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Tolkien's Linguistics: The Artificial Languages of Quenya and Sindarin

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Abstract

J.R.R Tolkien is famously known for his intricate world of Middle-earth, and the complex history that shaped his fantasy world into a literary masterpiece. Before Tolkien was an author, he was a philologist who is now considered the father of artlangs and conlangs. The languages of Tolkien's Middle-earth, especially his Elvish languages, Quenya and Sindarin, are highly regarded for their grammatical completeness and their ability to function as natural languages instead of artificial ones. Artificial languages or "artlangs," have been popular for years ranging from Klingon found in *Star Trek* to Dothraki spoken in *The Game of Thrones* television series. Although artlangs were not a new trend when Tolkien created his Elvish languages, Quenya and Sindarin remain the most developed artificial languages created in literature. The first part of this paper discusses Tolkien's fascination with languages and his career in philology. He used characteristics of natural languages such as Welsh, Finnish, and Latin to create Quenya and Sindarin. This discussion leads to the topic of artificial languages and how Tolkien managed to create two complete languages along with alphabets, writing systems, lexicons, and grammatical structures. Next, Quenya and Sindarin are discussed in detail. In this section, there is a grammatical analysis of both languages, such as the consonant change, lenition, which is found in Welsh and also appears in Sindarin. Quenya, however, has a complex inflectional system much like that of Latin. Quenya and Sindarin are known not only for their complexities, but also for their association with the Elvish race. There is a discussion of the hypnotic qualities of Quenya because of its inflectional system, which could suggest something sinister about the Elves even though they appear as a force of good in *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*. This paper concludes with Tolkien's influences on popular culture. Tolkien fans and scholars are now attempting to synthesize Elvish so that it might one day be spoken in a world outside of *The Lord of the Rings* novels and films.

Keywords: J.R. R. Tolkien, Elvish, *The Lord of the Rings*

1. Introduction

"No language is justly studied merely as an aid to other purposes. It will in fact better serve other purposes, philological or historical, when it is studied for love, for itself."

-J.R.R Tolkien, "English and Welsh Essay"

The complexities of linguistics appeal to complex minds, which was the case for a young J.R.R. Tolkien who was so inspired by his love of languages that he created his own. Although "artificial languages" are not meant to be spoken outside of the realms of literature, they have become a trend, intriguing scholars, writers, and Tolkien fans alike. Tolkien's artificial languages transcended those constructed before his time and set the standard for those in modern fiction; however, Tolkien's Elvish languages—Quenya and Sindarin—remain the most developed artificial languages created in literature.

2. Tolkien's Influence On English

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy—Tolkien’s literary masterpiece—is known for its beautiful imagery, its complicated history, but most importantly, the various races and languages which give Middle-earth a realistic quality that parallels our own. It is a misconception that Tolkien’s languages were constructed specifically for their use in Middle-earth; instead, Tolkien wrote his novels as a world to house his linguistic creations (Lynch 8). Before the idea of *The Lord of the Rings* was ever conceived, Tolkien’s passion for linguistics inspired his career in philology. When Tolkien graduated from King Edwards High-School, he had learned nine languages, including Latin, Welsh, Old Norse, and Anglo-Saxon, all of which later inspired his creation of Quenya and Sindarin (34). After Tolkien graduated from Oxford’s Exeter College, he enlisted in World War I (56). Although the war was a tragic time in Tolkien’s life, his linguistic talent became even more apparent, ultimately aiding him in his ability to communicate with his fellow soldiers and family. Tolkien learned Morse Code and a complicated, ancient Greek system in which Tolkien used flags as message transmitters to relay important information to his fellow soldiers across the battlefield (60). Sending messages outside of his station was slightly more challenging than communicating with his own battalion, so Tolkien used his creative and linguistic skills to send messages to his family. Because incoming and outgoing letters were censored, Tolkien’s ability to understand languages inspired him to create a series of dots, which he used in private messages to his wife (59). This was only the beginning of Tolkien’s linguistic creations, and after World War I, his love for linguistics developed into an important asset not only for his novels, but for what was formerly known as *The New English Dictionary*—later renamed the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Before Tolkien was hired in 1918, the OED staff struggled with their research, making little progress. The original editor promised that the dictionary would be completed within the span of ten years; however, after five, the staff had only reached the word “Ant,” that is until Tolkien arrived (70). Tolkien’s main job was researching the meanings, pronunciations, and histories of new words. With his help, the production of the dictionary moved rapidly and was completed in 1928 (69). Tolkien had such an influence on the *Oxford English Dictionary*—now known as the best dictionary in the English language—that in 1970, when he was preparing *The Hobbit* for publication, the revision editors asked Tolkien to define the word “hobbit” as his final contribution to the OED (71).

