily small set and then see how useful the language was, and what might need to be added to make it useful in daily life. Soon though, I realised that making it nearer to a polysynthetic language with many uniform morphological derivation strategies, I could define an extremely limited set of roots and then expand them easily with well defined rules. This is the base idea which influenced much of the grammatical decision making.

2 Log Entries

2.1 Tuesday 5$^{\text{th}}$ of October

This is the day I first began developing the language. I had already had a few thoughts about what sounds I wanted to use and the general structure of the grammar, but this was the first day I put it into writing. I began by outlining which sounds I wanted to use. I eventually settled on an extremely regular set of twelve relatively easy-to-pronounce consonants (with suitable allophones, in case) and seven vowels laid out in three pairs of rounded-unrounded vowels and the schwa. I set out a romanisation which would emphasize the paired nature of the sounds and set to work coining the first couple words to test their various inflections. Here I first laid out the biconsonantal root system where the vowel corresponds to the part of speech (Noun, Verb, Adjective) and defined how the roundness-umlaut changes each of these. I also defined the cases and their suffixes as well as which tenses would be available and their respective tenses.

2.2 Friday 8$^{\text{th}}$ of October

During the week I made a few additions, such as the basic personal pronouns and a couple new roots to make more test sentences and I thought about what other suffixes or prefixes I could add to allow for more derivations. I also began defining how to ask questions.

2.3 Saturday 9$^{\text{th}}$ of October

On this weekend, my two friends who were volunteering to help me test out the language's applicability visited for a couple days during which we made a few changes to the language. The vowels all shifted somewhat to make them easier to produce and distinguish for us. I taught them the basics of the noun classes and tenses and we made a few sentences to test their knowledge and to see if they had any suggestions. We solidified how to ask for information as well as binary questions. We also defined a few general inflections, such as the augmentitive and diminutive prefixes which are very handy for deriving new words. We spent a while discussing whether or not to define a way to set the aspect of the verbs, but determined it not really useful enough for now. I also wanted to get a foundation of the writing system defined and asked my volunteers for some suggestions of what æsthetic direction to move in.

2.4   Thursday 21st of October

I had some free time at work and spent a good portion of my afternoon documenting all the features of the language and ensuring that they were unambiguous. I went through the whole adjective inflection system, defined how to mark noun definitiveness, and even got the basics of different clauses worked out, so that conditional sentences and conjunctions could be used. Though these weren't fully fleshed-out by the end of the day, I could already make some pretty complex sentences like:

"Up kiñ kuñfuke utem, up nif muk, ut ñik taf puxe upem."
Which means:
"I give you some money, because I want you to get me good food."

Though the phrases were still quite poorly defined, and this particular example made the need for unambiguous prepositions very clear.

2.5   Sunday 24th of October

On this day, I spent some more time working on the documentation of the language, and also finally decided to remove the "eng" sound from the language as it was too difficult to differentiate, especially in onset position. I also defined how prepositions were going to work after realising the other day how ambiguous they could be. Additionally, I spent some more time refining the glyph designs for the writing system and began attempting to create a font for it.

2.6   Friday 30th of October

Here, I had some overtime built up and had to get rid of it by the end of the month, so — given I didn't have any tasks for my at work — I was allowed to take the rest of the afternoon to work on my VA. During this time, I continued transferring temporary notes which had been tested and worked in the language to the grammar document. This mainly included newly coined words. I also tried translating "The North Wind & The Sun", a commonly used fable for conlang translations, which lead to the dicovery of many problematic ambiguities. I didn't manage to get very far in the translation as I spent most of the time given working on ironing out these troublesome concepts.

2.7   Monday 1st of November

Given my next task at work wasn't ready for me to work on, and there weren't any other tasks available, my boss allowed me to work on the VA for a period instead of work. I used this time to go through all the areas that were unclear or not yet documented and I tested them out while adding them to the grammar document so I could at least have it concretely documented. The ideas I went through included basic conjunctions with some extra prepositions,

2.8   Tuesday 2nd of November

On this day, I tried making some more progress with "The North Wind & The Sun". Most of time was spent trying to find unambiguous ways of representing

more complex topics than the few roots alone could. I also was in contact with one of the volunteers to test out various compunds and phrases to see how easy they were to understand.

2.9 Wednesday 3rd of November

Here, I decided to reorganise the dictionary and work in the use of multiple small languages for testing purposes finally. I realised that I could easily create a scale of dictionary sizes with each one being larger than the last up to a certain maximum. This meant I could test different language scales within the framework of a single language, while simultaneously making it easier to learn by splitting it into easy-to-learn chunks, each building on the previous. I began working on reducing the set of words I had to the lowest language mode, M0, while using an online system to document them and how each is reduced to fewer, more ambiguous roots, or more, clearer roots. For the numbering/naming convention, I decided each group of four words would be represented by a number increasing steadily. So the the smallest version of Sutlun with any roots is Sutlun M1 with 4 roots. Sutlun M2 has 8 roots, and so on until M25. I also refined the set of grammar rules down to 7 simple rules, while also making the prefixes less ambiguous. I tried teaching my parents some of the grammar to see how easy it was.

2.10 Tuesday 9th of November

On this day, with free reign to add as many words as needed with the reassurance that I could simply cut them out of the smaller lexicons, I resolved to finally finish translating "The North Wind & Sun" fable. I practiced writing it using my custom made writing system and added any new words I'd coined to the dictionary I was keeping. Though this didn't mean the language was complete, it was a landmark and a test of the grammar I'd made which I only needed to lightly tweak to work with the story. Once I try translating a few more texts, I should be able to vouch for the language's usability and can commence trying it out with my test subjects and an even larger text, only maybe needing to add words as seems fit.

2.11 Tuesday 16th of November

Here, I had to present the status of my VA to the class. Though I didn't actually have to present it, I still had to prepare a presentation, which I did eventually actually present. In it, I was able to look back and reflect on the progress so far. I was quite happy with how much I'd done, but felt I'd been slacking in the past week and needed to invest some more time this weekend. I began searching for a suitable larger text to translate as that would be the next big step in the whole project.

2.12 Saturday 27th of November

On the weekend, I decided I wanted to overhaul the grammar document, because I had not updated it for a long time given that I wanted to develop the language more before writing everything down to save time. So, now that the language

was much more well-defined, I sat down to go through the whole grammar and update it to reflect any new changes and to add better example-glosses. One of the biggest challenges I ran into while translating and adding new words was that I had made every word have an antonym, which helps greatly with derivation, but makes it quite a pain when I have try to find a way to say table which only uses words which can have an opposite.