



Service Tiers of the Language Creation Society

Overview

The language creation society prides itself on crafting captivating constructed languages (*conlangs*) that provide depth, texture, a unique cultural flavor, and a sense of wonder to the worldbuilding of movies, novels, and games alike. They can be custom-built for load-bearing narrative roles and in-depth characterization for the central figures in a story, and to withstand the intense scrutiny of the fandom.

Much like a writer might be called upon to compose a single slogan for one client and write an entire movie script for another, so do conlang commissions span a wide range of possible scopes. To help you, our client, find the right amount of conlanging work for your project — and figure out how much that might cost you — we have devised a framework of *Service Tiers*.

Table 1: The LCS Service Tiers at a glance

Tier	Grammar	Typical use cases	Typical number of lines to translate
I	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place names for a map Proper names for characters 	no sentences possible
II	Sketch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A formal greeting An inscription on an ancient sword A traditional saying 	2–3 lines
III	Basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A short, simple conversation An inscription on a memorial plaque A pledge of allegiance 	5–10 lines
IV	Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vivid, expressive dialog between characters from different walks of life, of different social status, in unusual registers (ceremonial, literary, polite, academic, slang, childish etc.) or with differing local accents Key dramatic scenes in movies; language as a central motif or plot element of the story Poems or songs 	20–30 lines

All Tiers include a *phonology* (the sound of the language) and a *romanization* (a way to write the language in the Latin alphabet).

Note that all conlang commissions are unique, and have to be negotiated according to the particular needs of the project at hand. The table above is merely meant to provide archetypical reference points for these negotiations.



Pricing

So how much language will you need?

Two main variables determine the Tier of a given conlang commission:

- **Volume** is the amount of text you want us to translate into a conlang for you. It is measured in *lines*, equivalent to a typical sentence. The *work product* you will receive from us is the set of translated lines, typically with an IPA pronunciation guide, an interlinear, and a smooth re-translation in to English for each line.
- **Depth** is the complexity of the language that the conlanger creates in order to translate your lines. The term encompasses the size, complexity, and sophistication of the language's phonology, grammar, lexicon, and idioms.

Depth measures the amount of work the conlanger invests into building up the language's infrastructure, whereas Volume measures the amount of work spent on translating the lines using that infrastructure. Therefore, both variables jointly determine the price of the commission.

Table 2 below lists exemplary prices for commissions of various Volumes and Depths. The prices represent industry standards, as will be asked of mid- to high-budget clients such as movie studios or well-established authors. These prices represent fair compensation for the expected workload, taking into account that professional conlangers are highly specialized experts in their field. We are willing to negotiate significantly lower rates for clients with low budgets, such as starting writers or indie filmmakers.

Table 2: Exemplary industry standard prices in US\$ for conlang commissions. The default Depth for each Volume is highlighted in blue. Higher (yellow) or lower (red) Tiers may be appropriate under special circumstances.

		Volume			
		24 names	2–3 lines	5–10 lines	20–30 lines
Depth	Tier I (Naming)	600.—	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Tier II (Sketch)	>600.—	1,000.—	<5,000.—	N/A
	Tier III (Basic)	N/A	>1,000.—	5,000.—	<10,000.—
	Tier IV (Advanced)	N/A	N/A	>5,000.—	10,000.—

Volume and Depth are correlated: The larger the Volume of a commission is, the more varied and challenging are the demands it places on the language, and thus the greater must be the Depth of the language to meet those demands.

Other factors can further influence the cost of development:

- The table assumes creation of an *a priori* language, i.e., one not related to existing languages. In contrast, an *a posteriori* language (say, a sister language to Quechua at the time of the Spanish conquest of Peru) will usually require either a large amount of research or highly specialized expertise on the part of the conlanger, and therefore incur additional cost. This



wouldn't apply to a daughter language to present-day standard English (a «future English»), since the conlanger can be assumed to be familiar with the source material.

