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Author: Christine Schreyer

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The Culture of Conlanging: What Can We Learn About Culture from Created Languages?

Christine Schreyer, Clarke Ballantine, Vanessa Bella, Joanne Gabias, Brittany Ganzini, Robyn Giffen, Pamela Higgins, Justin Kroeker, David Lacho, Stacy Madill, Louisa McGlinchey, Sasha McLachlan, Shelley Nguy, Tara Wolkolsky, Vanessa Zubot

University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

ABSTRACT:
In my Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology class, my students are assigned the task of creating a new language over the course of the term. As the students learn new aspects of linguistic analysis they develop those pieces of their languages, including: phonology, morphology and syntax, proxemics and non-verbal communication, and language change. In this paper, my students and I argue that created languages help anthropology students realize how closely connected language and culture are, since students have usually found it hard to create any piece of their language without first imagining who the people are and what their culture is like (in other words - world building). Finally, we argue that creating languages allow students to more fully understand the concept of "cultural relativity" or the idea that each culture is unique and that we should not judge a culture based on how it compares to our own way of looking at the world.

Introduction

Anthropology is a discipline that is interdisciplinary in its very nature. For instance, according to Harriet Ottenheimer, anthropology is "the study of all people, at all times and in all places" (Ottenheimer 2013: 2), and, in order to fully cover this definition, anthropology is generally divided into four sub-disciplines: social-cultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology and linguistic anthropology. However, Alessandro Duranti, a prominent historian of the field of linguistic anthropology, has written that "*language* is the *most sophisticated* cultural system available to human societies, and their members, and, therefore, there can be *no anthropology without the study of language*" (Duranti 2001: 10, emphasis added). Consequently, linguistic anthropology courses teach theoretical concepts from both the fields of linguistics and anthropology, which can make for complicated learning material for first-year

students. The course objectives for my first year Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology course are outlined as follows:

> Throughout this course you will learn what an anthropological perspective on language entails. By the end of the term, you should have acquired basic knowledge of linguistic analysis and methods used to analyze human communication and the relationship between language and culture. (Schreyer 2012:1)

One way that I have found that works well for helping new students learn aspects of both linguistics and anthropology is to follow an assignment suggestion provided in Harriet Ottenheimer's textbook, *The Anthropology of Language*. In this book, Ottenheimer outlines a language creation assignment that progresses throughout the duration of the course. She writes, "the language creation project guides students in the process of creating a 'real' language in a group setting" (Ottenheimer 2013: xxiii). Since I began using Ottenheimer's textbook in the fall of 2008, I have also included this assignment as part of the students' mandatory work for their final grades. In total, I have taught this assignment in six different semesters and many students have commented that the language creation project is one of their favourite assignments and that it helps them solidify the concepts they have learned in class. As the students learn new aspects of linguistic and anthropological analysis throughout the course, they develop those pieces of their languages, including: phonology, morphology and syntax, proxemics and non-verbal communication, and language change.[1]

The first step that most students take in their language creation is to pick the phonemes of their languages. Using symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), students decide which consonants and vowels they wish to include in their language; keeping in mind that they will need to be able to pronounce them all if they are planning to present their language at the

[1] It should be noted that while I use the term "language creation project" to refer to this assignment and students quoted below also use the term "languages", the languages described within this paper are really only the beginnings of languages since they lack the detail and complexity of complete languages (either natural or constructed).

end of term. All documentation for their languages is also written in the IPA since they are not expected to develop orthographies for my version of this assignment.[2] The next step for the students is the morphology and syntax section where they are expected to develop a certain limited amounts of words from a wide-range of categories (nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns, function words), as well as derivational and inflectional morphemes. They also choose the syntactical word order for their phrases and sentences (SVO, OSV etc.), as well as decide how to make a negative sentence and an interrogative sentence.

The next section of the language creation project is on non-verbal communication and proxemics or how space is used in conversation based on Edward Hall's ideas (1966). Students work to set their proxemic systems for their language and culture and develop two or three gestures for whatever purpose they desire (these tend to be greetings, agreements, anger). Last, students work on the language change section. Students are asked to develop slang for their language, as well as borrow a word or gesture from one of the other newly created languages in the class. Finally, students write a short summary of what they have learned from this assignment before handing it in at the end of term. Students also have the opportunity to volunteer to present their languages during the last week of the term so that they can show off what they have been working on and also see what others have created during the course of the term. This part of the assignment is not mandatory (since some individuals do not like presenting in front of people), but presenting their work is necessary in order to receive a top grade on this assignment.

