Behind Dasopya

Since a lot of conlang documentation has to be a bit formal by necessity, I wanted to have space to talk about more personal topics, like my feelings on the language and why I created it. This won't be a fully unfiltered ramble, of course, but about as unfiltered as I'll allow myself to be in official material lol

If there are any questions you expected here, it may be in the official website's FAQ.

Why did you make this language?

Honestly, I didn't really want to, but one day I just happened to work practically 13 hours straight to make what would become Taynmoga, which was the base for Dasopya.

This isn't anything new to me – my first foray into conlangs was creating Kalibe, an a priori oligosynthetic language that was my naïve attempt at making a worldwide language... in only 42 words. Unsatisfied with it after more research into conlangs, I made a small update with extra words to make Kaliwe, which sits today at 50 words. Its current primary purpose is being a fictional language for one of my characters, rather than being an auxlang.

After I became more interested in conlangs, I learned much more about constructed and natural languages than I ever could've imagined. When I saw how much effort and time and obscurity these languages fell through, I told myself: it was not worth making a language. Just promote the ones that are "good enough," and that is the most practical solution for everyone.

This is the main motivation for my Youtube series on conlang tutorials. I made one for Ido, Mini-Linga, Globasa, and Elefen – while there are others I like, these are the ones that didn't yet have a true beginner's guide on Youtube. However, I had to do my due research for which languages to promote, and there were a few languages that were strikingly similar to Kaliwe, just much more practical.

The most well-praised one was Kah, an oligosynthetic a priori language with 300 words, so after some time, I delved into the documentation.

...and I did not like it! Of course, as a conlanger, I have to give my regards for anyone that makes a language. It's very difficult, and the creator of Kah very clearly put a lot of effort into this project that was very well-received.

However, its goals were shockingly different from what I expected, and they did not mesh with me at all. Probably the concept that irked me the most was the multi-page explanation of how to compound words together – even Esperanto did not modify words when compounded (minus word endings, but that's different!).

I think it's perfectly natural to look at a language and think "oh that's a clear flaw, I could improve it" – that's why so many Idos exist, after all. However, this really was one of those cases where the "voices" became too loud and I had to submit.

As far as I know, there are no oligosynthetic languages that have become even remotely popular.

I do not have the optimism for world peace.

I do not have a beautiful philosophy for minimalism and curing one's mind.

I am a designer, and Dasopya is my design for a solution that hasn't yet been solved.

While I am working to make Dasopya as popular as possible, I don't expect it to be a worldwide language, nor am I even sure if that's what I want my endgoal to be. The only thing I know is that IALs are a grand centuries-wide experiment, and it would make me very happy if Dasopya was allowed to be a footnote in the records of that journey. Dasopya would not be the language it is now without the help of the people who took a chance on me and my projects.

What does the flag mean?

Dasopya's flag has blue to symbolize the open sky, and a shade of green that can symbolize either the sea or grass – it's not incredibly original to have auxlang colors representing the Earth, but I largely chose them to look pleasant.

The symbol in the center is meant to be interpreted either as a gear or ship's wheel. The former represents the constructed/a priori nature of the language, while also implying the need for multiple gears to accomplish a goal (i.e. the oligosynthetic aspect). The latter represents the world language aspect, symbolizing the ability to communicate with any land using a common tongue.

Why are there 6 teeth/handles? Because I'm a senary fan.

(As a note, the original design was pretty explicitly a gear, and the colors were largely chosen for appeal, but changes were made to reflect the multiple interpretations. Special thanks as usual to SandwichDeer for feedback during the design process!)

Why 1-2 syllables?

From Taynmoga, you can tell that my ideal language would have 1 syllable for every word due to the amount of elegance. In practice, that's very difficult to do without either a large number of phonemes or something like tones, both of which would make the langauge less accessible.

Without those two things, you would need to speak and hear almost every word perfectly without misunderstandings, which just isn't feasible in the real world with imperfect speech and environments that may have noise or don't allow the transfer of perfect sound (e.g. talking over a phone). In English, it's rather common to be asked something like: "did you say 'can', or 'can't'?" since hypothetically having an extra plosive should be audible, but in practice it's not always obvious.

You could potentially structure the language to have all similar words be different to each other, but with a limited number of phonemes, I just wouldn't consider it very feasible. I would be curious to see if someone could pull it off, but I think it's unlikely.

Taynmoga's alphabet and phonotactics only allowed about 450 words to exist. Refusing to add phonemes, and having the goal of making words more differentiable, the only reasonable solution was to add syllables. Words could now be 2 syllables long, but since I wanted the language to be oligosynthetic, I wouldn't allow them to be longer – this would make compound words painfully long if there were any more than 2 roots.

However, one big goal was to make it so there were no rules for changing words when compounded, fixing one of my biggest issues with Kah. That also meant that every word combination had to be completely differentiable – able to be distinguished in spelling and when spoken, no matter which words you combined across all 800 words. That meant I couldn't have a 1-syllable word like "ma" and also have a 2-syllable word like "mama," because it would be ambiguous whether that was a single root or a compound word.

The solution I went with was to make every 2-syllable word start with CV to signal a 2-syllable word, and every 1-syllable word have either a glide or ending -n (CGV, CVG, or CVN). This isn't required knowledge to learn the language, but it is necessary if anyone wants to add words to the language. If anyone ever wanted to create 3-syllable words while maintaining all previous goals, some new rule would have to be made, and so on for every syllable added.

How did you choose word definitions?

As someone who is only a hobbyist in areas of linguistics, I did the most efficient (if dishonorable) thing to do and copied homework from people who've worked on this longer than me. Languages do happen to be free to pick from and modify, so I don't think most people would have an issue with this.

Globasa, Mini-Linga, and toki pona were the most direct influences on the language. Globasa is my favorite contender for the worldwide language, toki pona is my favorite conlang in general, and Mini has my favorite grammar – it also happens to be based directly on both of the former languages, making it a nice in-between.

The base vocabulary was pulled from both toki pona and Mini Kore, which got me to slightly more than 120 words. Afterwards, it was mainly jumping between Mini and Globasa. Using the inversion prefix, I figured I could cut Mini's word count (~1,000 total) by a good margin since it doesn't use one. For example, Esperanto's words for hot/cold are just varma/malvarma, while Mini has separate words kalori/kula. Taynmoga aimed for about 450 words, and that's about what it had when I had completed it.

