

A finite-state morphological analyzer using foma for Klingon, a constructed language

Matthew David Dreselly Thomas
University of Colorado at Boulder
matt@bocosoft.net

Abstract

This paper presents a morphological analyzer for Klingon, constructed language, developed following the official description of the morphology in the Klingon Dictionary (Okrand, 1992).

The open-source tool *foma* for constructing finite-state automata and transducers is used for building the morphological analyzer.

1 Introduction

Klingon was created by Marc Okrand, an American Linguist, for the 1984 movie *Star Trek III*. Klingon is spoken by the fictional Klingons in the *Star Trek* universe, so Okrand designed the Klingon language to sound alien by using grammatical constructs and sound combinations that are rarely used in natural language (Institute, b; Institute, c).

Klingon has a complete grammar that can be spoken and used as a real language. Marc Okrand formalized the Klingon grammar and vocabulary in *The Klingon Dictionary* (Okrand, 1992).

The number of fluent Klingon speakers is not known, but has been estimated between a few dozen (Okrent, 2009) to around 100 (Kelly., 2013). The *Klingon Dictionary* (Okrand, 1992) has sold more than 300,000 copies and has been translated into 4 languages. Klingon has entered into popular culture, and literary works such as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *Gilgamesh*, and “A Christmas Carol” have been translated into Klingon. The current lexicon contains almost 3,000 words (Zrajm,) and only grammar and words coined by Marc Okrand are considered canonical by the Klingon speaking community (Institute, a).

2 Klingon Morphology

Klingon is an agglutinative language that uses Object-Verb-Subject word order. Okrand categorizes all Klingon words into Nouns, Verbs, and Other.

2.1 Nouns

Nouns can take five types of suffixes. Each suffix type, if present, must be appended to the noun stem in a specific order and there can be no more than one suffix per type. Nouns are divided into three categories; body-parts, beings capable of language, and general nouns. Some suffixes can only be appended to certain noun categories or their meaning changes when they are appended.

Below are the noun suffix types and the relevant rules for each type.

Type 1 Augmentative/diminutive

Type 2 Number

Noun Type	Suffix
Body-Part	-pu’
Language-Capable	-Du’
Generic	-mey

The *-mey* suffix may also be used with body-part and beings-capable-of-language nouns, but the resulting word acquires an additional meaning “*all over the place*” on top of the plural meaning.

Klingon	English
jup	friend
jupDu’	friends
jupmey	friends all over the place

Table 1: Generic Plural Suffix Usage with Inherently Singular Nouns

Some nouns are inherently singular or inherently plural. For example the Klingon word

peng means torpedo (singular) but *cha* means torpedos (plural). The singular forms of these types of nouns may also take the *-mey* generic plural suffix, but the resulting word also acquires the “*all over the place*” meaning.

Klingon	English
peng	torpedo
pengmey	torpedos all over the place
cha	torpedos
*chamey	<i>Not allowed</i>

Table 2: Generic Plural Suffix Usage with Language-Capable Nouns

Lastly, nouns in Klingon are not required to take any plural suffix in order to be plural. The singular form of a noun may be used where the plural form would normally be used, and this is perfectly grammatically correct. The meaning is disambiguated using the context of the word in the sentence. Therefore *jup* means both “friend” and “friends” depending on the context. There are no articles in Klingon.

The Type-2 suffix group uses the NOUN-TYPE, SINGULAR and PLURAL flag diacritics to control which suffixes can be applied and what their meaning is.

Type 3 Qualification

Type 4 Possession/specification

Possession suffixes are selected depending on whether the *object* being referred to is language-capable.

Possessive Suffixes	Generic	Language Capable
my	-wIj	-wI'
your	-IIj	-II'
his, her, its	-Daj	-Daj
our	-maj	-ma'
your (plural)	-raj	-ra'
their	-chaj	-chaj

This suffix type uses the NOUNTYPE flag diacritic to restrict language-capable suffixes to always and only be applied to language-capable nouns.

Type 5 Syntactic markers

2.2 Verbs

Verb can take both prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes specify both the subject and object of the verb, including whether or not a subject and/or object exists. Verbs can use either the **Indicative mood** or the **Imperative mood**, which can also affect whether some suffixes can be used. There is no infinite form of a verb in Klingon.

Verbs are categorized into **stative** and **dynamic**. Klingon does not use adjectives so stative verbs are used to describe nouns. For example to say “red ship”, one would use the stative verb *Doq* meaning to be red/orange, “*Duj Doq*”.

Verbs conform to nine ordered suffix types. Just like nouns, each suffix type, if present, must be appended to the verb stem in a specific order. There can be no more than one suffix per type.

Below are the verb suffix types and the relevant rules and flag diacritics for each type.

Type 1 Reflexive, Reciprocal

This suffix type can only be used with the set of prefixes that mean “no object”. The *-chuq* reciprocal suffix can only be used when the subject is plural.