After reflecting to myself on how this language creation assignment has led students to more fully appreciate and understand aspects of linguistic anthropology, I gave the fourth year students in my upper level linguistic anthropology course entitled, "Pidgins, Creoles and Created

[2] Ottenheimer does have a section on orthographies in her assignment, but I have modified her original assignment to suit my own course needs. I have, however, had highly ambitious students develop their own orthographies for the sheer pleasure of it.

Languages" the opportunity to reflect on their past experiences in language creation in order to explain how they thought this process was beneficial to them in understanding the relationship between language and culture, as well as the concepts of cultural relativity and linguistic relativity. Using examples from their papers, as well as my own reflections, this paper examines what we can learn about culture from created languages.[3] For example, Brittany Ganzini reflected, "when the class was first presented with the challenge to create our own languages as a group project, I underestimated the time and patience it would take to create our own languages". Additionally, Louisa McGlinchey wrote, "With this project, I have been able to reflect on the ways in which language and culture are not only connected, but exist and develop as an authentic integrated whole". Students also realized that in order to create a language that they would need to think about whom the speakers were that would be speaking the language, as well as what their culture might be like. As Robyn Giffen notes, "I was assigned the task of creating a language for an *invented set of speakers*". Tara Wolkosky also comments that "not only was it necessary to have a culture in order to create any and all of the linguistic elements needed for a language, but it also demonstrated and taught me the importance of cultural and linguistic relativity". Within this paper, we will expand on these ideas, as well as on the lengthy debate within anthropology on the origins of language, language or culture, which comes first? Last, my students and I reflect on constructed languages as a whole and their place within academia.

The process of language creation - Groups or Individuals?

Language construction is often a solitary enterprise and within the field of language construction it is rare to find that a *group* has successfully developed a constructed a language

[3] It should be noted that while not all of the student authors are quoted here, all of their reflections have been used to inform the overall content of this paper. Also some of the student's quotes have been edited for clarity. If any major changes occurred these are noted.

from the ground up without breaking into factions (Shannon 2012). As well, language creators often have diverse opinions on who can help develop a language once it has been created (see Okrent 2010 for details for Klingon and Esperanto and Shannon 2012 for details on Volapük and Toki Pona). In the first two semesters I used the language creation assignment, I allowed students to work in groups of five or six individuals. I soon learned that this often led to my having to mediate between individuals and that this project was better completed either individually or in pairs or, very rarely, in trios. A few of the students reflected on the process of creating a language in a group rather than as an individual or with a partner. For example, Joanne Gabias was a student during a term when *group* language creation was the norm and had this to say about her experiences:

> Looking back on the project now, I realize that the backgrounds of my group members were a huge factor in our language creation process and our final product. However, it was only after I learned about Dr. Christine Schreyer's research with the Kala language of Papua New Guinea that I made this connection. She explained that the process of creating an orthography for the language varied from simple discussion to a huge debate depending on the phoneme. This was all influenced by the relationship the orthography creation team had with other orthographies (Schreyer 2011). Since my group collectively knew a vast range of languages and was open to other cultures, the phonemes of our language expanded farther than our [own individual] customary phonemes.

Clarke Ballantine also reflected on the joint nature of this project, although he worked in a pair rather than in a group. He wrote:

> All in all the cooperative nature of this assignment led to a multiplicity of overarching themes or genres that in turn shaped the properties of the language itself. In retrospect, I assume that if I had worked on a language by myself the focus of my culture and language would have been more specific to my own preferences. Alternatively if more people were involved there would be an even greater variety of motivations each rooted in the corresponding individual. Hence, I suppose this pattern may apply to the naturally occurring languages in the world. Some, for instance, may come into being based on a powerful or influential individual of small group of individuals. Others may have relied on a community's consensus. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that much of the language is largely based on its speakers, their way of life, and their collective cognitive interpretations of the world.

While some groups struggled to work together or simply accommodated each other, others did a good job of combing creative forces. Vanessa Bella commented:

> Honestly, our group worked well together and all came to the conclusion that we would choose the sounds we were most familiar with because it would give us a chance to fully commit to the language and not worry as much about the difficult sounds and placement of these sounds. As well, we were hoping later on that at another time we would able to use our very own created language easily outside of class. One struggle we had that complicated our building of words when using the more difficult sounds was that one of our group members had a strong British accent and would pronounce the sounds in a different way than my other [Canadian] partner and I. This complication directed us towards more of the simpler sounds of the IPA system for our created language, which were similar to our Standard [Canadian] English language.