However, it turned out that making every word 1 syllable introduced some issues (do you really want to distinguish between stuff like twin and dwin and kwa and gwa regularly), so I gave it a bit of a reboot in Dasopya, where base words could have 1-2 syllables, with the new goal nearly doubling at about 800 words. This would definitely allow it to express as much as Mini, and if I played my cards right, even surpass the number of meanings despite Mini having more base words, due to the higher reliance on word derivation.

From here, I relied more on Globasa. Mini was basically the lower bound, and Globasa was the upper bound: if Mini had a definition, then I needed a way to express it, and if Globasa had a word with multiple definitions, then I couldn't split it. However, I was generally fine with not all Globasa words being part of the base vocabulary (I did not need to reserve a word for golf, literally everyone just calls it golf).

I also had slight influence towards Globasa when I started refining, since I knew the creator was a linguist with more experience, and most likely had a better handle on which words were more universal. Mini puts lots of meanings into single words (e.g. "go" means go, to, for, towards, and the future tense marker) which is neat for people like English speakers, but also a popular reason for why people find English so hard. I did try to merge definitions into words where I could, but hopefully separating words out in a way that it wasn't too confusing.

How did you choose the words?

I've been hesitant to talk about this because it breaks a lot of the magic, but for the sake of transparency it's worth mentioning.

Large sections of the vocabulary were made in a bit of a rush (otherwise I never would have finished), so I needed a system. The first words were decently well thought-out, with a focus on sound symbolism – which yes, I know it's arguably pseudoscience, but when you're making a priori words out of thin air, it helps to have a starting point.

I took the most well-researched looking study on Wikipedia that was available, and designed the words around it. Body parts like knees like rounded sounds? Sure. Words relating to "big" usually use low/back vowels? Let's throw it in. These only accounted for basic vocabulary and a number of body parts, but they were helpful.

Past that, I had to find a way to avoid my bias towards English and related languages. I did so by focusing on 7 main languages: English, Mini, Globasa, Arabic, Hindi, Chinese, and Japanese.

This accounts for 4 out of 5 of the most-spoken languages, where I imagined Mini + my own Spanish knowledge would fill in that 5th spot. Globasa has an evenly spread source, and Japanese was taken because 1) I know the language decently enough to pick apart any bad translations, and 2) it's generally very well-separated from the other languages, barring direct loanwords.

(As a side note, it also had the benefit of having a very similar phonology to Dasopya which would lead to less mergers – by comparison, e.g. Chinese's t/c/ch/q/etc. would all be translated to a "t" sound, which would introduce massive bias for the vocabulary.)

By choosing languages that weren't solely based on each other, I could hopefully find some patterns of what seemed to vaguely be sound symbolism within these languages. For example, English and Japanese having a bizarre coincidence where "name" and "名前" (namae) are both very similar despite not being cognates? Let's make sure the word in Dasopya has both an "a" and a nasal consonant.

Not everything was so neat, though. In practice this was basically me going to Google Translate and trying to mush together 7 different words into 4-5 letters, and if it wasn't unique enough, then I morphed it into something more unrecognizable.

T too common? It's close to an S or D, or maybe even an L.

A too common? I find it close to an E or O.

O/U were considered interchangeable, and P/B/M, and K/G, E/I, etc. If it was a sound not in the alphabet, it was translated, and then sometimes morphed again. Avoiding common letters was important so that there wouldn't be dozens of nearly-identical words with similar meanings.

But no, technically the language isn't 100% a priori, though in my opinion, "word created by taking an English word, cutting it in half, turning it backwards, and then appending one letter from Chinese and one letter from Arabic" isn't exactly what people mean when they talk about a posteriori.

It would be more a priori if every word was randomly-generated through a simple algorithm, but... who would want to learn that language?

Oh, and also a major help for making words was the ending-letter system. I really wanted to carry something through from Taynmoga (a big selling point for me was that a priori words could organize themselves in a way most a posteriori languages couldn't), but the tiny word size meant very little could truly be done without running into the same issue as Taynmoga – words too similar in both meaning and phonology will be too confusing in speech.

So, I just made a lite system of Esperanto's word ending system. The last letter hints at the "base" word meaning, but doesn't actually define it. No learner needs to know this, and it might not even help, but it may be a neat thing to know.

Why is tonic stress at the end?

Something that people don't seem super fond of is the tonic stress rule, which may seem strange. I personally really like the stress rules for toki pona, Globasa, and Esperanto, especially due to the consistency and sound. However, as an oligosynthetic language, it was important to choose a specific one for clarity. The rules meant a throw pillow and a throw-pillow could be different, after all.

The most obvious answer at first was to have the stress at the beginning of the word, since that would indicate a new word being started. However, the vowel particles made this difficult.

Let's say there's 2 words "bay" and "baya." If the first syllable (not including particles) was stressed for every word, these 2 sentences would be indistinguishable at full speed:

bay a bay = BAY a BAY

baya bay = BAya BAY

Stressing particles wouldn't help – nobody was going to say "BAY A BAY" unless they were a beginner reading slowly. After talking about it with a friend for a good bit, I realized that pretty much the only solution would be to stress the last syllable.

bay a bay = BAY a BAY
baya bay = baYA BAY

This was tested with a few other scenarios and should work pretty well for eliminating ambiguity.

The main argument against this tonic stress rule is that it feels unnatural, but as an a priori language, I don't feel that naturalism needs to be prioritized at all, especially when there are objective benefits to moving the stress to the end.

Other than the one mentioned, there's also the fact that due to the way 2-syllable words are constructed, their second syllable is more important for identifying what word it is, meaning that the stress rule will be more beneficial more often.

Unless someone brings up proof that stress at the end of words is inherently more difficult rather than just being "less natural" (which is usually just speaker bias), I'm not planning to change this rule, but it is very much open to discussion if anyone has good points.

(For the record, I'm saying this while having had to struggle adjusting to it myself!)

Why these letters?

The easy answer is "I went to Phoible and chose the most popular ones" but there is a bit more to that.

I didn't want the L/R distinction because I was a Japanese learner and was acutely aware of that struggle, and I assumed R was an alright substitute for H in a few languages that use a silent H like French, so H is a separate letter with a possible R substitute. Globasa lists F/P as a problematic confusable pair, so I didn't want that – F could also possibly be an H substitute, even if not ideal. Looking into Arabic later on, it didn't seem to have the F/P distinction, so that solidified my decision.