Type 2 Volition, Necessity

Type 3 Inceptive, Inchoative

Type 4 Causative

Type 5 Undefined Subject, Capability

Type 6 Perfection, Uncertainty

Type 7 Aspect

Type 8 Honorific

Type 9 Syntactic markers

In addition, a “rover” suffix type can be appended immediately after the verb stem or between the nine suffix types, however rover suffixes cannot be appended after a Type-9 suffix. There are no restrictions on the number of rover suffixes that may be used. A rover suffix’s meaning applies to the suffix immediately preceding it. For example the **negating** rover suffix *be'* can be appended immediately after the verb stem and/or after any other suffix type.

Rover suffixes can even be appended after other rover suffixes, e.g. *Dubbe'be'* meaning *to not not improve*.

Klingon	English
Dub	to improve
Dubbe'	to not improve
DubmoH	to cause to improve
DubmoHbe'	to not cause to improve
Dubbe'moH	to cause to not improve
Dubbe'moHbe'	to not cause to not improve

Table 3: Verb Rover Suffix Usage

2.3 Other Words

Pronouns

Numbers

Conjunctions

Adverbials

Exclamations

Names

Questions

3 Klingon Morphophonology

Klingon completely lacks morphophonology with one exception. The endearment noun suffix *-oy* is prepended with a glottal stop ' if the noun stem ends with a vowel.

Noun Stem	With Endearment Suffix
jup (friend)	jupoy (dear friend)
cha (torpedo)	cha'oy (dear torpedo)

Table 4: Endearment Suffix

4 FST Implementation

The morphological analyzer FST consists of two files; a *lexc* file and a *foma* file. References to The Klingon Dictionary and other sources are captured in comments throughout the FST files for reference and as an explanation of implementation decisions.

4.1 *lexc* file

The *lexc* file describes Klingon morphology and contains the basic set of Klingon lexical entries. I use the KLCP1, which are the 502 basic words of first level of KLI's "Klingon Language Certification Program" (Zrajm,). Each lexical entry contains the stem and the english meaning on the upper-side (analysis) of the FST.

Beesley and Karttunen (Beesley and Karttunen, 2002) flag diacritics are used to restrict the stem

and affix combinations according to the grammar description.

The Noun LEXICON uses Unification flags to mark the noun category:

- @U.NOUNTYPE.BODYPART@
- @U.NOUNTYPE.CAPABLELANGUAGE@
- @U.NOUNTYPE.OTHER@.

If a noun is inherently singular or inherently plural, it is marked using the Positive flag diacritic @P.SINGULAR.IRREGULAR@ or @P.PLURAL.IRREGULAR@.

4.2 *foma* file

The *foma* file creates an FST from the *lexc* and adds morphophonological rewrite rules. The single Klingon morphophonological rule is implemented in the *foma* file as a rewrite rule.

5 Evaluation

More than 150 test cases are contained in a separate *foma* file. These test cases follow Okrand's examples in The Klingon Dictionary. The morphology *lexc* was modified until all test cases passed and recall reached 100%.

In order to obtain a quantitative analysis of the morphological analyzer, I compiled a list of words from The Klingon Dictionary and The Klingon Hamlet (096,). Of the 267 words on the list, the morphological analyzer accounted for 264. The remaining 3 words were *DatDaq*, *tIpuq* and *naDevDaq*. Both *DatDaq* and *naDevDaq* are explicitly forbidden by Marc Okrand in The Klingon Dictionary as there are location nouns with the locative suffix, therefore these words are technically not grammatically. The last word *tIpuq* comes from the Sonnet-18 translation in Hamlet and appears to translate to "bud" (as in rose bud), however this word does not appear in any canonical sources of Klingon. Therefore I consider the morphological analyzer to have achieved 100% recall for the target word list.

References

- Hamlet, Prince of Denmark: The Restored Klingon Version.* Klingon Language Institute.
- Beesley, K. R. and Karttunen, L. (2002). *Finite-State Morphology: Xerox Tools and Techniques.* Xerox Corporation.

Institute, T. K. L. Canonical Sources. http://www.kli.org/wiki/Canonical_sources. Accessed: 2015-12-15.

Institute, T. K. L. Development and Use of the Klingon Language. <http://www.kli.org/about-klingon/klingon-history/>. Accessed: 2015-12-15.

Institute, T. K. L. The Sounds of Klingon. <http://www.speakklingon.info/about-klingon/sounds-of-klingon/>. Accessed: 2015-12-15.

Kelly, S. M. (2013). How Klingon Became a Universal Language. <http://mashable.com/2013/05/18/klingon-star-trek/>. Accessed: 2015-12-15.

Okrand, M. (1992). *The Star Trek: The Klingon Dictionary*. Simon and Schuster.

Okrent, A. (2009). *In the Land of Invented Languages: Esperanto Rock Stars, Klingon Poets, Loglan Lovers, and the Mad Dreamers Who Tried to Build A Perfect Language*. Spiegel & Grau.

Zrajm. Klingon Word Database 1st edition. <http://mashable.com/2013/05/18/klingon-star-trek/>.