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Invented Words and Languages in Fantasy Fiction

Wordplay frequently appears in fantasy fiction in the form of invented words and invented languages. Besides providing linguistic amusement for author and reader alike, this kind of wordplay has the additional benefit of helping to provide a framework for whatever imaginary world the author creates. Philosophical inquiries have supported the idea that language is intrinsically tied to our experience of the world. Accordingly, the invention of a new fantasy world is often accompanied by the invention of new words and languages that in some way reflect the nature of the world itself. The *Harry Potter* series, *Through The Looking-Glass*, and *The* *Lord of the Rings* are three important works of fantasy fiction in which invented words and languages help to shape the reader’s perception of the author’s fantasy world.

The idea that language and our perception of the world are inextricably entwined has been substantiated by studies in philosophy since the late 19th century. Among philosophers of language, Martin Heidegger was one of the first to explore “die Frage des Daseins”[[1]](#footnote-1) in a linguistic context. In his *Letter on Humanism*, he maintained that language is the home of the human being’s essence, stating, “The human being is not only a living creature who possesses language along with other capacities. Rather, language is the house of being in which the human being ek-sists[[2]](#footnote-2) by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of being, guarding it.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Heidegger’s student Hans-Georg Gadamer elaborated on this concept in *Wahrheit und Methode*, an inquiry into philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer echoed his mentor, writing, “Language is not just one of man’s possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all.” Expounding on the codependence of the two, he stated, “Not only is the world world only insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it. Thus, that language is originarily human means at the same time that man’s being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic.”[[4]](#footnote-4) For Gadamer and Heidegger, the meaning of language and the meaning of the world were fundamentally linked. Fantasy fiction reflects this philosophy in that the essence of the fantasy world is captured in the author’s invented words and languages, thus providing a linguistic foundation for the overall impression of the world that the author hopes to communicate.

Before proceeding onto a discussion of specific works of fantasy literature, it may be prudent to address the subject of linguistic relativity. A distinction must be made between this theory, which maintains that language can affect our perception of the world, and the thesis put forward in this paper. This paper holds that the invented languages in fantasy fiction reflect the very nature of the fantasy world – an idea which, in “real life,” has been consistently disproven. For instance, the fact that Guugu Yimithirr speakers have only words for absolute direction emphatically does not mean that they see the world in more “absolute terms” than speakers of English and other languages that have words for relative direction.[[5]](#footnote-5)

However, in fantasy fiction, which, “instead of imitating the perceived confusion and complexity of existence, tries to hint at an order and clarity underlying existence”[[6]](#footnote-6), words *do* often reflect the nature of the world they represent. The task of building a world from scratch is a weighty one,[[7]](#footnote-7) but incorporating invented words and languages can help by providing a sort of infrastructure that reinforces the picture of the world that the author hopes to convey.

In *Harry Potter*, Rowling’s neologisms (almost all of which refer to magical things, such as potions, animals, and spells) mark a divide between the magical and Muggle ways of life. During Hagrid’s first visit to Harry, for example, Harry’s unfamiliarity with words from the wizarding world betrays his ignorance thereof. After hearing that Harry doesn’t recognize the name “Hogwarts,” Hagrid turns on the Dursleys, demanding to know why Harry knows nothing “about ANYTHING.” When Harry protests that he can “do math and stuff,” Hagrid waves his hand, saying, “About our world, I mean. Your world. My world. Yer parents’ world.” Harry’s nonplussed reply is: “What world?” [[8]](#footnote-8)

Magical folk display a similar ignorance of Muggle terminology. In her paper “Word Magic: Defining Harry Potter’s World in New Terms,” Tessa VonHilsheimer writes, “Arthur [a wizard] is absolutely fascinated with scientific discoveries and inventions like ‘eckltricity’… In *Prisoner of Azkaban,* his son, Ron, not only doesn’t know how to use a telephone, but also does not know the word or what it means”[[9]](#footnote-9).The incident in question happens in the beginning of the third book, when Ron tries to call Harry at the Dursleys’ over the summer, with disastrous results (not knowing how to properly use a telephone, Ron roars into the receiver at Harry’s Uncle Vernon: “HELLO? HELLO? CAN YOU HEAR ME? I – WANT – TO – TALK – TO – HARRY– POTTER!”[[10]](#footnote-10)).

But the Muggle and wizarding worlds, while set apart, are not absolutely isolated from one another; they exist concurrently, with significant overlap at times. The train to Hogwarts, for example, leaves from Platform 9 ¾ at King’s Cross Station in London, and Hogwarts itself is located near the very real borough of Dufftown, Scotland. In fact, the side-by-side existence of the two means that the wizarding world must go to great lengths to avoid detection by Muggles. Reference is often made to the necessity of memory charms to wipe the memories of Muggles who witness wizards performing spells or accidentally stumble across magically charmed objects, such as dancing teapots.

