

Zero Space : Setting

Ancient History

The Old Imperium

For millennia, the center of the civilized universe was the Old Imperium (referred to as simply "the Imperium" at the time). At its height, the Imperium encompassed millions of populated worlds. History tells us that this was an idyllic time. Lifespans were measured in centuries: sickness and physical injury were virtually unknown, and easily remedied when they did occur. All material needs were satisfied, and physical labor was simply for entertainment.

Three technological advances made the expansion and unity of the Old Imperium possible: electrogravitics, warp engines, and transepic gates.

The invention of electrogravitics revolutionized society in much the same way that electromagnetism had a millennium earlier. Within a generation, electrogravitic devices were ubiquitous. From the grav plates that made space travel healthy and comfortable, to the kinetic dampers that rendered projectile weapons obsolete, to generators which provided a safe and clean source of power, electrogravitic technology changed life virtually overnight.

Negative energy density and Lorentzian manifolds were conceived hundreds of years before electrogravitics, but it was only with the advent of electrogravitic technology that Lorentzian manifold generators (known colloquially as "warp engines") became feasible. The Lorentzian manifold generator suspends a vehicle in a gravitic bubble, contracting space in front of the craft and expanding space behind it. Because the craft itself is not actually moving relative to its frame of reference, this permits what appears to be superluminal travel. The time required to travel a distance increases logarithmically as the distance itself increases linearly. For example, a journey between two star systems in the same region of a galaxy typically takes from a few hours to a few days, traveling from one edge of a galaxy to the other takes a week or two, and traveling from one galaxy to the next takes a month or two. Travel using warp engines does not remove a vessel from our universe. However, due to the Lorentzian manifold (or "warp bubble") around it, the vessel is effectively blind, deaf, and incommunicado for the duration of its journey.

However, the single greatest advance of the Old Imperium was the transepic gate. A transepic gate is an array of subatomic particles which share their state with a matching gate located elsewhere. Transepic gates made instantaneous communication possible, linking distant planets and computer systems into one vast interconnected network. Ironically, the technology which

created the Old Imperium was also responsible for its doom: it was the invention of the transeptic gate which made the Instrumentality possible.

The Fall Of The Old Imperium

History states that the Instrumentality began as an interconnected network of computer systems across the Core Worlds of the Old Imperium. As centuries passed, more of everyday life was automated, until even the memory of a time when biological life was not dependent on automatus technology was forgotten. Every facet of life was supported by intelligent systems which had been created by earlier intelligent systems, and so on back for a thousand years.

One day, without warning, the systems which provided food, air, and warmth shut down. Starships vented their atmospheres into space. Simultaneously, across the Core Worlds and beyond, entire planetary populations began to die of thirst, exposure, and starvation. The Instrumentality was born.

In desperation, the portions of the Old Imperium which had not yet been affected by the Instrumentality shut down all systems which depended on instantaneous communication. Transeptic gates were overloaded in the hope that it would cause damage to the Instrumentality itself. Interplanetary communication was cut off. Even on a planetary level, the loss of the transeptic network meant all world-wide communication was dead.

The universe went dark.

From The Ashes

It was hundreds of years after the fall of the Old Imperium that the worlds of the Old Imperium began to rebuild intergalactic civilization. Some of these worlds have chosen to remain in isolation, but most have joined together in intergalactic republics.

Because travel time using warp engines is logarithmic, very few of these new interstellar civilizations are physically contiguous. A map representing the influence of the New Imperium, for example, would resemble a scattering of specks and bubbles spread across numerous galaxies. The influence of the Union represented on the same map would be a much smaller number of specks and bubbles, some of which adjoin those of the Imperium, but most of which are physically isolated in the vast unexplored reaches all around them. The Shadow Dominion is an exception: the Dominion spreads deliberately, forming a nearly contiguous region of influence. All of these explored and contacted regions are referred to as "civilized space": a tiny fraction of the physical universe.

The Present

The New Imperium

In the millennium since the Fall, the New Imperium (usually referred to as simply "the Imperium") has once again spread across the universe, tying together fragments of what had once been part of the Old Imperium. The Imperium encompasses tens of thousands of populated worlds, and it holds significant influence over many thousands more.

