










FrameLang Experiment

Your language sketch must account for the following data, taken from *Sushi for Beginners* by Marian Keyes. You need to treat it as an unknown entity, as romanized forms an author created to represent a language without actually having created a language structure to support it. It is, effectively, consistent gibberish.





Character Names

-  Ashling Kennedy
-  Yvonne Hughes
-  Clodagh Kelly
-  Lily Headly-Smythe
-  Bicycle Billy



Other Names (Place Names, Brand Names)

-  Dublin
-  Colleen
-  Trix
-  Mercedes

Short Phrases

-  ominous silence
-  surefire success
-  soap opera
-  sweet sixteen

Full Clauses

-  Rancor and regret generated insomnia.
-  Extreme familiarity and empty distance hung together.

In the template that follows, sections marked in purple indicate the minimum (for David and Jessie—anyone else who participates can do as much or as little as they choose!) and sections marked in green with asterisks are entirely optional for all involved.

FrameLang: A Language Sketch

Phonology

Consonants

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Stops	p/b		t/d	tʃ	k		
Fricatives	f/v*		s	ʃ	x		h
Approx.	w**		l, r	j**			
Nasals	m		n		ŋ		

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e	ə	o
Low	æ		ɑ

*v only appears as an allophone of f, in a dialect which voices intervocalic obstruents.

** Glides appear before vowels in more modern speech, while older and more aristocratic speakers pronounce these as separate high vowels.

Diphthongs:

* There are no diphthongs in the official Imperial dialect, but see note above regarding glides. Most speakers still pronounce the high vowel if it is stressed, but may do so with an onglide.

Stress:

- Primary stress typically falls on the final syllable if it is closed; otherwise the penultimate is stressed. However, there are some suffixes which are not counted when assigning stress, resulting in words/names like “*Kennedy*”, in which primary stress lands on the antepenultimate syllable.

Syllable Structure:

- Framelang’s maximal syllable structure is CCVCC. Onset clusters must consist of an obstruent followed by a glide, liquid, or nasal; coda clusters can only be formed by a

liquid or nasal followed by an obstruent or a different nasal. Single-consonant codas can be formed by any consonant.

Samples:

* **Character Names**

Ashling Kennedy	as.'hlinŋ 'ken.ne.də
Yvonne Hughes	ə.'von-ne 'huŋ.hes
Clodagh Kelly	tʃlo.'daŋh 'kəl.lə
Lily Headly-Smythe	'li.lə he.'ad.lə 'smət.he
Bicycle Billy	bi.'tʃətʃ.le 'bil.lə

* **Other Names (Place Names, Brand Names)**

Dublin	dub.'lin
Colleen	tʃo.'læn
Trix	trix
Mercedes	,mer.tʃe.'des

* **Short Phrases**

ominous silence	o.mi.no.'us si.'len.tʃe
surefire success	,su.re.'fi-re sutʃ.'tʃeʃ
soap opera	so.'ap o.'pe.ra
sweet sixteen	swæt six.'tæn

* **Full Clauses**

Rancor and regret generated insomnia.
ran.'tʃor and reŋ.'ret ŋe.,ne.ra.'ted ,in.som.'ni.ɑ

Extreme familiarity and empty distance hung together.

ex.'tre.me fa.mi.li.'ɑ.ri.tə and 'emp.tə di.'stan.tʃə hunŋ ,toŋ.et.'her

Morphology and Typology

Context:

An aspect of this experiment I found difficult was coming up with possibilities for the given forms without any narrative context, a frame of meaning to go along with the

phonological and morphological frames. The names and phrases we have to work with of course cannot be seen as part of the story of Sushi for Beginners, since the world of that book could point back to the English meanings of the words.

So I decided to provide myself with a new context for the data, and thought about how I would approach this if the given forms came instead from the world of the book I'm currently reading- Ancillary Mercy by Anne Leckie- while ignoring the non-English names there that the author created. (Inevitably, this is now making me want to create a framelang for that book series, based on Leckie's terms!) I found it a very helpful springboard for my imagination as I tried to come up with potential explanations for the forms and patterns I was extracting from the data set, particularly in my analysis of names.

Overview:

- FrameLang is a predominantly head-final language with SOV word order and fusional? tendencies.
- The basic phrasal structures of FrameLang are:
 - demonstrative-noun
 - adjective-noun
 - flexible; noun-relative clause or relative clause-noun
 - noun phrase-postposition
 - possessor-noun
 - adverb-verb

Phrasal and Clauses Analysis:

- Short phrase analysis:
 - Several of the short phrases feature words formed with a derivational prefix for modifiers, *su-* (*surefire*, *success*, *soap*, *sweet*). It is found in adverbs, such as *surefire*, as well as in adjectives.
 - With the exception of the adjective *success*, the second word in each of the short phases is a noun.
 - The words *ominous* and *opera* deserve special attention. Both contain the nominalizing prefix *o-* as well as the verbal suffix, which also happens to be *-o* (*-a* word-finally). With *opera*, this results in a nominalization of an instance of the action (eg "sing" / "song"). In *ominous*, we also see the active participle suffix *-us*; with the addition of the *o-* prefix, this forms a verbal noun, which (as in this example) can be placed in the attributive position with another noun, resulting in the meaning "for the purpose of x," eg "utensils for eating." Note that in order to say something like "food for eating," a nominalized passive participle must be used.
- Full clause analysis:
 - *Rancor* (noun- subject) *and* (negative particle) *regret* (noun- object) *generated* (verb- infinitive) *insomnia* (verb- finite).

