Holly Lisle's

Create A Language Clinic

A Step-by-Step Course
in Fictional Language Creation

NONFICTION

THE WORLDBUILDING COURSE

Holly Lisle's Create A Language Clinic

A Step-By-Step Course in Fictional Language Creation

THE WORLDBUILDING COURSE: BOOK I

OneMoreWord
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Other Books by Holly Lisle

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ROMANTIC SUSPENSE NOVELS

I See You, Onyx (ISBN: 0-451-41221-4), July 2006
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Midnight Rain, Onyx, (ISBN: 0-451-41175-7) Nov 2004

THE WORLD GATES

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BOOK II: The Wreck of Heaven, Eos (ISBN: 0-380-81838-8) Apr 2003
BOOK III: Gods Old and Dark, Eos (ISBN: 0-380-81839-6) Mar 2004

THE SECRET TEXTS

BOOK I: Diplomacy of Wolves; Warner Aspect (ISBN: 0-446-67395-1) Nov 1998
BOOK II: Vengeance of Dragons; Warner Aspect (ISBN: 0-446-67396-X) Oct '99
BOOK III: Courage of Falcons, Warner Aspect (ISBN: 0-446-67397-8 Oct 2000
Vincalis the Agitator, Warner Aspect (ISBN: 0-446-67899-6) March 2002

ARHEL NOVELS

Fire in the Mist; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-72132-1) Aug 1992
Bones of the Past; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-72160-7) Mar 1993
Mind of the Magic; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87654-6) May 1995

GLENRAVEN NOVELS

Glenraven; (w/ Marion Zimmer Bradley) Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87738-0) Sept 1996
In The Rift: Glenraven II; (w/ Marion Zimmer Bradley) Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87870-0) Apr 1998

DEVIL'S POINT NOVELS

Sympathy for the Devil; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87703-8) Jan 1996
The Devil and Dan Cooley; (w/ Walter Spence) Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87756-9) Dec 1996
Hell on High; (w/ Ted Nolan) Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87780-1) May 1997

CADENCE DRAKE NOVELS (SF)

Hunting the Corrigan's Blood; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-97768-2) Feb 1997; REISSUE OneMoreWord Books-- Mar 2006.

STAND-ALONE FANTASY

Minerva Wakes; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-72202-6) --- Jan 1994
When the Bough Breaks; (w/ Mercedes Lackey) (ISBN: 0-671-72154-2) Feb 1993
Mall, Mayhem and Magic; (w/ Chris Guin), Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87678-3) Aug 1995
The Rose Sea; (with S.M.Stirling), Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87620-1) Sept 1994

BARD'S TALE NOVELS

Curse of the Black Heron; Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87868-9) Mar 1998
Thunder of the Captains; (w/ Aaron Allston), Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87731-3) July 1996
Wrath of the Princes; (w/ Aaron Allston) , Baen Books (ISBN: 0-671-87771-2) Mar 1997

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And deepest gratitude to Matt, who not only cheered me on while I wrote this, but who copyedited the final draft. His sharp eye and keen ear for language made the manuscript into a book.

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Create A Language Clinic

Holly Lisle

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Author's Note

This book started out as the first chapter in what was to have been *Holly Lisle's Worldbuilding Clinic*. When it passed fifty pages, I knew the manuscript was hopelessly beyond being disguised as one chapter. When it passed a hundred, it reached full workbook status and became, instead, the first of three (planned) books in THE WORLDBUILDING COURSE. The other two that I have planned are *Holly Lisle's Create A Culture Clinic*, and *Holly Lisle's Create A World Clinic*, to be written in that order. I think odds are good that I'll be able to keep the next two books within bounds. But after so many years of doing this, I've discovered that books will surprise you.

Thank you for buying *Create A Language Clinic*. I hope you discover that you enjoy the language-creation process as much as I do.

Holly Lisle

6/14/06

P.S. If you'd like to let me know how your language building went, you can reach me at holly@hollylisle.com. I promise to read all emails. Due to the volume of e-mail and letters I receive, I'll cannot answer all of them. If you ask good questions, however, I'll try to answer through either my weblog (http://hollylisle.com/writingdiary2/) or my podcast (http://hollylisle.libsyn.com/) so others can get the same information.

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Chapter One

Why Create Languages?

There are a few basic reasons I can come up with, including the one that has led me to create several dozen so far.

- You write fantasy or science fiction or another form of fiction that would benefit from characters speaking or writing in languages that are unique to your worlds.
- You are a role-playing game designer, game master (GM), or worldbuilder, and you need workable languages within the game.
- You are a conlanger, you love languages, and you'd like to see how someone else organizes the process of creating them.
- You want to do something really different, but you don't want it to involve the pain of tattoos or piercing, and talking with your friends in your own real language would be really, really different.
- You're a Secret Master of the Universe, and your plan to take over the world involves getting everyone on board with one language—and you want it to be one that only includes concepts of which you approve.
- It's ridiculously fun.

Yes, but ....

Why a language? How could a made-up language possibly add to a work of fiction, or a game universe, or your personal amusement?

Consider the following:

A Language Is the Soul of Its People

We breathe language, we live language, and we dream language. Language is the way the past communicates with the present, the way the present communicates with the future, the way we form our goals and aspirations, transmit them to others, and make them come true. Shared language allows us to gather together to share our dreams and our strength; languages that we do not know drive us apart.

Language is what we have instead of telepathy, and it's a good replacement. With someone who shares our language, we can express emotion, make plans, tell stories about things that once happened and things that never will, invent new ideas, create worlds. Language is magic.

Common language is the first requirement for a people to *be* a people. Without shared language, there can be no comprehension, no understanding, no shared ground between two people, or between two groups of people. Ideas break in translation, concepts vanish where there are no equivalent words. The other requirements that make up a people—a shared philosophy and shared goals, die on the altar of the common tongue.

If you cannot communicate with each other, you cannot know each other.

Languages Shape Thought

What does "snow" mean to you?

Cold white stuff on the ground, right?

What does it mean to an Eskimo, who lives in a world where snow is both ally and enemy, and who has multiple words for the same frozen white stuff, each specifying a subtle difference: snow that is safe to walk on, snow that is treacherous and will collapse, snow that packs well, snow that can be cut into blocks, snow that is coming and that will kill those who wander out into it.

The concept of "snow" is something entirely different to someone whose life depends on understanding and identifying its subtleties. To understand snow as an Eskimo understands snow, you have to live as an Eskimo lives. And you have to learn the words.

Understanding that languages shape thought is a form of power. Those who control words and the meanings of words control the thought of the people. If

this were not the case, books would never be banned from schools or states or nations, the Chinese government would not be making deals with Internet search engines to censor out words like "freedom" and "democracy" from the Chinese people, and the PC movement would not be fighting words like "fireman" and "waitress" and "handicapped" and "fat." And politicians and political weenies would not constantly be trying to align enemy political camps with the devil as they see him. Her. Whatever.

Words matter. The language you first learn molds your thoughts. You cannot comprehend science as anything but magic if you do not have (or invent) a scientific vocabulary; you cannot discuss philosophy with only concrete nouns; and you cannot create a genuinely foreign culture using only the concepts embodied in the English language.

To some folks, "freedom" really does mean nothing—the concept doesn't exist in their language, or the experiences in their lives. If you're going to understand (or create) those people, you have to learn to see the world through the eyes of their language.

Languages Create Conflict

In the real world, language-induced conflict is not a good thing. (For examples of language-induced conflict, study English-speaking Canadians and French Canadians, Albanians in Serbia, and Latinos in the US.) Fights get ugly, they divide people, and they prevent communication.

But can't we all just get along?

No. Because (circle back to point A) language is the soul of a people, and you can't be a people if you don't speak the same language, because different languages embody different concepts and preclude non-speakers from ever truly belonging.

Sometimes you can't even be a people if you do speak the same language—but if you don't, forget it. You're dead in the water before you begin.

As crappy as this is in real life, it's *great* in fiction.

You can have two nations sitting side by side, loathing each other and believing horrible things about each other because the people cannot understand what the translators say, and so are at the mercy of those who speak both languages. If they could just communicate with each other directly,

they would discover that they have much more in common than they have been led to believe. This story could feature either the evil manipulators who profit from their ignorance, or the hero who finds a way to give them a common tongue. Or both.

You can have a man and a woman from different cultures who speak different languages natively, and who must overcome the difficulties of their language-induced mindsets in order to become allies against a greater foe. (As in my novel TALYN.)

You can have a character's history mistranslated and have her act on an erroneous assumption based on the translation, with horrifying results. I did variations of this with both the ARHEL books and the SECRET TEXT trilogy.

Once again, words matter—and if you're creating the languages and the concepts that imbue them with their souls, you have free reign to build in the sort of bone-deep conceptual conflicts that can give to sides a reason never to see eye to eye. And when you have that, then you can make them *have* to work together.

From there, it's all just fun.

Get Your Supplies Together

Let me stress organization right from the start. I cannot describe the sick feeling I got in the pit of my stomach when I lost my scattered language notes for the (very) complex and varied languages of Arhel (used in *Fire in the Mist*, *Bones of the Past*, and *Mind of the Magic*). I'd fully worked out those languages, and I realized that if I ever wanted to write in Arhel again, I was going to have to reverse-engineer the languages from the bits and pieces that exist in scattershot form in the books. I'm not sure I'll ever go back and do more books in Arhel, in spite of the fact that I love the world and love the characters. The loss of all my language notes, and to a lesser extent my worldbuilding notebook, is the primary reason.

DO NOT let this happen to you. Obtain the following supplies:

- A scratch pad or pile of scrap paper or cheap ringbound notebook. (I use the notebook, because I like hanging on to my scribbles. Sometimes they have good ideas that I can use elsewhere.)
- One three-hole binder per language (or group of languages per writing universe). I highly recommend side-bound pressboard report covers.

They will only take up as much room as you use, unlike three-ring notebooks), and they are less likely to damage your pages than a three-ring notebook.

- Hole punch, or pre-punched printer paper
- Tabbed page dividers to go in between sections of your language. This is not a must-have, but those tabs can keep you sane when you're flipping rapidly between vocabulary, grammar, written, and sound sections of your language, and I recommend them with all my heart.
- Do-it-yourself language-creating kit, which should include:
    - Black ball-point pens or other pens with quick-drying black ink for filling out forms (you don't want to smudge something critical because you wrote it in a smooth but slow-drying gel, and the use of glitter inks, florescent ink and other colored inks will not reproduce well when you photocopy your notes)
    - A set of fine-tipped drawing pens of variable width for designing your alphabets. I recommend Tech-Liner drawing pens because they're both good and relatively cheap, but any sort of technical drawing pens with black ink will do. You want widths from 0.1mm to 0.5 or 0.7mm. (In a pinch, you can use a ball-point pen or magic marker, or a brush and India ink, but carefully test your ink to make sure it won't bleed through to the next page.)
    - A metal straight edge or decent-quality ruler
- If you're working from the print edition of this book, you'll also need access to a copier, to copy off the worksheets.[1]

Your Notebook Layout

If you would like to set up your language's notebook before you get started building the language, print off the sheets (recommended numbers of each

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[1] See

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sheet for BASIC language building are noted below the sheet name) and put them into your binder, marking the tabs on your dividers as indicated if you're using tabs, and numbering pages as noted.

You may find as you go along that you'll need extra pages in some areas. If you have to make a trip to use a copier and want to make sure you have what your need when you get home, you'll most likely want to make a few extra copies of the Vocabulary Sheet, Vocabulary Rules Sheet, and Syntax Rules Sheet. These are the sheets I run out of, if I run out of anything.

- BASIC INFORMATION (tabbed divider)
    - **Linguistic Background Sheet**—print one sheet
    - **Reductionary Alphabetization (RA) Sheet**—print one sheet
- VOCABULARY (tabbed divider)
    - **Vocabulary Sheet**—print three sheets for BASIC development, more as needed
    - **Prefixes and Suffixes Sheet**—print one sheet for BASIC development, more as needed
    - **Vocabulary Rules Sheet**—print three sheets for BASIC development, more as needed
- GRAMMAR (tabbed divider)
    - **Case Conjugation Sheet**—print one sheet for BASIC development, more as needed
    - **Tense and Person Sheet**—print one sheet for BASIC development, more as needed
    - **Syntax Rules Sheet**—print three sheets for BASIC development, more as needed
- WRITTEN LANGUAGE (tabbed divider)
    - **Written Language Alphabet or Syllabary Sheet**—print one sheet
    - **Written Language Designer Sheet**—print three sheets for BASIC development, more as needed

You'll notice that each sheet has a letter before the space for the page number (A, B, C...etc.) Group all your A pages together in numerical order (if you end

up with more than one page), then all B pages together in numerical order, and so on, and put them in your notebook in alphabetical order. This will make finding things at a later date much, much easier.

Protect Your Work

Make sure that every time you do a sheet, you promptly put it in the notebook. Be a little paranoid as the project grows and you become sure the language is one you like and might want to use for more than one book. Photocopy your work and store it in a safe place.

Bank box? Maybe.

Parents' house? Only if they know its value to you.

Personal fireproof safe? If you can swing the price of one, sure.

But *someplace safe*.

The point is that once you've used your language in a published work of fiction, you want to know that your background will be safe for the rest of your working career. If you lose it and you want to go back one year or ten years or twenty years later to work in that world, you have a mountain of work ahead of you before you can step back in and pick up where you left off.

And you might discover that you simply cannot get back a working version of the language you need, in which case, you will have to either give up on the project or approximate what you lost. If you approximate, you're going to get nasty letters from readers who are good at languages and who can spot the places where you screwed up. As a final alternative, you can drop back 200 years and punt, declaring that in the older world, they spoke a variant dialect.

Chapter Two

The English Issue, From the Language Builder's Perspective

The problem with having English as your first language, from the language builder's perspective, is that English is a language that never met a word it didn't like.

It got its birth as the Norman soldier's attempt to pick up Anglo-Saxon barmaids, and the Norman tongue had been pretty promiscuous even before that. It started out when Roman Latin kept illicit company with Germanic nouns and African adjectives and Greek verbs and a whole lot more, squished a little of this with a bit of that, and a pinch of everything else, squeezed the whole mess into mostly-regular Latin grammar, bred like mad, and then tore across western Europe spreading civilization and what would become all the Romance languages; Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and so on, before falling into disarray and disuse.

Centuries passed, while Latin's clan of offspring shifted and evolved.

Then Latin's child Old French, carried by invading Normans, met my blue-painted intransigent Germanic-speaking Anglo-Saxon ancestor horde, and in the crash, all of Latin's beautiful, logical rules broke, and squishy Latinate multi-syllable soft sounds careened into rough-edged Celts and the advent of four-letter words that *only had four letters*.

Since then, English, the bastard child of frequent and messy cultural collisions, has gone on to add words from every other language on the planet that ever had an idea it didn't already contain. It has freely coined words when its speakers came up with concepts for which there were no words. It has cheerfully embraced, and then co-opted, and frequently mangled, the grammars and vocabularies of other places and peoples, under the absolute certainty that even though there were already a hundred ways to say "Dinner was great," *having a hundred and one ways would be better*.

English speakers have never accepted the limitations of the language. They have always just built more language to accommodate their needs, and then encouraged everyone else to jump onboard. Think Silicon Valley and the explosion of techie terms as a recent example of this. English goes anywhere and does anything, never takes *No!* for an answer, and even though it's a beast to learn well, can be picked up in a workable basic form by just about anyone, anywhere, using tons of words new speakers already know (because English raided *their* language for vocabulary a century or five ago.)

Every rule in English has an exception, or half a dozen of them, every part of speech has sections that have been tacked on like body parts to Frankenstein's monster, and everything you can say one way, you can say at least a dozen other ways, and probably closer to a hundred.

Because of this, English speakers (and therefore English-speaking language builders) have built into their subconscious minds this inherent linguistic sense that anything is possible, that the language rules are really just general guidelines, that such rules as exist are mostly made to be broken, and that these rules certainly need not apply to them if they don't want them to.

Pause here for a moment. Consider what I said at the beginning of this course about a language being the soul of its people.

See what I mean?

Now.

Realize that the majority of languages on the planet are *nothing like English*. They have a fixed set of regular rules with few exceptions (and those generally dealt with in a single, sane fashion), and people *follow* these rules. They have a word hoard grown at home and kept at home, and these languages add to their hoard with outside words reluctantly, if at all. (Witness France's eternal war against permitting any English words to creep into French vocabulary.) Such languages have one or two right ways to say something, and have markedly smaller vocabularies, limiting ideas and concepts that can be discussed.

Modern European languages (excluding official French) have the same expanding vocabularies as English, which weighs in at around a million words. Best guess on Russian is that it has about 500,000 words in its word hoard,

while German has around 200,000 words, Italian and Spanish have fewer than 200,000 but more than 100,000 words, and French has fewer than (but not much fewer than) 100,000 words. Generally these other languages have more regular rules, too.

However, many other languages have vocabularies ranging from a very low 750 words for one Creole pidgin variant up to around 20,000 words, about the size of the average English speaker's working vocabulary. And these smaller languages tend to have very regular (if complex) rules, few exceptions, and few or no loan words.

The English-speaking language builder's bone-deep assumptions about language and what it is and how it works shatter like glass on the rigid anvil of the majority of the worlds 6,912 known living languages[2] (and God only knows how many dead ones).

In many languages, there is only one right way to do anything.

Imagine there is only one right word to describe something. In most languages, a woman cannot be gorgeous, bodacious, bootylicious, drool-worthy, stunning, ravishing, or hot. She can simply be beautiful. Well, she can probably be hot, too, but only if the weather stinks.