- Should a conlang be accompanied by an **archaic** or **classical** version of itself, that would constitute an extreme case of «unusual register» and would count as a separate language if the differences are radical enough.
- Languages that **exceed the normal range of human vocal sounds**, or employ media other than the human voice (sign languages, whistled language, alien languages based on non-human sounds, etc.) require special expertise from the conlanger, and must be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- **Optional deliverables** beyond the translated lines and their IPA transcription, interlinear, and re-translation, such as audio recordings, actor coaching, a reference grammar, or language learning material, are not included in the base prices and will incur additional costs.
- We are happy to create original **writing systems**, including digital fonts, as visual complements your conlangs. These are not included in the base prices either.

Voluntarily commissioning language development at a Tier above default can be desirable for several reasons:

- **Expressiveness:** Let's compare the following sentences: «I love you» one one hand and «Please, I beg, would you grant me the honour of your hand in marriage» on the other hand. The former can easily be translated with a Sketch language, whereas the second requires at the very least Basic-level development to support the desired grammatical, lexical, and idiomatic nuances — even if the entire commission is only a few lines long. Similarly, a project involving a dozen lines of translation will benefit from upgrading from the default Basic level to Advanced if varying social registers (e.g., ceremonial, diplomatic, military, youth slang, expletives) are involved. Even a naming language intended only to populate a map with place names can benefit from some grammar development — for instance, the fact that JRR Tolkien's maps include both the Sindarin term *amon* «hill» and its unlauded plural *emyn* «hills» adds to their verisimilitude.
- **High art:** Any commission involving poetry or a song necessarily requires Advanced language development, since those forms are significantly more difficult to translate than prose and require a large repertoire of stylistic tools and vocabulary to achieve.
- **Future-proofing:** If a novel or movie involving conlang content is successful, it might lead to follow-up projects in the future, such as sequels, spin-offs, games, etc., which in turn will require a larger Volume of conlang translations. Expanding a Sketch-level language into a Basic or Advanced language can be tricky if the already published translations are to be preserved unchanged. Investing in a higher Tier of development than minimally necessary will leave the language ready for any future challenges.
- **Fan engagement:** Fantasy and science fiction fans often show great interest in worldbuilding, including the languages of the fictional setting. A language built to withstand the intense scrutiny of the fandom and to allow meaningful fan engagement can be a great PR asset.

Reducing the Tier below the default level is only very rarely sensible. At Tier I (Naming Language), it is impossible to translate sentences at all, for lack of grammar.



Examples

The following sections demonstrate the typical Depth of language creation in each of the four Tiers, with translatable materials chosen to be commensurate to the expected complexity at each Tier.

The examples are in Jovian, a conlang based on Classical Latin by Christian Thalmann.

Tier I: Naming Language

Sample:

Siovadra [si.'va:.dər] «Black Forest»

(from **fiova** ['siə] «forest» < SILVA and **adra** ['a:.dər] «(matte) black» < ATRA)

Notes:

- Phonology (the sound of the language)
 - Here: Diphthongs simplify to monophthongs ([iə] > [i]) in unstressed syllables.
- Romanization (how to write it in Latin letters)
 - Here: The spelling reflects an older stage of the language where the silent endings hadn't yet become silent. Unlike modern languages, Jovian retains the «long s» (ʃ) as a typographic idiosyncrasy.
- Basic decisions on how to put words together, especially for proper names of people and places
 - Here: Adjectives follow their nouns.

Tier II: Language Sketch

Sample:

Dindro ad Siovadra ei traeme.

[ˈdin.dra a_dzi.'va:d_ɾe ˈdrajm]

travel:1SG to Black_Forest DEF:OBL train

«I'm traveling to Black Forest by train.»