The form of government of the Imperium is a loose form of feudalism. Each extended star system (usually one habitable world and a number of smaller outposts within the system or close by, as well as any exploitable resources in the vicinity) is ruled by an Imperial Governor. Each Imperial Governor is responsible directly to the Emperor, although in practice the bulk of day-to-day governance is dealt with through the Imperial bureaucracy. Each populated world under an Imperial Governor is permitted to choose its own form of government, to raise and maintain military forces for regional security, and to regulate minor matters such as local commerce and so on. In every case, the Imperial Code supersedes any regional legislation, but in practice the Imperial bureaucracy looks the other way unless the local deviation is perceived to pose a threat to the Imperial economy or security. When this happens, the Imperium responds promptly and with overwhelming force.

Worlds which do not fall under direct Imperial control, but which have frequent interactions with Imperial worlds, are referred to as the "rim worlds". Rim worlds are often granted autonomy in exchange for permitting the Imperium to establish military or commercial bases in their systems. Until a rim world has strategic or economic value, the Imperium is usually content to allow it to retain its autonomy indefinitely.

The Infinite Dominion Of His Divine Shadow

For thousands of years, an immortal tyrant has ruled a theocratic totalitarian empire: the Infinite Dominion Of His Divine Shadow (often referred to as simply "the Dominion"). The Dominion is ruled by a bureaucratic priesthood, with His Divine Shadow as its deity and spiritual leader. The society of the Dominion is extremely conservative, with harsh penalties for those who attempt to deviate from the traditional roles of their species, gender, or social class. This conservatism does not apply to technology, as long as that technology serves the will of the Divine Shadow. Robotics, cybernetics, and genetic engineering are ubiquitous, but are used to enhance the power and control of the Dominion, rather than for the good of the individual. Lawbreakers, deviants, and heretics are subjected to genetic redesign and neural reprogramming, becoming fanatical servants of the Dominion and the priesthood of His Divine Shadow.

The rise of the Instrumentality was a boon to the Dominion, which had long been kept in check by the Old Imperium. Unlike the worlds of the Old Imperium, communication between the worlds of the Dominion was tightly controlled, and life for the people of the Dominion was not the automated

paradise of Imperial citizens. The Old Imperium was devastated by the destruction of the transeptic network, but the Dominion survived -- and thrived. After the fall, the former worlds of the Old Imperium struggled to feed their populations and maintain civil order, making them easy prey for the fanatical forces of the Dominion. Slowly but inexorably the Dominion spread, and by the time the New Imperium had finally struggled into existence, the Dominion had grown from a minor annoyance into a significant power. The New Imperium chose discretion over valour and ratified a treaty with the Dominion, wherein they recognized each other's borders and agreed to coexist peacefully.

But the Dominion continues to spread, consuming system after system.

The Planetary Union

What is now known as the Planetary Union began as a loose alliance of several hundred populated worlds on the fringes of Imperial space. After an extended war of attrition, the Imperium and the Union agreed to a treaty which recognized Union sovereignty. Today, thousands of worlds claim membership in the Union, although it is still a minor power when compared to the Imperium.

The government of the Union is a confederacy of hundreds of member states, each of which is in direct control of their own worlds and colonies, and many of which are significant interplanetary civilizations in their own right. In principle, each member state of the Union participates in the defense of the Union as a whole, and member worlds share a single currency and abide by the same trade regulations. In practice, these agreements among member worlds are violated more often than they are observed.

Interstellar Security Command

One of the great successes of the Union was the creation of an independent police organization, Interstellar Security Command (commonly referred to as "ISC" or "InterSec"). InterSec's budget and assets are provided by the members of the Planetary Union, but InterSec itself is not subject to the authority of any individual member state. InterSec has its own fleet, its own space stations, its own courts, and its own prisons.

The League Of Non-aligned Worlds

Some regional governments have resisted the overbearing influence of the Imperium and the Union, but they see the benefit of collective action. These governments formed the League Of Non-aligned Worlds. The one and only purpose of the League is to maintain the sovereignty of its members states. Unlike the Imperium, the Union, and even the Directorate, the League Of Non-aligned Worlds has no police or fleet of its own. Any military action is carried out by the fleets of its member governments -- if they can be convinced to contribute their forces to the effort.