Taynmoga had X (English SH sound), but that sound was in less than 50% of languages, and with Dasopya's word combinations, it didn't have to rely on having more letters.

I'm strongly on the side of having sounds that everyone can pronounce, even if it means substituting in sounds to stay distinct. That is because trying to learn how to roll my R's in Spanish continues to be one of my most emasculating experiences (I still can't do it for the life of me). Also, it's just as much an issue of distinguishing listened sounds as it is speaking them, sometimes even moreso.

But why Y and not J?

Oh, right.

J is the IPA letter for English's "Y" sound, so I imagine my choice of Y over J may be controversial to some.

The original reason I chose this isn't... the best reason? But upon further thought, I'm sticking with the decision for the reasons I'll list out below. Note that despite this, J isn't used in Dasopya at all, so the language currently considers it perfectly valid to use J instead of Y if the user prefers.

1) The original reason is to not make the language look intimidating to English speakers.

I had previously shown my friends Globasa, and the use of X made it look a lot more intimidating than it was supposed to (using English pronunciation rules, would you like to pronounce "xwexi" regularly?). While this "intimidation" is very subjective, I figured it was a combination of the letter being uncommon in English and being pronounced differently in English. The letter J follows both of these: having a word like "tepjo" would look nearly unpronounceable to an English speaker.

Why such heavy bias towards English? Well, frankly, I originally thought Taynmoga and Dasopya would never get picked up outside my friend group. lol

But, that made them the most important audience to appeal to.

2) From quick research, Y is usually a vowel or semivowel, while J is usually a consonant or semivowel, and I would prefer Y to be seen more like a vowel.

Picking up from the last point, I would prefer that if someone saw "pya" they interpreted it as /pya/ rather than /pdʒa/ since I feel /y/ is closer – Y is allowed to be pronounced as a vowel /i/ if the speaker prefers. However, I feel the last point is the most convincing.

3) More people know Y as /j/ than J as /j/

There are many languages that use J as the letter for /j/, but for the most popular languages, there seems to me like a bias for Y as /j/. English does, Pinyin (from my understanding) does for Mandarin, Spanish, etc. I don't have a strong enough understanding for the romanization of Hindi/Arabic to comment on them, but I do have the impression that if someone on Earth were picked at random, it's much more likely someone would be familiar with how a language like English would use the letter Y rather than default to, say, Icelandic.

And again, if you want to use J, that's perfectly fine, but that's my reasoning.

How do you feel about the language?

~~Hum... so this is actually a bit of a strange question that nobody will really ask, but one that I really wanted to address, because I actually have some mixed feelings about Dasopya!~~

~~Generally, I feel that I've succeeded very well in my goals, and I'm very happy about this achievement. However, when you make a language that's meant to be spoken by everyone, it actually loses a lot of what might make it personally enjoyable to you.~~

~~Kaliwe had a nice, small number of words that could be easily memorized in a neat number of categories, but it was too vague to be reasonably used for conversation. Taynmoga had every word neatly contained in a single syllable, but that made it impractical for speech. They are objectively worse world languages, but in some ways they still hold more appeal to me than Dasopya. Sonja Lang is a very lucky person to have had her personal language become a popular choice for an auxlang!~~

- After having more time with Dasopya, I like it a lot more than when I originally wrote the answer to this question! What I say still holds true, and I do have languages I subjectively enjoy more, but I would say my like/dislike ratio is a lot closer to 90:10 as opposed to before, which was closer to 60:40. This is largely due to a large number of small edits I've made across the vocabulary to make them easier to say, and due to the smaller number of productive roots (e.g. dway, kin, lun) that made the language a lot more interesting to me. Either way, the rest of my original response is preserved here.

Dasopya doesn't always sound too appealing to me, some things feel a bit weird in my mouth when I speak it, and it has much too many syllables for me. Objectively speaking, all these things are perfectly fine – I would still consider Dasopya to be an easier language universally than most popular auxlangs right

now. Even if some sentences take more syllables than, say, English, it's very comparable to other languages like Japanese which have a more similar phonology.

English: I eat eggs for breakfast. - 6 syllables
Japanese: 私は朝食に卵を食べます。- 15 syllables
Dasopya: telu masumabo a bay i mabo e pomo. - 14 syllables

This definitely isn't the best example since that's very much a Google Translate sentence for the Japanese example (I can confirm it's grammatically correct with my limited knowledge, other than being unsure whether 朝ご飯 is a better word for "breakfast"), but both languages can shave off syllables due to being pro-drop.

Japanese: 朝食に卵を食べる。(at breakfast, eggs eat) - 11 syllables
Dasopya: masumabo a bay i pomomabo. (breakfast, i egg-eat) - 11 syllables

Either way, syllable count isn't a bad tradeoff for simplicity. English has less syllables for a variety of reasons, e.g. no sentence markers and a more complicated phonology, but these can make the language more difficult for some speakers.

In summary, I made a lot of decisions for Dasopya that help it reach its goal of being a universal language, and I'm very happy with how Dasopya is now! However, those decisions for "the greater good" has affected my personal enjoyment of the language. I still do enjoy many smaller parts of the language ("luli" for "spin" is one of my favorite words), but if you wanted a language that's a much more unfiltered version of what I personally enjoy in conlangs, you can read all about Babol.

How did you choose the "default" words?

Dasopya has an Esperanto-style inversion prefix "kwe" (functionally the same as Esperanto's "mal") to save on vocabulary size. However, a consequence of that is that I had to choose a "default" value to invert.

A few of these were based on practicality. For example, "hese" means danger, which meant it could be turned into "kwehese" (opposite-danger, safe) or "soyhese" (zero-danger, harmless), which allowed for more nuance that would not quite have been possible if I made "safe" the default word.

However, most were based on a principle of "something existing." This could be very subjective! However, I just had to hope it would be more intuitive for most people. For example, "kulu" means "light" and "kwekulu" means "dark," because dark is the absence of light, and is not really something that exists on its own. The

same with “syo” (life), “bade” (strength), and even “doy” (size). So yes, in Dasopya, being small is interpreted as having the opposite of size.

