

LaTeX - A Typesetting Mark-Up Language

Post by “Joshua” of June 26, 2021 at 1:33 PM

I've been banging my head against the problem of typesetting the Interlinear Edition of DRN, and this is where I'm at right now.

In [another thread](#), I slightly explored and we discussed some of the options for typesetting the text. I mentioned the option of using tables in Microsoft Office/LibreOffice to keep things lined up. This works, but not elegantly.

I've since been exploring the TeX (pronounced "tek") family of typesetting Mark-Up languages. TeX works by using bits of code interspersed with the text to take care of the formatting, and it can do some pretty incredible stuff. The most common use is in academia, where it is used to typeset documents with complex mathematical formulae; difficult or impossible to format properly in Word, but fairly straightforward in a mark-up language once you learn the commands.

The software is community-supported and open source, and the original software has been improved by the creation of "macros" to add functionality. LaTeX (Lay-tek) is a collection of such macros, and is the most widely used version of the TeX language.

LaTeX itself has been *further* improved by more third party macros. These macros are collected into "packages", which are loaded for use by a command at the beginning of the document being prepared.

ExPeX (EkPek? EcksPek?) is one such package, designed specifically by and for linguists in order to solve the problem of formatting interlinear text. I'm currently planning to go all in on LaTeX with ExPeX as the solution to my own problem.

The trouble with open source software is usually getting it up and running. In the case of TeX/LaTeX, one needs an editor/compiler to actually use the software. Any given editor/compiler is referred to as a "distribution". In theory, when you download and install any LaTeX distribution it will come pre-installed with all of the core LaTeX macros. Other macros can be had by downloading packages through the distribution's GUI.

I'm going to use LaTeX as the mark-up language. I'm going to use the ExPeX package to handle interlinear glosses. What I haven't figured out yet is which *distribution* I'm going to use. My early efforts have been in TeX Studio, known for being user friendly. I won't say I haven't been having problems, but I am gradually learning.

I have book coming in the mail on Monday to help me learn.

There is another option; a website called Overleaf specializes in LaTeX collaboration. Think of it as a cloud-based distribution. There is, however, a small monthly fee.

When I learn more, I'll post it here!

Post by “Joshua” of June 26, 2021 at 1:45 PM

Let me also add;

I realize that using a mark-up language rather than, say, Google Docs, will impose a barrier to collaboration because most people won't want to bother learning the process. I don't blame them!

But you can still help me! As I get things moving, I will post the PDF's of my progress. At that stage, especially early on, I will need as much feedback and proofreading as I can get!