- *Rancor and* (subject phrase) *regret* (object) *generated insomnia* (verb phrase).
- *Extreme* (noun- subject) *familiarity* (noun- genitive) *and* (negative particle) *empty* (noun- genitive) *distance* (noun- object) *hung* (adverb of place/time) *together* (verb- finite).
 - *Extreme* (subject) *familiarity and empty distance* (object phrase) *hung together* (verb phrase).
- The negative particle *and* negates the word it follows. In the first sentence it negates the subject (“No x did y”), while in the second sentence it appears in between two genitives attributed to the same object noun, conveying the sense of “not x’s but y’s.”
- The genitive suffix *-ty* seen in sentence 2 is also found (with a dialect variant pronunciation) in the name *Kennedy*. It is the inanimate counterpart of the animate genitive ending *-ly* seen in several other character names.
- Infinitive *generated* features the active infinitive suffix *-ted*, which follows the stem of the verb ending in *-a*; we can see this became affixed later than some other verbal endings, as the word-final *o > a* change has already occurred.

Grammar Details*

Nouns:

- Noun Function: Framelang is nominative-accusative, with subjects taking a position followed by the object.
- Noun Gender: nouns are classified by an animacy distinction. Gods, humans, and other sentient species, as well as collectives of these (eg councils, families) are considered animate, while everything else- including sentient AI such as ships and stations- is classified as inanimate.
- Noun Possession: A possessor takes the genitive form and typically precedes the possessee in attributive position (or follows it in predicate position). Genitive markers include the suffixes *-ly* (animate) and *-ty / -dy* (inanimate). Note that the animate/ inanimate distinction in these forms refers to the animacy of the possessee, rather than that of the possessor to which it is attached.
- Noun Derivation: Nominalizing affixes include the prefix *o-*, and the agentive suffixes *-hes* (active) and *-he* (passive).

Adjectives:

- Adjective Placement: An adjective precedes the noun in attributive position, and follows it in predicate position.
- Adjective Derivation: Many adjectives and adverbs are derived by the addition of the prefix *su-*. This prefix derived from an archaic word for “dream”, **sul*.

Demonstratives:

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Verbs:

- FrameLang verbs are often marked with the suffix *-o* (*-a* word-finally), which may combine with other verbal suffixes.
- Participles: Framelang has active and passive participle forms; the active participle is formed with the suffix *-us*.
- Verbal nouns: Participles nominalized with the prefix *o-* form verbal nouns.

Compounding*

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Naming Strategies*

- Family names frequently end with the genitive animate suffix *-ly* (*Kelly, Lily, Headly, Billy*); the genitive in this context indicates membership, origin, or ancestry. The genitive inanimate form *-ty* (*familiarity, empty*) appears as a dialect variant form *-dy*, in the name *Kennedy*. While genitives normally precede nouns, in names the genitive term usually comes second, a remnant of when names were given as e.g. “Bicycle, daughter of (House) Bil.”
- The agentive suffix *-hes* (*Hughes*) is frequently seen in professional titles, such as Governor, Administrator, or Captain. A domain can also be specified in a title, eg *Yvonne Athoekly Hughes*, “Yvonne, Administrator of Athoek.”
- The most complex name on the list is *Lily Headly-Smythe*. It features the passive form of the agentive suffix: *-he* (**-hei*); Smythe refers to one who is receiving clientage. Individuals are typically referred to by their first names, but the leader of a House may be referred to by their family name. So this name can be translated as “(leader) of (House) Li, Client of (House) Head.”
- In the given place names, we find the suffix *-lin*, which often denotes a point or a specific spot, and originated from a word for a sharp piece of rock. This is also the origin for for the word meaning “fulcrum,” and as such it appears

within the name *Ashling*, “Justice,” which comes from a term for “point of balance.” Its augmentative form *-leen* originally meant “peak,” and is often found in the names of mountains.

*Historical Notes**

Below is a series of sound changes I’ve reconstructed for Framelang:

1. α lowering: in a VV sequence, high vowels before α lower to e and o.
2. Word-final vowel lowering: $i > e$, $e > \text{æ}$, $u > o$, $\text{æ} \ \& \ o > a$
3. Double vowel merge: two identical vowels in a sequence reduce to a single vowel.
4. Word-final æ shifts again to ə .
5. Glides: an unstressed high vowel becomes a glide before another vowel; if stressed it takes an onglide (this is a relatively recent change, not found in the speech of older characters)