There is much to consider when working in a group in order to construct a language. For example, not only should the group consider the sounds that group members are able to make, but also what each individual in the group sees as the ultimate world they are building. This brings up the important role that culture plays in language development and raises the question of which comes first.

Language and Culture: Which comes first?

Created languages help anthropology students realize how closely connected language and culture are. Many students realized right away that they would need to think about the world (and the speakers) of their language before jumping in. For example, Tara Wolkosky wrote:

> Upon sitting down with the creative freedom to build a language however and with whatever linguistic elements I pleased, it struck me very quickly that it would be absolutely necessary to create a culture or engage in some detailed "world-building" before I could do anything else. I wasn't quite sure where to start. I thought I would try to decide on a name for the language and then begin to construct a world based on that. This did not get me far! How could I decide on a name for a language that had not only yet to be created, but where there was an absence of culture? How could I choose phonemes for a language without knowing which would make sense for the speakers to use? I couldn't. None of this is or can be done randomly. Vocabulary depends greatly on what is important to the speakers and what types of words are needed, and, therefore I could not begin with that either. I was surprised to find that I needed cultural information and context for morphology and syntax as well. In addition

> to each of these aspects of language, non-verbal communication and proxemics are also greatly related to culture. During my language creation process, I found that I had to decide on a larger theme, as well as significant cultural details, before I was able to create any of these linguistic elements

While Tara focused on the speakers of her language and their culture, other students, such as Brittany Ganzini and Vanessa Bella, based their "world" on a place that was familiar to them – the mall. Brittany wrote the following about her group:

> First, we realized very quickly as a group that we were going to have to create a place for our language to be spoken in, in order for our sentences to be consistent to one another's and to minimize the workload. Naturally, being a group of three girls, we chose a world that was familiar to all of us and was of interest, so we based our language around the mall. We felt it was a familiar atmosphere that we all had recently and frequently visited and that it would be easier to create a language for a world we were interested in versus trying to create a language for a world that we, ourselves, knew very little about.

For Robyn Giffen and her partner, the *place* was not as important as the *activity* the community was involved in at that place. As a result, Robyn commented that the language she created was not so much for a speech community, but rather a community of practice. She reflected:

> When creating my language [řokɛbe], my partner and I decided to base our language on an activity rather than develop a new culture or community. Therefore, our language is based around what Ottenheimer would describe as a community of practice (2013:161). The activity that we chose to base our language around was shopping. While we did not develop a new culture, there was an understanding that our ideas about shopping were based on our own experiences of shopping situated in a Western, consumerist culture. Often a self-serving culture, out to get the best prices and centered around exchange of goods, the users of our language would also be a self-serving and very focused group. Word choice would be precise, adjectives for number and colour would be required, and fewer words to do with emotion or interpersonal communication would be necessary.

As phonology is the first task that students tackle in their language creation assignments, often there is little thought about culture until the section on morphology when students realize they need something - some world, some theme - before they can decide on what words to create. David Lacho's project was a classic example of this and he stated, "The first step of my project was to build the phonology of my language. This task proved to be quite simple, as at this

point of [kaI kaI]'s creation I did not have to imagine a culture". Robyn Giffen echoes this sentiment and states, "We were unable to do anything other than develop the phonology of the language without developing a theme. As soon as we had selected our sounds and wanted to start working on the morphology, we immediately discovered that we needed a direction so that we could pick relevant words rather than creating a random assortment of unconnected words". Louisa McGlinchey similarly felt that she and her partner did not need to reflect on culture in order to choose aspects of the sound system of the language, although they did in fact decide on a culture first. Louisa describes the steps they undertook as follows:

> After establishing what the culture consists of, our next step in the developmental process was choosing phonemes for the language. We had to choose twelve consonants and six vowels. This was the only part of the language creation where we did not find it necessary to reflect on the culture we had created. In my reflection of our language development now, I would say that this part of the language creation was drawn from the study of theoretical linguistics, and not from an anthropological study of linguistics. We could have chosen the exact same phonemes had we not just developed a culture for the language. However, in studying groups around the world, I can see how phonemes can be interpreted in speech in an anthropological way by looking at how [certain student] groups can or cannot make certain sounds [based on what their mother tongues were].