Tolkien’s influence on the English language did not end with his work on the OED and his creation of artificial languages. Many fantasy writers have borrowed from Tolkien’s “word hoard” and they continue to do so (Gilliver et al. 229). A popular example is the borrowing of the word “lore-master,” which is how Boromir refers to Elrond in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. “Lore-master” was first traced back to the 15th century poem *Cursor Mundi*. It is speculated by many scholars that Tolkien was the first to use this word in Modern English, and it has been adopted by the fantasy genre (227). As Tolkien’s influence continues to grow, his unique words are assimilated into the English language and are added to the OED as they gain popularity (229).

Not only have Tolkien’s words impacted the fantasy genre, but the characteristics he gave to his creatures set the standard for those found in modern fantasy. Creatures such as the Elves and Dwarves had been mentioned in myths and literature for centuries before Tolkien used them in his novels (228). Tolkien did not just adapt the words which refer to the fantastical creatures that he and other authors borrowed, but he reestablished the concepts surrounding these creatures. The Dwarves and the Elves had long been neglected and ultimately forgotten by writers until Tolkien molded them into his own creation quite different from those used in past legends. Freed from their evil connotations, the Dwarves and the Elves became the forces of good who fought against the evil that spread throughout Middle-earth. Because of Tolkien, these creatures popularized and reformed into beings much different from those found in Anglo-Saxon myths (229).

The most intriguing aspect of any Tolkien novel is his use of artificial languages created from his own knowledge of philology and his love for linguistics. *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* consists of many languages spoken in Middle-earth including Dwarvish or Khuzdul, Entish, and the Black Speech, but the most developed are the two Elvish languages, Quenya and Sindarin (“The Lord”). Almost fifty years after publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien studies became popular as the linguistic intricacy of Quenya and Sindarin was discovered (Ringel 257). Although the concept of an “artlang” was not a new trend during Tolkien’s time, he created two almost completed languages along with lexicons, grammatical structures, and even a setting in which each language of Elvish thrived (Barnes et al. 108). Artlangs are no longer confined to the Tolkien fan base, but because of his extraordinary talent, Tolkien sparked a new development in linguistics as the desire to study and create artificial languages becomes increasingly popular in modern literature.

3. Artificial Languages

Artificial languages or “artlangs” are created for the purpose of adding completeness to an imaginary world (Barnes et al. 115), but as seen in Tolkien’s novels, their function is much more significant. “Artlangs” bring fantasy to life by transporting the readers into the fictional setting in which the language functions, but because they do not have real native speakers and are not grammatically complete, most artlangs could not be considered natural languages. Unlike artificial languages, “natural” or “native” languages are found in a realistic setting, are used by a group of real native speakers, and are grammatically complex and complete (103). In other words, a native language is actively implemented in our society while an artificial language is synthesized and is never meant to be spoken or written except for an author’s artistic purposes. Tolkien broke away from these conventions by creating two Elvish languages with a specific group of native speakers, the Elves, and a world in which each language could operate; therefore, Quenya and Sindarin, although artificial, function much like natural languages in Middle-earth with working grammatical structures, which are almost complete, and two writing systems including their alphabets (111-12). Artlangs, especially Quenya and Sindarin, are important to the formation of a fictional setting, and the fictional setting is just as important to the artlangs. Quenya and Sindarin would be unrealistic, and would serve little purpose, without a world where they could exist. Similarly, Middle-earth would not function as a sufficient natural world without the presence of language, because language adds a sense of “meaning and identity” to a fictional or realistic setting (115). The complexities of Middle-earth would be incomplete and unrealistic without languages to shape the identities and culture of each race, as well as each character spread throughout this fictional world. The complexities of Quenya and Sindarin would be just as insignificant without a world where they could function as languages. *The Lord of the Rings* transcends other fantasy novels because Middle-earth has many elements of reality, including the presence of natural languages and an established cultural identity that is individual to each race (115); therefore, both Quenya and Sindarin have some of the characteristics of natural languages because they add complexity and realistic qualities to Middle-earth, establish a cultural identity among each race found in Middle-earth, contain complicated grammatical systems that are characteristic of natural languages, and are able to function much like natural languages outside of Tolkien’s novels. Many artlangs have been created, but Quenya is the most developed artificial language in the fantasy genre (111). Quenya and Sindarin are studied extensively by Tolkien scholars because of their realistic qualities, but Tolkien realized that no language is truly complete without a historical background and a world in which it could thrive.