The parallel existence of the Muggle and wizarding worlds is reflected in the nature of Rowling’s neologisms. Rowling’s invented words are often derived from foreign languages, particularly Latin. Consequently, many of her neologisms “sound like what they mean,” since readers instinctively associate the classical roots with cognate words in English. Thus, the relationship between the magical and the mundane is mimicked by that between the ordinary English language and Rowling’s more unusual neologisms.

A few examples may be in order to illustrate this point. A number of Rowling’s magical creatures have neologistic names, such as the dementors, which are able to suck out people’s souls and drain them of all happiness with something called the “kiss of death.” “Dementor” sounds like a suitably depressing word, but why? The answer is that the word “dementor,” besides bearing a resemblance to the word “tormentor,” can be traced back to the Late Latin *demens* (out of one’s mind), which is the root of the English words “demented” and “dementia.”

Other examples can be found in the names of characters, which are often in some way reflective of their natures or identities. “Malfoy,” for instance, is derived from the French *mal foi*, which translates to “bad faith.”[[11]](#footnote-11) The name belongs to the Malfoy family, all of whom are dark wizards and members of the House of Slytherin (a sinister, sibilant name befitting a House governed by dark magic and symbolized by a serpent; note the resemblance to the word “slither,” as well as the snake’s association with the legend of Biblical betrayal). The French *mal*, in turn, comes from the Latin *malum* (evil or harm), which has spawned a host of unpleasant English words, including “malady,” “malcontent,” “malevolent,” “malice,” and “malignant.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

The name of Harry’s nemesis in the series, Lord Voldemort, is also linguistically significant. According to Rowling, it should be pronounced with the silent “t” at the end,[[13]](#footnote-13) as in the French *mort* (death). In fact, *vol de mort* can be translated as “flight from death,” a reflection of Voldemort’s fierce desire for immortality. *Mort* is also derived from the Latin *mors* (death), which appears in English in the words “morbid,” “morgue,” and “postmortem.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Other words of both Latin and English influence include “Portkey” (a charmed object that transports wizards to certain locations) and “Pensieve”(a shallow stone basin into which people siphon their memories for later review). One of the roots of “Portkey” is the Latin *portare* (to carry), which appears in English as “transportation” and “portable”; the other is the word “key.” One might imagine a Portkey as the “key” to accessing a new location, the way a door key is used to enter a room.[[15]](#footnote-15) “Pensieve” can be traced back to the Latin *pensare* (to weigh or consider), which appears in English as “pensive,” and also to the word “sieve,” since wizards use Pensieves to sift through their memories, filtering out unwanted remembrances.

One of the few words of Germanic influence, “Durmstrang,” is a particularly interesting case: the name, given to the cold, dark, and foreboding wizarding school of the North, is a tinkering of *Sturm und Drang*, a literary movement that took place in Germany in the late 1700s, characterized by the free expression of extreme and sometimes violent emotions. In German, the name literally means “Storm and Drive,” although it is conventionally translated as “Storm and Stress,” a phrase that calls to mind the stringency and rigor for which Durmstrang was known. Rowling’s choice to use a word of Germanic influence may also have been a conscious one, since the German language is often perceived by speakers of English as being made up of harsh and discordant sounds.

A few words are also derived from English itself; the word “muggle,” for instance, is based on the British word “mug,” meaning a stupid or gullible person. As J.K. Rowling related in her 2004 online World Book Day Chat, “I was looking for a word that suggested both foolishness and loveability [sic]. The word ‘mug’ came to mind, for somebody gullible, and then I softened it. I think ‘muggle’ sounds quite cuddly.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

The magical and the mundane do, of course, inhabit two different worlds – Rowling’s use of invented words delineates this separation – but the incorporation of Latin roots means that the reader is more likely to perceive the two worlds as intertwined. The magical world and the wizarding world coexist within the same spatial limits, and their respective languages reflect the parallel nature of their relationship.

