

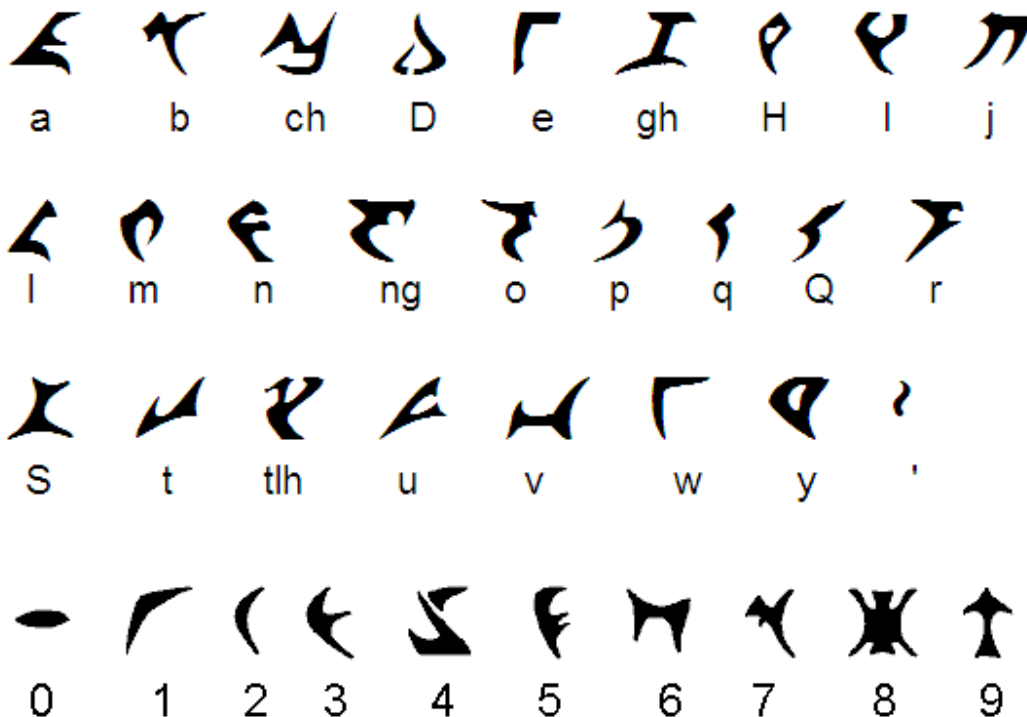
Examples of Conlangs in Sci-Fi and Fantasy

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Klingon (and the Klingon Hamlet) - from Star Trek

Written Klingon

Klingon written language seems to be made to resemble claw or scratch marks, although the change in line thickness could also be accomplished easily with brush and ink. You will notice that there is no K, as the glottal 'tlh' is actually their K. Their K is produced by speaking a plosive TL sound with a glottal stop added. The difference between it and an English K is very difficult to hear. When translated into the Latin alphabet, it's quite difficult to read in a sans serif font, as the I and L look quite similar.



The (unnatural) Evolution of Klingon

At first, it was only referenced as 'Klingonese' in the television show.

The Klingon language itself started with few guttural words and phrases invented by James Doohan, created for simple barked orders in Star Trek: The (slow) Motion Picture.

The full language was developed for Star Trek III by Marc Okrand.

Extra rules had to be added for subject/verb agreement because Christopher Lloyd made a mistake in one of his lines. (In this writer's opinion, this is one of the hallmarks of a conlang versus an evolved language. An actual evolved language would have just had one or two irregular nouns or verbs that could explain the mistake without needing to add extra rules in the language. HISuv!)

Basic Language Structure

Klingon is a very agglutinative language. Complex phrases and even entire sentences can be made up of nothing more than simple root words mashed together. Some examples are:

bIjatlbHa'chugh - "If you say the wrong thing"

Or from the Klingon translation of Hamlet, written by Wil'yam Shex'pir: jIHaghqangbe'law' - I have of late but wherefore I know not lost all my mirth

Direct translation jI (a prefix indicating that the subject is I, and there is no object) Hagh (laugh) qang (willing) be' (negative) law' (apparently) - e.g. "I am apparently unwilling to laugh."

