Mando'a Basic Lesson 1

Introduction to the study of Mando'a

by DiscWarrior

The pursuit and study of Mando'a is a journey that is embarked upon by many different people for just as many different reasons. Many study for the sake of immersion into the Mandalorian culture from the Star Wars universe, some for the mental exercise of learning a constructed language, and others simply to have a "secret language" amongst friends and/or family. Whatever your reason may be, the study of Mando'a is very rewarding when approached with a realistic expectation of the language and its limits.

The very first appearance of Mando'a was in the form of lyrics written by composer Jesse Harlin for the soundtrack to the game Republic Commando released in 2005. It is interesting to note that Jesse used Hungarian as an influence for this early form of Mando'a. During the post-production phase of the game and its music, author Karen Traviss began writing Republic Commando: Hard Contact, which was released in late 2004, and began further developing the language to fit her work with developing the Mandalorian culture. Karen Traviss released her final work on Mando'a in April of 2009 with a lexicon of ~1200 entries which include individual words and entire phrases.

In universe*, the Mandalorians descended from the Taung; a race who were driven from their homeworld of Coruscant to seek a new homeworld amongst the stars. Over the millennia as they spread across the galaxy their culture changed and adapted. Uniting under a single dominant leader referred to by the title of Mandalore, the Mandalorians began absorbing ideas, and individuals from the other cultures they came into contact with. Their language, and culture, became something of a paradox. Coming into contact with countless cultures and languages and races, yet Mando'a and the Mandalorian culture remained largely unchanged at its core. Eventually settling down on the new homeworld of Mandalore, the Mandalorians were by this time an eclectic smattering of individuals from countless races who had been adopted into Mandalorian life.

The Mandalorian culture has what is called the Six Tenants, or '*Resol nare'* in Mando'a, which are daily actions and mindsets for every Mando. They are: Education, Armour, Family, Defense, Mando'a, and following The Mandalore. Through the lens of these six commands we can see how Mando'a played a role in a Mando's life, and also how it is intended to be studied and used. With the attention given to Family, Education, and Mando'a we have an emphasis on remembering the past and preparing for the future yet never forgetting to live in the moment and also a penchant for speaking in proverbs. In a warrior culture you never know what day is your last, when or if you'll come home again, or even if you'll see tomorrow. With the importance of wearing the Armour as a daily reminder of The Fight (whatever form it may take for each individual), Defense of self and others, and following The Mandalore we have a language that caters to giving concise commands and living in the moment.

Mando'a is an agglutinative language (much like Hungarian among many others), has no gender (added only for emphasis or clarity where needed) or articles (again, only used for emphasis or clarity), is almost always spoken in the present tense, and is dominantly spoken in the active voice. This combination of characteristics leads to a language that

favours commands, songs, and proverbs. We can see quite a bit of this in Karen Traviss' existing works.

As a fully functional day to day spoken language, Mando'a falls short due to a lacking vocabulary and an incomplete grammar. This is partially due to Karen Traviss having to cease her work on all things Star Wars due to copyright dispute and disagreement, and partially due to Karen Traviss' original intent for the language. There is still hope for those of us (the author included) who wish to speak Mando'a as much as possible in our day to day lives. There are multiple efforts across the internet to expand Mando'a. Some of these efforts extrapolate existing vocabulary and existing examples of Karen Traviss' works to give a complete idea, while others are expanding the language with newly constructed vocabulary and even grammar rules. Which of these routes you choose to take in your study of Mando'a is an entirely personal choice, and will depend heavily on your intended use of the language.

As a "secret language", Mando'a is satisfactory in this role. The simple question, answer, and command dialogues are already in place. More complex conversations, such as gossiping about friends or co-workers, might take a little more creative translations.

Art, poetry, and music is where Mando'a (as it stands in Legends Canon) really shines. The agglutinative nature of Mando'a lends itself to creative, poetic, and sometimes unconventional ways to communicate basic ideas. One wonderful example of this is knowledge, and love. Both are based off the same root word '*Kar'taylir'* which means to to hold in your heart. To know. The way a Mando would express love for someone is '*Ni kar'tayl gar darasuum'* which means 'I hold you in my heart (know you) for eternity'.