Imagine there is only one right verb for a given situation. In many languages, you cannot sashay, prance, amble, wander, stroll, strut, swagger, shimmy, wriggle, float, tiptoe, galumph, creep, clomp, stomp, tromp, march, dawdle, meander, drag, scurry, hurry, careen, race, bounce, hop, skip, traipse, or ooze into a room. You can only walk.

The mind of the English-speaker rebels at such confinement.

But imposing these constrictions in a created language do make it a whole lot easier to build. Regular rules with no exceptions, limited vocabulary, refusal to accept loan words or expand—all of these are a great aid if you're building the language from the ground up.

In some cases, such limits will fit your work perfectly. In other cases, they won't.

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[2] http://www.ethnologue.com/

Perhaps you won't want a restrictive, limited language. Restrictive languages will influence the people who speak them, just as wide-open messes of languages influence their speakers.

Because a language is the soul of its people.

When you're designing your languages, keep this point in mind, and make your languages fit the people who speak them. (Or make your people fit their language, if you're building the language as your first step.)

Chapter Three

So When You Build A Language, What Do You Build?

The following shows the steps you'll take in creating your language, and a rough approximation of the minimum amount of time (after reading the instructions) it will take you to complete each step. Each step is also a stopping point—if all you want are some cool names for your world, do steps One and Two (about 48 min). If you want to include your characters speaking short bits in your story, you're committed through Step Five (roughly 3 hrs). If you want a workable written language, you're all the way into Step Seven (about 5 total hours). For a language you and friends can use yourselves, figure a minimum of about three weeks putting in several hours each day if you're going it alone. If your friends pitch in, you can cut that time down considerably.

If you want to use language as a point of conflict of a story or novel, or even the main theme, start by doing the *Concepts That Do Not Exist in English* mini-workshop at the back of the book, then decide how much language you want to have on hand to support this, and return to step One to begin creating your language.

Language Creation Steps

1. The sound of the spoken language (15 min)
2. The history and background of your language (3 min + updates)
3. Easy proper names (30 min)
4. A workable short list of nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs, pronouns and conjunctions (1 hr)
5. Rudimentary grammar (1 hr)
6. Complex proper names (15 min)
7. Complete sentences (1 hr)

8. A workable written language (2 hrs)
9. A reasonably speakable language with a minimal acceptable vocabulary and writing system. (3 wks working several hours a day on it)

The times listed here do not include reading the accompanying material. They are the times I estimate it will take you (somewhat longer, in most cases, than it takes me, to doodle around with concepts and come up with some you like well enough to write down on your worksheets.

With each of these steps, you can expand considerably. The same steps that give you a handful of easy proper names will also yield a nice word hoard; with extra effort a rudimentary grammar can become a rich and fully usable one; and a handful of language concepts can give way to a complete philosophy and culture. (We'll get into this in detail in *Holly Lisle's Create A Culture Clinic*, the next book in **The Worldbuilding Course**.)

Chapter Four

The Beginnings of Created Language: Reductionary Alphabetization

The first concept to grab when creating a convincing language is that other languages don't sound the same as your own.

They include sounds that your language doesn't have, like the Spanish trilled *rr*, or the gutteral *ghk* sound found in some Eskimo and Germanic languages, the tonals of Chinese, or the glottal stops, clicks and whistles of some African languages.

Language is sound that, through assigned meaning and syntax, conveys thought.

We start with sound. English has hundreds of sounds. The sounds we convey with the the single letter A range from fAte to cAt to fAR to fAmine to wAll and beyond, and vary by region and dialect, too. For E, you have fEEd and pElt and pErson and pEt and carpEt and more; for O, everything from hOme to hOp to hOrse to hOw to hOOp ... and it goes on and on. That's not counting dipthongs, it's not counting consonant blends, it's not counting Deep South English and West Texas English and Southern Ohio English and Cockney English and Tea and Crumpets English or Auckland English or any of the other accents, dialects, and pidgins that all pass for English and that serve to more or less get thoughts across to other English speakers.

Lotta sounds. All English.

The writer using a created language can imply that all these variants of his language exist, but he does not need to create them. He can instead do some neat mystic handwaving that will cause the reader to believe much more of his language exists than what he actually has on paper.

Here's where we start that mystic handwaving.

The quick and dirty (and sometimes lean and elegant way) of giving your language its first hint of otherness is to start tossing out some of those sounds.

You can make your language sound convincingly non-English by tossing out all *S* and *K* sounds, for example. Speakers of languages that don't include *S* will approximate sibilants from sounds that do exist in their language (at least until they learn to reproduce the sounds). *Th* can reasonably approximate *S*, for example, as can *Z*. The *K* sound can be approximated by a hard *G*.

If you just transpose these sounds, you can start approximating the accent of one of your foreign language speakers speaking in your main language.

Example:

The quick, slippery snake killed a cockroach.

The gwick, zlippery znake gilled a gogroach.

While this example is not anything you'd want to do in your work, and totally ignores the syntax that would likely change with the non-native speaker's use of a foreign language, it does demonstrate how a simple and very limited change in sound can convey foreignness.

One more quick example—a translation of the English sentence *I walked to the paraglesa's house* into Ropheti, one of the main languages of THE SECRET TEXTS trilogy.

Example:

English: I walked to the paraglesa's house.

Ropheti: Sora tojhka dla paraglesa aes da ma.

Literal: To the (sora) house (tojhka) of the (dla) paraglesa (paraglesa) walk (aes) I (da) in the past (ma).

Though this example also includes the use of a comprehensively worked out grammar, you can get the feel of the foreignness of the language not just from the words you don't know, but from the sounds you don't use when speaking English, *jhk* and *dla*.

I have some warnings to attach to the process I have laughingly dubbed *Reductionary Alphabetization.*

Reductionary Alphabetization, because you're going to be tossing out sounds and letters, culling them like mutant cattle, and pretending that they don't exist in any form and never did. (*Laughingly* called this because Reductionary Alphabetization is a long, goofy name and I am opposed in principle to long,

goofy names. But in two words the term sums up what I do and what you'll be doing, so I've winced and let it stand.)

- **The first warning is that you can go overboard in reducing your sounds.**

In theory, you could pare your created language down to the vowel sounds that can be made with the letters A and O. Nothing more. You could do a workable syntax, and make those sounds carry out all the functions of a language. The problem here comes in writing down your language in your work of fiction. It's going to look stupid.

Example:

Disasterspeak: Aoá à aaoo ó öa aa õaooaao oo aoa â.

English: The writer got too cute with this and looks idiotic.

Nobody is going to look at a line of As and Os and hear a language. They're going to hear Chimpanzee. If that's what you were hoping to convey, you'll be on the right track. Otherwise, reconsider your two-basic-sound language.

In order for the language to feel real, *you want the reader to be able to hear your language in his head as he reads*. You want the words to feel like something people somewhere actually say. Some languages, like German (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language), are full of gutterals, fricatives, and hard stops. Some, like Hawaiian (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_language), are full of soft sounds, open vowels and plosives. Languages develop a sound character based on the sounds used, as well as on the length of words, the placement of accent and stress, and the patterns and tempo of speech, and the use of inflection to convey emotion. You need to hear languages other than your own to understand the range of possibilities and get a feel for what real languages sound like, and what fictional languages *can* sound like.

Real languages spoken by real people involve complexity across a broad range of sounds, and while you don't want to keep track of 300 separate sounds, you probably do want from thirty to sixty. Nowhere near as many as in a real language. Plenty to keep track of in a fictional one, though.

Meeting New Language Sounds

The following link will take you to a list of foreign language Internet radio stations:

http://multilingualbooks.com/online-radio.html

If you have not been exposed to a lot of foreign languages in your lifetime, make the time to listen to some of these, specifically to languages you do not speak. Choose news stations; these are best for getting undiluted language. Avoid all attempts to understand or guess what is being said. Instead, listen to the sounds the speakers make, the rhythms of the language, inflections, tempo, and accents and stresses. You want to feel the language, to get the shape of it in your head. Round and soft? Sharp and pointy? Hard and flat? All springs and jaggies? Or some combination of the above?

As you listen, scribble down sounds that you like. Consonant blends, dipthongs, glottals, things that you don't hear everyday. Hang onto this list.

- **The second warning with reductionary alphabetization is that you can go overboard in expanding your sounds.**

Yes, real languages use a lot of sounds, and as you're cruising through the language smorgasbord linked above, you're going to find a lot of exciting sounds you want to pull into use.

However, remember that even though you're making a working language, you are keeping its sound samples clean and simple to make it *usable for you*, and *comprehensible to your readers*.

This means that you do not want to use all the letters in the English language plus all the symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet to get your spoken dialect onto the page. The vast majority of readers will balk at the heavy use of diacritical marks and phonetic symbols, because these marks and symbols turn the text into a code that requires the reader to either stop and decipher what you've written, or mentally label it "gibberish" and blow it off.

USEFUL TIP

As much as possible, represent examples of spoken or thought dialogue in your text with the letters of the alphabet you use everyday, without foreign diacriticals or your own invented symbols.

You'll improve readability, and surprisingly, make your language seem more real to your readers in the process. Because—and this is important—they'll be able to hear the sound of the spoken language in their heads.

Here's a list of fairly intimidating resources that will allow you to expand on the sounds you can use in your language if you choose to:

- The International Phonetic Alphabet
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet
- Americanist Phonetic Notation
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americanist_phonetic_notation
- Phonetic topics in linguistics
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_phonetics_topics

Important Author Disclosure: I do not use any of these resources in developing my languages. I offer them out of a sense of obligation to completeness, and in the interest of permitting you to follow your own leanings. I recommend them insofar as they are interesting to look over. But I follow my own advice in keeping my languages simple. I reduce the number of overall sounds available in my languages. I do not expand them.

Time to Get Your Sounds On Paper

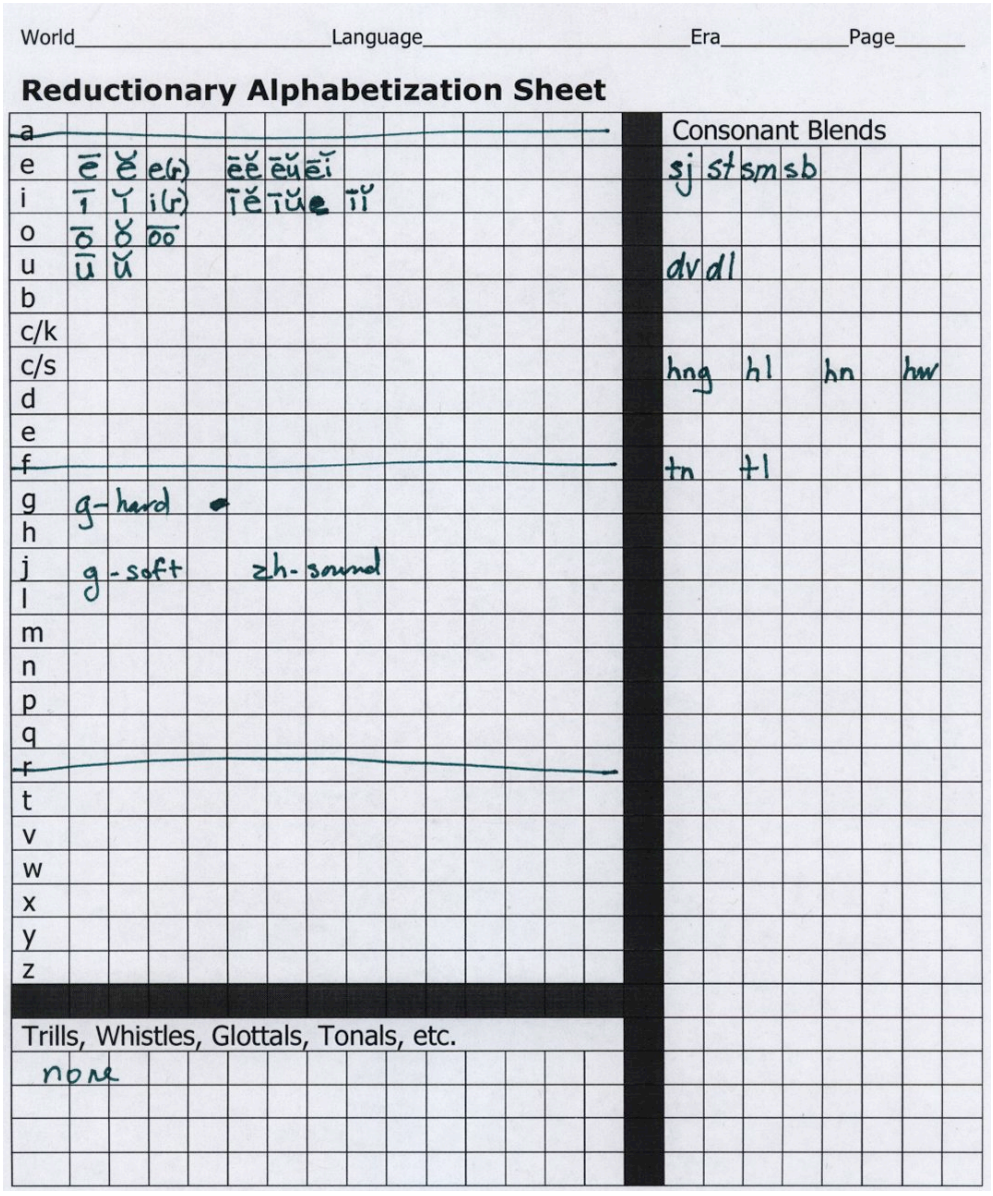
With a bit of research into sound behind you, your list of language sounds you like in hand, and both warnings in mind, it's time to carry out what I find to be the most important step in creating your new language: giving it a unique sound. You'll find your first worksheet at the end of this chapter—the Reductionary Alphabetization Sheet. Reproduce it via your printer or a copier.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

As with all the worksheets in this workbook, you have my permission to make unlimited copies for your personal use, or for use by members of your immediate family living in your household. You are in violation of copyright law if you make copies for anyone else. See the

How To Use the Reductionary Alphabetization Worksheet

I've presented a copy of my own RA Sheet for the language I'll develop as we go through this course. You'll see a lot of blank space on it. This is, however, enough information for us to create a fully workable fictional language.



Don't worry about that line at the top with World/Language/Era/Page blanks just yet. We're going to jump straight into the language building, and you'll need what you develop in the first two sections to fill in those top blanks. So let's start building.

The first thing you're going to do is eliminate some sounds.

These can be either vowel sounds or consonants, or both. You'll see a line of basic English sounds running down the left-hand column of the sheet. Draw a line through any letters you've decided not to use, and then through the entire line of boxes to the right of each of those letters. If you're not sure, you can use the "close your eyes and stick a pin in it" method of reducing your letter count.

USEFUL TIP:

For improved readability of dialogue in text, leave yourself at least one vowel.

You've made your first simplifications. Good.

Next, write in your approximations of your cool new foreign language sounds.

These can be sounds you discovered by exploring Internet radio or ones you like from languages you know, or ones you've made up. Write them in the Consonant Blends box in the top right corner of the sheet, or in the bottom left corner of the sheet, depending on where they fit. Frankly, being precise about the classifications of these sounds is not critical. If, for example, you aren't sure what a tonal is and don't particularly want to find out (http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/language/tonal.html, if you do), put your cool sounds where they make the most sense to you.

Finally, go back to the letters in the top left, and write in sounds you want to associate with each letter you're keeping.

Example:

a: long A, short A, aa

Don't fill out all the boxes. I put so many in when I designed the sheet because I don't like running out of spaces. But I've never even come close. I rarely have more than four vowel sounds for any one vowel (not including dipthongs), and with consonants, almost never have one make more than one sound (not including consonant blends).

If you check back to my RA Sheet, you'll notice that I wasn't joking when I said the intent here is to reduce the sounds you use. My sheet doesn't look like much. I gave myself a handful of pure vowel sounds, a handful of dipthongs, a few nice consonants blends, and a good range of consonants. I eliminated the letters A, F, and R, and permitted J to have two sounds.

Quick Sounds Without the Internet or Foreign-Language Radio

If you want to come up with sounds you don't use, and you're in a hurry, start making mouth noises. Seriously. (You want to do this behind a closed door, and maybe very quietly, because you're going to sound like a loon.)

When you were an infant, you babbled. You made all the sounds available in most languages. You're going to go back to babbling again. Make machine gun noises. Make airplane noises. Make dog barking noises, and meowing noises. Roll your tongue to make repeating *rrrrr* sounds, and blow through your nearly-closed lips to create *bbbbb* sounds. Gargle. Cough. Sneeze. Clack your tongue at different points along the roof of your mouth or against your teeth. Stick a couple of pens in your mouth to recreate fangs, and try talking around them. Hum through your nose.

No matter what bizarre sound you come up with, someone somewhere has incorporated that sound into a language.

Listen to each of these sounds, figure out letter combinations or symbols for the ones you like, and put them in your RA Sheet.

The meow? That's a tonal. Have a soprano cat, an alto cat, and a tenor cat, add letter sounds, and you're creeping into the realm of tonal language.

The cough? Close to a glottal. Machine gun noises, too. (Depending on how you make them, I guess.) Glottals are formed by stopping air as it pushes through your epiglottis. They're not the easiest sounds to make. But then, neither are the multiconsonant purees of English.

When to Use This Technique

- Always, but with the following reminders:
    - Leave yourself at least one vowel, so readers can read what you've written without stopping to decode
    - Limit yourself to under sixty sounds total, and around thirty if you want to avoid headaches
    - Bend over backward to avoid the need for diacritical marks and phonetic symbols in writing out your dialogue

Finishing the RA Sheet

Setting up my RA Sheet took me about five minutes, but in limiting the sounds available to my language, I finished the most critical step in making my new language feel real. Wait until you see what I can do with those few changes. And what you'll be able to do, too.

When your RA Sheet is finished, hole-punch it, mark it as Page 2-A up on the top right corner, and put it in your binder. (Why 2? Why A? We'll get to that a couple chapters on.)