There were a few cases where I didn’t want to choose a default (e.g. left/right are different words due to a critique I heard of Esperanto), and other cases where I had to choose a default for other unrelated or arbitrary reasons (e.g. “dry” was chosen as a default despite being a lack of liquid since a word for liquid already existed, but it also felt awkward to be used to describe something).

As with most things, I don’t think it’s perfect, but hope it’s acceptable!

Which words aren’t a priori?

Oh, this is a bit of an awkward topic that technically doesn’t fit here, but I don’t have a better place to put it.

Other than what I mentioned previously, Dasopya is still not 100% a priori; there’s a very small portion of words that are taken directly or near-directly from other languages. They can be put into a few categories with their own reasonings:

1) Particles

Dasopya’s grammar was strongly inspired by Mini-Linga, so it would make sense that the single-vowel particles would be functionally nearly identical. I COULD have taken the particle functions and rearranged the vowels, but that felt kind of unnecessary.

“i” works exactly the same as Mini.

“e” works similarly in some cases, but is much closer to toki pona’s “e”.

“a” works vaguely similar to Mini’s, but is not the same.

There are also a few other non-content words that are strongly based on a single language, but still unique enough that I consider them a priori.

“pin” is based on Globasa’s “hin”

2) Placeholder words

When starting out the language, I didn’t have a process yet for generating most of the vocabulary, so some of the words were just made up on the spot. A few of them were taken almost directly from toki pona with slight modifications, and after finishing the vocabulary, I never got around to updating them since they weren’t marked as temporary.

The only one I'm aware of right now is "lemo" (cloth) which was probably taken directly from toki pona's "len," for example. I'm keeping that one since I've used it a fair bit, enjoy it, and it fits the word generation scheme regardless. This is unlike the previous word for "leg" which was "moga", literally toki pona's "noka" but with slightly modified sounds.

3) In-jokes

There are exactly 2 words in Dasopya that were inserted as in-jokes for my friend group. Let me have my fun!

I don't plan on directly revealing what they are, ever, but have some hints: one is a word from a video game that technically has a conlang, and the other is just an English word with a very similar definition. I would normally avoid something like the latter, but my non-conlanger friend requested one of their favorite words be put in the language, so I couldn't turn it down.

4) Exclamations

wa, yoy, and nn are "sounds that people make" bounded by Dasopya's phonotactic rules, so there weren't that many possible combinations (they take advantage of the fact that w/y/n specifically can't start a root word, but are phonotactically valid). "yoy" is an attempt at making it unique (a blend of English "yo" / "oi" and Japanese "よ"), but that's about the best I could allow myself to do.

"wa" comes directly from English "wah" (iykyk) while resembling to the near-univeral "wow." "nn" was taken directly from toki pona.

5) Sound-related words

There are a few words very closely tied to real life sounds that I felt were important enough to be resembled, especially since they may be used as a sound of sorts. The main one is "hasi," where "haha" is a near-univeral onomatopoeia.

Semi-related are the words for male/female/parent, which come from the near-universal words baba/mama – Dasopya translates these as byamya/mawmya. Some theories suggest that they're just interpretations of babies babbling, but as near-univeral words it felt too neat and perfect for me not to include.

Why not add more letters if it means more ways to differentiate words?

Alright, this is officially becoming a pet peeve of mine. I don't know how to explain to people that tons of people all around the world just cannot differentiate specific sounds because their language doesn't differentiate between them.

Japanese speakers have an L and R sound merged. If you had a minimal pair with those 2 sounds, they would pronounce it the same without extensive practice.

Spanish doesn't distinguish B and V. It would also sound the same without extensive practice. Tagalog doesn't differentiate between P and F. This specific example is so prominent it's baked into one of the spellings of "Filipino."

These speakers would also need to differentiate the sounds when spoken to, when sometimes those sounds don't even exist in their language.

It's difficult to explain this to English speakers because English has many sounds, and rarely have I seen popular auxlangs have a notable number of sounds unfamiliar to English speakers (there's Esperanto's ĥ, but it's rare and generally distinguishable).

My best comparison would be for an English speaker differentiating /ʑ/ and /ʐ/ since I briefly studied Polish (these are ź and ż respectively). To a Polish person's ears, these are different sounds, and must be pronounced differently, but to me they sound essentially the same. Imagine asking someone to learn not this, but multiple letters just to learn a "universal" language. That's an issue we already have with English!! We don't need that in any modern auxlang, especially one like Dasopya which can already hypothetically have 10,000+ words with its extremely limited phonotactics.

Globasa gets an uneasy pass from me because it combed through literally every word to make sure words didn't conflict with easy to confuse words, but most languages don't have that, nor are they expected to. I could introduce the letter V and make a new word "vamu," but then some speakers would pronounce it exactly the same as "bamu," and it would have to be disambiguated through context, so then the whole point of "having new word combinations" is just completely pointless???

Anyway, I'm not saying people aren't able to learn new sounds or comprehend sounds that aren't in their native language. I'm saying that as an American who has never been able to roll my R's after years of trying, I never want to put anyone through the pain of having to learn how to make a new sound with their mouths just to learn a "universal" language. If Dasopya were better built for it, I would actually prefer it had LESS sounds, but we already have toki pona for that.

Oh, and the point about recognizable loanwords doesn't count, even if Dasopya has loanwords, because the issue still stands. Some people can't naturally end words with consonants, so a word like "Internet" would be pronounced differently

anyway. By having a more limited phonology/phonotactics, Dasopya just regularizes these words into a form that most people should be able to pronounce in the same way — which really, I thought was the point of having a simplified united language.

Why are these loanwords so unrecognizable?

This is directly tied to the last point from the previous question – not everyone knows or is able to pronounce the same words in the same way, so it has to be transformed in a way that won't be 100% recognizable to everyone.

"Coffee" is well-known and often cited as one of the most universal words in the world, but it doesn't exist in the exact same form in every language. The letter C is pronounced differently in some languages, so they may use the letter K. The F sound might not be present, so sometimes it's substituted with a different but similar sound, like P. The English vowel sound for the O is also not very common, so it has to be turned into /a/ or /o/.

The result is something like "kape," which is not immediately recognizable to an English speaker, and other words have to be stretched or morphed much more in comparison! However, the goal for Dasopya's loanwords is not to be immediately recognizable for speakers of a small collection of languages – they're meant to be easily CONNECTED to the version in as many native languages as possible. This means that you will have to learn it, but it will be much easier to learn like a cognate. The Esperanto word "suno" would not sound like the English word "sun" even though it's based directly on it, but once you learn it once, it becomes extremely easy to recall.