4. The Fictional Histories Of Quenya And Sindarin

All natural languages have a history, whether mysterious or detailed, and even though Quenya and Sindarin sprang from the mind of their creator, Tolkien gave his artificial languages a complex history to enhance their realistic qualities. Quenya and the languages of men developed naturally in Middle-earth. According to Elvish history, the Elves awoke and called themselves the Quendi (Noel 55-6). While on a hunt, Ormë—the creator of the original Elvish—discovered the Elves and called them Eldar in Quenya (Foster 392). Quenya changed slowly in Middle-earth, borrowing much of its vocabulary from the Valar—the fourteen greatest of the Ainur (‘holy ones’) (517, 5). When Thingol—one of the greatest of the Elven lords—heard his brother, a king, had been killed, he deemed Quenya as the language of the Kingslayers, and he forbade its use by the Sindarin Elves. Since it was banned from public use and because its liquid syllables gave it a musical quality, Quenya became a language of lore spoken by the Noldor, the Edain, and the Ents (409). Sindarin was adopted by the Noldorin exiles as a language for their daily use since they were no longer allowed to speak Quenya within the Elvish community (Noel 57). Unlike Quenya, Sindarin changed more quickly, and it was not as lyrical, making it unsuitable for poetry and song (Foster 455-56). During the Third Age—the Reign of Aragorn in Gondor—the Elves were nearly extinct in Middle-earth and as a result, more men spoke Quenya and Sindarin than did the Elves. During his reign in the Third Age, Aragorn preserved Quenya by giving his son a High-Elven name, Eldarion. After Aragorn’s death in the Fourth Age, Eldarion succeeded his father as King of Arnor and Gondor (Quenya). Little is known about the life of Sindarin in the Fourth Age, so whether this form of Elvish endured is unknown, but since Quenya was preserved through Aragorn’s descendants, it is possible that Sindarin survived as well (Sindarin). Although Elvish has an extensive fictional history, its original linguistic influences were quite real and were the root of Tolkien’s philological career before the birth of Elvish.

5. Linguistic Influences Of Quenya And Sindarin

As mentioned previously, Quenya and Sindarin are the most developed artificial languages in literature, and even though these languages are fictional, Tolkien used his philological background as his inspiration for Elvish. Because of his linguistic talent and knowledge of classical languages, Tolkien observed the four principles used by every natural language and applied each principle to breathe life into his own creations. First, each sound shift in a language should fit the “sense and the speaker.” Second, it takes time for languages to develop as governed by regular and natural laws. Third, different languages may relate to one another, and finally, languages, especially artificial languages, need a world in which they can thrive (Garth 226). These principles allowed Tolkien’s Elvish to transcend other artificial languages because Quenya and Sindarin were both developed according to the laws of natural languages.