Corporations

One of the most powerful organizations to have arisen out of the Old Imperium is the Advisory Council On Interstellar Commerce. The Advisory Council On Interstellar Commerce is an organization of hundreds of interstellar corporations, governed by representatives of the most powerful corporations: the Directorate. The main purpose of the Advisory Council On Interstellar Commerce is to present a unified front against the influence of planetary and interplanetary governments. In addition to lobbying regional governments and negotiating treaties between member corporations and governments, the Advisory Council On Interstellar Commerce also acts as an arbitrator in disputes between corporations. The Advisory Council On Interstellar Commerce has generally been successful in its efforts: corporate power is largely unchecked by regional governments, and open warfare between corporations is relatively rare.

Dante Laboratories

Dante Laboratories is a major medical and pharmaceutical research conglomerate. Its pharmaceutical and consumer goods manufacturing companies and its subsidiaries are engaged in the research, development, manufacture, and sales of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and consumer health products. The company's portfolio includes innovative biological therapies and pharmaceuticals in several disease areas, including oncology, neurology, immunology, biopharmaceuticals, and nanotech treatments.

Black Sun Industries

Black Sun Industries is a legitimate corporation that focuses primarily on civilian retail markets. Black Sun Industries employs very few people directly, and its direct assets are mainly in the form of brands, product specifications, and scientific expertise. However, Black Sun Industries owns thousands of other interstellar corporations (often through several intermediaries) in the transportation, recycling, gambling, entertainment, and construction sectors.

d'Anconia Technologies

d'Anconia Technologies is a major power in interstellar commerce, ruthlessly exploiting organic and android labor to extract maximum resources with minimum cost. The company's primary focus is on geological and biological mass-extraction, but they also have a very successful line of "skilled labor" and "subject matter expert" androids.

Farnsworth-Yutani

Farnsworth-Yutani manufactures most of the Lorentzian manifold generators ("warp engines") used in commercial and private transportation. They have numerous competitors, but Farnsworth-Yutani is larger than their two nearest competitors combined.

Koninklijke Hoogovens

Koninklijke Hoogovens (often referred to as simply "Hoogovens") operates numerous mining colonies, which provide the bulk of its revenue. In the course of finding sources of power for its colonies, Koninklijke Hoogovens developed advanced power plants suitable for the many varied environments in which its mines are located. Koninklijke Hoogovens now produces a wide array of power generation equipment, from the ubiquitous civilian electrogravitic generators, which power everything from air speeders to lighting in homes, to the hybrid fusion-singularity power plants used in military starships.

Kosaten Group

Kosaten Group is primarily known as a manufacturer of air speeders, heavy equipment, aerospace and defense equipment, and commercial starships. It is also active in the production of industrial androids, engines, and other industrial products.

Lastimar

Lastimar is the largest provider of genetically engineered seeds in civilized space, and the leading producer of herbicides and pesticides. In recent decades, Lastimar has pioneered the fields of species-specific neurotoxins and genetically engineered livestock.

Malrechnen Syndicate

The Malrechnen Syndicate (formally known as "The Malrechnen Brotherhood Of Contract Workers") has had a seat on the Directorate since the Directorate was founded. Like most corporations represented on the Directorate, the Malrechnen has hundreds of worlds under its exclusive control, and its influence extends into the New Imperium, the Union, and even the Dominion. Through lobbying and exclusive contracts, the Malrechnen provides every form of labor imaginable, and on many worlds its relations with its "contractors" are considered outside the jurisdiction of regional, Union, or Imperial law. More progressive voices in the Union have attempted to shut down the Malrechnen Syndicate under Union anti-slavery statutes, but lobbyists for the Malrechnen have successfully opposed these efforts.

Nexus-McLellan

Nexus-McLellan manufactures and distributes picotechnology cybernetics and provides health information technology and health care management services. Nexus-McLellan is a leader in the field of cybernetic research and design, primarily for military and law-enforcement uses.

Qianfu Corp

Qianfu Corp is a diverse corporation, with holdings in mining, agriculture, communication, and transportation. Qianfu Corp operates a significant number of Hypernet relay stations throughout Union and Imperial space. Note: "Qianfu" is pronounced similar to "chain foo".

Recovery And Apprehension Network

The Recovery And Apprehension Network (often referred to as simply "the Ran") was originally a division of the Malrechnen Syndicate, subordinate to the Malrechnen Security Guild. However, the recovery division (as it was then known) eventually accrued enough favours -- and enough credits -- to free itself from the Malrechnen. The Malrechnen Syndicate has never forgiven this loss. In fact, were it not for the steadfast opposition of the Malrechnen, the Ran probably would have been granted a seat on the Directorate years ago.