If you know your book title or series name *and* the words of the title or series are all in English, you can write that on your World lines. If you want to have your title or series include words from your language, let's keep going.

You're ready to create some easy words, including simple place names and character names.

For that, we'll break out the Vocabulary Worksheet, and start a new chapter.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page B_____

Reductionary Alphabetization Sheet

a																Consonant Blends							
e																							
i																							
o																							
u																							
b																							
c/k																							
c/s																							
d																							
f																							
g																							
h																							
j																							
l																							
m																							
n																							
p																							
q																							
r																							
t																							
v																							
w																							
x																							
y																							
z																							
Trills, Whistles, Glottals, Tonals, etc.																							

Chapter Five

Simple Nouns and Proper Names

Before we build any names, let's talk about names and where they come from. Among other possibilities, names can be holdouts from otherwise forgotten languages, they can be descriptive of places where the object originated or where it resides, they can be onomatopoeic (with the name representing the sound the object in question makes), they can suggest a hope held for the holder of the name or perhaps an honor earned, or they can be simple sounds.

If you're going further with this than a few place and character names, you'll want to create some of each sort, but for now, we're going to work with names that are either onomatopoeic or that are simple sounds. When you get into descriptive, earned, and historical names, grammar and additional backgrounding start rearing their exquisite heads, and undoing a lot of names when you change your mind on how the grammar works is a big, annoying pain in the...wrist. Right. Wrist.

So, for now, no translations of towns named Pretty-By-The-Water, Underhill, or Smelly, and no people named your language's version of Dog's Breath or Studly J. Wears-Out-Women-Like-Socks.

Instead, we're going for sound names. Print off a blank Vocabulary Sheet, which you'll find at the end of this chapter, get a blank piece of paper for scribbling, and have your RA Sheet on hand.

Creating a Language Name

Your language name can only use the sounds from your RA Sheet, something that is easy to overlook if you come up with the language name first.

Mix and match your special consonant blends and, if you've used them, glottals, trills, whistles, etc., with the vowels and consonants you spared from the English-language sound set. Start a few words with single consonants, a few with single vowels, a few with consonant blends, and a few with dipthongs. Squish things together, play a little, allow your hand and your brain have some fun putting together nonsense sounds.

When you're finished, you'll have what could be called a page full of gibberish. It isn't, because by using the limitations imposed by your RA Sheet, you have plan and structure already built in. But it will take us a few more exercises for you to see the real beauty of the language you're creating.

Nevertheless, by the time you have half a dozen or more nonsense words on you scratch pad, you'll have a few of them that you like.

My scribble list looks like this:

- Dvehngi
- Stohwu
- Osji
- Keuhn
- Iisbehli
- Getlji

I could keep going if I wasn't satisfied with any of those, but actually, I like a lot of what I've come up with, and I think out of the choices I've shown you, I'll pick Osji as my language name. It's short, it's simple, and it's pronounceable.

It will be one of the nightling languages I'll use in **The Ruby Key** and other books in the MOON AND SUN series, if the series sells. (The MOON AND SUN proposal out with a bunch of publishers as I write this.)

So I'll scrawl OSJI on the Language line of my RA Sheet, my Vocabulary Sheet, and any other sheets I do I connection with this language, and I'll mark it as the first word on my vocabulary sheet, in the Noun Form column.

Do the same with your language name.

Creating Gendered Name Suffixes

In English, male personal names frequently end in consonants, while female personal names frequently end in vowels. Not always, but often enough that people make a subconscious association with Glen being masculine and Glenna or Glenne or Glenni being feminine.

In Spanish, male personal names frequently end in O, while female names frequently end in A. Roberto. Roberta.

Most other languages have ways of denoting the gender of names. If you decide that you want to use gender marking for some of your personal names (and remember, you don't have use gender marking with every name, but if you do it with a lot of them, your language will resonate subconsciously as being real with your readers), go over your RA Sheet and look for promising combinations that could be gender name endings.

On your scratch pad, scribble down short (three or four-letter) combinations—anything that comes to mind that doesn't look like English.

I get:

- sji
- hnu
- bii
- tne
- koo
- dviu
- hwu
- smei
- dle

I can divide the examples that I like into male and female categories on my vocabulary sheet as follows.

English Word	Root	Noun Form	Verb Form	Other Form
Male name suffix				hnu, hwu, dviu, koo
Female name suffix				sji, bii, smei dle, tne

Figure out your name suffixes.

Note: You can create prefixes, too, but I don't recommend it. Readers of English presented with a dozen names all beginning with the prefix Hnu, for example, will have a hard time keeping them straight. We aren't adapted to name prefixes, and don't deal with them well.

Example:

- Hnudget
- Hnuvin
- Hnutig
- Hnubej
- Hnuval
- Hnunvig
- Hnusji
- Hnudle
- Hnutne

See what I mean? If you use gender prefixes, you'll end up having written a book with "all those Hnu guys" who will blend together in readers' minds. It's tough to overcome that, even with a great story and extraordinary characterization.

Creating Personal Names

Back to the RA Sheet and your scratchpad.

You're looking for short, quick, and pronounceable here. So, for me:

- Get
- Viij
- Tei
- Wo
- Sen
- Sjoo
- Umbi
- Hno
- Kon
- Kedlo
- Hiito
- Mos

From my name suffix list, and the single base name Get, I can get the male names:

- Gethnu
- Gethwu
- Getdviu

- Getkoo

And the female names:

- Getsji
- Getbii
- Getsmei
- Getdle
- Gettne

Now, we have to admit that some of these names are bad from the English reader's perspective. Getsmei is way too close to "gets me," and Getdle for some reason reminds me of "kettle"—and it's ugly. So I cross those off my scratchpad list as being non-starters. And Getkoo is going to be another hit-or-miss proposition for me. It verges on the silly. If I can carry it off in context, shoring it up with other "-koo" ending words in Osji to give it some dignity, I may be able to make it work. But do I need to? And Getdviu is hard to pronounce.

I love Getsji. I think that's a great name. I like Gethwu almost as well. And since, among my main characters, anyway, I'm only going to be able to use one name beginning in the letter G, I nominate Getsji, and move on to my next base name, Viij. And from there to Tei, and so on.

Note that these are all first names.

Create some simple last names by dumping the gender suffix, and perhaps by adding a syllable or three

For Getsji, I came up with a simple last name of Konhiiro.

Getsji Konhiiro. I like it, and it hasn't been done to death in every fantasy and SF novel since time began.

Note that I have no idea who Getsji Konhiiro is going to be yet. I know she's female. Beyond that, I'll go back to my *Create A Character Clinic* techniques to develop the details of who she is and why I care.

Work through your list of names, come up with a dozen first name keepers and an equal number of last name from all your possibilities, and then save your base names onto your Vocabulary Sheet in the Root column.

English Word	Root
Base name	Get
"	Viij
"	Tei

And so on.

Creating Place Names

Using your RA Sheet and your scratch pad in the same manner that you've done before, come up with twelve one- and two-syllable words that you like. In general, I find that I have to create about three new words for every one that I'll eventually keep. Your ratio may be different, but definitely give yourself some breathing room. This is play. Allow your brain to play with the sounds you've given it, work as randomly as you can.

When you're finished, take your twelve best words and assign them to the following place nouns (or, if your world won't have cities or bridges, etc, replace those nouns with other place nouns that you'll be able to use):

- Bay
- Bridge
- City
- Creek
- Hill
- Lake
- Lane
- River
- Road
- Sea
- Town
- Village

When you have your chosen words, fill them into your vocabulary sheet in your Noun Form column.

I ended up with:

- Bay—Hleji

- Bridge—Sjin
- City—Mohwi
- Creek—Pedvi
- Hill—Hlut
- Lake—Deutl
- Lane—Oosjit
- River—Sbin
- Road—Hetl
- Sea—Iudl
- Town—Yehnet
- Village--Hnoosj

With these place nouns, you're now prepared to create basic compound words that you can use as place names, or as slightly fancier last names.

I can use the base name root of Get that I came up with to create Gethnoor (Get Village), Gethlut (Get Hill), Getmohwi (Get City), and Gethetl (Get Road).

I don't have to make them one word, either. They can be Get Hlut and Get Hnoosj and Get Hetl.

I can change the language order, so that they would be Hnoosj Get and Hlut Get and Mohwi Get.

The general reader's subconscious will pick up the connection between these words and register them as real, even if he does not take the trouble to figure out what each of them means. And for those language buffs who read your books and realize that you have developed real words with real meanings, and that you have not simply thrown random letters on the page and hoped for the best—well, you will have made them very happy.

As for onomatopoeic words, figure out ways that you can approximate the sound a cat or dog makes using the letters you have left. Create a few words like *meuw* and *ruhng* for *cat* and *dog*, *dladla* for infant, and so on.

When to Use This Technique

- Always. Keep these points in mind:
    - Focusing on common suffixes rather than common prefixes when naming prevents all names (and thus all characters) from blending together for readers

- Gendering some names permits readers to subconsciously register some of the rules of your language, making your world feel more real
- Repetition of recognizable place markers permits readers to catch on to parts of your language without having to struggle for meaning, and makes your word feel more real
- Use onomatopoeia to give a language the lived-in feeling of interacting with your world

Finishing Up With Easy Names

For those of you who were looking for a way to generate some simple words and names to put into your stories, you can now sit back and breathe easy. You're finished.

Or... can I lure you deeper with the promise that what we have not yet covered is even cooler than what we've done already? Can I tempt you with the promise that after I show you how to build a whole language, I'll show you different ways you can use it in your work, even if you'd never thought about doing so before?

For everyone who is going on with this, then... onward! More magic and more coolness awaits.

Chapter Six

A Better Way: Creating Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs

We've done simple names. We've done a few place nouns, and the technique for developing place nouns can be used to generate a whole list of other nouns.

But there is another and better way to create words for your language, and it starts with the so-far-unused Root column on your Vocabulary Sheet.

Breaking Language Into Pieces

Adjectives, words that describe nouns, generally have a way to distinguish themselves as adjectives. Some languages use prefixes, some use suffixes, some use word placement, some use stresses or tones. English adjectives frequently end in *–y*, *–ous*, or *–ful*.

The same is true for adverbs. Different languages, different gigs. In English, adverbs don't always end in *–ly*. But they usually do.

Nouns can have started life as verbs, verbs can have started life as adjectives, and everything can shift one step left in the lineup and become something else at any time, without warning.

English nouns mostly sit there, changing only in number or possessiveness, not in gender. You can have one of them, or more than one of them, or somebody else can have them. But they have a terrible number of ways of shifting from singular to plural, and a handful of ways of becoming possessive, and when you start mixing plurals and possessives on the same noun, the situation can get messy.

English verbs are conjugated—they exist in a form called the infinitive, which is preceded by the word "to". To run, to dance, to fly, to dream. These are all infinitive verbs, and the infinitive is the only form of the verb that can be

depended upon to always be formed in the same way. It's always "to" plus the base form of the verb. English verbs have a simple present, inflected by the subject to which the verb refers. I run, he runs, they run, it runs. Present tense verbs are not, however, all conjugated in the same fashion. English verbs also have a simple past tense—I ran, he ran, they ran, it ran—but again, there are a multitude of ways to conjugate a simple past tense verb, depending on where English got the verb and how it has treated it since. And then verbs have a whole lot of complicated past, present, and future tenses that we obtain by tacking on extra words to the infinitive form of the verb. I may have run. I had run. I will have run. I will run. I may have never run.

Other languages deal with tense and person changes of verb conjugation in scores of ways, some more logical than English, some less. These languages tack on endings. Or inflections. Or tones. Or use modifier words, or modifier sounds. The point is, we have a multitude of options for verb conjugation, and right now, this early in the process of developing your first language, you don't really know which of these myriad methods you're going to use.

But let's set things up so that, when you get to devising your system of plurals and possessives and verb conjugation and modification through adjectives and adverbs, you'll have a lot of open options and a nice clean language interface on which to test them out.

Then we can go play in the Mad Hatter world of syntax.

Building Root Words

To simplify our lives, we're going to develop a good vocabulary of root words, and develop rules for turning them into nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Pick a few words you know you'll want to use in your language. These can be nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs, or even groups of words. You'll get the coolest results if you select words or phrases that are critical to what your story is about. Write your words down on your scratch pad.

And abbreviated version of my list was:

- run
- fight
- hunt
- day magic

- night magic
- nightling
- prince
- champion
- monster
- moonroad
- liar
- cat

I'll put these into my table in alphabetical order, though I might as well warn you now—when you're working on paper, alphabetical order is a losing battle. If you know you're going to need a lot of words, consider creating categories like Magic, Buildings, Household Objects, Farm Implements, Political Nomenclature... whatever you think you'll need.

And now you're probably saying: "But you could do all of this in a database."

I could. I have. It ended badly.

Database software becomes obsolete, programs change and die, hard drives crash. I did worldbuilding in database form. I used it, loved it...and then finished the series and didn't need the worldbuilding anymore. The publisher dropped the series, I went on to new worlds, and didn't think about that world again. Now, eight years later, with the right to those books back in my hands, I'd love to have all that information back. But in that time, I've changed OS's, changed computers, changed software, moved twice, and misplaced my backup disks. Everything I did by hand on paper for that world, I still have, and pen on paper always works. Meanwhile, everything I did on computer for that world is gone.

Even though you don't realize it now, you may be working for the long haul on this language and the other worldbuilding you're doing for your world. Consider very, very carefully before deciding that you want to trust your data to a format that may no longer be viable somewhere down the road.

Back to our word list. The first thing I'll do is go to a new Vocabulary Sheet, number it, and fill in my selected words in the first column, the English Word column on the far left. Refer to Table 1—The Vocabulary Sheet on page 36.

Table 1—The Vocabulary Sheet Example

English Word	Root	Noun Form	Verb Form	Other Form
cat	meum	meumgit	meumstil	p.1-D, adj. #1, adv. #2
champion	dveetga	dveetgaveet	dveetgastil	"
day magic	ootl	ootlgit	ootlgil	"
fight	geski	geskiveet	geskisjil	"
hunt	sbiiji	sbiijiveet	sbiijigil	"
liar	gok	gokveet	gokigil	"
monster	tnookihn	tnookihngit	tnookihnstil	"
moonroad	kiudlin	kiudlingit	kidulinstil	"
night magic	jidl	jidlgit	jidligil	"
nightling	jimon	jimonveet	jimonsjil	"
prince	vootsj	vootsjveet	vootsjigil	"
run	nik	nikveet	nikisjil	"

Next, I'll return to my RA sheet and scratchpad, and start creating short root words. (You just make these up. Play on your scratchpad, keeping your root words short and allowing yourself to have fun. I used onomatopoeia for my *cat* (the sound one makes while purring), and for *fight* (the sound of weapons striking each other). Notice that I'm not worrying about whether the words I want to use are nouns or verbs. (I didn't throw in any adjectives or adverbs, but that's okay. I'll still end up with some.) Creating root words will let me obtain everything I need and a few frills that I probably won't—but still might decide to use.

You'll find this in the second column, Root, in the table above.

Nouning Around

Next, I'll make as many nouns as I can, including noun forms of the words I intend to use as verbs. In English, singular nouns have absolutely no common characteristics. They can begin any way, end any way, use sounds that the language doesn't generally employ (because of all the foreign loanwords we've co-opted into the language) and break all rules. They also have a few ways of forming plurals and possessives. We'll get to those a little later. For now, we'll be creating singular nouns only.

Some languages employ identifiable noun endings or other means of identifying the singular noun. In this regard, I'm comfortable with chaos, but readers notice patterns, and I'd like to give them something solid to hang onto as they go into the bits of dialogue I'll eventually throw into the story.

I'll create the suffixes –git and –veet as Osji's regular noun endings. As I delve deeper into Osji, I'll come up with a few endings that to me suggest some words might be loanwords from other languages, or that they may have come from an archaic version of the language. But basically, I'm looking for ways to create patterns readers can find.

Double-check your RA sheet to make sure you're not using any letters or consonant blends or frills that you haven't included (in the first draft of this manuscript, I repeatedly used the letter R in my Osji words, because even though I knew I'd thrown it out, it slipped into middles and endings, simply because I *like* the letter R), and transform your word list into nouns.

Refer back to Table 1 on page 36 for my example, in the Noun Form column.

By doing this, I've created the nouns that mean *cat*, *champion*, *day magic*, *night magic*, *fight*, *hunt*, *liar*, *monster*, *moonroad*, *nightling*, *prince*, and *run.*

I could expand on *hunt*, *fight*, and *run* to create *hunter*, *fighter*, and *runner*.

Now, those of you with orderly minds will notice that the place nouns we created in the previous chapter do not conform to the nice, neat rules we've just established for our formation of nouns from root words. There are a handful of ways to deal with this clear inconsistency.

- **The first is what we'll call *The English Method*.**

  In *The English Method*, you shout loudly, "Those nouns are exceptions to the rule!" and you go on your merry way.

  The English Method, by the way, is one very quick and effective way to get you out of any inconsistency or contradiction or flat-out screw-up you (or your readers) discover in old work, and it works beautifully and always. However, you don't want to overdo it, or your language will stop being *your* language, and start being another mostly-incomprehensible variant of English, which runs counter to what we're trying to do here.

- **The second is called *The Good Enough Method*.**

In *The Good Enough Method*, you go back and tack on the noun suffixes you've decided upon, and then you're done. You don't worry about figuring what the root word is, or what the verb form would be, or what concepts you might kick out of the words. (More on that in the next section.) You've covered your butt sound-wise and appearance-wise, and it only took three minutes.