Whether this is your first new language, constructed language, or you are a polyglot, I hope these lessons will help you in your pursuit and study of Mando'a. Please feel free to send any and all feedback to reddit user u/DiscWarrior or email DiscWarriorMandoa@gmail.com.

*All in universe references will be to the Legends Canon. Mostly because this is 99% of what I know of Star Wars, and also because I'm a grumpy old man (27yr) who refuses to accept the new Disney Canon Mandalorians. There is much greater depth of Mandalorian culture in Legends, and Mando'a was developed as part of that Canon. Your own personal feelings and preferences should not be affected by my personal feelings and opinions about Canon and Mando'a. Legends or Canon; either way the study of Mando'a itself is the same.

Course Notes

Throughout this course I will be using English, sometimes called Galactic Basic, and Mando'a. This course will aim to use canon Mando'a wherever possible, and only look outside of Karen Traviss' original work where absolutely necessary. The following key will help you decipher how each text is to be interpreted.

"English text will be in double quotes"
'*Mando'a text will be in single quotes and italics'*
<u>Speculation, or any explanation for extrapolated vocabulary made by the author will be underlined</u>
Fando'a, or fan created concepts or vocabulary will be in bold

A quick reference for pronunciation in Mando'a

Mando'a pronunciation is very similar to English, or Basic, with few exceptions. Words native to Mando'a do not include the letters "f," "x," or "z,". For ease of communicating with other Earth-based fans learning Mando'a, assume that these cases are exceptions rather than a rule. The missing letters have been added to the Mandalorian written alphabet to help with transliterating foreign words.
The initial "h" in a word is usually aspirated, except in its archaic form in some songs and poems, and "h" is always pronounced when it occurs in the middle of a word.
The stress on syllables shown in the lexicon is as commonly spoken, but many Mandalorians place stress on different syllables.

Vowels and Diphthongs:

A: Pronounced as the 'a' in "Father". Exceptions include words based around Mando, which is pronounced as "Man-Dough".

E: Pronounced as the "ey" in "Hey" or as a long "a"

I: Pronounced like the "I" in "Machine". When written as '*ii*' be sure to be extra intentional about this pronunciation.

O: Pronounced as the "o" in "Or".

U: Pronounced as the "oo' in "Boo!". In some cases ease of pronunciation will lead to the '*U*' being pronounced as the name of the letter "U". As with '*ii'*, when written as *'uu'* give special care to the pronunciation.

Y: Pronounced as "Y" would be in English.

AI: Pronounced as "Aye" as in "Aye aye captain!"

AY: Pronounced as the "ey" in "Hey" or as a long "a"

OA: Pronounced as "Ah" as in "Ah-ha!"

OY: Pronounced like the British exclamation "Oi!"

-UY: Pronounced oo-ee like the Movie title "Ratatouille"

Consonants and Consonant Clusters:

CYE: shay

-YC: sh after a vowel

C: Pronounced as a hard “K” sound when it comes before the letters ‘a’, ‘o’ and ‘u’ at the beginning of a word.

C: Pronounced as a soft “S” sound when it comes before other vowels at the beginning of a word or when it occurs in the middle of a word.

cy: Pronounced as either “SH” or “CH” depending on ease of pronunciation.

*Pronouncing terminal consonants varies in songs. They often become extra syllables. For example, tor becomes to-rah and tang becomes tan-gah to maintain rhythm and meter.

There are several exceptions for various in-universe* dialects. In universe* it is supposed that some regions pronounce "p" almost as ph and "s" as z. Occasionally, the pronunciation of "t"s and "d"s are swapped. "T" is the modern form; "d" is archaic. "V" and "w" are also sometimes interchangeable, as are "b" and "v"-another regional variation. "J" is now pronounced as a hard "j" as in joy, but is still heard as "y" in some communities.