Quenya is a highly inflected language known as “High Elvish” or “Elvish Latin,” and it is the oldest form of Elvish influenced by Finnish, Latin, Greek, and Celtic (Lynch 53). Philologists have observed that, much like Finnish, Latin, and Greek, Quenya adopted case endings for nouns such as the nominative and genitive cases, and it contains many adverbial cases with four numbers, including the plural and the dual plural. One case ending, the nominative case, is clearly displayed in “Galadriel’s Lament.” The nominative case appears in the first line marked by the letter “-i” in “*lassi*” (Quenya) when Galadriel says, “Ai! laurië lantar *lassi* súrinen” or as literally translated, “Alas! golden fall leaves wind-in” (Noel 39). Another example of case structure is the genitive singular which is marked by the suffix “-o” (Quenya). This is seen when Galadriel says, “Andúnë pella *Vardo* tellumar” or “west beyond (the borders of) Varda’s domes” (Noel 39).

Quenya does not have a definite article to mark a regular plural and when the plural is used, it refers to an entirety which is also done by using the “dual plural” as represented by the word “*lassi*” meaning “the leaves” in the example given above. The dual plural was used in many now extinct Indo-European languages like Ancient Greek—a parent language of Quenya. In Quenya, the dual plural is used as it would have been in many Indo-European languages, meaning it refers to a “natural a pair” (Quenya) like when Galadriel says, “ve fanyar máryat Elentári ortanë” or “like (white) clouds hands her two Star-Queen lifted up” (Noel 39). Here, the dual plural is seen in the word “máryat” meaning “her hands.” The suffix, “-t” marks the dual plural, changing the meaning to “her pair of hands” or “her two hands” (Quenya). Although the dual plural has been used in this instance, it does not appear often, and still remains a rare form in Quenya. Characteristics, such as cases and its use of the dual plural, along with its inflected nature, define Quenya as an archaic or classical language much like Latin and Finnish (Barnes et al. 114). As the name “Elvish Latin” suggests, Quenya’s inflectional system made the language suitable for lore and ceremony. It was spoken by the High-Elves and functioned as Latin did in society during the Middle Ages (Goering 68), and because of its complicated grammatical structures, only the elite, the noble, and the educated were able to learn Quenya (Ugolnik 24). Like Latin, Finnish and Celtic are highly inflected; therefore, because of the musical qualities provided by these languages, Quenya was suitable for song and was quite enchanting when spoken or sung (25).

Because of its linguistic influences, Quenya is a complex language with 2,500 words in its lexicon (Garth 234); it contains adjectives with number agreements (Hostetter 7) such as “laurië lantar *lassi*” or “the golden fall leaves”(Quenya), an incomplete pronominal system (Hostetter 7) such as “máryat,” meaning “her hands” and “hiruvalyë” meaning “thou wilt find” in which the pronouns are “rya” for “her” and “lyë” for “thou” (Quenya), and also verbs with the active and imperative mood along with the present, past, past perfect, and future tenses (Hostetter 7). In the present tense verb “*lantar*,” the “r” agrees with the plural subject of “*lassi*” meaning “fall” or “are falling” (Quenya). The past tense of a verb is indicated with the final vowel “-ë” as seen in the phrase, “ve fanyar máryat Elentári ortanë” translated as “like (white) clouds hands her two Star-Queen lifted up.” “Ortanë” functions as the past tense verb meaning “lifted up” (Noel 39). Quenya is an agglutinative language (Barnes et al. 111) which is a language that strings morphemes together into long words in order to express grammatical information (Millward et al. 440). This characteristic gives Quenya its complicated inflectional qualities and its flexible syntax, but it is more difficult to learn because of its many inflections. Since Quenya has a flexible syntax, it can have sentences composed of subject-verb-object, object-verb-subject, or object-subject-verb (Noel 70). The last construction, object-subject-verb, is similar to the sentence structure of Latin. An example from “Galadriel’s Lament” is, “máryat Elentari ortanë” or “her two hands Star-Queen lifted up” (70). Sindarin, however, has a sentence structure that is more consistent. It is known as a “head-left” language, meaning that in almost any phrase—which consists of the main word and any word or phrase that modifies it—the main word or “head word” will be on the left (Salo 194). A common example is found in a genitive phrase of “The King’s Letter, stating “aran Gondor ar Arnor” or “King of Gondor and Arnor” where the main word, “King” is on the left and the modifiers, “Gondor and Arnor,” follow (225-26). In Quenya, however, “máryat”