It is a compromise between recognizability, universality, and accessibility, and I prioritized the latter two since it's an a priori language. However, as usual, the language prefers that you just use compound words instead of loanwords when possible.

This root word is way too recognizable!

Dasopya has a very limited phonology, so it was inevitable that multiple root words sound very similar to some languages. Sometimes this was partly on purpose (Dasopya directly borrows sounds across different languages which can create resemblances), sometimes this was on accident. When you only have 1-2 syllables in a word, then it'll usually resemble 1-2 syllables in some language for one of the related words, and since I can't represent 10+ world languages in 2

syllables equally, then they'll usually seem to be biased towards at least one language.

For example, "tay" means "very, many," and I recently found there is a Mandarin word 太 (tài) with a very similar definition. It's not exactly the same (otherwise I would have found out about it earlier), but it can mean "very, extremely" with a nuance more like "too (much)."

With the goals of the language, it is essentially impossible to account for all of these in every language for every word!!! I think that is a very reasonable thing to say.

What about the ones that are "partly on purpose?" Well, Dasopya was never meant to be 100% a priori – again, if that were the case, I would just randomly generate every word. Instead, I realized there was an outcome much better than any a priori language has mentioned.

Instead of every word being completely unfamiliar and unrecognizable for total neutrality... imagine if every word would cause half the globe to say, "wait, that isn't a priori – that's my word!" This is something that can be done in a way completely uniquely from a posteriori languages, because a posteriori languages can only be based on a specific word from a specific language family, so only words in that language family (or words taken from that language family) can claim it as theirs.

"may" means "now," and a Japanese person could say, "That's just like 今 (ima)!" while a French person could say, "No, I think that looks just like the first part of 'maintenant'!"

"kopo" means "book," and me as an English speaker was like, "Wait, this feels like 'corpus,' like a body of writings," but someone who spoke e.g. Hindi would say, "Oh no, with those consonants this is clearly based on किताब (kitab)."

Of course, this wasn't the actual basis for Dasopya's naming schemes, so it probably won't come up for most words, but I do think it's a very interesting perspective on a priori languages that most people haven't even considered – I certainly haven't until after I began learning a lot of my own vocabulary. However, it is a natural consequence of the way I constructed the words, though I have a feeling it doesn't assist learnability by much, even if it (in my opinion) succeeds at making words feel more familiar.

Why use sentence particles?

For a universal language, it seems like a strange decision to use sentence particles that have no direct equivalent in any other language (unless you were part of the small Mini community, by chance).

Some well-received auxlangs like Elefen and Globasa don't have anything like that by default, with Elefen having an unbreakable sentence order to remove ambiguity, and Globasa only having an optional one for people that want to mix up word order. Why have these sentence particles instead of just defining a word order?

There's a few reasons, but the main one is just that toki pona convinced me. Despite people's arguments about whether it's a suitable auxlang, people do generally agree that it's the easiest language to learn (easiest language to speak with is more debated, but that's a different subject... there are a lot of arguments about conlangs lol) – and toki pona did, in fact, choose to have sentence particles to be easier to use.

The particle that most people seem to struggle with at first is "la" (context marker), but "li" (verb marker, basically) and "e" (object marker) seem to stick pretty easily, with the issue seeming to moreso be about when to include it, not which words to put it on. This was the first part of the decision: if I DID add particles for the subjects / verbs / objects, then it would most likely not have a considerable impact on the difficulty of learning the language.

So, the second part of the decision would be the pros and cons of adding these particles – I think there are many, with the main one being less ambiguity. By separating each part of the sentence with a particle, you can define each one more clearly, which might in English may be more ambiguous or generally harder to parse.

One example would be a sentence like "She hit the man with the umbrella," which is ambiguous as to whether the umbrella was the tool for hitting, or if it's just something that the man was carrying. By marking the object, you can confirm that "the man with the umbrella" is a single noun phrase, or if it's the other case, force the sentence to be rearranged (e.g. "With the umbrella, she hit the man").

Another would be allowing users to rearrange sentences to what they're more comfortable with. This one's a bit more controversial (arguments include the fact that if one person decides to do an unusual sentence order, it requires others to work harder to understand it), but I would prefer that the language is allowed to do that at all, especially since it can create more unique sentence building for more expression, like in writing. Dasopya essentially has built-in grammar points that encourage the default SVO word order anyway, so that it's not just arbitrary.

How did you decide sentence order?

Other than familiarity, I was not aware of any true benefits of specific word orders over other word orders, so Subject-Verb-Object was a pretty quick decision to me based on the Wikipedia chart listing "Arabic (modern spoken varieties), Chinese, most European languages … Hebrew, Indonesian, … Malay, Swahili, Thai, Vietnamese" as SVO.

Yes, word order is kind of fake, and no, I technically didn't do a full analysis of how many speakers this would add up to, but I thought it was pretty safe to assume that SVO containing the majority of the top 10 most spoken languages in the world would be a safe bet.

There's 2 related questions I personally find more interesting.

1) Why adjectives before nouns?

This was mainly affected by the Globasa note on head-first or head-last, where head-last had more advantages for simple phrases and word formation – the benefits of head-first could be achieved through other words that changed word order like "teso" (relative clause marker) and "hoy" (adjective reordering marker).

With my linguistic knowledge, most of the languages I knew would also make compound words head-last, either by default or as a possibility. 学生 means student in both Chinese and Japanese, the first character meaning "learn" and the other "life" (i.e. "learning living-being"). "Ferrocarril" means railway in Spanish, where "ferro" means "iron" and "carril" means "lane." Even though adjective order was pretty variable across languages, I felt this was decently consistent. This could be wrong though, feel free to correct!

Due to these factors and Dasopya's focus on compound words, I decided to have adjectives come nouns, and to reduce the number of rules, adverbs also come before adjectives/verbs. Why make the adjective and compound word order the same? I felt that it would be better to mishear "throw pillow" as "throw-pillow" and not "pillow-throw" since it would completely change the meaning.

2) Why sentence particles before words?