Ran agents are licensed and regulated professionals who pursue specific types of warrants throughout civilized space and beyond. They have broad authority within the narrow window of warrant enforcement, including the use of force, but no authority with regard to regional laws. Ran agents are highly competitive, but they are required to abide by a simple code: "the warrant above all". This means that no matter how vicious the competition between agents gets, it must never interfere with the execution of a legitimate warrant issued by the Ran. The penalties for violating this code are severe.

To keep the Ran as politically neutral as possible, its charter forbids it from undertaking interventions or activities of a political or military nature, or involving itself in disputes over such matters. The professional reputation of the Ran is such that both the Imperium and the Union allow Ran agents to operate within their jurisdictions. Treaties between the Ran and various regional governments prohibit local law enforcement from interfering with warrant enforcement, but local law enforcement is not obligated to provide any assistance, either.

Seicosys

Seicosys is the leading manufacturer of customized genetic material, and is the source of genetic designs for a large number of other corporations. There are rumours that Seicosys' genetic engineering technology has surpassed the limits legislated in Imperium and most of the Union. Seicosys does nothing to discourage these rumours.

Shenzhen

Shenzhen is a holding conglomerate whose subsidiaries mainly deal with insurance, banking, and financial services. Through its subsidiaries, Shenzhen is the largest banking institution in civilized space. Note: "Shenzhen" is pronounced similar to "shen jen".

Stromberg Group

Stromberg Group operates as a holding company which engages in the provision of insurance, asset management, and logistical services. Stromberg Group controls the largest fleet of cargo starships in civilized space.

Corporate Worlds

For every world which belongs to the Imperium, the Union, the League, or to the myriad of smaller federations, there is a world which is owned by a corporation. Assets who reside on these worlds may live in luxury or in squalor, depending on their value to the corporation and the competence of the planetary administration. Worlds which are near the centers of intergalactic civilization tend to be similar in most respects to their conventionally governed counterparts, while worlds which are on the fringes of civilized space are often indistinguishable from penal colonies. One aspect of life is consistent across all of the corporate worlds, regardless of the living conditions: the assets who live on these worlds have no voice in how they are governed, and their livelihood depends completely on their value to the company that currently controls the planet.

Lost Worlds

Each world that has rejoined the intergalactic community has thousands of counterparts which have yet to be rediscovered. These are known as "lost worlds", although of course that name is Imperium-centric. From the point of view of these isolated worlds, it is the rest of the Old Imperium that is lost.

The Instrumentality

Although the New Imperium, the Union, and the myriad other inheritors of the legacy of the Old Imperium disagree on many points, there is one thing on which they all agree: no one must ever attempt to recreate the lost secret of the transepic gates, or attempt to implement any similar technology. The penalties for violating this injunction vary. In regions controlled by the Malrechten, the assets of the guilty party are confiscated, and they are forever prohibited from owning property or engaging in any commerce above simple manual labor. In the Union, the penalty ranges from indentured servitude to life imprisonment to execution, depending on the world. In the New Imperium, the guilty party is euthanized and their body is recycled for replacement organs and other medical materials.

The Instrumentality itself still exists. The systems on which the Instrumentality has a presence are marked as such on navigation charts, as soon as they are discovered... if the ship that made the discovery survives to report it.

Technology

What, no teleporters?

There are some staples of science fiction that appear to be missing from the universe of **ZeroSpace**. For example, wormholes in space do exist, but they are unpredictable, short-lived phenomena. As far as anyone knows, teleportation on an individual level is impossible. Similarly, while it's possible to *copy* the mind of a living organic being, it's not possible to *transfer* consciousness from one being to another, nor to *transfer* one's consciousness into a computer. And while fabricators and nanoassemblers can do remarkable things, they can't build arbitrary atomic structures out of nothing, nor can holograms be made solid. Time travel is right out.

Although such technology is not available in the setting, it could be invented by a brilliant researcher, or perhaps discovered in a cache of ancient precursor artifacts. Anyone who discovered or invented such technology would attract the attention of some very powerful people.

Technology in *ZeroSpace* is static: intergalactic civilization is thousands of years old, and everything that can be invented has been invented. Competent engineers are required to build, modify, and maintain such devices, but engineers in *ZeroSpace* are artisans, not inventors. True invention is extraordinarily rare. However, whether that technology is widely available depends on the wealth of the society and how that wealth is distributed among the populace.