- **The third is called *The Right Way Method*.**

  I'm going to relieve you of a huge amount of potential guilt right now, and let you know that when I'm building and using a language and I find places where I was inconsistent or where I erred, I almost never do things using *The Right Way Method*. However, there are times when I need to, and I'm guessing there will be times when you'll need to, too. *The Right Way Method*, then, is to go back, figure out what the root word for your nouns should have been, figure out the noun and verb forms, and determine any workable foreign concepts you've acquired in the process. And then correct anything you previously got wrong. Generally, this will require scratching out old entries and adding new entries on a new page and doing goofy numbering schemes like C-3-a, C-3-b.... Which is why I usually don't do it.

Now we're ready for the next section, which for me (and I hope for you), will be even juicier than the last, because with my list of words I was primarily I was looking for nouns, but I'm about to get some rich, tasty verbs, and a few concepts that will exist in Osji that don't exist in English.

Juicy Verbs, and Juicier Concepts

Verbs make things happen, and one of the things that they make happen when you're creating your own language is the creation of new concepts that you hadn't considered for your language.

Watch. This is so very cool.

In English, infinitive verbs are always the conjunction "to" plus the basic verb form of the word.

So, using my previous list, what I'm going to be creating here are the infinitives that mean:

- to cat
- to champion
- to day magic
- to fight
- to hunt
- to lie
- to monster
- to moonroad
- to night magic
- to nightling
- to prince
- to run

Some of those make immediate sense: *to hunt, to champion, to fight, to lie,* and *to run*. Others we can sort of get our heads around: *to cat* could well be the Osji way of saying *to slink around like a cat* or *to tomcat around* or even *to lie very still*. But it could also be something like *to purr*, since, as I noted before, I created the Osji word *cat* from the sound a cat makes while purring, transferred to the Osji sound system. Words in other languages don't relate to each other in the same way as words in English, and having them *not* create perfect one-to-one translations is yet another way of making your language feel real.

For that reason, I'm going to decide that my Osji verb built on the root word *meum* will mean *to purr* (which I'll add as a separate entry to my vocabulary list, filling it in identically with the entry for *cat*).

In the same manner, I'll decide that my verb *to prince* will translate into English as *to rule*.

But then there are those nouns that don't really seem to offer themselves up as likely candidates for verbhood.

What in the world, for example, could *to moonroad* mean? Or *to nightling*?

In the world of the tentatively titled **Moon and Sun** series, moonroads enter a different, parallel universe, and are accessible only when the moon is visible in the sky. A few days of every month, they cannot be reached at all because the moon is new and not reflecting moonlight; some days they are hard to find because there is little moonlight; and some days they are so strong they lure the unwary onto them, and sometimes keep them. And those who walk the

moonroads can only get back to the moonroads in the same fashion—when moonlight is shining. Further, the world on the other side of the moonroads is a scary, monster-filled place.

The Osji word that will become *to moonroad* could encompass the entire concept of traveling the moonroads with the understanding that one could be trapped by them in another (and dangerous) world for an unknown length of time. It could be used not just in talking about the moonroads themselves, but about people who behave in a moonroad-y manner, never being where the speaker expects them to be, always taking foolish risks, and so on.

To nightling takes me into an "aha!" moment I had a few days ago about the nature of night magic and the way the nightlings have used it to alter themselves. The Osji word that will translate literally as *to nightling*, then, will mean something along the lines of "to become something other than what one was before, changing in an uncertain and uncontrolled manner, via the use of night magic," and the concept will include overtones of wonder, terror, and power.

I'll come up with concepts for my other odd verbs in the same manner that I brainstormed the concepts for *to moonroad* and *to nightling*, and then I'll get to work making my verbs.

Again, English verbs are horribly without rhyme or reason because of the way the English language has become what it is. (If you want to experience some moments of sheer joy and hysterical laughter, read Bill Bryson's brilliant book, *The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way*.)

But never mind English. *Your* language can have nice, polite regular verbs that you can figure out how to conjugate without having to drop back to the fifteenth century to discover how a decision by Chaucer determined the way you speak the language today.

Oh. You don't have to create easily-conjugated verbs, of course. But I want to at least offer you the opportunity to see how it's done.

I've decided that my infinitive verb endings are going to be –stil, -sjil, and –gil, depending on the root word. If I need to smooth out the word for the sake of pronunciation, I'll stick a vowel in between the root and the suffix.

Return to Table 1 page 36 and examine the Verb Form column for my example.

We have not conjugated these verbs yet, into past, present, future, and whatever else you want to do with them. But we have some very interesting new verbs and concepts that we can use in our stories.

Before we go on…

Before things get any messier than they already are, it's time to drag out the next worksheet, the Prefixes and Suffixes Sheet. Next, start your sheet. You'll see four columns, two with no header, and two where the word Details is aligned to the left of the column.
In the first column, write in NOUN SUFFIXES, and in the third column, write in VERB SUFFIXES

Here's what my sheet looks like:

Noun Suffixes	Details	Verb Suffixes	Details
-git	Originated in the 1st Era, used with nouns that existed from that period through the end of the 2nd Era	-stil	
-veet	New suffix, arose in the 3rd Era and has been added to all words coined since	-sgil	
		-gil	

I've tossed in some example details on the noun suffixes. Please realized that I have no idea what these mean yet. I do not have detailed worldbuilding done on the MOON AND SUN universe; at the moment I'm still playing with it and creating tiny details on blank canvas. Until this moment, I didn't have a 1st or 2nd or 3rd Era, and I don't know what they might relate to, or who ruled during those eras, or anything else. This is all a mystery to me. But it's one I'll follow up on now.

The comment about a change in Osji language in the 3rd Era is interesting because it suggests that something big happened then. Events big enough to change a language usually involve invasions by people who speak a different language, big comets falling from the sky and separating and isolating groups of people, the spread of plagues, or other Events Bad Enough to Notice, so when I get deeper into the worldbuilding for the MOON AND SUN series, I'll

have to look at some possibilities for cataclysmic events in the timeline at around that point.

I left the verbs alone. This is not because they couldn't offer something as interesting, but because at the moment I've already given myself something huge to pick at. If my worldbuilding requires yet more hints and details of past language traumas, I can always return to my verbs to ask myself "Why do regular verbs end with one of three different suffixes?" For now, I don't want to know. My temporary answer is, " 'Cause I said so."

Next, Adjectives and Adverbs

We can say the following things about adjectives and adverbs in the English language:

- **Adjectives can be formed from verbs.**

Frozen comes from the verb *to freeze*, *lazy* from the verb *to laze*, *sleepy* from the verb *to sleep*. Infinitive verb plus –y equals adjective a lot of the time. It doesn't always work, (witness *frozen*) but it does most of the time.

- **Adjectives can be formed from nouns.**

Danger (from the Old French word *dangier*) plus –ous makes *dangerous*, *virtue* (from the Italian *virtù*) plus –ous makes *virtuous*, *wonder* (from the Old English *wundor*) plus –ful gives us *wonderful*.

- **Some adjectives exist as adjectives in their natural state.**

Cold. *Fair. Good. Bad.*

- **Some started as nouns or verbs in a previous version of the language, and only the adjective function remains.**

Wicked, for example, comes from the Old English noun *wicca*, meaning "sorcerer." But though we find the pair "wicked witch" together in modern English often, the words have diverged enough that they are no longer considered close relatives. *Pretty*, believe it or not, started as the Old English verb *prætt*, meaning "to trick."

- **We can form adverbs from adjectives and verbals by loading up suffixes like toppings on a baked potato.**

Wonderfully. Wondrously. Wonderingly. Bewilderingly. Headachingly. Stop-doing-this-to-me-ing-ly.

- **We can, in other words, noun our verbs, verb our nouns, wring adjectives and adverbs and anything else we might want out of everything including the kitchen, the sink, and the cockroach beneath it, and in all other ways drive ourselves batwonkily mad twisting our language into labyrinthine pretzelconstructian nightmariforms.**

Welcome to English. Have an aspirin.

We can also create a language just like English with which we can torture unsuspecting readers, and in the process frustrate ourselves when we forget why we did what we did, and how we once got our rule-exception-except-for-the-exception-to-the-exception language to make some form of sense.

- **Or not.**

Me, I'm voting for "Not," just because I've gone the other route before, and then had to keep up with books that had more than one language with nightmare rules.

What we do have to do is enough work already, without loading our language or languages down with Byzantine complexity.

With our existing list of words, we're going to need to create:

- prefixes or suffixes that change words into adjectives and adverbs
- a rule that tells us now and reminds us later how we did this
- meanings for some of the invented words that result—in my case words that can literally be translated as *purrcatous*, *championly*, *day-magic-y*, and *nightlingly*.
-

I could make create the following simple language rule pertaining to both adjectives and adverbs:

> **Rule #1: Adjectives AND Adverbs:** Adjectives are created by adding the suffix *–dak* to the noun form of a word, and adverbs are created by adding *–dak* to the verb form of a word.

English Word	Root	Noun Form	Verb Form
cat	meum		meumstil
champion	dveetga		dveetgastil
day magic	ootl		ootlgil
fight	geski		geskisjil
hunt	sbiiji		sbiijigil
liar	gok		gokigil
monster	tnookihn		tnookihnstil
moonroad	kiudlin		kidulinstil
night magic	jidl		jidligil
nightling	jimon		jimonsjil
prince	vootsj		vootsjigil
run	nik		nikisjil

I look at my words again.

If I did that, I could work out that *meumgitdak* (meaning *purrcatous*, or "something that is purring in a catlike way, or cattish in a purring way") is the adjective form of *meum*, as in **My stomach just made a *meumgitdak* noise**, or **The *meumgitdak* earth began to tremble**.

Meanwhile, *meumstildak* would be *purrcatly*, as in **The motor rumbled *meumstildak***.

Alternately, I could create two rules that would completely change the look and feel of the language:

> **Rule #1: Adjectives:** Adjectives form from the root word, and are preceded by the prefix *di'*.
>
> **Rule #2: Adverbs:** Adverbs form from the root word, and are preceded by the prefix *mi'*.

This would render my *purrcatous* adjective *di'meum*, and my *purrcatly* adverb *mi'meum*. **My stomach just made a *mi'meum* noise** feels different than the sentence above that said the same thing.

Tiny alterations—the use of prefixes versus suffixes, the use of apostrophes versus none, the use of open-ended soft sounds like *mi* and *di* versus closed-ended hard sounds like *dak*, seem almost inconsequential when you're making them. But context and repetition render them huge, and the presence of these tiny choices you're making now forms and fixes the shape and sound of your language in the minds of your readers.

Use your RA Sheet and scratch pad and come up with a prefix or suffix or two or three that you can tack on to root words, as you did with your male and female names.

Next, print off your first Vocabulary Rules Sheet from the end of this chapter, and number it. Create a simple rule for how you will form your adjectives and adverbs, and number it.

Here's what I did with my Vocabulary Rules Sheet:

#	Rule For:	Rule:
1	adjectives	use *root word* + prefix *mi'* to create
2	adverbs	use *root word* + prefix *di'* to create

And finally, refer to my Vocabulary Sheet example in Table 1 on page 36 one last time to see how I've handled the Other Form column.

If I wanted some of my adjectives or adverbs to form irregularly, I could make a different rule, then mark that page and rule number in on only the applicable line. A Rule #3 for the adverb form of *moonroad*, for example.

When to Use This Technique

Use the root-word-plus-modifiers technique to create vocabulary when:

- When you're planning on developing sections of language to use in dialogue
- When you want your language to build as real languages build
- When you want the reader to subconsciously recognize the connections between related words and "get" your language

- When you want to a quick method to develop concepts that don't exist in English

Final Thoughts on Words

Remember that nothing is carved in stone unless you want it to be. If your language is going to be used by a rigid, isolationist people, you may want to be very precise in sticking to the rules you create, following them in every instance, and incessantly checking to make sure you didn't make any mistakes.

If your people are a bit more flexible, however, you can always put *The English Method* in play if the rules get too confining or stressful, or someone pins you down about a place where you messed up your grammar, or included a letter that in one of your words that did not exist in your language. (The 100% failsafe method for escaping *this* dilemma is to utter the phrase "foreign loanword," in a confident tone, then make your hurried escape before you become pinned down by a question regarding the loanword's origin.)

At some point in all this creation of the appearance of complexity, you're almost certain to mutter, "Thank God for *The English Method*." It's a better loophole than corporate officers dare even pray for at tax time, yet it's yours whenever you want it.

On to Grammar.

It's nothing like it was in school. Building it yourself, *your* way, is fun.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page C_____

Vocabulary Sheet

English Word	Root	Noun Form	Verb Form	Other Form

World_____Language_____Era_____Page D_____

Prefixes and Suffixes Sheet

	Details		Details

World_____Language_____Era_____Page E_____

Vocabulary Rules Sheet

#	Rule For:	Rule:

Chapter Seven

Articles: Where English Is Easy

English has three articles. They are:

- a (indefinite)
- an (indefinite)
- the (definite)

This is about the easiest system of articles on the planet. If you're talking about one type of car, you can say *a Cobalt* or *a Volkswagen*. If you're talking about the great car right next to you., you say *the Cobalt* or *the Volkswagen.* Or *the Cobalts* or *the Volkswagens*, if you're lucky enough to have more than one of either.

(If you have more than one, you can also say *some Cobalts*, but *some*, while specifying an indefinite quantity, does not get listed as an article. It's an indefinite pronoun).

Doesn't matter what sort of noun you want, it's either *a* (or if the noun starts with a vowel, *an*) or *the*. English disposed of masculine and feminine nouns, cases (with two exceptions), and other complications, so you never have to worry about whether you're supposed to use a feminine article, a masculine article, a neuter article, a high-caste article, a tense-related article.... oh, the list of possibilities goes on and on and ever on.

Sometimes we toss out articles entirely. If you're speaking in generalities, chuck the article out the window.

> You might talk about *a person*, but you talk about *people*. *Cars* are essential if you live in *the sticks*, so I have *a car*. *Dogs* do useful things, whereas *a cat* is not too helpful unless you have *mice*.

You can treat articles in a number of ways.

First, you can dispense with articles entirely. You can simply decide that a noun will march into your sentence unattended by the announcer with the trumpet. Well and good. You're done with articles; move along.

Second, you can create simple, genderless, uninflected, un-cased articles that work in all situations. If you do, you may or may not want to distinguish between definite and indefinite, or between singular and plural. You could say *schwa* and be done with the whole mess.

- schwa dog
- schwa dogs

Third, you can chose to complicate matters.

You can, in fact, complicate them a lot.

German replaces the single word *the* with the following mind-bender of a list that separates the definite article into four *cases*, three genders, and a plural.

So you get:

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Masculine	der	den	dem	des
Feminine	die	die	der	der
Neuter	das	das	dem	des
Plural	die	die	den	der

And that's *just* the definite articles. German has twelve indefinite articles, too.

But German is not the most complex language on the Article Hit Parade.

Languages that deal heavily in *cases*—for example, politeness forms, or caste forms, or gender forms—can twist your brain into a pretzel in a second.

Let's play with this just a little. You've created a language that requires men to speak in one way, and females in another. You started by creating masculine and feminine suffixes for all your words, and females use the feminine form of the language, while men use the masculine form. So now you want to have masculine, feminine, plural masculine, and plural feminine articles. You don't want to mess with definite or indefinite variants.

You can create four separate articles:

- *dar* (feminine singular)
- *far* (feminine plural)
- *ker* (masculine singular)
- *kith* (masculine plural)

You can create a root article and suffixes.

- *dar*—your root
- *dara* (feminine singular)
- *daras* (feminine plural)
- *daro* (masculine singular)
- *daron* (masculine plural)

You can take this further by having separate articles that indicate singluar, plural-but-not-a-lot, and plural-in-bunches-and-droves. For example:

- *dara* cow (feminine singular) meaning: *the cow*
- *daras* cows (feminine moderate plural) meaning: *the few cows*
- *daraya* cows (feminine excessive plural) meaning: *the "Holy Cow, that's a lot of beef" cows*

You are not stuck with stand-alone articles that precede your nouns, either. You can squish articles onto the noun as either a prefixes or a suffixes. You can place them either before or after the nouns. Lots of options.

You can also add cases, and really complicate things, but for now, just keep articles in mind as a place where you may want to tack on things later.

What You Do

- Work out some options on your scratch pad. Pick the ones you like, and enter them into your Vocabulary Sheet.
- If you go for anything more complicated than "this languages has no articles" or "this languages has one all-purpose article," create rules that will help you remember how you intend to use your articles. Put these rules in your Vocabulary Rules Sheet.
- If you've created suffixes or prefixes, put them into your Prefix and Suffix Sheet, too.

Organize now, or weep later.

We've just dealt with an area where English makes life easy, and where other languages complicate things. We're about to move into an area where most languages do considerably better than English: plurals and possessives.

Chapter Eight

Creating Plurals and Possessives

As an English speaker or user, you have to question how the language messed up plurals and possessives so badly. This is an issue that could have been so easy.

We form both plurals and possessives in English (at least in regular form) by adding the letter *s* —sometimes we add an apostrophe, but not always, and not in the same place depending on what we mean... and our plurals and possessives *sound* exactly alike when speaking the language.

What this means is that if you hear a word that sounds like "the readers" in a spoken sentence, you have to get from context alone whether the speaker is referring to something that belongs to one reader (the reader's), if he is referring to a group of readers (the readers), or if he is referring to *something that belongs* to a group of readers (the readers'). This, my friend, is bad design, and this linguistic twitch in English causes writers of English, including native speakers, tremendous problems, as well as making things difficult for non-native speakers.