This was like working a long puzzle backwards! While Japanese's particles may be the most well-known to the English-speaking world as sentence structure particles, those ones come after what they mark. However, that would not work under the constraints I had given myself.

I wanted Dasopya to have completely unambiguous compounds, so the best choice for these particles would be taking Mini's homework and making each one

a single vowel. This would make them distinguishable in text, easily memorizable as a group, and simple pronunciation required for every sentence.

However, it's a decently well-known fact that there are some languages that don't deal with words ending in consonants very well – they're pretty rare in Italian and Japanese (outside of -n), as an example. Even English, with its wacky phonotactics, still finds itself very awkward with certain ending consonants (give German "Ich" to an English speaker, and they'll probably try to turn the sound into "ick" or "itch" because an ending H-like sound feels wrong!). For accessibility, Dasopya does not allow any ending vowels other than the rare -N.

If the majority of words end in a vowel, this would be problematic for vowel particles! It would lead to sentences like "swe a boti i kupa e" which in quicker speech would drown out the vowels and make them unclear. Since every word (barring these particles) starts with a consonant, it just becomes a sort of prefix that's more distinguishable – "a swe i boti e kupa".

As an interesting consequence, this led to the "context comes at the beginning of the sentence" rule, which was not actually initially planned! Since everything between particles is just assumed to be part of the same phrase, putting context at the end would sound like it's part of the object phrase. In English, you can say "I'll do it in the morning," but in Dasopya, "bay i dyu syu e goy law masu" sounds like the object is "the thing in the morning" rather than "morning" being context for the action.

So, this is one of those more interesting features to me where context being put at the front is not due to any linguistic trend I'm aware of, but just due to the consequences of how all these other parts fell into place.

Why make a minimalistic auxlang?

I remember seeing this really funny exchange on Youtube that went along the lines of, "If you can't translate this English sentence exactly in toki pona, then toki pona isn't capable of being an auxlang!" and to that I could only react like... hello? Have you guys never learned another language before?

There's this idea that started circulating in some auxlang circles that an auxlang should be able to express as much as every speaker's native language, and on paper, this seems reasonable. Why would someone learn an auxlang if it only has a smaller range of expression? In practice, this is so mind-blowingly ridiculous that I'm shocked it took off at all.

Let's do a simple example. If I say, "I'm fine," and translate it to Spanish, then it would be "Estoy bien." If I say, "I'm doing well" and translate it to Spanish, then it

would also be “Estoy bien.” This is the exact same sentence in Spanish, but in English, these sentences carry different connotations.

Saying “I’m fine” (at least to me, as an American English speaker) has the connotation of “I’m doing alright, could be better, might even not be doing that well, but I just want to say I’m doing fine so you don’t need to ask any more questions.” There is, ironically, a strong connotation of not doing fine when you say you’re fine, and even if the speaker doesn’t mean to imply that, it’s usually a level or two below “good.”

Meanwhile, saying “I’m doing well” is more formal, but generally means what it sounds like. Assuming the speaker isn’t lying, they are most likely doing well. You could convey these somewhat through tone in Spanish, but in terms of the words themselves (especially in text), the nuance is completely lost. Sooound familiar?

When making a conlang, you have a choice here. Do you take the word “bien” and just take all the definitions onto it, losing the nuance from English? Or do you make a separate word that means the same thing as English’s “fine,” requiring speakers of every other language to learn its specific nuances, even if it doesn’t exist in their language at all?

To me, for an auxlang, the choice is obvious: choose the simpler, more universal option. Even in this case, the example is only about a single word in 2 languages that are very closely related in terms of vocabulary. Imagine this issue for every word across every language in every country. Do you want the nuances of Japanese’s あなた versus おまえ? Polish’s żabisko versus żabula? Despite its popularity and years of use, I don’t think even Esperanto can do either of those succinctly.

I’m not saying that auxlangs shouldn’t have nuance, but moreso that I think it’s very reasonable for a fully functioning auxlang to not have all the same nuances as existing languages, and that if a language WERE to have all the nuances, they would need an unfathomably large number of words (possibly cases/etc. too!), which would put a heavier burden of learning on speakers.

Dasopya is meant to be on the lower end where almost all nuance is removed, but the user should still ideally have enough tools to express themselves and be understood easily. That’s why it won’t have, for example, the pluperfect tense (which is a nuanced concept that doesn’t exist in all languages), but it will have a particle to create the past tense which essentially expresses the same thing without the nuance. This concept extends from the grammar to the vocabulary, and was one of the strongest guiding principles for the creation of the language.

It is perfectly fine and good to have auxlangs that have more nuance! However, I would like more auxlangs to explore the space of languages with 1,000 words or

less, because I think they would make for very strong candidates for world languages, unlike what many people seem to believe.

How is Dasopya designed to be easy to learn?

We've gone over multiple aspects, including the alphabet, phonotactics, and vocabulary. However, there's one thing I still need to talk about: the grammar!

Compared to the auxlangs I've seen, I had a strange but (in my opinion) generally reasonable guiding point for the grammar: it should be easily understandable by someone who knows next to nothing about grammar! While Mini and Globasa are very well-made, they created certain grammar features that were not very well-understood by laymen.

One of the most confusing things for Mini learners was actually one of the most basic particles! Similar to Dasopya, "i" marked verbs, "a" marked direct objects, but "e" marked adjective complements. What does that mean? It means "Kosa a vasa" = "The thing is water," but "Kosa e vasa" = "The thing is wet." This is very simple when explained, but I found people often confusing the two, most likely since they had a lot of overlap in usage.

Of course, finding what's "simple" in grammar is a complex and widely varying topic, and I most likely missed the mark in multiple places. However, I would like to see more auxlangs that catered more to the majority of the target audience... i.e. people who would not understand more complicated grammar topics.

For example, that's partly why "swa" uses "e"! Even though copula shouldn't take an object, that's a friction point I've found many people struggle with since e.g. English (mostly) doesn't mark objects, so it doesn't make sense to them. So, "e" was redefined to also include noun/adjective complements. This technically creates more ambiguity, but can be disambiguated by modifying the word itself for part of speech, which is something I've seen occur in many languages.

There are multiple grammar features that Dasopya could possibly benefit from, but only if people would actually be able to understand how to use and understand them. Globasa has a "resumptive relative pronoun" which is very nice for disambiguation, but also good luck explaining that stuff to laymen! If toki pona did not exist, Dasopya would probably not have subject/verb/object markers at all, but it apparently seems to be easy enough to explain to people.

