Enterlan – The English Interlang

Made by Hibot3000, July 2021

I created Enterlan, not as a solution to a problem facing compatibility with other languages, but as a challenge to see how universally understood and pronounceable I could make English. For the challenge, I had to do more than a spelling reform, but I also had to keep it mostly recognizable for current English speakers.

Prologue

You, the reader, must understand that I have no background in linguistics and that I am not a true native English speaker. My true mother tongue is Dutch, but I have trained my English from a very young age and I believe I speak it fluently. Despite this, I have also dabbled in French, German, Spanish, Latin and Japanese, in descending order of fluency. My pronunciation may be influenced by this selection.

My experience in IAL linguistics consists primarily of binge-watching jan Misali's Conlang Critic series, so I am by no means an expert in that field: this is an amateur's work and should be treated as such. That is not to say that I have zero experience, because I have made conlangs before, although they are mainly artistic natlangs.

Phonology

I started Enterlan with the phonology, and I was immediately hit by a linguistic migraine. Losing the voiced consonants was hardly an issue, but I had to decide whether or not /w/, /l/ and /r/ and its allophones were compatible *enough* with the most spoken languages in the world (>100 million speakers). I eventually decided to pick all those sounds for Enterlan, but they were implemented very liberally.

The sound /l/ posed the least of a challenge. Most languages had a lateral sound, velarized or not. The only major language incompatible with /l/ was Japanese, although deciding whether or not to leave it in sent me into a mental breakdown. Seeing how universal /l/ is otherwise, I quickly decided that it was unwise to drop it from the phonology.

I wanted to implement /r/ as the standard rhotic, with some flexibility for its tap and uvular varieties, /ɾ/, /ʀ/ and /ʁ/. However, many English and Chinese speakers struggle with producing exactly those sounds, preferring the approximants /ɹ̠/ and (maybe?) /ɻ/ respectively. I was forced to accommodate for this, but not wanting to lose the trill, I decided to impose zero restrictions on the rhotic.

I was on the fence about /w/. A couple of languages do not have this sound, although some have /ʋ/ as an alternative. This applies to Dutch as well, so there is no problem having it as an allophone. However, Russian and Spanish insist on having /v/ and /β/ respectively, and /ʋ/ is not phonemic in Russian. I nearly dropped it for the phonology, but decided at the last minute to leave it in and see what I could do with it.

For the vowels, I went for a five-vowel system. For the most elemental of words, I went for a three-vowel system, since that was easy to implement. The same could not be said for the nouns and verbs, since a food-foot merger only caused unnecessary ambiguity. Ultimately, I thought that the five-vowel system produced enough variety between words, without copying English's vowels.

Orthography

Enterlan orthography is similar to that of English and is written in the Latin alphabet. Everything is written as it is in the IPA, with the exception of /k/ as <c> and /j/ as <y>. /k/ to <c> was mainly an aesthetic choice, whereas /j/ to <y> was meant to aid pronunciation for English speakers, as <j> is usually read as the affricate /dʒ/. Besides, Slavic languages are often Romanized with <y>-something for the palatalized sounds.

Grammar

Enterlan grammar is the epitome of "Why waste time say lot word when few word do trick?"

An analytical grammar system produces, in my opinion, the shortest and easiest sentences. Any contextual words can be omitted if the sentence functions without them, most notably the verb "to be". However, I wanted to include some form of continuous, as it describes a situation rather than an action. So, the third person present simple of to be, "is", has been adapted to describe a continuous, "si".

Other examples include "cu", from the word "ago" and describing the past tense, "ma", from the words "many" and "much" and indicating plural, and "ta", from the article "the" and describing a definite amount of something. Everything else has no dedicated word, including the future tense.

Besides this, Enterlan uses the same word orders as English: subject-verb-object, adjective-noun, and whatever else is placed wherever it is most appropriate. Using these rules takes the burden of invention off of me, as English is an adequate language in this specific field.

Vocabulary

I needed a base vocabulary for Enterlan to express grammatical features, and for this I decided to derive nearly everything from English, with some variation. This is with the clear exception of proper nouns, for which I tried to preserve the most common endonyms as much as possible. As a result, some names may be unfamiliar to English speakers.

Syllables follow a (C)CV(C) structure, with the two optional consonants being mutually exclusive and ideally omitted entirely. After all, CV is the easiest to pronounce syllable structure internationally, but a true CV structure can be hard for transcribing English, and there are no major natural languages that I know of with a perfect CV structure.

The vocabulary is something I can never hope to finish in its entirety. Given the guidelines of the language, I believe many words in Enterlan can be extrapolated from existing English words:
English words that start with a front vowel have the starting consonant <y> in Enterlan, and back vowels have <w>;
<h> becomes <c>, voiced consonants become voiceless;
Homophones and homonyms must be sorted out with foreign words or (existing) synonyms.

The **only** possible exception to this extrapolation is the name Enterlan itself, and even it may be written as Yenterlanca in Enterlan. This exception is merely the result of my own incompetence, but I do not have the willpower to change it. So, I prefer you use Enterlan in anything but Enterlan, and Yenterlanca in Enterlan itself.

Samples

On top in bold is the sentence in Enterlan, in the middle is the literal translation, and on bottom in italics is the English translation. This also serves as a demonstration of the grammar.

Mi cit ta fute nacti.
Me eat the food night.
I eat that food at night.
Las yira, ti co Neterlan, Franas, Sonco.
Last year, they go Nederland, France, Zhōngguó.
Last year, they went to the Netherlands, France and China.
Mi spica Yenterlanca, Neterlanca cut. Fralanca nu cut, Canlanca nu tin.
Me speak Enterlan, Nederlands good. Français no good, Guānhuà no thing.
I speak Enterlan and Dutch well. I do not speak French very well, and Mandarin not at all.
Calu yal! Cutcom par yelef SMPFilme.
Hello all! Good come part eleven SMPFilm.
Hello everyone! Welcome to episode 11 of SMPVideo.
Mi cate peson tay!
Me hate person die!
I hate when people dies!
Yula, yu yacti, mi conclu.
Gyula, you action, me conclusion.
Gyula, from your behaviour, here is my conclusion.
Fatcil stupit, sonta fat cil. Nu conlanca.
Vötgil stupid, sound fat kill. No conlang.
Vötgil is stupid and it sounds like "fat kills". It is hardly a conlang.

Final(?) Notes

For the purposes of describing Enterlan, I believe I should leave it now as it is: a manifesto, a starting point for future Enterlan. If I contrive any new words or sentences, I will do so according to these exact guidelines. I also encourage others to build upon the work I have made, as to enhance the internationality of Enterlan.

I have spent no more than 24 man-hours constructing the basis of Enterlan. I do not know how long development takes for other IALs, so I can only assume that this is one of the quickest IALs ever constructed. I would like you, the reader, to keep this in mind when critiquing Enterlan.

I might use this language in some of my works for YouTube. There, it might be better fleshed out, and as such I may consider it an addendum to Enterlan. It is not a guarantee, though, so if I post no videos in Enterlan, then this is what you have to work with if you wish to build upon it.

Hibot3000, 6th of July 2021