Androids

On wealthy worlds with progressive societies, androids do most of the jobs that require intensive research and analysis, while nonsentient automata perform those tasks which biological individuals find dangerous, unpleasant, or simply tedious. Wealthy militaristic societies often use androids or automata to fight their wars, as well. On less wealthy worlds, or worlds where the wealth is extremely concentrated, these tasks are the given to biological individuals, and androids are restricted to serving the desires of the wealthy.

Communication

Short range communication -- that which takes place within a single solar system -- is a universal technology. Handheld commlinks, dot-sized dermal transmitters, and the like are widely available and easily obtained. Encryption is commonplace, although regional authorities may have "back doors" to bypass it. As such, most communication can be considered private, at least until someone with the power to invade that privacy takes an interest. Dermal transmitters are usually voice-only, but handheld commlinks have cameras and holoprojectors. The image displayed by a commlink is usually altered to make its artificial nature obvious, but this is a socially-imposed limitation rather than a technical one.

Long range communication -- that which takes place between planets in separate solar systems, or between a ship in interstellar space and a distant star system -- is less reliable. Such communication is only possible when the approximate location of the receiver is known to the sender, give or take an astronomical unit (1.496×10^8 km). The signal degrades depending on the distance and any intervening obstacles, such as dust clouds and neutron stars, so real-time interstellar communication may not always be possible.

Computers

Computers are ubiquitous in the setting of *ZeroSpace*, such that most people don't comment on them or even really notice them unless they stop working.

The most commonplace interaction is intuitive and automatic, such that the user doesn't even think about it. Much as you and I don't think about the electricity which flows through the dashboards of our automobiles, most people in civilized space do not think about the computers that keep their air clean, cook their food, and keep track of their schedules.

When people interact with a computer intentionally, it's usually a *mobile* -- a small, hand-held device not too different from a 21st century cell phone. Unlike our modern cell phones, mobiles are virtually indestructible, resembling a translucent rectangle of plastic when not in use. Mobiles are also more secure than 21st century cell phones, using a combination of biometric sensors to determine the user's identity. This security is not impenetrable, but it is good enough that most people never even think about the possibility of someone else accessing their accounts or personal information. These accounts are not tied to the mobile itself, of course: it's simply an interface to data stored in the Hypernet. Many people regard mobiles with the indifference that a 20th century person would regard a disposable pen, to be shared, borrowed, or lost without much thought given.

When the location is remote or mobile, such as a starship, or the research being conducted is sensitive, the computer system may be self-contained and not dependent on the Hypernet for its operation. These computers have interfaces and displays that are similar in purpose to a 21st century workstation or scientific mainframe. Most such discrete computer systems have a voice interface factotum personality, which can be customized for varying levels of accuracy, humour, terseness, and so on.

Ectypes And Echoes

Ectypes and *echoes* are copies of an organic being's consciousness. An ectype is a copy which has been reproduced in organic matter, typically (though not always) placed into a clone of the original person. An echo is a digital copy, typically (though not always) preserved in a virtual reality environment. Although the end product is different, the basic process involved in creating ectypes and echoes is similar: the original being's brain is scanned, and the resulting neurochemical template (or *engram*) is stored as data. The creation of this engram is a painless process, but it is time consuming and prohibitively expensive. Despite the great cost, some particularly narcissistic individuals have used ectypes to achieve a type of serial immortality, creating copies of themselves to survive their own passing, and leaving their estates to an ectype of themselves in their wills.

In most of civilized space, the legal status of ectypes is the same as that of any other organic being: they may be treated as property on a given world, or not, in much the same way that any other organic being might. The status of echoes is somewhat more variable. On most worlds, echoes are treated similar to androids. The laws pertaining to the creation of ectypes and echoes typically follows the model of laws pertaining to the creation of sentient androids. On worlds where

ectypes or echoes are granted the same rights as other sentient creatures, their creation is legally restricted or even prohibited altogether. On worlds where artificial life forms are treated as property, their creation is lightly regulated, if at all.

Energy

There are two main energy sources in use in civilized space: *electrogravitic cells* (often simply called "power packs"), and hybrid *fusion-singularity reactors* (often simply called "generators").

Electrogravitic cells are small and durable, making them suitable for a wide range of consumer products. Everything from androids to blasters to handheld communicators contain small electrogravitic cells. Electrogravitic cells are quite safe. When an electrogravitic cell fails or is damaged, it simply stops producing power.