What's your marketing approach?

For multiple reasons, Dasopya is taking a rather natlang approach to marketing: just make cool and interesting stuff, and people will learn it if they want.

First of all, I feel this is the best approach in the modern day. People have to choose to be interested in things they will be thoroughly invested in, and ideas like "ad campaigns" tend to turn people off.

Second, Dasopya's features don't lend themselves well to most other methods. It is relatively exotic, and not convincing for many people that it is a practical solution to the world language issue, being a priori. It is by leveraging that exoticness that will most likely attract more attention.

Third, I am personally an artist. It's in my best interest to leverage my own strengths in creating videos, making art, and developing games to help my language gain success.

Recommendations for making a Dasopido?

I've said it before, but I would very much like Dasopya to be a stepping stone to an even greater language, so I fully endorse Dasopidos, especially if the creator is serious about developing it.

However, while I can assume anyone making a Dasopido found notable issues with the language, they've probably also respected a large number of the decisions, and would prefer not to break any of the internal logic of the language without understanding it first. So, I wanted to make a list of recommendations for anyone interested.

1) Don't mess with the existing base vocab definitions

The base vocab was based on existing auxlangs and has been hammered away at for a while. While you can certainly change the words attached to the definitions, changing the definitions has a large chance at ruining a lot of the efficiency and ease of acquisition the language was designed around. Changing certain definitions may also have the effect of making them more biased towards your native language.

Add new words? Feel free! But also adding words like "small" when we already have "un-big" was made to be unnecessary by the language's design.

2) Only mess with the phonology if it isn't a priori

A priori auxlangs have very few strict benefits, but a large one is that words don't need to resemble real words, allowing you to massively decrease the available sounds. I feel that adding sounds is only necessary if the language was e.g. a worldlang, though even this I dispute (see "Why not add more letters?")

I actually feel that Dasopya would be directly improved by having a worldlang vocabulary. I just didn't go that route because it is not within my abilities.

3) Don't mess with the orthography

Latin alphabet is objectively the most practical for many reasons

4) Overhaul the phonotactics if you don't care about compound homophones

Dasopya has a shocking number of traits designed around this one principle: no homophones should exist in the language ever (other than possibly loanwords). This was mainly due to idealistic reasons, not practicality, since context usually clears it up.

For example, "kataro" in Esperanto means "a cold", but the word could also be formed with the root word "kat(o)" and the affix "-aro", which would mean "a group of cats." Due to the way Dasopya's words are formed, this is impossible in Dasopya. However, basically 0 auxlangs function like this, and most people don't care.

Removing this rule would allow single syllable words like "ka" and "le," and have words with as many syllables as you want, as well as removing the diphthong system which may be harder for some speakers (even if the vowel workaround is valid). Though, of course, I would still recommend keeping syllable count low for base words if you stick to an oligosynthetic language.

5) Change the tonic stress

Probably one of the most controversial features, the fact that tonic stress is at the end. This is to eliminate more ambiguity (and I feel it makes it unique), but it's difficult and people don't like it a ton.

Depending on how the sentence particles are modified, there's a possibility that this could be made obsolete, or if you don't care about this much disambiguity, you can just eliminate it altogether.

Regrets for Dasopya's design?

Since my current goal is to keep Dasopya stable for adopters, there's many changes I'm not allowed to make, but over time I've spotted flaws that I feel iffy

about. If there's a large number of speakers that agree to change certain aspects, maybe it could change in the future! toki pona has had multiple changes throughout the years, for example, like "oko" being phased out.

Here's a list of things I would like to change if I could:

1) L glide is not universal

I allowed an L glide (in words like "pla") because of 2 reasons. I needed more word combinations for my first draft Taynmoga since it only has 1-syllable words, and because Globasa allowed it in its phonotactics.

Both these reasons don't really apply anymore (Globasa's phonology is still not universal enough for me), so it's an awkward carry-over that's probably at the detriment of Dasopya. For example, Japanese, one of the most influential natlangs on Dasopya, would technically not allow a word like "teklo."

My regret is somewhat assuaged by my later addition "almost any consonant can replace L," but that's still not compatible with Japanese. I also wouldn't be able to remove it easily because certain single syllable words like "pla" wouldn't be able to replace or remove it.

Hopefully it won't be too difficult for learners?

2) "bya" is too similar to "bay"

This one sounds weird, and maybe I'm paranoid, but hear me out.

"bya" means male and it's the closest word to "bay", which means "me." I worry that this comes off as a "male as default" thing which I'm strongly opposed to in auxlangs. What makes this particular issue worse is that "maw" (female) is close-ish to "mya" (parent) and I worry that these 2 issues combine come off really badly!!

To prove that it's accidental, I can explain the reasons they ended up this way. "bay" was made in direct response to the running joke that every auxlang just uses "mi" for the first person pronoun, so as an a priori language, I wanted to make it different. I kept the bilabial sound, but used B instead of M, and gave it A as a very basic vowel to make it easy to pronounce.

Meanwhile, bya/mya/maw were made to mirror one of the most universal words, "mama" and "baba". Since gendered words vary a good bit, I thought this would be a neat way to reference it (mawmya for mother, byamya for father).

This one is a relatively easy fix, but bay/bya are such common and basic words that they've shown up a LOT and I cannot change them without altering a large number of beginner tutorials. I am also not changing maw/mya since I think

they're not actually that similar; they only seem awkward when compared to bay/bya.

Possible solutions include: changing bay/bya -> ban or bla, changing bay to something else entirely, etc

3) Swapping around the word endings

I'm currently very happy with how the vowel particles are, but that's mainly due to existing languages rather than pure design.

For example, I mentioned in my server that toki pona mirrors Dasopya very closely (caps only for EMPHASIS to highlight the similarities):

tenpo ni LA ona LI moku E moku
may A swe I mabo E mabo
[Now, they eat food]

However, these are meant to mirror the word endings. Default verbs end in -i because the verb particle is i. This falls apart a bit for U (concepts) and E (adjectives) but it was intentional for A (living things, which will often be subjects).

This is an issue because (last time I tallied) Dasopya words with A as the second vowel are the third smallest category – it's just hard to put things into that category. However, A as a vowel allows the MOST glide combinations: -ay, -ya, -wa, -aw, -la, -an.