Since there exist no native speakers of Mando’a, and there exist contradictions and inconsistencies even within Mando’a and Karen Traviss’ own works it is impossible to offend with improper pronunciation. This lack of native speakers, coupled with the great distance between those who study Mando’a leads to most communication in Mando’a to be in written form. However, this is no excuse to let pronunciation take a back seat in your study of Mando’a. If we are to undertake this task of learning Mando’a, we should approach it with the same discipline we would give to learning any “real world” living language. Otherwise, this time and energy is wasted where it could be used to train our mind and increase our self-discipline.

Basic Mando'a

Mando'a is a very regular language. It has no cases, and Mando'a has only two forms of each verb and a tense system expressed with prefixes. It possesses very simple rules for creating adjectives out of nouns and verb stems. Since Mando'a is a primarily spoken language spelling and punctuation have multiple forms. It's hard to be completely ungrammatical; the main goal should be understanding.

Much like in English, word order determines meaning. Mando'a is typically spoken in an AVOL (Actor Verb Object Location) word order. This course will focus on using this basic sentence structure until more complex ideas are explored in the Intermediate and Advanced courses.

"Boba throws his boot in the house".

'Boba goora kaysh cetar o'r yaim'
lit.: Boba throw his boot in house.

Section 1 - Pronouns
Pronouns, like many words in Mando'a, are often dropped when the meaning is clear in the given context, or where using a pronoun would be redundant. Despite this tendency for Mando'a to drop words, knowing them is still very important. Pronouns (with the exception of 'Ner', and 'Cuun' for emphasis) are possessive as well as descriptive. There is also no gender in Mando'a, and this is reflected in the pronouns. Mandos are focused on your actions defining who you are rather than your past, your race, etc.

Pronouns

I /Me	Ni
My/Mine	Ner
You/Your	Gar
He, him, his /She, her, hers	Kaysh
They/Theirs	Val
We/Us	Mhi
Ours	Cuun

Section 2 - Essential Words
I wasn't quite sure what to do with this next section, so I have compiled words that are essential for building the most basic sentences and conversations.

Essential Words

Yes	Elek
No	Nayc
to Be, to Exist	Cuyir

And	Bal
This	Ibic
That	Ibac
But	A, Al, A’
For	Par
With	Ti
With, What, Who, That	Meg, Megin (before a vowel)

Section 3 - Questions

Questions in Mando’a are created with the use of the prefix ‘*Tion’* either in front of a word or a sentence. For example, the basic sentence “Speak Mando’a” would be ‘*Jorhaa Mando’a.*’ and the basic question “Do you speak Mando’a?” would be ‘*Tion’jorhaa Mando’a?*’. This very simple pattern can be applied to any verb in Mando’a to create a question, and can also be applied to nouns and pronouns.

Questions

Question (noun)	Tionas
to Question (Verb)	Tionir
Interrogative prefix	Tion’
Son, Daughter,	Ad
Who?	Tion’ad
Where (location)	Vaii
Where?	Tion’vaii
Day	Tuur
When?	Tion’tuur
Because	Jorcu
Why?	Tion’jor
to Count	Soletar
How Many?	Tion’solet

Section 4 - Greetings

The warrior mentality permeates every level of a Mandalorian’s life, and Mando’a’s greetings are no exception. The Basic greeting ‘*Su cuy’gar’* literally translates to “You are still alive” which is reaffirming and reassuring to both parties, especially during times of combat.

Greetings

Su cuy'gar	Hello
Su'cuy	Hi
What's new with you?	Me'vaar ti gar?
What's your name? /Who are you?	Tion gar gai?
My name is _____	Ner gai _____
Good to meet you.	Jate'urcye gar.
Welcome	Olarom

Section 5 - Farewells

Farewells in Mando'a share the same pragmatism that the greetings posses. Always mindful that tomorrow is never guaranteed, the Mando'a phrase for "Goodbye", *'Ret'urcye mhi'* literally means "Maybe we'll meet again". This farewell is simultaneously practical in its realism and hopeful in its openness as a conversational end. Mandalorians, being a people made up of warriors, have also found more colorful ways of dismissing unwanted conversation.

Farewells

Maybe we'll meet again (Goodbye)	Ret'urcye mhi
Bye! (See you!)	Ret'!
Stay alive (Come back safely)	K'oyacyi!
Go away!	Usen'ye!
Get out! (Get lost!)	Slana'pir!