Notes:

- Just enough grammar to put together a few lines of simple language.
 - Here: The verb retains distinct endings for all grammatical persons and numbers, obviating the need for a subject pronoun.
 - Here: Nouns do not inflect for case, but their articles do. The oblique definite article **ei** marks the train as the instrument of transportation.
- Just enough vocabulary for those few lines.
 - Here: The verb **dindre** «to travel» is derived from Latin ITER «journey» via a fictional intermediate verb form *ITINERARE.



Tier III: Basic Language

Sample:

Seoginde ei hiftonde, jau dindrare ad Siovadra ei traeme hidun.

[sɛ.'gind e hif.'tand | jo zin.ɹdra:r a_dzi.'va:d_re ɹdrajm 'hi:.də]

next DEF:OBL week | FUT:1SG travel:INF to Black_Forest DEF:OBL train fast:N

«Next week, I'm going to travel to Black Forest by express train.»

Notes:

- A basic foundation of grammar ready to handle everyday tasks.
 - Here: The future tense is formed with a conjugated form of an auxiliary verb **ire** (< Latin IRE «to go») and the infinitive. **ire** is no longer used as a full verb, having been supplanted in that role by **vare** < VADERE.
 - Here: To improve prosody, Jovian likes to advance an article from the beginning of the noun phrase to its interior, just before the head noun (cf. **seoginde ei hiftonde**, literally «next in-the week»). The adjective reverts to an inflectionless form in this context.
- A basic foundation of vocabulary, with a few idioms.
 - Here: The article in the final phrase is not advanced to ****hide ei traeme** because the noun phrase **traeme hidun** for «express train» is idiomatic.



Tier IV: Advanced Language

Sample:«**Care o viodurs, id traeme ad Siovader ix blade uenti nih minudae.**»

[ˈkaːr ɔ ˈviə.dərs | it͡ʃˈtrajm a͡dziˈvaːdər iʃ ˌblaːd ˈyn.ti ni miˈnuː.de]

dear VOC traveler:PL, DEF:N train to Black_Forest is delay:PP 20 IDF:F:PL minute:PL

«Dear travelers, the train to Black Forest is delayed by twenty minutes.»

«**Blorame Vor en veina.**»

[blaˈraːm vɔr em ˈmejn]

beg:1PL POSS:2PL DEF:ACC grace

«We apologize for the inconvenience.»

«**lo, ɨda me cauva! Jau dferre tarre ad m'ei praefte fu'n treifte.**»

[ˈlɔ | ˌda_m ˈkaw | jo dzeːr ˈtarː a m_e ˌbrɛʃt sun ˈtreft]

jeez, give:IMP 1SG:OBL room | FUT:1SG be_there:INF late at POSS:1SG DEF:OBL boss

POSS:3SG DEF:ACC shindig

«Jeez, give me a break! I'm gonna be late for my boss' shindig!»

Notes:

- Comprehensive grammar ready for a wide variety of challenges.
- Development of a deep etymologically interconnected lexicon.
 - Here: The word **cauva** < CAVA literally means «cave, hollow», but when used without article acquires the meaning «(enough) room, elbow space».
- High-level linguistic features such as cultural sensitivity, idioms, social registers, slang, poetry, word play, etc.
 - Here: Register differences — Smooth politeness from the announcer, an impatient rant from the passenger, reflected in choice of words, grammar, and idioms.
 - Nativization of idioms — Rather than literally translating the English idioms «we apologize for the inconvenience» and «give me a break», the Jovian idioms literally say «we beg for your grace» and «give me room».
 - Formality: The announcer employs the vocative particle **o** preserved straight from Latin, which sounds highly pretentious in casual speech.
 - Slang: The rant includes several contractions (**da mic** [da miç] > **da me** [dam], **mi ei** > **m'ei**, **fu en** > **fu'n**) and an informal possessive construction (**m'ei praefte fu'n treifte** «to my boss his party» as opposed to the formal **en treifte mi yh praefte** «the party my of-the boss»).
 - Word choice: The word «party» is translated with the low-brow word **treifte** «tumult» as opposed to the high-brow **fifta** «fête».