would be stated as “hands her two” instead of “her two hands” (Noel 39). The pronoun “her,” which would function as the head word in Sindarin, is found within the inflection “rya” of “máryat.” Unlike Sindarin, Quenya’s complex inflectional system allows syntactic flexibility and inconsistent sentence structures as seen in the example given above. The main word or the “subject” can appear almost anywhere in a sentence while the sentence still remains comprehensible. Because of Quenya’s complicated inflectional system and syntax, the relationship between Quenya and Sindarin was that of the High Speech versus the Common Speech. As stated previously, Quenya was learned by the wise men especially in Gondor long after the time of the Elves, while Sindarin was known by almost all of Gondor’s inhabitants (Hemmi 164).

Sindarin or “Grey Elven” is a paratactic language that has few inflections, resembling its Welsh counterpart (Hostetter 7). Tolkien’s Welsh influence when creating this form of Elvish is evident in a consonant change of the Welsh language called “lenition”—a sound change or mutation in which consonants change their phonological quality when they occur in certain syntactic or phonemic environments (Nevalainen et al.). Lenition can also be referred to as “softening” or “soft mutation” (Sindarin). When lenition occurs in Welsh, the change is often triggered in the middle of word when a consonant is wedged between two vowels known as the “intervocalic position” (Hostetter 6). In Welsh, lenition occurring in the intervocalic position weakened consonants to such an extent that they often disappeared. When analyzing Sindarin more extensively, philologists discovered that Tolkien replicated, though not exactly, the lenition patterns of the initial consonant mutation in Sindarin after those grammatical and phonological patterns specifically found in Welsh (6). In Sindarin, lenition often occurs after particles ending in a vowel, such as “i” meaning “the.” When the particle precedes a word, the particle and the main word are sometimes so closely associated they are grouped as a unit (Sindarin). An example of lenition as triggered by a particle can be found in the longest and most famous passage of Sindarin known as “The King’s Letter,” in which Aragorn informs Sam Gamgee about his plans to visit the Shire. Aragorn states in his letter: “Aragorn Arathornion Edhelharn anglenneatha i Varanduiniant erin dolothen Ethuil” meaning “Aragorn, son of Arathorn, Elf-stone, will approach the Bridge of Baranduin on the eighth of Spring” (Salo 225). Lenition is triggered by “i” in the word “Varanduinaint” where “v” is softened to a “b” forming the word “Baranduiniant”—translating to “bridge over the Brandywine” (226).

Another characteristic of Sindarin is its paratactic sentence structure, meaning it heavily relies on coordinating conjunctions (Millward et al. 449). Parataxis is clearly displayed throughout “The King’s Letter” with the conjunction “ar” or “and.” Aragorn states in his letter: “ennas aníra i-aran Gondor ar Arnor ar hír i Mbair Annui” meaning “and there the king of Gondor and Arnor and Lord of the Westlands . . .” This same structure is repeated again at the end when Aragorn says: “*Edregol e aníra tírad i Cherdir Perhael. . . Condír i Drann; ar Meril bess dín; ar Elanor, Meril, Glorfinninel, Eirien, sellath din ar Iorhael . . .*” or “He especially desires to see Master Samwise, . . . Mayor of the Shire; and his wife, Rose; and his daughters, Elanor, Rose, Goldilocks, Daisy; and his sons, Frodo . . .” (Salo 225-26). In these instances, the sentences are connected by the coordinating conjunction “ar” which gives the syntax a run-on quality instead of using subordination—which is the predominant structure of English—to form shorter, more complete sentences. Parataxis is one of the elements that contributes to Sindarin’s simplistic nature and unlike Quenya, makes it easier to learn. This Grey-Elven speech was spoken by the Sindar, and it changed more rapidly than Quenya. Because of its simplicity and lack of inflections, Sindarin is not as lyrical, making it unfit for song, but suitable for everyday use (Foster 455-56). Although related to Quenya in origin, Sindarin’s simplicity gave it the title of the “Common Speech” known by all of the Elves (Ugolnik 24) especially after Quenya was banned by Thingol (Foster 456). When the Sindar adopted Sindarin as their new tongue, it spread throughout the societies they ruled and quickly became a respected language because it was also spoken by the High-Elves (Hemmi 162). As other languages developed and spread throughout Middle-earth, Sindarin loaned many of its words especially to Westeron—the native language of men and hobbits (Foster 536). An example of a Sindarin loanword is the Westeron word “balc” or “horrible” which was seemingly borrowed from the Sindarin word “balch” or “cruel” (Westeron). In its early stages, Sindarin was known as Goldogrin or Gnomish (Hostetter 12). Tolkien developed Sindarin into a more complex language through borrowing between Quenya and Sindarin. An example of Quenya loanwords found in Sindarin were “arth” or “noble,” “caun” or “commander,” and “lalaith” or “laughter” (Salo 191). Not only did Sindarin become a completed language, but a relationship was formed between Sindarin and Quenya, adding plausibility to both languages.