It seems then that for most individuals it was only when they looked at the words that patterns in the language and, therefore, in the culture began to emerge. In particular, Vanessa Bella wrote about how it was the words that brought the world together. In her paper she commented:

> Just as David Peterson mentions in his [post on the blog Ebon Shores], "The thing that most immediately distinguishes a language is the way in which all its words hang together" (Peterson, 2012)… Later on in the building of words, we became aware of a simpler way of pairing up words such as "big: [gʔɔ]" and "small: [kʔɔ]" or "afternoon:[θʔ] and "evening:[bʔ]" (Bella et al 2011) by having the same ending formation or similar sounds for the opposition pairings. As well, for each type of word, such as the thing words or action words, we focused on having common sounds and similar beginnings or endings to make it easier for learning the created language. As noted in our Language Project, we used the [θ] for the ending in all the words having to do with a mall atmosphere such as, the "mall: [aθ]" and the "foodcourt: [iθ]"(Bella et al 2011).

Many of the students then reflected that world-building began with word-building and this is

where we head next in our discussion.

World Building through Word Building

Joanne Gabias, who commented on the issues involved in choosing sounds of a created language in a group above, found that developing words was not as challenging for her group's members. She stated:

> The "world-building" that we did for our culture actually came much easier than choosing sounds. Perhaps this was because we did not have the same physical limitations on our creativity as we did with our sound production. Also, we did not have strong relationships with the culture we were creating because it was so dramatically different from our own.

Another student, Justin Kroeker, also wrote about the importance of world-building in his project. As a creative writing student, Justin took the opportunity to develop a language as a means to enhance one of the worlds he was creating in his writing; that world was based on communities of foxes.

Similar to Don Boozer's language of Dritok, a language made for the fictional Drushek, "long-tailed beings with long ears and no vocal cords" (Okrent 2010: 289), which is was created based on the sounds that chipmunks could make (Okrent 2010). Justin had to reflect on how choosing an animal community affected his language creation process. He wrote:

> Quite necessarily, I found myself engaged in world-building right from the start. I was venturing into relatively unknown territory, stepping into a world in which there were no given presuppositions about human culture; a world I as a human knew very little about. The resulting process that was central to the language's development can be summed up with a term I learned a while after the project's completion: *paracosmic immersion*—the act of not only creating an imaginary world, but imagining oneself in an entirely different situation than their current reality. This process was encapsulated by a single question that formed the basis for all of my thinking and building of the world of these foxes: "how would a fox think of this?" Every single aspect of the language was to be bound by the limitations and uniqueness of a fox's perspective, not only physically, but also cognitively.

As a writer, Justin's world developed much more thoroughly than some of the other students in the class. For instance, Vanessa Bella, whose language was based on the mall, a world that was familiar to all of her group members (as noted above), had this to say upon consideration "looking back on the project I wish we would have thought longer and harder about a more sturdy background to work with as our culture so we could then have had a stronger more well-formed language". Other students also felt constrained by the worlds they imagined, since they took a fictional world that had already been developed and then developed a language for that world. For instance, Shelley Nguy's group "came to a mutual agreement that [they] would base our language and culture around Super Mario, the popular video game series. [They] named [their] language [mʌʃɹum], which is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) way of spelling our language 'Mushroom'". However, Shelley noted that while her group "found that basing a language around a video game was fun and exciting, it limited our creativity because we had to follow the structure of that culture". Understanding how another culture works is an important principle in anthropology, as a whole, and in the next section, we examine how language creation helped the students learn more about the principle of cultural relativity.

Understanding Cultural and Linguistic Relativity

Cultural relativity is a principle that anthropologists strive for in their research and it is a concept that anthropology students are taught almost from their first day of class. Regna Darnell defines cultural relativity as the process "where the fieldworker must suspend the categories and expectations of his or her natal language and culture and learn to think from the standpoint of other local knowledges" (Darnell 2001:187). Linguistic relativity, sometimes known in

anthropology as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis,[4] is a piece of cultural relativity. This is "the idea, that languages are different, that they are arbitrary systems, and that knowing one language does not allow you to predict how another language will categorize and name the world" (Ottenheimer 2013: 356). Students who created their own languages reflected on how they were able to learn about both of these concepts through the language creation process. In particular, Pamela Higgins wrote:

> Generating a completely unique language was not only interesting and entertaining, but also insanely challenging. Both of us quickly realized that communicative competence [("the ability to use a language correctly in a variety of social situations (Ottenheimer 2013: 350)")] is not easily acquired, even with a language that we created ourselves…Our main realization with creating slang, gestures, and even the words themselves was the importance of cultural background. Without a culture a language has no meaning. Each language, whether made up by two university students or spoken for thousands of years by tribes of the utmost historical value, has a cultural heritage that must be understood in order to achieve communicative competence (Davies and Higgins: 2011).