In English, *most* of the time, we form the plural case by adding the suffix *–s* or *–es* to our nouns. The plural case denotes that we go from having one of the noun to more than one. We have a neat little rule that if a word ends in –y, you change the *–y* to an *–i* and add *–es*. We're fairly consistent with this one, which is, in itself, an example of the inconsistency of English. Examples:

cat :: cats
dog :: dogs
cheese :: cheeses
dummy :: dummies

Endlessly entertaining examples of exceptions to this rule come from words dragged unchanged into our era from our language's hoary past, such as:

ox :: oxen
goose :: geese
deer :: deer
foot :: feet
this :: these

In English, *most* of the time, we form the possessive case by adding the suffix *–'s*. The possessive case denotes that something in question belongs to the noun. Examples:

girl :: girl's
child :: child's
house :: house's

Again, however, we have big fun with exceptions, and you can add a ditto to our language's hoary past for the origins of these puppies:

it :: its
I :: mine
she :: hers
he :: his
they :: theirs
we :: ours

We could regularize this mess by eliminating the possessive case, as many languages do, and using a helper word to indicate possession. English has such a word, in fact, (which is sort of disappointing, because it's much more fun to make up new words). The word is *of*, but the problem with it is that using it causes some awkward and wordy sentences.

It is the hat of John.

It is John's hat.

We haven't abandoned our possessive helper, though, because there are times when it comes in handy. The heaviest use I've noted lately comes from hockey

announcers, who in the midst of criminally mangling the language in other ways, take time to carefully enunciate *Kasparov tripped over the stick of Lundqvist*. This sounds stupid until you say the alternative, *Kasparov tripped over Lundqvist's stick*, loudly, three times, and fast.

Then you discover that somewhere deep inside, most human beings are perpetually twelve years old, and playground humor can still take you by surprise.

Again, though, the use of *of* in its possessive sense requires correct positioning. The syntax is:

the [noun] *of* [noun/pronoun]

By English standards, that's wordy, and English is a language where getting things said faster is practically a competitive sport. Which is why we almost always fall back on the use of the possessive case.

Divide and Conquer: Plurals vs. Possessives

The first thing we're going to do is separate plurals from possessives, as if they were two troublemakers in the classroom. They *feel* related to English speakers, because of that accidental similarity of ending with *s* most of the time. But they aren't similar. One tells you the number of things you have. The other is a form of *case* (much more on that later) that tells us some object belongs to some other object.

Plurals first.

Consider the situation. You have one cat. You have two cats. You have six cats. You have sixty cats and Animal Control is about to pay a visit to your home.

In English, we distinguish plurals into only *one* and *more than one*, as if anyone who has more than one of anything tells you all you need to know about *him*, (and a pox on his house, the scallywag).

But plurals do not need to be treated this way.

We could create a plural for small numbers, a plural for large numbers, and a plural for obscene numbers.

Let's get serious with our cat example.

We'll do suffixes for plurals first.

Using the RA sheet, I'll decide that I like *–foom* as my small-numbers plural, and *–feen* as my large-numbers plural.

So this gives me:

- cat (one, and only one, of the little buggers)
- cat*foom* (a reasonable number, somewhere between two and whatever you personally decide is the number where the cat population goes from acceptable to outlandish)
- cat*feen* (the number of cats that will cause your neighbors to report you to government officials)

I have a cat. You have catfoom. The crazy guy down the road has catfeen.

But we aren't limited to appending syllables to the end of our root word. We can use prefixes and helper words, too.

I could as easily say you had *foomcat*, or *foom cat*, or *cat foom*.

As always, you want to keep good records, making sure that helper words end up on your Vocabulary and Vocabulary Rules sheets, and that your prefixes or suffixes end up on your Vocabulary and Prefix/Suffix sheets.

Possessives: Our Collision with Linguistic Insanity

From the language user's perspective, there's good English. *Articles* are good English. There's bad English. *Irregular verb conjugation* is bad English.

And then there's wackaloon English. And here you are, right in the heart of it. English users have three different ways to form possessives, and none of them are remotely related to each other, and you can't ignore any of them and simply decide to use something else, the way you could decide to ignore nouns with Latinate roots in favor of nouns with Germanic or Celtic roots, for example.

Let's creep up on this a bit at a time.

Forming by Agglutination

If you're going to name the owner, either by using a proper noun or just a plain old noun, you're going *agglutinate* the possessive. That is, you're going to tack an –*s* to the end of the word. Simple so far.

Then you're going to put an apostrophe before the –*s* if you have only one owner, or of the owner is a group noun, like a *team* or a *corporation*. If you have more than one owner, and if the plural is formed by some variant of the letter –*s*, you're going to put the apostrophe *after* the *s.* If you have some weird plural, like *children* or *feet*, you go back to putting the apostrophe before the letter –*s.*

So you get:

- the boy*'s* toy (one boy, one toy)
- the boy*s'* toy (more than one boy, one toy) .....BUT.....
- the children*'s* toy (more than one child, one toy)

And you get:

- the team's trophy (one team, though multiple members, one trophy)
- the teams' trophy (more than one team, multiple members, one trophy)

A bit goofy, but not impossible. You can sort of slog your way through that, because, if you look hard, you can find a pattern.

Forming by Case

However, now we bring on the pronouns, possessive case. There are no neat little *S*es here, whether with our without apostrophes... except when there are.

I'll list a handful of the many available English pronouns, and then form their plurals. Watch, and groan:

- I, mine
- you, your
- he, his
- she, hers
- it, its (*it's* , which looks like it ought to be possessive, is actually a contraction of *it is*, and that apostrophe there has nothing to do with ownership)
- who, whose
- whoever, whosever

Fun?

Forming by Preposition

We're not done, because in English, you can also indicate possession with the helper word *of*, which is classed as a preposition.

For example, we'll go back to:

- *the stick of Lundqvist*
- *the houses of each*
- *the dreams of some*

As noted earlier, you could say *Lundqvist's stick.* Those *S*es could get you in trouble, but it's at least a possible formation.

However, what about sentences like:

- The monster visited his wrath upon *the house of each* who had angered him.
- *The dreams of some* are beautiful and inspirational.

You can't say *some's dreams*, or *each's house*. In these instances, you simply have to know which words in the language require the formation of plural by preposition.

The Language Builder's Approach

You, the language builder, are free to duplicate the bewildering mess that ensues from English possessives and plurals in your own language. But realize that you don't have to.

You can use the Pick One Theory of Language Simplification (I just made that up) which states:

> When presented with a multitude of options that are sure to complicate your language beyond the point of coherence and usability, just pick one.

Let's Practice the Pick One Rule

You can choose to always form plurals by tacking on a suffix.

And then you can choose to always form possessives using a helper word.

Let's bring back the cats:

- I have a cat.
- You have cat*foon*. (moderate plural)
- The crazy guy down the road has cat*feen*. (excessive plural)

Now let's figure that we form our possessives with the helper word *daak*, and that this helper word will go *after* the noun it modifies.

We get these examples:

- *I daak cat daak food* is inexpensive. (*my cat's food*)
- *You daak catfoon daak* food is moderately expensive. (*your several cats' food*)
- *The loony daak catfeen daak food* will break the bank. (*the loony's many cats' food*)

By doing this, we've eliminated case-formed possessive pronouns (my, your, his). We've eliminated the auditory confusion of figuring out from same-sounding words how many owners any item has, or whether possession is involved at all. We've eliminated the enormous confusion of doing separate parts of one thing with three separate processes.

Doing Pick-One, we could just as easily have created case-formed plurals and agglutinated possessives, either with prefixes or suffixes. Or helper-word plurals and case possessives.

Or even agglutination all the way around, with a prefix for plurals and a suffix for possessives. So long as they don't cross each other's paths, they're easy to figure out and easy to use.

Work out concepts and rules on a scratch pad, using your RA Sheet. When you come up with plural and possessive systems that you like, write down your keepers on your Vocabulary Sheet, your Vocabulary Rules Sheet, and/or your Prefixes and Suffixes Sheet.

When you're finished, we'll go on to the rest of the pronouns, and get a little cozier with the concept of *case*.

Chapter Nine

The Rest of the Pronouns

Language Shorthand

Not every language permits a speaker to say "I went to the store with him."

Some languages occlude the subject of the sentence with passive voice, resulting in something like, "The store was visited by two persons."

- This can be because the language hardwires in a requirement for culturally acceptable politeness, where it is considered rude to mention oneself (or someone else) a doer of things, or one to whom things have been done.
- It can be because certain classes or castes are not permitted to refer to themselves or anyone belonging to a class or caste higher than their own.
- It can be because the language follows the dictates of a religion where only the god or gods are permitted to be thought of as initiating action.

To the English speaker, this inability to refer to oneself is almost unimaginable. We have all sorts of way of referring to ourselves without using our names. However, languages without pronouns exist, and if you want to create one, you can skip this section.

If you want your speakers to have the ability to refer to each other or themselves without naming names, however, you'll need pronouns.

Pronouns are one of English's two instances of *case*, also known as *declension*[3].

[3] (You can read a nifty article about case here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declension)

There are some horrible, confusing definitions of case in dictionaries, grammar books, and on the web. I hated all of them, so I came up with my own little analogy to help you make sense of this if you've never dealt with it before.

Term of the Hour: *Case* or *declension* involves the conjugation of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives, much as *tense* involves the conjugation of verbs.

We conjugate verbs to indicate the time that something happened or will happen, and the number of persons, places, things or intangible that were affected.

Why would anyone conjugate a noun, and adjective, or a pronoun?

In English, we do it to permit our pronouns to tell us whether they are the subject or the object of the sentence, whether they are possessive, whether they are plural, whether they are asking a question, whether they are demonstrating or pointing out something, whether they are generalizing or being indefinite, and whether they are being relative in relation to something else. English pronoun case names are in bold below:

- **Personal**
  - First Person
    - I, me, mine (singular)
    - we, us, ours (plural)
  - Second Person
    - you, your, yours (singular)
    - you, yours, yours (plural)
  - Third Person
    - he, him, his (singular, masculine)
    - she, her, hers (singular, feminine)
    - it, it, its (singular, neutral)

        - they, them, their (plural, neutral)
- **Interrogative**
    - who
    - whose
    - whom
    - what
    - which
- **Demonstrative**
    - this (singular), these (plural)
    - that (singular), those (plural)
- **Indefinite**
    - all
    - any
    - anybody
    - anyone
    - anything
    - both
    - each
    - each one
    - each other
    - either
    - everybody
    - everyone
    - everything
    - few
    - many
    - neither
    - no one
    - nobody

- none
- nothing
- one
- one another
- ones
- other
- others
- several
- some
- somebody
- someone
- something

- **Relative**
  - that
  - what
  - whatever
  - whatsoever
  - which
  - whichever
  - whichsoever
  - who, whose, whom
  - whoever
  - whomever
  - whomsoever
  - whosesoever
  - whosoever

With all our many pronouns, English offers great flexibility (and a tremendous amount of opportunity for confusion).

> *But not a single pronoun is essential to the success of a language. English speakers could easily identify every noun by name each time speakers used the noun, and if doing so lent English speech and writing a certain wordy repetitiveness, the repetitiveness would kill neither speakers nor writers...nor even listeners.*

The paragraph above uses no pronouns. Without pronouns, it was longer than it would have been without them. It was wordier. But it wasn't unreadable.

If you want to have pronouns, decide whether you want to be able to:

- determine singular, plural with them
- determine possessiveness
- identify male, female, neutral, or other genders with them
- have specific pronouns refer to classes, castes or other divisions within society
- have separate pronouns for humans, animals, plants, or inanimate objects
- use them for both questions and answers
- simplify your system so that one pronoun acts for all living things and one for all nonliving things; or have one for all persons (first, second, and third); or create only one pronoun that works in every situation, as a sort of universal *it*

Let's Do An Example

In the universe of *The Ruby Key*, I have a number of different classes of nightlings. Some of them tolerate each other fairly well, some not at all. They have different species origins, and though all are sentient (though not

necessarily smart), not all originated from humanoid or even animal life. There are a couple of nightling plants, and at least one nightling mineral.

I can toss a couple of proposals into the air, from which I can create pronouns and rules.

- The mammal-originated nightlings and the saurid-originated nightlings despise each other, and have specific pronouns that indicate that they are the superior form of life, and that the group they detest is an inferior form
- The animal-based nightlings, including the mammal and saurid forms, uniformly look down on the nightlings of plant and mineral origin
- Everyone detests the mineral-born nightlings

All nightlings in the region where the story takes place speak the same language. However, they aren't all going to speak it in the same way.

They'll have species-case pronouns. In order to keep myself from going crazy, they won't have the wild number of pronouns that English has. Their pronouns will be limited to first, second and third person, and to single and plural. No gender, no indefinite case, no demonstrative case, no possessive case. I'll deal with these language needs in other ways.

I will, however, have:

- Mammal case
    - First person
        - hei (singular)
        - heiji (plural)
    - Second person mammal
        - sbei (singular)
        - sbeiji (plural)
    - Second person non-mammal (deprecatory)
        - puk (singular)
        - pukyuk (plural)

- Third-person mammal
  - mei (singular)
  - meiji (plural)
- Third person non-mammal (deprecatory)
  - nog (singular)
  - nogyuk (plural)

I can then create the same distinctions with for a Saurid Case, as Plant-born Case, and a Mineraloid Case.

When I've finished with my RA Sheet, I'll print out a Case Conjugation Sheet, found at the end of this chapter. You'll notice that this sheet is just boxes. There's a reason for this. Case is useful for so much more than just pronouns that pre-filling any of the boxes would limit its flexibility unacceptably.

Here's how I'll use the sheet for pronouns: At the top of the sheet, I'll write PRONOUNS. Then I'll write in my first case, and how I'm going to split those cases up. For me, that will be person across the top, and singular or plural down the side. (*Deprec.* is short for deprecatory.)

Conjugation of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives.

Mammal case	*FIRST*	*SECOND mammal*	*SECOND deprec.*	*THIRD mammal*	*THIRD deprec.*		
singular	hei	sbei	puk	mei	nog		
plural	heiji	sbeiji	pukyuk	meiji	nogyuk		
Saurid case	FIRST	SECOND saurid	SECOND deprec.	THIRD saurid	THIRD deprec.		
singular	tahng	and so on...					
plural	tahngji						

If I have any specific rules relating to the way I form these pronouns, I'll need to write them down on the Vocabulary Rule Sheet. For example:

- First-person plural pronouns form from the singular pronoun and the suffix *–ji*.

Having this rule on paper will help me if I later decide that specific groups within the darkling mammals or saurids or plantoids or mineraloids have further separated themselves within their groups.

What You Do Now

- Play with pronoun concepts that fit the people you want to write about
- Using your scratch pad and RA Sheet, come up with some basic pronouns that you like
- On the case sheet, set up your categories, plug in your basic pronouns and then go through and conjugate your pronouns according to your categories
- Write down any rules you created for conjugating pronouns on your Vocabulary Rules Sheet. If you created prefixes or suffixes, mark them on your Prefix and Suffix Sheet.

Now, on to some unbelievably cool games you can play with language while delving deeper into case.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page F_____

Case Conjugation Sheet

Conjugation of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives.

Chapter Ten

The Case for Cases

So. We've already established that case, or declension, can be a headache where pronouns are concerned, but that it can also create some interesting distinctions with pronouns that can be useful for worldbuilding.

Let's take a look now at some of the useful language tricks that English doesn't use case for, and why you may want to employ these tricks in your language.

Varieties of One-Word Communication

In English, one-word sentences are not only possible, but common.

"Run!"

"Who?"

"You!"

"Why?"

"TIGER!"

While the sense of these sentences is largely contextual, they convey complete packets of information, though they may do so with the help of implied words, as in the case of the first example, which implies the command "(You) run!".

You can eliminate the possibility of single-word sentences in your language by demanding that all nouns have articles and verbs, and all verbs have tangible subjects.

The previous brief conversation would then be modified to something like the following:

"You must run!"

"Do you mean me?"

"That is affirmative."

"Why do you say this?"

"A tiger prepares to pounce on... ah... ack!... *euwww*, that's messy."

A language that permits brevity offers significant advantages in instances where speed of conveyance of meaning is of the essence. However, there are plenty of languages that don't permit such brevity, and they've still managed to sustain breeding populations of speakers. This may be entirely because of a shortage of tigers. But probably not.

Maybe you have an abundance of tigers (or other clear and present dangers) in your story or world. Perhaps you'd like to give your folks a sort of verbal shorthand that will get them through tiger attacks or the sudden appearance of hostile aliens with equal ease.

If you want to include the possibility of one-word sentences in your language, you can use English methods: implied context (pointing at the tiger); previous context (having mentioned the tiger in a previous sentence); ALL CAPS AND EXCLAMATION POINTS!!!; modification of the word with a rising, falling, or exclamatory vocal inflection; or just dumping the word out there with a bit of punctuation and no explanation and hoping for the best.

Using context from previous sentences, however, is not the only way to have meaningful one-word dialogues.

Using Case to Streamline the Passing of Information

Pull out your Vocabulary Rules Sheet and let's see what we can do with one-word sentences. (We aren't using a Case Conjugation Sheet here because, with one word sentences, we want to keep this simple. We can do everything we need to do with just one tacked-on syllable.)

We're going begin exploring the use of *case* to formulate a rule regarding the syntax of the shortest possible sentence you can speak in your language. This may regard yes-no type answers (do realize that some languages do not have single words for *yes* and *no*, and that in cultures that value avoiding conflict or hurt feelings over direct and clear communication, such words are neither

needed nor wanted). You may choose to develop a command syntax for your characters to use in emergencies.

By world language standards, English is a slacker where case is concerned. We only use two. Some languages use a dozen or more.

Here are some of an incomprehensibly complex list of things that case can indicate:

gender

status

caste

time

place

attitude

intent

race or nationality

activity

I want to create a case that will allow my Osji speakers to use one-word sentences to convey information in emergencies, and to make it known, even if they can't scream (tigers, you know) that the situation *is* an emergency.

I'm going to do this by adding a prefix, *emi* (developed by using my RA Sheet, of course).