One of the big problems in translating Hamlet - Klingon has no verb 'to be'.

So "taH pagh taHbe'" actually translates to - taH (to continue) pagh (either/or) and the suffix be' makes a verb negative. (Klingon often uses OSV or OVS order)

And the reason they chose 'to continue' as opposed to 'to live' is because the actor who was to speak the line, Christopher Plummer, didn't like the way 'to live' translated. (A fairly wise choice, since for Klingons it is ALWAYS a good day to die.)

The 'to be or not to be' speech from Hamlet (Act 3, Scene 1)

*taH pagh taHbe'. DaH mu'tlthehvam vIqelnIS.
quv'a', yabDaq San vaQ cha, pu' je SIQDI'?
pagh, Seng bIQ'a'Hey SuvmeH nuHmey SuqDI',
'ej, Suvmo', rInmoHDI'? Hegh. Qong --- Qong neH ---
'ej QongDI', tIq 'oy', wa'SanID Daw''e' je
cho'nISbogh porghDaj rInmoHlaH net Har.*

Useful links relating to the Klingon language

Klingon Language Institute

<https://www.kli.org/>

Mando'a - From the Star Wars Expanded Universe

Mando'a was created by Karen Traviss for the Republic Commando book and video game series. It is, in this writer's opinion, one of the easier conlangs to learn due to its simplicity and yet flexibility.

The excuse for the aforementioned simplicity and flexibility is that it was an ancient language that accepted few words and phrases from outside: rather it is agglutinative and created more complex meanings from simpler affixes and phrases. For example, 'dar' means 'no longer'. So instead of adding the word for 'Sith' to their vocabulary, they simply call them 'dar'jetti'. Even though not all Sith are fallen Jedi, it has come to reference any dark side force user.

Another example can be found in the Republic Commando book series. When a Jedi fell in love with a clone commando, she asked a fluent speaker of Mando'a how to tell him that. The response was this: "Try...ni kar'tayli gar darasuum. It's the same word as 'to know,' 'to hold in the heart,' kar'taylir. But you add darasuum, forever, and it becomes something rather different."

To further simplify the language, with a simple addition of a suffix, a verb could become an adverb, or a noun could become an adjective.

As for how the Mandalorian culture affected its usage and growth, several examples are used in various books. Young Mandalorians are often reminded that the language has no word for 'hero', only a word for 'coward'. Because to be a hero is their expected state of being. There is no special word for it. The Mandalorian culture shows strongly in many other aspects of the language, including the Mandalorian obsession with personal strength over inherited bloodlines or honor. There is very little gendering in the language. For instance, 'buir' is their word for

‘parent’, if they feel the need to specify which parent, they will simply add the words for male or female, or agglutinate the word with the first syllable or two of the parent’s name.

The lyrics to the ‘traditional’ Mandalorian song 'Vode An' as it was taught to many clone troopers

*Kandosii sa ka'rta, Vode an.
Coruscanta a'den mhi, Vode an.
Bal kote, darasuum kote,
Jorso'ran kando a tome.
Sa kyr'am nau tracyn kad, Vode an.*

(In the personal opinion of this writer, the word ‘Coruscanta’ was likely changed from a previous ‘Manda’yaim’ or ‘Mandalore’, as the clone troopers were raised to fight for the galactic capital of Coruscant rather than for Mandalore. However, it is never explicitly stated as such, and Mandalorian legends and history claim that the progenitor race that spawned their culture was originally from Coruscant, so it is possible that Coruscanta was in the original text.)