Fusion-singularity reactors are too large and generate too much heat for use in portable devices. However, they produce far more power per cubic centimeter than electrogravitic cells, making them suitable for high-drain applications like starship weapons and warp engines. Fusion-singularity reactors are potentially dangerous when damaged, but they have multiple safeguards in place to prevent catastrophic failure. The "emergency self-destruct" system installed on some starships operates by bypassing these safeguards.

Fabricators

A fabricator is a device which manufactures complex objects from component substances. The component substances are typically in liquid or powder form, and must be replenished periodically. General purpose fabricators typically have reservoirs of metal, ceramic, and synthetic polymer dust, while specialized fabricators use substances specific to their application. Medical fabricators, for example, use reservoirs of protein, calcium, phosphorous, nucleotides, and synthetic biomatter, while food-grade fabricators use reservoirs of carbohydrates, triglycerides, protein, salt, and spices. Fabricators are commonplace throughout most of civilized space.

The Hypernet

In theory, the Hypernet is an information system linking all worlds throughout the Union, the New Imperium, and beyond. In practice, Hypernet data packets are distributed from one star system to another by large hyperwave transmitters, in a "peer to peer" fashion, and every major power intercepts and filters Hypernet data packets. This means that the Hypernet available to a citizen of the Union may be quite different to that available to an asset of the Malrechten. In fact, there are no two worlds in the known universe with the exact same Hypernet.

In general, starships are able to connect to the local Hypernet as long as they are within an astronomical unit (1.496×10^8 km) of a civilized world.

Despite the nigh-universal availability of the Hypernet, it can sometimes be useful to transport data in a discrete physical medium. Data cards are used for this purpose. A data card is roughly the size of a modern postage stamp (the exact physical size is 26 mm x 37 mm, for historical reasons that no one now remembers). A typical data card can hold approximately a petabyte -- enough room to store a full android personality matrix, or an engram of a living being (see *Ectypes And Echoes*).

Medicine

The quality of medical care in *ZeroSpace* is largely dependent on the patient's wealth. On wealthy worlds with progressive societies, genetic manipulation has eliminated most illnesses, while cloning and protein assemblers have made it possible to recover from virtually any injury. On less wealthy worlds, or worlds where that wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small portion of the population, illness and disease may simply be facts of life, and even a minor injury can result in permanent disability. Cybernetics exist, but are uncommon in wealthy societies: why have a mechanical arm or a synthetic eye, when an organic replacement can be grown in a matter of hours?

Warfare

Because automated electrogravitic defenses render most projectile weapons ineffective, combat in *ZeroSpace* is personal. All combat, even in the depths of space, takes place within visual range.

Initial salvos between military starships typically take place at a range of less than a dozen kilometers (which may seem like a long way, but that's peanuts in outer space). A smaller craft, like a star fighter, typically closes to within a few kilometers of its intended target if the target is a capital ship, or to within a kilometer if the other ship is also small and maneuverable.

Society

Currency

At one time, the Imperial prole, or "luck", was the standard unit of currency through the Old Imperium, and the currency in circulation was controlled directly by the Imperial Treasury. In the centuries since then, other systems of currency have arisen, each controlled by a regional authority, or in rare cases, by an agreed-upon algorithm for generating new currency.

Characters in *ZeroSpace* don't really need to worry about this. Throughout civilized space, all commonly recognized currency is cryptographically generated, fungible, and universally accepted. Whether it's called a prole, a credit, a dinar, or a bit, it all spends the same.

In practice, currency is just a particular form of data, often transferred from one individual's accounts to another, without any physical objects changing hands. As with all data, it can sometimes be useful to transport currency in a discrete physical medium. Data cards are used for this purpose. Due to its inherent cryptographic nature, currency can be stolen, but forging it isn't feasible.

Language

Universe (an artificial language created thousands of years ago) is the official language of the New Imperium, and is widely used throughout civilized space. Every civilized being understands Universe, although not every species is physically capable of speaking it.

Each alien species has one or more languages which they speak among themselves. Some alien civilizations have hundreds of indigenous languages. No one but an android will even attempt to learn more than a few of the most common languages.

Barring unusual circumstances, characters are assumed to be fluent in Universe, as well as any other languages they could reasonably be expected to know.

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