My logic with choosing a prefix rather than a suffix for this task is that a prefix will be the first sound a listener will hear, and if that sound only and always means, PAY ATTENTION: BAD THINGS ARE ABOUT TO HAPPEN, it will improve the attention my listener will pay to what follows.

Here's my example of what I'll put on my Vocabulary Rules Sheet:

#	Rule For:	Rule:
3	emergency case	"emi" (prefix) precedes a single verb to denote emergency or command for immediate obedience
		Structure: Emi+[inf. verb]!
		Example: Emigeskisjil!
		Rough translation: Emergency! Fight!
		"emi" can be used by anyone in appropriate circumstances, but is socially dangerous for persons of lower class speaking to persons of higher class.

I don't choose to have other one-word sentences in Osji, including one-word questions. Terseness and succinctness do not fit the character of the nightlings. I'm satisfied to have covered the bases with a command syntax for emergencies.

I could have chosen to skip a word modifier completely, and just gone with verbal inflection (rising or falling tones, like those the English speaker uses when asking a question, or answering one). However, my nightlings have some physiological issues that would make trusting inflection and tonal language to get meaning across their various forms risky.

Using Case To Eliminate the Need For Sentence Order

Two-word sentences are also equally possible. The following are a couple of several usable English two-word structures:

subject + verb

He ran.

verb + object

Run, fool!

With the second example, the subject is still implied, as it was in the one-word command above.

But the possibilities are much more varied than what the limitations of English permit. English has all but eliminated case—and case is one sweet toy for the language builder to play with.

English syntax depends on word order, and the word order for a simple declarative sentence is, with some exceptions (we *do* invoke The English Rule, you know):

subject – verb – object

For this reason, in English the following sentences have completely different meanings:

The girl (subject) fell on the overpass (object).

The overpass (subject) fell on the girl (object).

Now, we could build a language where we could change the meaning of those two sentences without changing word order. To do so, we create a couple more cases.

Let's create a *subject case* and an *object case*.

We'll make this easy on ourselves. Cases used with real languages have such imposing names as the Aversive Case, the Causal-Final Case, the Essive-Modal Case, and the Instrumental-Comitative Case. Half the terror in learning another language is being hit with terms like this. The good news is that, as the language creator, you can call your cases *anything you like.* You're not stuck with the sort of professorial-obfuscatory names used by linguists.

I created the Command Case with my one-word sentence example above.

Now I'm going to create two new cases. The first will tell the listener or reader that the noun in the sentence is the subject of the sentence. Because I like to keep things clear, I'm going to name this case the Subject Case.

The second case will mark a noun that is the object of the sentence. I'll call the case that modifies the object the Object Case.

DEFINITIONS:[4]

subject (noun) The noun, noun phrase, or pronoun in a sentence or clause that denotes the doer of the action or what is described by the predicate.

object (noun) 1. A noun, pronoun, or noun phrase that receives or is affected by the action of a verb within a sentence.

2. A noun or substantive governed by a preposition.

We'll leave the sentences in English to make it clear what we're doing.

Our first rule will be that we can modify a noun or pronoun to make it the sentence subject by adding the suffix *–teh*.

Our second rule will be that we can modify a noun or pronoun to make it the object of the sentence by adding the suffix *–wen*.

These rules go into the Vocabulary Rules Sheet like this:

#	Rule For:	Rule:
4	SUBJECT Case	-teh (suffix) modify noun to become sentence subject by adding –teh suffix Suffix –teh will be final suffix in words with multiple declensions
5	OBJECT Case	-wen (suffix) modify noun to become object of sentence by adding –wen suffix Suffix –wen will be final suffix in words with multiple declensions

Now we can say:

The girl*teh* fell on the overpass*wen*, and we know that the worst injury we can expect in the girl is probably a skinned knee.

If we say **The girl*wen* fell on the overpass*teh***, however, we know we're going to have to dig her out of the rubble to find out how she's doing.

[4] Quoted from The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

With the use of subject and object cases for our nouns, we can dispose of articles, scramble the sentences completely, and the meaning of the sentence survives intact. Watch.

Girl*teh* overpass*wen* fell on. The girl fell on the overpass.

Girl*wen* overpass*teh* fell on. The overpass fell on the girl.

Scramble those four words in any order, and as long as you've invoked the subject case and object case on your nouns, you'll understand what the sentence is telling you.

Using Case As A Worldbuilding Tool

Let's play with a sentence in English, creating a couple of new cases to reflect a society very different from our own.

Creating A Case (or Two) for the Government

Let's say that we're required (by law, religion, or mind control) to publicly speak to and about government officials in terms of deep respect. Further, let's say that we wish to speak of them among ourselves in, ah, a somewhat less reverent manner.

We'll create the *reverential case* and the *despicable case* specifically to discuss government officials.

We'll create two case rules to make it possible for us to carry out these new goals for our language:

- **Reverential-case nouns** end with the suffix *–ba* (singular) and *–bat* (plural).
- **Despicable-case nouns** end with the suffix *–duh* (singular) and *–dork* (plural).

•

HELPFUL HINT:

When you're filling in the Syntax Chart, you'll collide with rules that refuse to politely fit into the space given. Rather than write smaller and try to cram everything in, just write your normal size and use up more lines. This is probably obvious to you, but since it wasn't obvious to me, as witnessed by the fact that some of my writing in the past got so small I now need a magnifying glass to read it, I'll pass this on... with the additional warning that middle age plays some seriously crappy tricks with your near vision, and things you think are perfectly legible might not be in ten or twenty years.

Remember, you're doing this with the future in mind.

#	Rule For:	Rule:
6	REVERENTIAL Case	-ba (singular) –bat (plural) (suffix) Modify government-related nouns to be acceptable to government members by adding **reverential case** suffixes Suffix –teh will be final suffix in words with multiple declensions
7	DESPICABLE Case	-duh (singular) –dork (plural) (suffix) Modify government-related nouns to express loathing for government members by adding **despicable case** suffixes Suffix –wen will be final suffix in words with multiple declensions

Now let's do a sentence, modifying it both ways. The basic sentence will be:

> Senator Hypocriticus addressed the Assembly on the subject of raises for members of the Senate.

We can tag certain nouns as neutral—that is, not in need of modification. Well, excluding the proper name Hypocriticus, we only have two neutral nouns in that whole sentence, and those are the words *subject* and *members*. Everything else has a political charge that's going to require modification.[5]

[5] The word *raises* could be considered a neutral word, too; in most cases, raises are happy things, and everyone loves to get them. In the case of government officials voting themselves raises, however, the word takes on blood-pressure-raising qualities. Because of

Reverentially—what you're going to hear on the nightly news, for example—you'll get:

> Senatorba Hypocriticus addressed the Assemblyba on the subject of raisesbat for members of the Senateba. (grovel, grovel)

The guy at home watching this on television is going to turn with one eyebrow raised and says to his wife:

> Senatorduh Hypocriticus addressed the Assemblyduh on the subject of raisesdork for members of the Senateduh. (Of course he did, the scumbag.)

Same words. Same information—almost. We know that in the first sentence, the speaker is sucking up, whether by inclination or by compulsion. We know in the second sentence that the speaker disapproves of almost everything said by the first speaker.

Using Case to Add Shades of Meaning (How To Make Yes *Mean* No*)*

But riffing on government greed, fun as that is, is small stuff. We can do so much more with case.

Consider shades of intent. This is an area where some languages are incredibly rich compared to case-poor English. English-speakers come up against rocky shoals when attempting to learn such shade-rich languages, too, because the whole concept of inflected meaning is foreign to us. With inflected meaning, what people say might not be anything like what they mean. The concept of "yes means no" is a rumor in English, but in other languages, it's been given a palace and a grand parade, and has been ensconced in the hall of fame. The reasons for using case to convey shades of meaning can vary, with the cause being everything from cultural angst over causing disappointment by telling someone *no*, to caste requirements over what can be said to persons of differing statuses, to cultural distaste for being blunt.

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that, we can treat *raises* in this instance as a special case involving only *government* raises. In which case, we modify it. (Which is, by the way, the nice thing about making up your own rules. They always work out the way you want them to when you do.

If the English listener in one of these "shades of meaning" languages only hears the words without the meanings added by case, he's going to miss the truth of the conversation.

I'll create some "shades of meaning" cases for English, to show you how such cases work.

I'll invent five cases to modify intent.

The first is the *affirmative case*. The speaker using the affirmative case is absolutely certain about what he says.

- *Affirmative case* verbs will end with the suffix *–in*.

The second is the *positive case*. The speaker using the positive case is leaning in the direction of agreement.

- *Positive case* verbs will end with the suffix *–ig.*

The third is the *dubious case*. The speaker using the dubious case is uncertain about the subject in question, leaning neither in favor of nor against it.

- *Dubious case* verbs will end with the suffix *–is*.

The forth case is the *evasive case*. The speaker using the evasive case is leaning against the subject in question, but doesn't wish to be pinned down.

- *Evasive case* verbs will end with the suffix *–ip*.

The fifth case is the *negative case.* The speaker is dead-set against the subject, and means the opposite of what he says.

- *Negative case* verbs will end with the suffix *–ik*.

Our example sentence will be:

We'll meet here again tomorrow at noon.

When we apply cases, we get the following five sentences (with translated clarifications in parentheses). You'll see how *Yes* means everything from *yes* to *no*.

> We'll meet*in* here tomorrow at noon. (Set your alarm, buddy; I won't be amused if you're late.)
>
> We'll meet*ig* here tomorrow at noon. (Probably. If I don't have a flat, or forget to check my watch, or have something cool come up.)
>
> We'll meet*is* here tomorrow at noon. (Maybe. I'll flip a coin at eleven-thirty, and not tell you what I got. You can just be surprised.)
>
> We'll meet*ip* here tomorrow at noon. (If your lawyer and the cops can find me.)
>
> We'll meet*ik* here tomorrow at noon. (When Hell freezes over. I'd rather jump off a bridge.)

You can see that the use of cases offers the potential for all sorts of fun and confusion between native speakers of your language and those who are having to deal with is from the perspective of the second- or third-language speaker.

Incidentally, we can modify negative sentences with these cases, too. Here's another quick example, in this case a teenager who has the house to herself for the weekend while her parents are away. She says:

> I won't have friends over while you're gone.

We'll modify what she says in the following ways, so that *No* means everything from *no* to *yes*:

> I won't have*in* friends over while you're gone. (I'm determined to be a good kid while you're gone. OR I'm a SMART liar.)
>
> I won't have*ig* friends over while you're gone. (I'm considering having Best Bud Betty over for pizza, and I want to leave myself a little waffle room in case you call.)

I won't have*is* friends over while you're gone. (I really want to have Hot Bob stop by, and Best Bud Betty, and maybe Homework Annie, but if I do, we aren't going to do anything you wouldn't approve of.

I won't have*ip* friends over while you're gone. (Hot Bob and I are planning an overnighter, but he might not be able to get out of the house because he just got grounded.)

I won't have*ik* friends over while you're gone. (I've already invited everyone in the school; the booze is hidden in the basement; and if you guys look out the window, you'll notice increased traffic on the street out front. And I don't really care if you know.)

At this point, I want to pull out my Case Conjugation Sheet again. While I can do a single rule for each case, it will be hard to see how five cases will look when used with first person, second person, third person, and so on. I'll do a sheet that lets me see an example of one noun fully conjugated with each case in its own vertical column, and each person in its own horizontal column. And of course I'll be careful to write down the rules on my Vocabulary Rule Sheet.

Case Can Divide and Conquer

Consider languages where every caste or social step on the hierarchy has its own case. You can only speak to rulers in the highest of cases, marking yourself as crud on the bottom of their boots; you speak to those lower than rulers but higher on the social ladder you in a case that emphasizes the fact that you subject yourself to their magnanimous superiority; you speak to your equals in your case; you speak to those beneath you in a case that notes that you're doing them a great favor to even notice their bug-like existence.

Some languages do not permit the concept that "all men are created equal" to exist, because the fact that in those cultures, the inequality of man is hardwired into the language. There is no way to say "all men are created equal" because which case would you use, and how would you apply it to everyone.

Consider languages that separate men from women, where men speak to other men in one case, women speak to other women in a second case, and

men and women speak to another in a third case in which the man is designated the master or superior, and the woman the subject or inferior. In cultures that speak such languages gender inequality is hardwired in. Concepts of gender equality cannot exist; every sentences spoken in the language makes such equality impossible.

Consider languages where the race of native speakers is given its own case, and all other races are lumped into the case of "barbarian," "non-human," or "animal that walks." In these languages, racism is hardwired and inescapable, a matter as impersonal and inescapable as gravity; you're either a true human or one of the scum, and if you're one of the scum, it's not a position you can change. You were born scum, you will live your life as scum, and you will die scum.

English has its flaw and weaknesses. It also has its great strengths, and its refusal to separate human beings by race, creed, caste, color of skin, gender, place of birth, or social standing is perhaps its greatest strength.

In English, all men and all women are equal.

AUTHOR NOTE:

Some readers will now be angry with me because I am not playing the Woman Card in the feminist argument that women in the English-speaking world are held in a position of social inferiority by use of the word *man* to refer to humankind, and the use of the word *he* to refer to the generic person.

As in, *The reader can see where I'm going with this, because he's pretty bright.*

I used to fish a lot. I call myself a fisherman. If I joined Fire Rescue, I'd call myself a fireman. And I will not apologize. *Man* means *human*, and both *man* and *woman* contain this all-encompassing affirmation of our humanity. We're all humans here.

If a woman has to use a case that forces her to refer to herself as "I, the unworthy inferior to you, the mighty man" simply to speak to a man, she has cause for complaint. English speakers have none.

In developing your own language, you can create these caste differences to develop societies that are intolerant, immovable, and blind to the existence of

their prejudices. You can build in racism, sexism, and classism without the possibility of escape simply by the use of case.

Why would you want to do this?

First, because it creates great conflict, and great conflict is what fiction is all about.

Second, because it opens up otherwise-incomprehensible parts of the world we live in. Such languages and such language-plagued societies as I've described exist, and by inventing and playing with languages of your own that codify racism, sexism, and classism into language structure, and by working through scenarios between your language's darlings and its demons, you'll come to a greater understanding of how people can be oppressed by the language they speak.

When language separates its members, when it divides and conquers, then the entire society stagnates, innovation dies, and injustices flow from generation to generation. The untouchable-caste genius will never have a fair hearing among the ruling caste. The lord in his castle will never be forced to redress the evils his unconscious prejudices have caused. Ideas cannot travel freely, the housemaid, the carpenter and the king cannot sit down to dinner together and speak as equals. (It isn't that they won't, you see. It's that they *can't*. The language that would let them doesn't exist.)

You already know how to create cases now, so I won't waste space by creating cases to demonstrate built-in racism, sexism, or classism. You would build them in the same fashion that we built cases in our previous examples. Developing a set of racist, sexist, or classist cases makes for a pretty eye-opening exercise, and is definitely worth taking some time to explore, even if you aren't planning on writing a book in which a language revolutionary changes your world.

When To Use This Technique

Create cases to:

- Streamline parts of your language
- Eliminate the need for a strict word order in sentences
- Create shades of meaning that don't exist in English
- Develop societies constrained by the limitations of their language

Case differences can be, and frequently are, subtle in sound and appearance, but they can convey changes of meaning as extreme as those in our examples.

Next, quick verb conjugation.

Chapter Eleven

Conjugating Verbs: Using Your Roots

And now we're down to verb conjugation and tenses. You can probably bet you'll need the present tense. And the past tense. Maybe a future tense. But what about all those other tenses that languages like English provide?

Do you want them? Do you need them?

Odds are that, if you're just planning on writing in some cool foreign dialogue in your novel or game, you don't.

However, if you need a full and fully flexible language, you'll want the complete arsenal.

Either way, print or copy the Tense and Person Sheet, and let's get to work.

First, consider the possible tenses available to the English language. You have everything from simple present to conditional perfect progressive. If you're foggy on what these tenses are (and all of us use them to speak, but most of us don't know them all by name, so don't feel badly if you don't), check out the following web links:

- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_seqtense.html
- http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/grammar/tenses_satz.htm
- http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/tenses.html

Or check out any handy basic book on grammar.

Then consider the possiblities offered by prefixes, suffixes, and helper words, and alterations to the root. English uses a combination of suffixes, helper words, and in a few really screwed-up instances, complete (and completely irregular) reworkings of the infinitive.

Regular English verbs form the past by adding –ed, and other forms by adding –ed and helpers. Progressive forms add –ing and use helpers.

I avoid.

I am avoiding.

I avoided.

I will have avoided.

Here are some painfully irregular English verbs.

These are presented in the following order: Infinitive, Simple Past, Past Participle.

go, went, gone

awake, awoke, awoken

forsake, forsook, forsaken

write, wrote, written

foresee, forsaw, forseen

weep, wept, wept

For these, you get:

I foresee.

I am foreseeing.

I foresaw.

I will have forseen.

One regular verb, more or less completely conjugated in English, offers the following possibilities (excluding negatives, such as "I will not beg":

I beg.

I'm begging.

I begged.

I was begging.

I have begged.

I have been begging.

I had begged.

I had been begging.

I will beg.

I am going to beg.

I will have begged.

I would beg.

I would be begging.

I would have begged.

I would have been begging.

You do not have to address all of these options in creating your language. Conversely, if you want to create options that you don't see here, as in a past tense that will tell the listener that an action succeeded or failed, you can create such a tense.

What do I mean?

Let's create a past affirmative and past negative tense to let us know whether an action attempted in the past was successfully carried out.

Here's our sample sentence:

I went to the store for bread.

We have no idea whether the person who went actually got the bread or not. So we can create suffixes, prefixes, or helper words that will tell us this extra bit of information.

