Conlang
Course Overview

1/13/15
What are we doing here?

• There are more than 6000 real languages to learn.
• It takes 2000 hours of instruction and practice to reach a basic level in a real language.
• It takes at least as much time to make up a conlang at a basic level.
• Is this really a worthwhile thing to do?
  – I hope some of you get hired by Hollywood.
Learning objectives

• Meta-linguistic awareness of the building blocks of human language from phonetics through discourse
• Meta-linguistic awareness of the types of meanings that are expressed by languages
• Language typology and universals
• Language policy (language in the real world)
• Sociolinguistic variation
• Language change and language families
• Practice with language technologies
• Practice with language documentation tools
Course Requirements

• Each class:
  – Reading assignments
  – Add to your conlang using Fieldworks
  – Ten minute briefing on a conlang or a conlanging tool

• Three language technologies assignments
  – Talking clock
  – Morphological analyzer
    • Could just include LEXC. FST not required.
  – Chat Bot

• Two language artifacts
  – Narrative or poem
  – Movie scene performance

• Final language description, texts, and lexicons
Your language

• Concept, world, people
  – But don’t get carried away with a strong Whorfian hypothesis unless you are as good as Orwell.
  – Don’t get carried away with uniting the Earth in peace under a common language.

• Should not be much like English

• Can be
  – For a fictional world (Earth or other)
  – For real use (sub-language or specialized language)
Your language

• Phonemes
• Prosody and stress
• Lexicon and morphology
  – lexicalization
    • what kinds of meanings are packed into words
  – grammaticalization
    • what kinds of meanings are packed into grammar
• Single clauses: grammatical encoding
• Sentence-level constructions
  – Framing
    – Information structure
• Noun phrase syntax and constructions
• Discourse structure
• Writing system
• Narrative structure
• Poetic structure
• Pervasive linguistic metaphors
• Etc.
Getting started

• Books by Mark Rosenfelder (zompist.com)
  – Language Construction Kit
  – Advanced Language Construction
  – Conlanger’s Lexipedia
• Fieldworks
  – fieldworks.sil.org
• UCLA phonetics page
  – Browse everything on this list
    • http://phonetics.ucla.edu/index/sounds.html