Section 6 - Family

Finally. Family. One of the most important things to a Mando, and a central pillar of the Mandalorian culture. The Mandalorian idea of family operated heavily on adoption. In fact, by the time we reach the SW main storyline, there are no more of the Original Taung remaining. Everyone has been adopted in from other races. The Mandalorians had an interesting system in which children could divorce their parents if they felt they were failing them. Quite possibly the most "common" phrase/proverb in Mando'a, *'Aliit ori'shya tal'din'* translates as "Family is more than bloodline". This idea was present at every level of Mandalorian culture and would have been a part of their everyday life. Terms like *'Vod'* which means "Brother/Sister" were commonly used to address or refer to close friends.

Family Relations

Family, Clan	Aliit
Brother, Sister	Vod
Father, Mother	Buir

Children	Ade
Child aged 3 to 13	Adiik
Little one, Son, Daughter, of any age	Ad'ika
Baby under 3	Ik'ad
Grandchild	Bu'ad
Grandfather, Grandmother	Ba'buir
Aunt, Uncle	Ba'vodu

Section 7 - Opposites

If we are going to begin describing the world around us using Mando'a, we will need to know a few opposites. Some of these words use a "noun as an adjective" rule that we will discuss in more detail in the Intermediate course.

Opposites

New, Young	Evaar'la
Old	Ruug'la
Big	Ori
Small	Kih
Victory	Parjai
Defeat	Rohak
Hot	Nadala
Cold	Ciryc
Up	Laam
Down	Daab
In	O'r
Out	Dayn

Section 8 - Basic Verbs

Now that we can make some basic descriptions, let's get out there and start VERBing! Verbs in their infinitive forms end in -ir, -ar, -ur, -or or -er. We can usually produce the Verb stem by dropping the "r". Many times an apostrophe separates the terminal vowel; this indicates the slight glottal stop of some Mandalorian accents, such as the dialect spoken on Concord Dawn. This apostrophe, known as a beten or sigh-as, can also indicate when to breathe, pronunciation, or where a letter has been dropped. Since Mando'a is a predominantly spoken language, contractions and pronunciation variations happen just as in any living language.

Basic Verbs

to Go	Slanar
to Bear Arms, to Carry	Jurir
to Walk	Kemir

to Run	Viinir
to Make, to Create	Gotal'ur
to Punch	Gaanynir
to Throw	Goorar
to Speak, to Talk	Jorhaa'ir
to Eat	Eapr
Can, Able to	Liser
to Dislike	Paguur
to Like, be Fond of (person or creature)	Guuror
to Like, be Fond of (food or activity)	Emuurir

Section 9 - Basic Nouns

Now with nouns we can begin talking *about* things. Nouns in Mando'a are very straightforward and are treated just as they are in English.

Basic Nouns

Home	Yaim
Food	Skraan
Thing	Kebi
Name	Gai
Job	Bora
Night	Ca
Time	Ca'nara
Bed	Haav
Boot	Cetar

A word about plurals.

Any noun can be made plural with the addition of either the -e or -se suffix. For example, *'Cetar'* becomes *'Cetare'*, and '*Kebi*' becomes *'Kebise'*. Which suffix is used is determined by ease of pronunciation. A typical rule of thumb is that words ending in consonants will use the *'e'* suffix while words ending in vowels will use the *'se'* suffix.

Section 10 - Basic Adjectives

Mando'a forms adjectives out of nouns by the addition of either the suffix -la or -yc (the yc/cy combo is pronounced 'eesh'/'sh' in Mando'a). The choice is made depending on which suffix makes pronunciation easier. There is no incorrect suffix, but one will be more common based on pronunciation. Adjectives in Mando'a only have a single form. The adverb is exactly the same as the adjective.

Basic Adjectives

Good	Jate
Happy	Briikase
Bad	Dush
Sad	Trikar'la
Fast	Iviin'yc
Tired	Haryc
Funny	Nuh'la
Lazy	Sharal
Beautiful	Mesh'la
Strong	Kotyc
Angry	Kaden
Spicy	Janad