Useful links relating to Mando'a

Mando’a dictionary online
<http://www.mandoa.org/>

Other Fantasy and Sci-Fi Conlangs

Dothraki and Valyrian from Game of Thrones

For the most part, individual words and phrases were created for flavor in the books. However, for the television show, the languages were expanded greatly.
<https://www.dothraki.org/>

Tolkien. Just... Tolkien

There's far too much to cover in a single printout, but some examples of the written languages can be seen on the next page.
<http://www.elvish.org/FAQ.html>

Tengwar consonants

᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
tinco	parma	calma	quesse	ando	umbar	anga	ungwe
[t]	[p]	[k]	[k ^w]	[nd]	[mb]	[ŋg]	[ŋg ^w]
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
súle	formen	harma	hwesta	anto	ampa	anca	unque
[s]	[f]	[x]	[x ^w]	[nt]	[mp]	[ŋk]	[ŋk ^w]
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
númen	malta	ngoldo	ngwalme	ore	vala	anna	vilya
[n]	[m]	[n]	[n ^w]	[r]	[v]	[j]	[v/w]
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
romen	arda	lambe	alda	silme	silme	áze	áze
[r]	[rd]	[l]	[ld]	[s]	[s]	[z]	[z]
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
hyamen	hwesta	yanta	úre	osse	halla	telco	ára
hy	hw	i	u	h	short vowel carrier	long vowel carrier	
[j/ç]	[y/h ^w]	[i]	[u]	[h]	carrier	carrier	

Tengwar Vowels

Vowels & diphthongs											
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
a	e	i	o	u	á	é	í	ó	ú		
[a]	[e]	[i]	[o]	[u]	[a:]	[e:]	[i:]	[o:]	[u:]		
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
ta	te	ti	to	tu	tá	té	tí	tó	tú		
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
ai	oi	ui	au	eu	iu						
[ai]	[oi/oj]	[wi]	[au]	[eu]	[iu]						
Long consonants											
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
cc	ll	mm	nn	pp	rr	tt					
Palatalised consonants						Following S					
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
ly	my	ny	ry	ts	ts	ts	ts	ps	ks		

In Tolkien's Tengwar, vowel sounds are added by giving accented flair to the consonants. Variants of this alphabet were used in Sindarin, Quenya, and even the Black Speech of Mordor.

Cirth Runes

In Tolkien's lore, Cirth runes were actually created by an elf, although they were adopted by dwarves (and later, by some men). Considering how most dwarves feel about elves, it's probably best not to mention that fact to them.

᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
p	b	f	v	hw	m	(mh)/mb	t	d	th	dh	n-r
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
j	sh	zh	nj-z	k	g	kh	gh	ŋ-n	kw	gw	khw
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
ngw	nw	r-j	rh-zh	l	lh	ng-nd	s-h	s-'	z-ŋ	ng*	nd-nj
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
l(y)	y*	hy*	u	ü	w	ü	e	ē	a	ā	o
᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋
ō	ö	n*	h-s	*	*	ps*	ts*	+h	&		

Unfinished Conlangs in Fantasy and Sci-Fi

Many science fiction and fantasy movies, books, comics, and video games scatter bits of constructed words and phrases to bolster up the feel, cultural complexity, and size of their world(s).


















































Star Wars

In the original films, entire conversations of meaningful-sounding gibberish was used to represent some of the languages present in the huge universe that Star Wars encompasses. Rodian (Ooona goota, Solo?), Huttuese (Bargon wan che copa.), Ubese (Yatay. Yatoh.), Jawa (Eeteedee!) and Ewok (Yub yub!) have a few words, but were never developed into full languages. (Oddly enough, Ewok is likely the closest to being fully developed.)

In the (now non-canon) expanded universe, numerous other languages were mentioned or used, some verbal, some made up of odd sounds, like Shriwook (the language of Wookies) and various odd bleeps and blurbles of some droids, as well as some cultural sign languages.

However, when it came time to implement some ideas about the common language spoken in the films, they did get a wee bit lazy. Basic, as the language is called, uses a simple alphabet cypher called ‘Aurebesh’, and even the naming convention is the same as that of our alphabet, as the first two letters of their alphabet are... aurek and besh.