6. Linguistic Relationships, Speakers, And Alphabets Of Quenya And Sindarin

Although the relationship between Quenya and Sindarin is strongly based on the borrowing of words, these Elvish tongues parallel their real world counterparts by sharing more between them than just their vocabularies. Quenya and

Sindarin have a cultural connection by functioning in Middle-earth much like Latin and Welsh in the Middle-Ages. Sindarin continued to change linguistically while Quenya remained constant, operating as a “book-language” as Latin does today (Goering 69).

The cultural connection between Quenya and Sindarin is also exemplified by their speakers. As mentioned previously, Quenya was spoken by the Eldar or the elite Elves, while Sindarin was the tongue of the Grey-Elves, who were inferior and less educated. In Tolkien’s novels, the Elves appear as pure creatures resistant to Sauron’s evil that permeated Middle-earth. They were an immortal race who were the objects of mystery and wonder, especially by Sam Gamgee and many other characters in *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*. Like their languages, the Elves were beautiful and perfect, but Tolkien hints at a malevolent undertone present in the Elvish race. In Anglo-Saxon myths, Elves were seen as malignant beings with vampiric tendencies who led humans into sexual temptation (Shippey 3). Although Tolkien altered this medieval perception by molding the Elves into creatures of pure goodness, he preserved a mysterious and potentially dangerous quality of the Elves which is evident in their language, Quenya. Quenya’s inflectional system provided it with a flexible syntax and a fluid nature. As a result, Quenya was musical and was said to be a language with “magical qualities” (Ugolnik 25). When the Fellowship entered the Golden Wood of Lothlórien in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, they expressed fear and uncertainty because of the Elves’ power. As the Fellowship wandered through the woods of Lothlórien, whispers and speculations spread throughout the group as they pondered Galadriel’s reputation as a sorceress. Tolkien displayed the Elves as virtuous, but because of the hypnotic power of Quenya and the uncertainty of those who entered the presence of the Elves, Tolkien did not completely disregard the Anglo-Saxon concept of these “malignant creatures”; instead, he left both views open to the reader’s interpretation by creating the Elves as a potential bridge between good and evil (Shippey 12).

The bond between two languages, such as Quenya and Sindarin, would not be tangible without an alphabet. There were two main alphabets present in the Elvish tongues during the Third Age, *Tengwar* or *Tiw* which is translated as “letters” and *Certar* or *Cirth* meaning “runes.” *Tengwar* was a cursive script written in brush or pen, while *Cirth* was a set of inscriptions that were scratched or incised. The more ancient of the two was the *Tengwar* because it was developed by the Eldar before they were exiled (Tolkien 440). The *Tengwar* alphabet was shared across various languages, apart from Elvish, found in Middle-earth. *Cirth*, compared to the *Tengwar*, was a relatively new alphabet created and used by the Sindar for inscribing names and brief memorials on wood or stone. The individual characters of *Cirth* were angular as were the characters of the futhorc, also known as the “runic alphabet,” except that the arrangement of the two differed. Throughout the Second Age, *Cirth* was popular to many races other than the Elves, including Dwarves, Men, and Orcs. Each race altered the alphabets to accommodate their skill level and for their individual purposes (Tolkien 441). These alphabets along with the other features discussed in this section proves that, although Tolkien never meant for his languages to be used outside of his own artistic purposes, he imagined a life for each of his artificial languages. His love for linguistics is still preserved in his novels because he created a world for them in which they could thrive long after he had perished.