Let's say we add –il to the verb it the action was successful, and –ong to the verb if it was not.

I went*il* to the store for bread. (They had it, he bought it.)

I went*ong* to the store for bread. (He went, and though we don't know why, we know he didn't get bread.)

What else could verb tenses offer?

- **Tenses can display the special characteristics of your people**
  - Can they see into the future? Then you could create a past precognitive tense and a present precognitive tense (but not a future precognitive tense, because if you can see what you'll see into the future *in* the future, you're still seeing it in the present, if you see what I mean) that allow a speaker to speak predictions or refer to past predictions in a manner that others will understand as different and special.
  - Can they travel through time, or through alternate dimensions? They'll need some way to make sense of these travels when speaking with other travelers?
- **Tenses can convey emotion**
  - You can want something a little, or want something so much you'd just about kill to get it. Creating special desire tenses could allow you to use the single verb *want*, and still convey the degree to which you want it.
- **Tenses can convey degree of relevance, or intent**
  - You sit around with friends blue-skying a totally hypothetical way to create a new form of energy. Your cousin, the energy engineer, sits around with his friends actually creating a new form of energy. Differing conjugations could permit these two conversations to use the same verbs while acknowledge their degree of seriousness. (As

an aside, such conjugations could permit a guy to jokingly ask a girl to marry him, and have her know he was joking, without any possibility of communication wires getting crossed.)

Play with other possibilities that you could convey by simply changing the conjugation of a verb.

Keep in mind how you treated your verb when used in a question. Consider whether you've used helper words, prefixes, suffixes, or just reveled in irregularity up to this point. Then pick a verb that you decide will conjugate regularly in your language, and start working out the possibilities.

Consider that helper words are flexible and reusable, while prefixes and suffixes are pretty much one-shot items. Remember that you (probably) want to make re-using your language something that isn't going to require constant referral to your notes for every single word.

Consider that, if you've used case, it could have an effect on your verbs, especially if you have caste cases, politeness cases, or streamlining cases.

You'll probably only want or need to use one column for each verb. In which case, you can work out seven verbs you think you'll be using on each sheet. (There's an empty line at the top for your infinitives, if you can do this.) However, if you have special needs—if for example you have a politeness case in which women must speak differently to women than they do to men, and differently again to children, and differently again to household servants, and men have a separate case for speaking to other men, and so on, then decide how this is going to affect your verbs. Will there be some that are only available to men, and some that are only available to women? Will each verb have a separate conjugation for all classes? Will verbs be free of the constraints of the politeness case, used and conjugated identically by everyone?

Here's an encouraging note for this point of the process:

When it seems too complicated, remember—You're making it up, and you're always right.

Here's a short conjugation of the verb *walk*, making allowances for the four politeness cases mentioned above, and done in English to make the changes easy to see. I did not conjugate for person: I walk, he walks, we walk, they

walk, you walk, you(plural) walk. I did one column in another language (unknown, unrelated) to demonstrate how such changes could look in your work.

Conjugation of verbs or other method of demonstrating tense, person, etc.

Present	walk	walken	walkam	walko		pad	
Present Perfect	have walked	have walkened	have walkamed	have walkoed		ti'padin	
Past	walked	walkened	walkamed	walkoed		padin	
Past Perfect	had walked	had walkened	had walkamed	had walkoed		cha'padin	
Future	will walk	will walken	will walkam	will walko		in'pad	
Future Perfect	will have walked	will have walkened	will have walkamed	will have walkoed		inti'padin	
	masc	fem	child	servant			

There. You've survived the process of developing a system of conjugating your own verbs.

That's it for building a spoken language. You can always add more to what you've done, dig through dictionaries and language guides to study how other languages work, and take interesting processes from them, but no matter what you do, you'll have your system to fall back on so that you can find what you've done before, and keep it working as you add to it later.

All that remains in the creation of a working spoken language is the order in which you put your words. You have every building block you need: Now you get to play with them.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page G_____

Tense and Person Sheet

Conjugation of verbs or other method of demonstrating tense, person, etc.

Present							
Present Perfect							
Past							
Past Perfect							
Future							
Future Perfect							
	I	**You** (sing.)	**You** (plural)	**He/ She/ It**	**We**	**They**	

Chapter Twelve

Syntax: How Words Relate to Each Other

By now, you've built some unique names to use within your world; developed a vocabulary list for your language; created unique concepts that don't exist in English by developing nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs from root words; and explored (and perhaps chose to use) a few of the many possible variants of case to inflect your language, and inflict conjugation on your verbs.

You're through the hardest part.

Now we're going to figure out how to write sentences in your language. This will be short and sweet.

Languages have to accomplish two, and only two, tasks. They have to permit users to convey information, and they have to permit users to request further information. That's it. If you can ask questions and receive answers, you have a full language, and you can be using your tongue, or your fingers, or movements of your arms and legs, or brainwaves, or little squiggles or raised dots on paper, or electrons expressing themselves as light on a screen, to convey or receive that information.

If you and another language user share both a symbol set and the format in which the symbols will be transmitted, you can communicate.

And that's language:

A series of symbols presented in an agreed-upon format that conveys information.

All our previous work has been about creating the symbols. Now we're going to create the format in which you'll present your symbols. You can make it as simple or as complex as you like.

In the previous chapter, I used two sentences to demonstrate the positional syntax of English:

The girl fell on the overpass.

The overpass fell on the girl.

The syntax of this English sentence is:

subject > verb > object

We can break it down further, into:

article + subject noun > verb > preposition + article + object noun

(subject) verb (object)

Word order, and *only* word order, determines the final meaning of this sentence. English, the Romance languages, and some other languages share this syntax structure, and it will be our starting point.

We'll do a simple declarative sentence in present tense.

We'll work out our structure in English, and then you'll plug in your vocabulary in your language and compare results.

Our sentence will be:

I want a box of cookies.

Print off a Syntax Rules Sheet. Label and number it.

Now, go back and look over all your other work. Have you developed any cases? If you have, keep them handy. Are you using pronouns? Figure out which one will apply. Are you going to streamline your language to make word order unimportant? Prepare your suffixes. Have you created special tenses or persons for your verbs? Have them close by.

Look at the components you have in this sentence. You have:

- A subject, in this case the pronoun *I*
- A verb, *want*
- An object that includes the article *a* and the noun *box*
- And a prepositional phrase that defines box and consists of the preposition *of* and the noun *cookies.*

You are in sole command of how you put these elements together.

Here are some options.

- Subject(subject case suffix—we'll say *–geest*) > Object + prepositional phrase(object case suffix *–diust*) > Verb
  (Fish out your RA sheet to make yours.)
  - Example: I*geest* cookiebox*diust* want. Or ....
  - Example: Cookiebox*diust* I*geest* want. Or ....
  - Example: Want cookiebox*diust* I*geest*.
- Object and prepositional phrase > Verb > Evasive-case subject.
  - Example: The box of cookies is wanted by one.
- Subject(caste case) > verb(caste appropriate) > object.
  - *I-(king) command* the box of cookies.
  - *I-(high-caste)* order the box of cookies.
  - *I-(commoner) request* the box of cookies.
  - *I-(pauper) beg* the box of cookies.

Remember that what you're doing is creating a template into which you can fit other sentences. Play with different word orders, with your different cases and suffixes and find a way of putting this simple sentence together in English that

works for you, that you find interesting, and that you'll be able to figure out again when you look at your rule in five years, or ten.

Tack your suffixes and other modifiers onto the English words, see how everything fits.

Then do your sentence in your language.

Write them into the Syntax Sheet like this:

Modifier	Rule, Structure, Example Sentence	Comments
p. E-3 #4 p. E-5 #6	Declaration w/ prepositional phrase I want a box of cookies. Subject (pronoun from list) > noun/modifying noun in one word(prepostion suffix) > verb	Form prepositional phrases by squishing nouns into one word, and adding preposition suffixes at end
	Example: English I(female form) boxcookiesof want.	
	Example: Bogooto Shera toggahamofel'dan torgi.	

Check out how this breaks down: *'dan* is my preposition *of*, I've smooshed *box* and *cookie* (*togga* and *hamofel*) into one word in the best of compound-word-building traditions, and I've used a gendered first-person pronoun. In this language, a male saying the same thing would say *Hama toggahofel'dan torgi*.

When you have your simple sentence in place, figure out how to ask a simple question.

First, break down the question into its component parts, then remap those parts to your language, just as we did with the declaration above.

Here's our sample question:

Do you want a box of cookies?

We're using essentially the same words so you won't have to spend time translating a new set.

Determine if you'll be using interrogative pronouns, what cases you'll apply, and so on, just as we did before. Play with word order, remembering that it does not have to be the same as for your sentence, but the same basic rules of language should apply—if you've used politeness forms before, use them again, if you've used caste case before, use it again, and so on.

For me, the second example will work out as follows:

Modifier	Rule, Structure, Example Sentence	Comments
p. E-3 #5 p. E-5 #6	Question w/ prepositional phrase Do you want a box of cookies. Subject (pronoun from list) > noun/modifying noun in one word(prepostion suffix) > interrogative verb	Form prepositional phrases by squishing nouns into one word, and adding preposition suffixes at end
	Example: English You (female form) boxcookiesof (question)want.	
	Example: Bogooto Sherok toggahamofel'dan vo'torgi.	

Sherok is the pronoun for female second person, or *you*. The male version would be *hamok*. *Vo'* is an interrogative prefix attached to the verb. This language needs no inflected ending—that lilt in the voice marked by the symbol (?), because the *vo'* prefix means "this is a question."

Create your own question, work out your examples, make sure you keep track of the pages and rule numbers where you can find the applicable rules for the sentence you built.

Remember the following tips:

- **Keep track of your references while you're working.** Mark the page and rule number for every case, prefix, and vocabulary rule you use.
- **Make sure you remember to apply rules where they fit your situation.** If you don't have a rule for a situation you're working out,

create it on the spot, keep track of where you put it, and you'll be able to use it again later.

- **Don't drive yourself crazy.** Make things just complicated enough to be fun for you and for your linguistically-inclined readers. Don't feel obligated to create the most complex, difficult language in the universe. You can use a hundred cases, but if you do, you're going to be the one who has to keep track of them and wade through them while writing dialogue translations—and what should be a fun few minutes of work will turn into a nightmare slog through pages of arcania.

Do a couple more sentences if you'd like, trying different grammatical constructions in English, and then remapping them, using your own words, concepts, and situations. Make sure you like the way what you've done sounds and works. If you don't, feel free to go back and changes the rules to ones you like better.

Our final chapter will be on creating a written language. For now, though, take a breather. You've earned it.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page H_____

Syntax Rules Sheet

Rules and modifiers (if applicable) for language syntax

Modifier	Rule, Structure, Example Sentence	Comments

Chapter Thirteen

The Linguistic Background Sheet, & Why It Will Save Your Sanity

Finally we come to the page that will be A-1 in your language notebook. It's just a cover sheet, but it will give you the rough outlines of your language and the page numbers where you can find the details.

Say you have six years worth of languages in a stack on your desk. These languages cover four different universes you've build, thirty different languages in different degrees of development, and a couple of different eras. You know there was something in one of those languages that met a need you currently have, but you haven't the foggiest clue which language, or era, or world the thing is in.

Enter the Linguistic Background Sheet. All the convenient facts about your language at the very front, or with handy page numbers to the issues you're likely to want to find quickly.

Print off a copy of the Linguistic Background Sheet, and start filling it in. Here are the questions it asks you, and how you want to answer them.

The first half of the sheet covers the language, its relatives, and its speakers:

- **World, Era, and Language Name**—just write the names you came up with at the beginning of this course.
- **Race or nationality of native speakers**—if you're starting your worldbuilding with your language, you may not know this yet. You can leave it blank, just make something up, or if you already know it, fill it in
- **Distribution of language**—in the Mapmaking section of this course (which will be in *Holly Lisle's Build A World Clinic)*, we'll deal with language maps. If you have a language map, mark in the key that you've used to designate the places where this language is spoken, or

the countries or regions where it is spoken. If you haven't mapped out language distribution, leave this space blank.

- **Precursor languages**—These are the languages from which some of your (made up) root words arose, and from which you took some of your grammar exceptions, and other such oddities. If you're looking to add some depth to your story, you can create names for these precursor languages, then make up stories about the people who spoke them. If you want to get crazy, you can build the precursor languages. If you don't want to go that deeply into this particular world, leave this space blank.
- **Dialects, Creoles and Pidgins**—these are all named offshoots of your language. If you decide you want to refer to or create speakers of regional variants of your main language, write the names of your variants here. Sometimes just having a character show up in a story with a bad accent and a reference to being from another part of the country can be enough to add a touch of richness and depth to your world. Sometimes you may want to actually build a bit of the variant.

The second half of the sheet breaks the language down into parts that are designed to get you back up to speed on it quickly.

- **Consonants in use, Vowels in use, Glottals, Clicks and Tonals**—just write down the letters you kept from your RA Sheet in the applicable spaces
- **Word order in sentences**—you want to use the English grammar breakdown of your simple declarative sentence as your example. Just seeing

  (politeness case prefix)subject> object(gendered suffix) > verb

  can be enough to trigger the details of the language in your mind, and let you know it is (or isn't) the one you were looking for.
- **Pronouns, Possessives, Method of Constructing Noun Phrase, Method of Constructing Verb Phrase**—just write in page numbers.

The extra columns to the right are for you to keep track of other things you've done. Name on the left, page number on the right.

Keep this sheet up to date. If you create a creole from your main language, for example, make sure you list the variant in the creole space on your main language's background sheet, and as a precursor language on your creole's background sheet. It can become nightmarish trying to keep things straight if you don't keep notes straight. Your language can accidentally become its own grandfather, and that's a pretty hard hole to dig yourself out of with readers.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page A_____

Linguistic Background Sheet

Language Pedigree

World	
Era	
Language Name	
Race or nationality of native speakers	
Distribution of language	
Precursor language(s)	
Dialect(s)	
Creole(s)	
Pidgin(s)	

Language Structure Quick Chart

Available Sounds			
Consonants in use			
Vowels in use			
Glottals, clicks			
Tonals			
Grammar			
Word order in sentences			
Pronouns			
Possessives			
Method of constructing noun phrases			
Method of constructing verb phrases			

Chapter Fourteen

Creating A Writing System for Your Language

I want to start off this chapter by recommending that you either visit one or some of the websites listed below, or pick up a copy of a book on omniography. One that I have that I particularly recommend is the last item in this list. It is excellent, has great pictures of a multitude of written scripts, and is also still in print, which is a big plus.

- http://www.omniglot.com -- A rich and astounding site for the language builder, pictures of every writing system imaginable, including real language systems and made-language systems
- http://www.omniglot.com/writing/ --Omniglot's amazing A-Z index. A must-see.
- http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writintro.htm -- A good back-up site
- http://www.ancientscripts.com/ws.html -- Excellent A-Z listing of ancient scripts, with pictures.
- The book **Writing Systems of the World: Alphabets, Syllabaries, Pictograms** (Paperback)by Akira Nakanishi -- http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0804816549/

These sites (or the book, or both) are to give you ideas on the different ways that languages can look. A lot of us, deeply steeped in Tolkein, got the impression that if there was another way of writing than the Latin alphabet or the Greek alphabet, it was Tolkein's Elvish. Or runes.

In fact, the variant writing systems of the world are myriad, and in many cases breathtakingly beautiful. You need to spend an hour or more looking at what people have already created before you jump in with your own design.

With that said, let's get a few definitions out of the way. When you're creating a writing system, you may think of creating an alphabet for it. After all, an

alphabet is what you use to write in English, and it seems the logical (or perhaps the only) approach to writing things down. In fact, though, alphabets are just one of many options.

Here are your main options:

- An **alphabet** gives separate symbols to individual consonant sounds, and individual vowel sounds
- An **abjad** gives separate symbols to individual consonant sounds, with vowels usually skipped or represented by diacritical marks
- A **syllabic alphabet** (also called an abugida) gives symbols to combined consonants plus one vowel, with other vowels generally represented by diacritical marks
- A **syllabary** gives symbols to combined consonants and vowels. *ba*, *be*, *bi*, *bo*, and *bu* would all have different symbols.

Beyond these relatively structured systems, there are systems like ancient Egyptian and Chinese that are harder to define. These can use symbols as **logograms**, which represent parts of words or whole words, and can directly represent the items drawn; **ideograms**, which represent ideas, or abstract thoughts; **semantic-phonetic compounds**, which can use the sound of an item pictures to hint at a rhyme for the thought expressed, or can in other ways link the image to sound; or the symbol can have no recognizable link to the item drawn, and represent a syllable or simple sound.

Consider how you'd like to represent your language. Realize, too, that you could create an example writing system in each of the methods listed above for the same language. Nothing but convention and a large body of written literature demands that English be written in the Latin alphabet.

When you've decided on the style of written system you want to create, your next task is to determine your direction. Really.

Left to right? Right to left? Alternating rows of left to right and right to left? Top to bottom? Bottom to top? Alternating rows of top to bottom and bottom to top? And if you're going top to bottom, do you read the rows from left to right or right to left?

Languages have used and continue to use all of those. The possibilities offer you totally different looks and feels for your written system.

Ready to get started?

Then pull out a Written Language Designer Sheet (and your scratch pad) and remember back to when someone first taught you to write. Odds are, you sat at a desk or table with a piece of ruled paper with *huge* spaces between lines, and a fat pencil just about big enough to rest on your shoulder, and you practiced writing circles, half-circles, vertical lines (some that started at the top line, and some that started at the middle line) and lines angled to the right and the left. These are strokes you have to be able to duplicate to be able to form the Latin alphabet. You use the angles to make letters like A and X, and the straight lines for L and T and H, and circles and half-circles for O and C and S, and mixtures for M and N and R and K and D. And so on.