In regards to cultural relativity, Tara Wolkosky commented, "in creating my language, I saw first-hand that cultures are all unique, as I had to create a unique culture of my own. In creating a culture of my own, I had to put my predispositions stemming from my own culture aside and really try to distance myself from it. This process demonstrated to me that culture and language need to be viewed completely objectively, without any preconceived notions from another culture".

Justin Kroeker, who developed a world based on a fox community for his project (as noted above), came to the following conclusions about cultural and linguistic relativity:

> It is Edward Sapir who perhaps best encapsulates my belated revelation. Sapir stated, "No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached" (Sapir 1929:5). For my foxes' language

[4] The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is also often connected to the idea of linguistic determinism, which is the belief that "your language affects, even determines, your ability to perceive and think about things as well as to talk about them" (Ottenheimer 2013: 356).

> (and any animal conlang in general), the distinction of these different realities between humans and animals can be summed up as almost extreme opposites. Even with being granted complete creative license over how the language was to shape the reality of the foxes, I again still had to be conscious of certain quirks and limitations of fox "mannerisms" if you will. But, my attempts to put myself in the frame of mind of a fox carries with it the assumption that I know—to a certain extent at least—what those limitations and quirks are. What we see as 'limitations' may in fact then be only a small part of a greater set of communicative symbols that make up for this perceived lack of detail.

In summary, Justin was able to shift his frame of reference from his own human viewpoint to realize that the quirks and limitations of the foxes may not have been limitations at all. In realizing this he more fully grasped the concept of cultural relativity and understood how this could also be applied to two divergent human cultures.

As well, prior to understanding the concept of linguistics relativity, students often make the assumption that one language is better than another due to a number of factors such as ease of learnability, historical connection to their mother tongue, desire to travel to the location where that language was spoken etc. However, the students who completed the language creation assignment came to realize that one language is not better than another through their own language construction. For instance, David Lacho wrote that:

> Creating the language of [kaI kaI] helped me further understand the concept of linguistic relativity. This was emphasized in the building of the phonology and the syntax of [kaI kaI]. Although the phonology I chose reflects my level of comfort with the phonology of English, it is nonetheless unique. The language of [kaI kaI] organizes its sounds in a way that is quite different from English. To understand the phonemics of my created language, it has to be analyzed on its own terms. Also, in analyzing my created language, it would also be necessary to view its syntax on its own terms, and not on the terms of English. In doing so it would bring to light that, although my language's syntax is very similar to English, it fulfills a need for the speakers of [kaI kaI] because of the culture's emphasis on negotiation and commerce. As well, the morphology of my language reflects what is culturally relevant to its speakers. The language combines a number of word formation processes that an English speaker would be unfamiliar with, such as interweaving. [Therefore], my understanding of linguistic relativity was encouraged by the uniqueness of my created language.

Robyn Giffen also had similar thoughts about her and her partner's language, which (as noted above) was "clearly based on a frivolous and not particularly meaningful theme" - shopping. Robyn stated:

> Despite the lack of depth to the language and what it could be used to describe, writing the grammatical rules and discussing the proxemics brought home the fact that every language is complex and nuanced. If a language based in consumerism could have this much thought put into its creation, even when only the first few nouns and verbs were being constructed, it is clear that any fully functioning established language would be even more complex and elaborate. Each word has a [specific] meaning behind it, and if the meaning and thought that two people put into deciding on a verb was multiplied by all the users of the language in a culture of people, the magnitude of that ingrained meaning for the culture is intensified. If each language then is constructed to suit the needs of the community, how then can one language be better than another?

Finally, while students realized that their own languages were unique and could meet the needs of communication, they were also exposed to the newly created languages of other students during the presentations of the languages. Students were challenged to shift their frames of reference and apply cultural relativity to the languages and cultures that might seem unusual or strange if viewed from an ethnocentric position where Western or Canadian culture is privileged. Vanessa Zubot expanded on this when she wrote:

> While listening to presentations, I learned that not one language is better than another. In class, we learned that when learning about other cultures or languages one must not be ethnocentric and view all cultures and languages as equal. Therefore, as the class watched other presentations, we all had an open mind that each language and culture is unique. For instance, the languages presented by other students used different non-verbal communications and proxemics. When some groups decided to have proxemics closer or further apart compared to my culture, I had to have an open mind thinking that my own comfort level for proxemics between people is not going to be the same comfort level for other cultures. I remember one group having extremely close proxemics when communicating to one another, and [actively] reminding myself that while I personally do not enjoy close interactions, other cultures do.