7. The Elvish Impact On Society

Fifty years after Tolkien’s death, Tolkien studies peaked as Elvish became the center of fascination in the world of fantasy (Ringel 257). Tolkien fans all over the world desired to be a part of Middle-earth, and out of this desire arose two groups: those who wished to study Elvish and those who wished to speak it. Scholars sought to understand why Tolkien created these languages, how he did it, the mythologies behind each one, and how these languages related to one another. Then there were those who wished to speak Elvish by synthesizing Tolkien’s languages, filling in the grammatical gaps so that it might one day be possible to use Quenya and Sindarin in speech and writing. These synthesized forms were not found in Tolkien’s writings and were distinguished by the names Neo-Quenya and Neo-Sindarin. When these languages are spoken by Tolkien fans and by the actors in *The Lord of the Rings* films, the synthetic forms are used rather than the authentic languages found in *The Lord of the Rings* novels. One of the most famous Tolkien Linguistic scholars, David Salo, is highly revered by the Tolkien fan base because he was able to replicate new grammatical structures for Tolkien’s original Elvish languages based on his own knowledge of linguistics to fill in the grammatical gaps in each form of Elvish. At the age of eight, Salo developed a fascination with Quenya and Sindarin, eventually pursuing linguistic studies in college and writing a book on the grammatical structures of Sindarin called *A Gateway to Sindarin*. Because of his knowledge of languages, he continued to study Elvish, which earned him a position to re-create the Elvish languages for the *The Lord of the Rings* films (Cooke). By synthesizing Tolkien’s languages and developing Neo-Elvish so that it can be spoken by the Tolkien community, Salo has given fans the opportunity to understand the complexity of Tolkien’s languages. Salo stated on his website,

“Elfling” that his intention was ““to create sentences which would be intelligible to people who study the languages.”” Many fans praised Salo’s work because “they recognized and understood some of what they heard on the screen”” (Galadhorn).

With the help of Salo, Tolkien’s languages popularized and developed a trend that continues to thrive in the literary and film world today. As the years have passed since Tolkien’s death, many authors and linguists use Tolkien’s Elvish as a bases for what are referred to as “conlangs” or “constructed languages” which began to appear in television series, films, and novels. Tolkien is considered the “father of the conlang”, and even though his languages were incomplete, he laid the groundwork for scholars like David Peterson to develop languages such as Dothraki and the High Valyrian Tongue for the HBO series, *Game of Thrones* (Brennan). Languages such as Klingon from *The Star Trek* franchise and Na’vi spoken in *Avatar* also began to appear and were developed enough to be spoken or written by their fans. (Livingstone).

The popularity of conlangs throughout the 20 and 21st centuries as well as the learning process and recreation of Elvish by Tolkien fans and scholars is a testament to Tolkien’s influence on popular culture (Hostetter 23). If Tolkien’s novels were not respected and loved, Elvish would have died with its creator—a man who appreciated languages, and through his novels, encouraged others to do the same; however, Tolkien did not complete Quenya and Sindarin because they were used for his own “artistic” purposes, and were never meant for a practical or realistic use outside of Middle-earth. Because Tolkien left them incomplete and filled with grammatical gaps, many scholars recognize that it may be impossible to develop Tolkien’s languages enough for their use outside of the Neo-Elvish spoken in *The Lord of the Rings* films (23-4).

8. Conclusion

Although Tolkien fans may never be able to speak the languages of Middle-earth in daily conversation, Quenya and Sindarin have impacted the literary world, creating a new sense of community by uniting people with a common passion for studying the Elvish languages. As the linguistic and literary intrigue of Elvish continues to grow, Middle-earth becomes less of a fantasy and more of a reality, which was an idea Tolkien had never considered. *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* are novels that surpass other modern fantasy novels, not because of their literary intricacy or the complex history of Middle-earth, but because the story was first conceived by a passionate philologist who only wished to invent a world for his beloved languages.

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