11-823 Conlanging

Writing
Writing Systems

- Different Writing Systems
- What makes a writing system
- Standardization vs Historical artifacts
- Constructed Writing Systems
- Computing and its influence on writing
Types of Writing Systems

**Sampson 1985:**

- **Logographic systems:** Chinese
- **Phonographic Systems:**
  - Syllabic: Linear B
  - Consonantal: West Semitic
  - Segmental: Greek
  - Featural: Hangul
History of Writing

- **Earliest writing systems**
  - Mesopotamia around 3200BCE
  - Mesoamerica around 600BCE
  - China around 1200BCE

- **But there is considerable controversy**

- **More than numbers**
  - Markings, counting beads ...

- **More than painting pictures/signs**
Writing Development

- **Picture Writing**
  - Represent actual objects, times, etc

- **Transitional**
  - Representing the abstract ideas

- **Phonological**
  - Represent things with similar sound
Writing Uses

- Taxes, taxes and taxes
  - Record who owns what when
  - How much you have to pay

- Rules, religions
  - Laws (Hammurabi ~1770BCE)
  - Fortune telling (Oracle Bones ~1300BCE)

- Histories/Literature
  - Early authors whose names we know
  - Plahhotpe (Egypt) and Enheduanna (Sumerian) 2400BCE
What things are writing?

- **Known writing systems follow Zipf's Law**
  - Some things are very frequent
  - Some things are very infrequent

- **But things that follow Zipf's Law**
  - May or may not be writing
  - *Indus Script*
  - *Amish Barn Symbols*
  - *Linear A*
How is Writing Done

- Often influenced by the medium
  - Cuneiform – easy to cut in stone/paper
  - Cursive script (書法)
- Often borrow someone else's script
  - Chinese Characters for Japanese
  - Latin script for Vietnamese
  - Latin script for English
Direction

- **Left to right**: English
- **Right to left**: Arabic
- **Vertical (right to left)**: Chinese/Japanese
- **Boustrophedon (like an ox)**
  - Left to right to left: Ancient Greek
- **Direction the faces look**: Mayan
Skilled and become stylized
Skilled and become stylized
Stylized not so decorative

not your own

we've gotten used to

mesh in such a way

To such
tune & will

Perfect

for me

not the

I don't know a lot

We differ learn a lot

but it's some
Alphabetic Order

How does this occur?
- Well its the order of the alphabet
- Phonetic (ish) Ordering
- By tables (Sanskrit, Japanese Kana)

By unicode/ascii order
- (That came later)

By order of the stars/Kings
Writing Distinctions

- **Upper and Lower Case**
  - Case was the printer's case
  - (why do European languages have this)

- **Language origin spelling artifacts**
  - Ph and gh in English (Greek, Germanic)
  - Silent initial w and k
  - Wales vs Whales
  - Japanese (Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana)
Writing causes Standardization

- Removal previous supported letters
- Ye Olde ...
  - Þ deleted from alphabet so replaced with y
  - So “Ye” is still pronounced “the”
- Menzies, Culzean, Dalzell, MacKenzie
  - ȝ deleted from alphabet so replaced with z
  - (mostly old Scots names)
- Often printings encourages more standardizations
  - Æ, ß (f in English and ss in German)
- But new letters too
  - @ & % (its about taxes again)
Writing causes Standardization

- **Removes dialectal variations**
  - Jail vs gaol
  - Tuppence, thruppence

- **Back correction of pronunciation**
  - Forehead
  - Awry, indictment
- **Hangul**
  - *Phonetically defined*
“New” writing systems

- **Vietnamese**
  - *Up to 19th Century Hanzi based*
  - *Replaced with Romanization plus diacritics*

- **Gaelic**
  - *Did match (19th Century) pronunciation*

- **Ojibwe (Anishinaabe/Chippewa)**
  - *σʃəɬɬɬ (19th Century)*

- **Musical notation**
“New” writing systems

- Vietnamese
  - Up to 19th Century Hanzi based
  - Replaced with Romanization plus diacritics
- Gaelic
  - Did match (19th Century) pronunciation
- Ojibwe (Anishinaabe/Chippewa)
  - \( \sigma \Join \dot{\alpha} \Join \Delta^a \) (19th Century)
- Musical notation
AAC Languages

Minspeak

I like

MOREMUSIC

music

Blissymbols

\[\text{Symbol 1} \quad \text{Symbol 2} \quad \text{Symbol 3} \quad \text{Symbol 4} \quad \text{Symbol 5} \quad \text{Symbol 6} \]
Contemporary Writing Influences

- **Computer/Typewriter influenced**
  - “two spaces” between sentences
  - *not in unicode so can't use it*
  - *New symbols :-)*
  - *'Labelling' is now 'labeling'*
Contemporary Writing Influences

- **All input is romanized**
  - Indic languages
  - Chinese, Japanese use roman as input

- **Many languages have romanized version**
  - Arabizi, Greeklish
  - Romanagari