Therefore, throughout the course of developing their new languages students learned not only the linguistics concepts such as phonology, morphology, syntax, proxemics and language change, but also the important anthropological concepts of cultural and linguistic relativity. To summarize with a comment from Brittany Ganzini, "the language creation project allowed me to see that other language systems can eventually make sense to me if I take the time to learn and understand another language. It also taught me that it is important to look at the culture and world that the language is used in, instead of focusing so much on just learning the language in general".

Conclusions

To finish, let's return to the course objectives for my first year Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology, which were outlined as follows:

> Throughout this course you will learn what an anthropological perspective on language entails. By the end of the term, you should have acquired basic knowledge of linguistic analysis and methods used to analyze human communication and the relationship between language and culture (Schreyer 2012:1).

First, does the language creation project allow students to acquire basic knowledge of linguistic analysis? I would argue that it does this through a reversal of understanding. Rather than giving students a language and asking them to pull it apart, this project asks students to take what they know about the pieces of language and put it together in a new, unique way. Second, does the language creation project allow students to understand the relationship between language and culture? I would argue that this is also true since students realize early on in their language creation projects that they cannot get too far in making a language without considering the culture of the people who will speak it, including *who* the speakers are and *where* they are located.

However, don't take my word for it; let's hear some summary comments from the students as well. Vanessa Bella wrote, "the diversity between all the created languages was astonishing to see because we were all situated in the same area or class and still managed to come up with completely unique ideas and themes". Sasha McLachlan commented, however, on the fact that the assignment guidelines were too limiting and this affected how diverse the students could be in their projects. She thought that some people developed cultures or communities of practice that were stretching things a bit too far. She stated:

> Because this assignment demanded certain language and semantic aspects to be fulfilled a lot of the time the language being used was not something that seems as though it would develop normally in the world. For example, I recall another project done by classmates in which their language and culture were all to do with being spies, and while it was unique and interesting to listen to the cultural reasons they chose certain proxemics and volumes, it was still a "made up" language that seems as though it would have no context within the world (but who knows, maybe there is a culture group of spies out there).

A question remains then as to whether or not the languages and cultures created by the students need to have a context or a purpose. Louisa McGlinchey, following discussions our class had on constructed languages as art-forms (see Okrent 2010), had this to say:

> I would compare the process of making the language to the creation of a piece of art. In creating an art piece, the artist has a subjective perspective that influences and is portrayed in the art. Every artist and every art piece has a subjective purpose. The perspective that the viewer takes of the art is also subjective. With this, it could be argued that no piece of art can be compared to another because every art piece acts as a different subjective display as well as a different subjective experience. In developing [vɤzijaz], I was able to see how the language creation process acted as an art form. My partner and I were the artists, creating an art piece that will never be recreated. At the same time, no one who has or who would have learned our language and culture can interpret it in the same way because their interpretations would be through a subjective lens. Relating to the real world, natural cultures and languages, although they may not be formally 'produced' per say, are created and developed in a sense through the physical environment and world. From this, cultures and languages act as distinct and separate art forms that, like art, cannot be compared [to other cultures and languages].

Finally, to conclude our paper on what anthropology students can learn about culture from created languages, I will draw on the conclusion of Joanne Gabias's paper, who had these closing thoughts about her experience creating a language:

> Thinking back now, this project was an introduction to my whole linguistic anthropology journey. The first part of the project on phonetics and phonemes was an introduction to the structural aspects of language. The morphology and word creation section was the basis of sociolinguistics. It showed the close connection between language and culture. The section on non-verbal communication and proxemics was an introduction to ethnography. This section helped me understand that cultures have different cultural norms that only understood when they are broken. For instance, culture governs behaviour as subtle as determining which is the appropriate side of the sidewalk to walk on. The last section was a good introduction to [the topics of] endangered languages and pidgins and creoles. It showed how contact with other languages could have unpredictable effects on languages from ranging from extinction to creating an entirely unique language. All in all, I truly believe that this project taught me more about languages than all the papers I have read in my undergraduate degree.

What more could a professor ask for?

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