The Aurebesh

								
Aurek (a)	Besh (b)	Cresh (c)	Dorn (d)	Esk (e)	Forn (f)	Grek (g)	Herf (h)	Isk (i)
								
Jenth (j)	Krill (k)	Leth (l)	Mern (m)	Nern (n)	Osk (o)	Peth (p)	Qek (q)	Resh (r)
								
Senth (s)	Trill (t)	Usk (u)	Vev (v)	Wesk (w)	Xesh (x)	Yirt (y)	Zerek (z)	Cherek (ch)
								
Enth (ae)	Onith (eo)	Krenth (kh)	Nen (ng)	Orenth (oo)	Shen (sh)	Thesh (th)	(,)	(.)
								
(?)	(!)	(:)	(;)	(-)	(")	(')	(´)	(´)
								
(())	(/)	(Credits sign)					

Note: Horizontal lines are provided to show position of marks relative to top edge and baseline of letters.

Star Trek

Over the course of numerous shows, movies, books, and other media, it's hard to narrow down the number of languages shown in Star Trek. Suffice to say that it has explored numerous styles and types of languages, often used as a primary plot point to help propel the conflict of whatever individual episode or movie the language was featured in.

Dragon Age

The Dragon Age video game series is set in a somewhat standard fantasy setting, and the dialogue of the game is peppered with Dwarven and Elven words. For the most part, things like titles are translated to English. But certain words, especially terms for other races, like the elven term 'shem' (singular for non-elf) or 'shemlen' (plural) are often used as epithets.

The Elder Scrolls

The Elder Scrolls series of video games are also a set in a fairly standard fantasy setting. However, at least in the most recent game in the series, Skyrim, a great deal of words of the Dhova (Dragon) language were used in the game itself.

The Ultima Series

This is an interesting example in that the creator of the series, Richard Garriott, had constructed a phonetic alphabet that never made it into the series. It was not only entirely phonetic, but it was intended to cover almost all of the sounds that could be made with a humanoid mouth. Each sound was divided up into various subgroups, e.g. labial, dental, et cetera. Then they were further divided with modifiers on each character. Unfortunately, due to the series coming to an untimely end with the unfinished Ultima 9, it was never used.

Creative Cursing in Various Sci-Fi and Fantasy TV Shows

Many sci-fi and fantasy TV shows use bits of constructed language in order to allow characters to curse in ways that normally wouldn't be permitted on American television. From Firefly's 'gorram' and 'rutting' to Battlestar Galactica's 'frack', these little made-up (or in the case of 'rutting', simply repurposed) words are obvious in what they indicate, but are a clever way to get around censorship.

Semi-Constructed Languages in Sci-Fi and Fantasy

Often times a writer will only share the translations of a language with the audience, but it can be used to create a unique seeming way of talking or writing for another race or species. Some examples of this are:

Larry Niven's 'Known Space' Series

In Niven's books, the catlike Kzin rarely share their speech with the readers, but their naming and some of their speaking conventions do come across. Kzinti are introduced often by hyphenated titles, such as protagonist 'Speaker-to-Animals' in the Ringworld series. Some of their pronunciation is hinted at, once the aforementioned character earns himself a true name, as his name has a coughing, guttural 'Ch' sound at the beginning of it.

Another race, the Puppeteers, have two heads and can produce or reproduce nearly any sound they can think of, and their native tongue sounds more like complex music than speech.

Star Trek (Again)

In Star Trek: The Next Generation, there is a well known episode, 'Darmok', with a somewhat silly linguistic trope. The crew of the Enterprise meets a species that speaks only in metaphor and reference. While the Enterprise's translator has no issue with translating their speech, their short sentences that reference the history or mythology of their own culture make communication near impossible. The most often referenced myth in the episode is the one line that most viewers remember: "Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra".

In another episode, '11001001', a race of cybernetic humanoids has become so dependent on their technology that even their speech has become a rapid transfer of audible warbles representing bits of data. While they can speak other languages, their own base language being a binary one has led them to think quite differently than most other races, and due to this, they often have trouble dealing with scenarios that have more than one outcome.