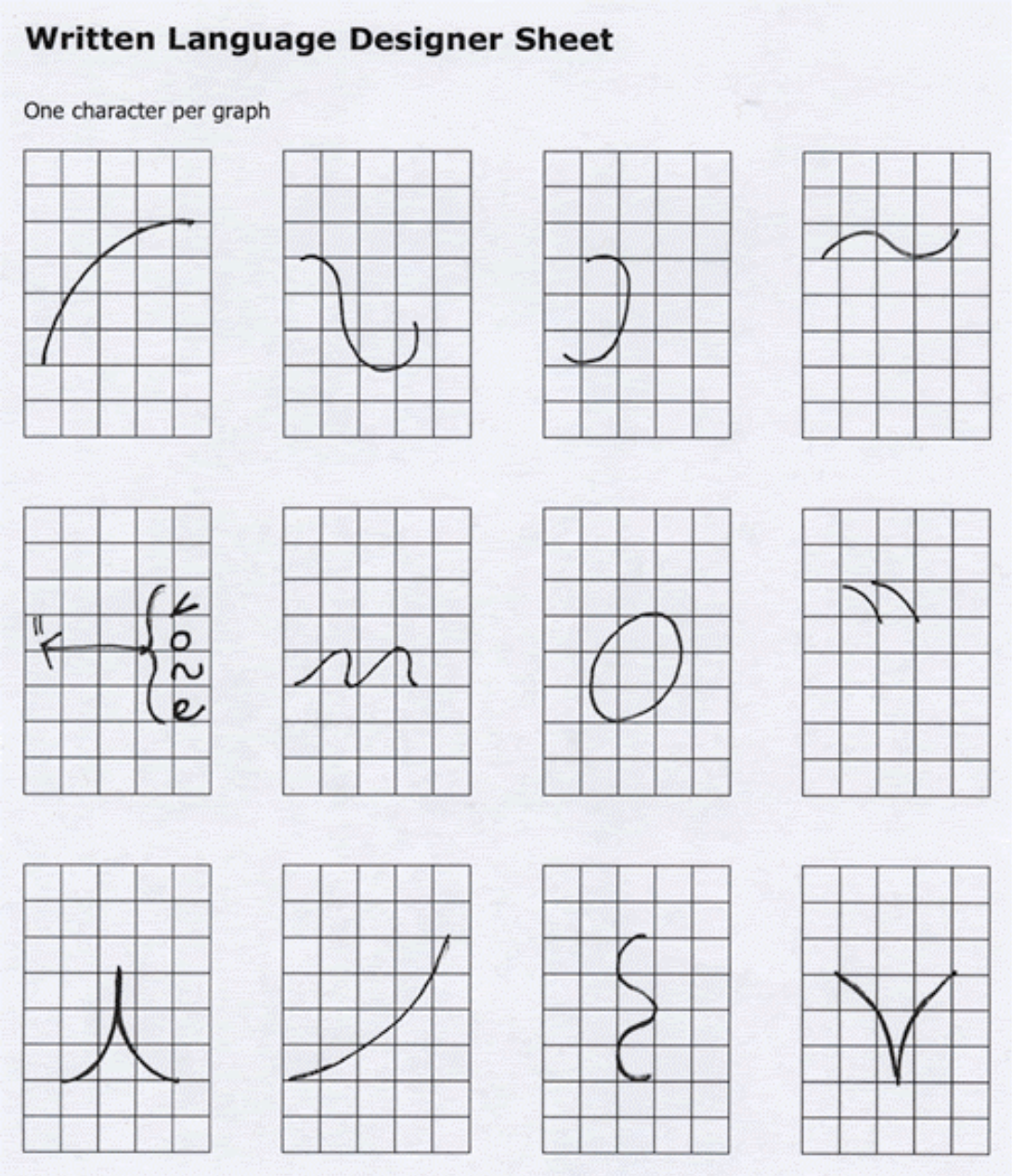
What you're going to do now is design a series of strokes with which you'll build your written system.

The reason you do this is that naturally evolved written languages have a coherent look. All the letters seem to fit together, they look like they've been designed by somebody with at least one degree in graphic arts and sometimes with the esthetic sense of a Michelangelo. Well-done invented languages have the same look. Written languages designed by beginners, however, tend to have no coherence to them. The language designer has labored to make every character different and unique, and has ended up with something truly ugly as a result.

If you haven't yet looked at any of the links to written language sites provided at the beginning of this chapter, do that now. You want to be aware of the enormous range of possibilities. If you've already looked, we'll get started.

You can look at my example and see what I've done. I've decided that my language is going to be written vertically, from top to bottom, and that columns will stack from left to right. I've decided that I want curvy letter forms, with no straight lines.

So this is what I've come up with.



My language will have thirty consonants and seventeen vowel forms, but I have defined the look of the language in eleven simple stroke forms, and one vowel box.

The vowel box is the second box on the left. It includes four tiny characters, grouped together with a curly bracket and marked with an arrow. This is my personal shorthand for "can appear on the left or the right." These are my

vowels, and though, as you'll see in the next sheet, I give myself modifiers to assist the reader with pronouncing them, I'm going to create written Osji as an *abjad*, so writing out vowels can be skipped entirely if the writer is so inclined, and not too interested in readability.

Now, having defined the strokes that I'll use to design my letters, I move to my Written Language Alphabet or Syllabary Sheet.

Notice that on the sheet, Consonants run down the left column, and Vowels run across the top.

It's designed for maximum flexibility, which means I had to make enough room for syllabary languages, where *ma*, *me*, *mi*, *mo*, and *mu* all get different symbols, and where every other consonant sound in the language is given five or even more symbols as well. If you're doing a written language like this, you may find that you can split all your consonants into two columns on one sheet and still fit everything in. You may have to go to two sheets.

And you want to line them up in columns, with all the syllables separated in vowel order. Here's what I mean:

ba	be	bi	bo	bu
sha	she	shi	sho	
ta	te	ti		tu

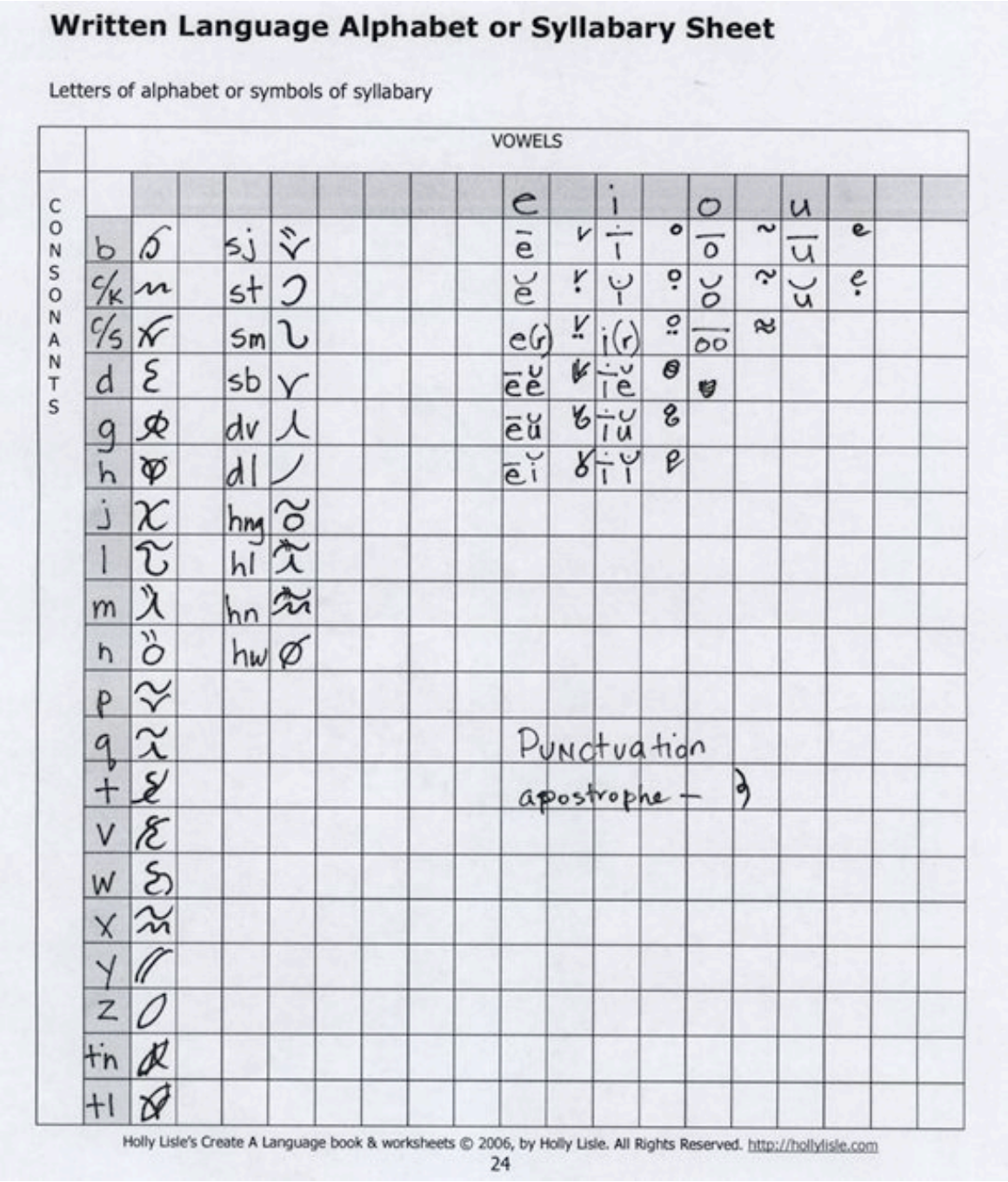
If you keep everything separated in this fashion, you can scan the left column for your beginning letter and quickly find the letter/vowel combo symbol you want. You can quickly identify which combos you decided not to permit (in the example above, *shu* and *to*. And you can eliminate a lot of extra writing/drawing if you decide that all *b*-beginning or *a*-ending letter forms share a common element, say a left-hand loop, or a triangle.

If you're creating a *logographic language*, where every symbol means a word or a part of a word, you're going to need a lot more than two sheet.

If you're doing an *alphabet*, you can wrap this business up with a couple of columns on one sheet.

And *abjads* fall sort of in the middle.

Take a look at how I've used the sheet. My vowels are separated from my consonants, but because I used symbol changes to mark long sounds, short sounds, and dipthongs, I gave each vowel its own column.



Written Language Alphabet or Syllabary Sheet

Letters of alphabet or symbols of syllabary

VOWELS

CONSONANTS

b
c/k
c/s
d
g
h
j
l
m
n
p
q
t
v
w
x
y
z
th
tl

sj
st
sm
sb
dv
dl
hmg
hl
hn
hw

Punctuation
apostrophe –

24

The letters I'm creating are those from my RA Sheet. While you're not bound to a straight translation of your RA Sheet into written form (especially if you're using a logographic writing system), working from the RA Sheet in all other instances insures that you'll have all the sounds you'll need to write everything you want to write.

A quick comment on esthetics: Notice how I used the basic strokes from my designer page to create complex letterforms, and at the same time, notice how all the letter forms seem to belong to the same language. They are related to each other, they are coherent. The eye looks at them, and the mind says, "Yes, that's writing."

Draw out your completed letter forms on Written Language Designer Sheets or your scratchpad to work out your complex letter designs before you put them in your Written Language Sheet. I go straight from the Designer Sheet, but then, I'm a big believer in the beauty of synchronicity, or the happy accident. I don't mind if I end up scribbling things out or if something happens that I didn't expect. You may think differently.

In Conclusion

This is the beginning of your journey into creating languages, not the end. With more than six thousand living languages and an uncounted number of dead and lost ones, my goal has not been to give you an exhaustive compendium of every sort of language you could create, or every grammatical structure available to you.

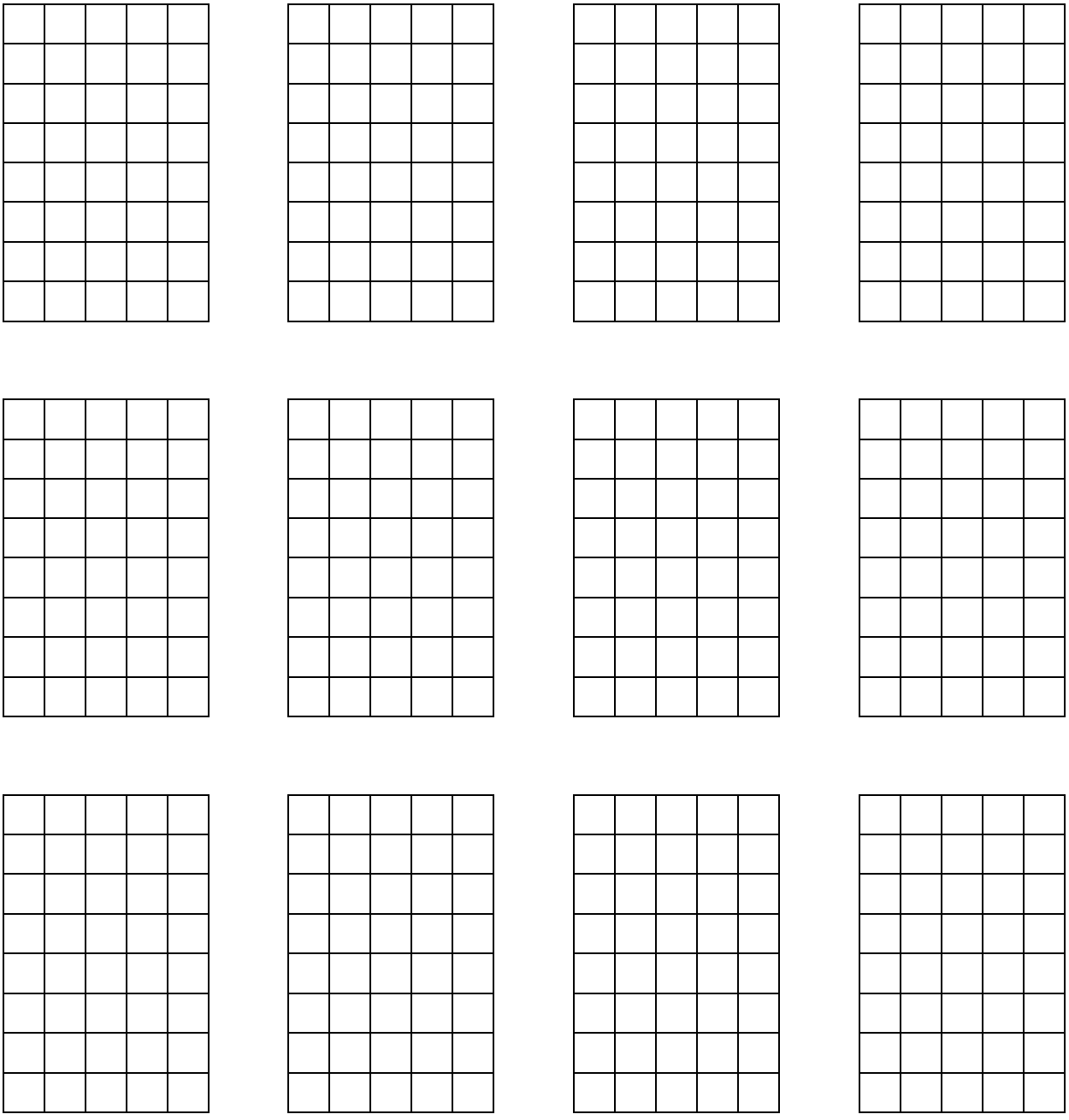
What I have done is given you a basic, methodical approach to the process of language creation, a handful of useful organizational tools, and some reference sites and books that can allow you to start exploring and creating on your own. Beyond this point, you are limited only by your own imagination and your willingness to broaden your research and explore the fascinating realm of existing languages for bits and pieces you can use in your own.

I hope you'll have as much fun inventing new words and people to speak them as I have.

World_____Language_____Era_____Page_____

Written Language Designer Sheet

One character per graph



World_____Language_____Era_____Page_____

Written Language Alphabet or Syllabary Sheet

	VOWELS																	
CONSONANTS																		

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The Grammar Link

ESL : Grammar and English Usage

http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Grammar_and_English_Usage/

The resource is supposedly for English as a Second Language students, but it has thousands of links to English grammar and usage sites, many of them for native speakers. If you're uncertain about any aspect of English grammar or usage, this is a convenient first stop.

From the perspective of the creator of non-English languages, it also has some links to how native speakers of other languages commonly break English, and the fixes. If you're trying to get a feel for how your languages could be crashed by non-native speakers (a fun thing to play with in fiction), these sites are incredibly cool.

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  My method for creating immersion in the story through the use of language, imagery, sleight-of-hand, dialogue, action, and description.
- **Holly Lisle's Finish the Book Clinic**
  My method for revising stories from the nearly ready to the totally wrecked. Includes the full details of the dreaded Red-Yellow-Orange-Green Line-For-Scene Method (http://hollylisle.com/writingdiary2/index.php/2005/09/14/the-line-for-scene-is-done/)**,** easier methods for less-wrecked books, manuscript formats, writing exercises, printable charts, and much more. New, Nonfiction.

About the Author

Holly Lisle has published nearly thirty novels (and counting) with publishers from Penguin and Tor to HarperCollins, Warner, and Baen. She writes fantasy, science fiction, paranormal suspense and the occasional secret project in other genres, maintains a vast website (http://hollylisle.com), a mostly-regular weblog, Pocket Full of Words (http://hollylisle.com/writingdiary2) , and a little web store (http://shop.hollylisle.com), and she frequently writes with the mandatory cat on one shoulder and the other three glomming around the space heater on the floor. And her family is pretty cool.