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll’s sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, invented words reflect a different image of the fantasy world in question – namely, that of a bizarre, baffling, and disorienting universe. As one might expect, Carroll’s neologisms are of quite a different nature. Almost all of them appear in a poem called “Jabberwocky,” which Alice discovers lying on a table in the mirror-room. The poem itself is written in mirror writing, and Alice must hold it up to the looking-glass so she can read what it says. The poem begins:

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The poem is full of other nonsense words – “Jabberwock,” “Bandersnatch,” “manxome,” and “uffish,” to name a few – and Alice is quite mystified as to what it all means. When she later encounters Humpty Dumpty, who professes to be a master of words – “I can manage the whole lot of them!” – she asks him to explain the poem to her, and he willingly obliges. A number of the words, it turns out, are portmanteaus; “slithy,” for example, is a combination of lithe and slimy, while “mimsy” is a pairing of flimsy and miserable. “Fruminous,” according to Lewis Carroll, is fuming and furious. In the preface to “The Hunting of the Snark,” Carroll articulates the logic behind his creation of the word:

Take the two words ‘fuming’ and ‘furious’. Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. Now open your mouth and speak. If your thoughts incline ever so little towards ‘fuming’, you will say ‘fuming-furious’; if they turn, by even a hair’s breadth, towards ‘furious’, you will say ‘furious-fuming’; but if you have the rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say ‘fruminous’.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Carroll also offered explanations for “uffish” and “burble”; in an 1877 letter to childhood friend Maud Standen, he wrote:

I am afraid I can't explain ‘vorpal blade’ for you - nor yet ‘tulgey wood’, but I did make an explanation once for ‘uffish thought’! It seemed to suggest a state of mind when the voice is gruffish, the manner roughish, and the temper huffish… as to ‘burble’ if you take the three verbs ‘bleat, murmur, and warble’ then select the bits I have underlined, it certainly makes ‘burble’ though I am afraid I can't distinctly remember having made it in that way.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The double nature of these words is an important point to recognize, because it reflects the duality of the mirror world as a whole. Carroll was obsessed with doubles; it is a theme that appears over and over again in *Through The Looking-Glass*. When Alice steps into the mirror room, she sees that “the chessmen [are] walking about, two and two!” There on the hearth are the Red King and the Red Queen, the White King and the White Queen, and two castles, strolling arm in arm.[[20]](#footnote-20) Other doubles in the story include Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum and Haigha and Hatta, the king’s messengers (one to come, and one to go). Carroll scholar Martin Gardner points out also that “it may not be accidental that there are several references to corkscrews, for the helix is an asymmetric structure with distinct right and left forms.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Linguistically, this duality is reflected in the idea of the portmanteau, which Humpty Dumpty explains as “two meanings packed up into one word.”

Not all of Carroll’s neologisms are portmanteaus, however; in fact, quite a few seem to be rather nonsensical. For example, toves are, according to Humpty Dumpty, “something like badgers – they’re something like lizards – and they’re something like corkscrews… Also they make their nests under sun-dials – also they live on cheese.” As for mome rath: “Well, a ‘rath’ is a sort of green pig: but ‘mome’ I’m not certain about. I think it’s short for ‘from home’ – meaning that they’d lost their way, you know.” However, to take these explanations at face value would be a mistake, since our friend Humpty is not exactly a stickler for accuracy: “When *I* use a word,” he tells Alice scornfully, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.” Consequently, the reader can never be quite sure of the meanings of even those words for which Humpty Dumpty offers explanations.

Turning to Carroll himself is not much help, since his explanations often contradict Humpty Dumpty’s interpretation. When Carroll published the first stanza of *Jabberwocky* in 1855 – in his periodical *Mischmasch*, under the name “Stanza of Anglo Saxon Poetry” – he also offered a literal translation of the first stanza: “It was evening, and the smooth active badgers were scratching and boring holes in the hill-side; all unhappy were the parrots, and the grave turtles squeaked out.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Does “slithy,” then, mean lithe and slimy, or smooth and active? Is a “mome rath” a green pig, wandering far from home, or an amphibious creature of a solemn disposition?[[23]](#footnote-23) Carroll never gave a definitive answer, and so the meanings of these nonsense words – if, indeed, there were any intended at all – remain a mystery.

If Carroll’s portmanteaus reflect the duality of the mirror world, then his nonsense words exemplify its strangeness. When Alice steps through the drawing room mirror, she enters a land of talking flowers, nursery rhyme characters, and a queen who at one point turns into a sheep. Many of the *Jabberwocky* neologisms have a similarly disconcerting effect, perhaps best described by Alice herself: “‘It seems very pretty,’ she said when she had finished it, ‘but it’s rather hard to understand!’ (You see she didn’t like to confess, even to herself, that she couldn’t make it out at all.) ‘Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don’t exactly know what they are!’” Like her bizarre, bewildering conversation with the Red Queen (and just about everyone else she meets through the looking-glass), the poem’s neologisms reaffirm the idea that something – or, rather, everything – about this world is markedly strange. Carroll’s invented words may not be pure nonsense, but there is just enough queerness about them to produce that peculiar sense of unease which characterizes Alice’s mirror world. [[24]](#footnote-24)