Adjectives ended up on the bottom even though they have more combinations than concepts (-ey, -ye, -we, -le, -en), concepts ended up second most even though it has almost the least number of options (-yu, -lu, -un). Objects are the most common, but have less than A (-oy, -yo, -lo, -on).

If that seems a bit confusing, lemme put it this way:

# of words for
Nouns (O) > Concepts (U) ~= Life (A) > Verbs (I) > Adjectives (E)

# of combinations for
A (6) > E (5) > O (4) > U (3) > I (2)

** These numbers exclude double glides/etc. for simplicity, but the tiers should still be the same

Hypothetically, the vowels that contain the most possibility for being differentiated by unique glides should be assigned to the largest category of word.

However, this isn't a huge issue since most words can be differentiated without glides. Still, it's something that I would change if I redid Dasopya from the ground up, though it's information that would essentially be impossible to predict without having made the language first.

4) "u" is not very helpful

This is the one exception to me saying I was happy with the verb markers!

Having an indirect object is just not very common, and "u" could have been used for other more common uses. Another word like "telu" could have been repurposed to also include indirect object marking instead.

One use I had my eyes on was replacing "boy" as the preposition marker. Both are only one syllable, but "u" would be easier to say.

The one upside to keeping "u" as-is is to keep all vowel particles as markers of parts of the sentence (excluding "o", but that needs to be a vowel particle), though its brevity really could just be used for something more useful.

EDIT: would also have to do an examination for how replacing "u" with a preposition would change interpretations of sentences since it might not be as ideal as I imagine

5) Not matching word endings to additive suffixes

What a blunder! Yes, 1-syllable words don't need to follow the second vowel system, but the words that transform other words into specific parts of speech should at least match those vowels.

"goy" creates objects, and it has an O, so that's good. Same with "bey" and the E ending. However, "gen" for concepts, "syu" for actions (possibly forgivable since it has that y sound and i syllables are limited anyway), and arguably "syo"/"dey" for living things. Not satisfying!

Addressing Possible Critiques

These are some critiques I expect to be passed, so I wanted to address them. I have not actually received that much criticism, but I've seen common ones for other auxlangs. I'm unsure a better place to put these (I worry that bringing up these points publicly will only stoke arguments), so it will stay here.

800 words isn't enough for a language.

I gave an informal interview to 2 people who considered themselves to be proficient at Mini-Linga, both having been rather active in the relatively small community. Both confidently said they had absolutely no issues with communicating at their level of proficiency, and one pointed to the vast number of translations as proof (which I can confirm is a relatively large library compared to most non-toki pona minimalistic languages).

This is important because Mini only has 1,000 root words, but I can confidently say that Dasopya's root words are more expressive than them since they're more productive. Mini doesn't have an inversion marker, for example (like mal- in Esperanto, or roughly un- in English), which means that Dasopya was able to free up more space for more root words.

For example, Mini has separate root words for "small" and "big" but Dasopya only has "big" and "un-big." Account this for long and short, cold and hot, fast and slow, etc., and now Dasopya has the same amount of expression as Mini, but with a smaller base vocabulary. With that extra space, the language was actually able to gain more root words that Mini doesn't even have in its dictionary yet.

In other words, the word count doesn't matter, but how it's used!

Objectively, there should be no reason why Dasopya can't be a functional language with just 800 words — it's also entirely possible to make one with less. Subjectively, someone may make this claim as saying that the language wouldn't have enough expression for what they want to speak.

This is a valid opinion. However, my opinion is that English – even with its hundreds of thousands of words – is also often insufficient for my own human expression, but this does not invalidate it as a language.

Everything takes too long to say in Dasopya.

I imagine Dasopya might seem rather wordy (whether by word count or syllable count) to most English speakers. This is because English can be a rather efficient language with its low number of syllables per word. However, English's tradeoff is that the words are incredibly difficult to pronounce for many foreigners. It has many uncommon sounds and unforgiving phonotactics that can create very difficult consonant clusters (see "sixths" and "strengths"). These are not features that I feel are acceptable in an idealized world language.

Making a language easier to pronounce comes with the essentially guaranteed issue of requiring more syllables to express the same things. Simpler phonotactics means more vowels between consonants, and smaller phonology

means words usually have to be longer to be differentiated (though this point is not actually as big of an issue as people tend to think unless your phonotactics are as restrictive as toki pona – based on calculations I've done in the past, Dasopya could technically reach thousands of words before running into issues).

However, this syllable count "problem" is not as big of a problem when compared to other real-life natural languages. Japanese is the best example due to its similar phonology to Dasopya, and the syllable count in sentences is actually very comparable (see previous section "How do you feel about the language?"). This is partly due to the fact that Dasopya has a 2-syllable limit on all base words, but also because Dasopya is a pro-drop language that also allows you to drop other parts of the sentence. If it's good enough for people in the real world exchanging information for business and the like, then it's good enough for me.

Many sentences formed in Dasopya are actually pretty comparable in length to sentences in other languages, and oftentimes, words and phrases will be very comparable. To an English speaker, translating the 3-syllable phrase "the weekend" to the 5-syllable phrase "setukwesadi" might seem overly and unnecessarily sluggish, but then compare to Spanish where it's "el fin de semana" (4 separate words for 6 syllables!) and it doesn't actually seem that bad.

Either way, I don't think speed and efficiency are things that need to be a priority for an auxlang. If they were, we would be speaking Ithkuil, and I don't think many people are fond of that idea. It is much more important to me that the majority of the population can speak the language easily.

Oligosynthetic? Why are all the sentences I see so isolating?

As an auxlang, I prioritize Dasopya as being able to be used in many ways to keep users comfortable. This includes how isolating the language is.

As a native English speaker, and as someone whose audience is largely made up of other English speakers, I assume that a more isolating form of the language is easier and better for both of us to interpret. However, that doesn't mean the language isn't (or can't be) oligosynthetic.

You could translate, "Hey, it's one of those guys who lie to gain money" as, "yoy, e man hoy san moy dawdway teso i bedi telu sugwi e melo," or you could translate it as, "yoy, emanhoymoysantwibeditelumelosugwitwidawdway" and it'd be perfectly grammatically correct. Looks like a polysynthetic language to me! Though, I'm sure you can see why I prefer not to write this way, even if it's fun.