Lastly, we must consider Tolkien, master wordsmith and philologist extraordinaire. In *The Lord of the Rings*, invented languages do not merely reflect the nature of Tolkien’s fantasy world; they are the foundation upon which that world is built. Tolkien conceived of Quenya – which was later to become the high language of the elves – in 1910, before he even began thinking about the events that transpired in *The Hobbit*. It was not until 1914 that Tolkien began to formulate an Elven mythology to accompany his beloved language,[[25]](#footnote-25) and it was not until October of 1916, while he was recovering in the hospital after more than three months of fighting in the Battle of the Somme, that he made significant progress on *The Silmarillion* (a compendium of the mythology of Middle-earth).[[26]](#footnote-26)

Tolkien constructed a number of languages, to differing degrees of completion, but by far the two he worked on the most extensively were Quenya (High-elven) and Sindarin (everyday Elven speech), which were inspired by Finnish and Welsh, respectively. Despite the fact that Finnish and Welsh belong to different language families in the “real world,” he considered Quenya and Sindarin related, descended from the same “proto-Elven” tongue.[[27]](#footnote-27) In fact, when he constructed his languages, he always considered them from a historical context, as if they had developed organically. His method of language invention, as described by his son, Christopher, was thus:

He did not, after all, ‘invent’ new words and names arbitrarily: in principle, he devised from within the historical structure, proceeding from the ‘bases’ or primitive stems, adding suffix or prefix or forming compounds, deciding (or, as he would have said, ‘finding out’) when the word came into the language, following it through the regular changes in form that it would thus have undergone, and observing the possibilities of formal or semantic influence from other words in the course of its history. Such a word would then exist for him, and he would know it.

Tolkien scholar Helge Kåre Fauskanger[[28]](#footnote-28) cites an example from *The Etymologies*, a dictionary of the Elven languages edited by Christopher Tolkien. *Etymologies* lists the Quenya word for “three” as *neldë*, and the Sindarin as *neled.* Both are derived from the primitive stem *nel(ed).* C. Tolkien notes, however, that the Sindarin word for “three” was originally *neledh;* later, influenced by *canad*, “four,” it became *neled*. Fauskanger remarks:[[29]](#footnote-29) “One imagines the Elf counting *min*, *tad*, *neledh*, *canad*; one day he says *neled*, *canad* instead!”[[30]](#footnote-30)

As Tolkien developed the language of each race, he concurrently considered its history and how the two would influence one another. As he would later relate in his essay *A Secret Vice* – presented at an Esperanto conference in 1931 – “The making of language and mythology are related functions; to give your language individual flavour, it must have woven into it the threads of an individual mythology… your language construction will *breed* a mythology.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Thus, it was with great deliberation that Tolkien tailored each language to reflect the nature of its speakers (and vice versa).

Tolkien’s choice of Finnish and Welsh for his Elven tongues was a primarily aesthetic one, since he considered the phonetic and visual beauty of a language to be of paramount importance. The Elves of Middle-earth embodied wisdom and nobility; it was only proper for their language to do the same. In a 1955 lecture, titled *English and Welsh*[[32]](#footnote-32), he expounded on the concept of linguistic beauty, writing:

The basic pleasure in the phonetic elements of a language and in the style of their patterns… is of fundamental importance. This pleasure… is simpler, deeper-rooted, and yet more immediate than the enjoyment of literature… It can be strongly felt in the simple contemplation of a vocabulary, or even in a string of names… Most English-speaking people, for instance, will admit that *cellar door* is ‘beautiful’, especially if dissociated from its sense (and from its spelling). More beautiful than, say, *sky,* and far more beautiful than *beautiful.* Well then, in Welsh for me *cellar doors* are extraordinarily frequent, and moving to the higher dimension, the words in which there is pleasure in the contemplation of the association of form and sense are abundant.

Tolkien went on to describe how the beauty of the Welsh language had stirred his philologically attuned heartstrings:

“It struck at me in the names on coal-trucks; and drawing nearer, it flickered past on station-signs, a flash of strange spelling and a hint of a language old and yet alive; even in an *adeiladwyd 1887* [built in 1887]*,* ill-cut on a stone-slab, it pierced my linguistic heart.”

But Finnish was the greatest treasure of all – which is probably why he chose it as the basis for his High Elven tongue, as opposed to the Elven vernacular. In a letter written in 1955 to W. H. Auden, he commented on the magic of his “discovery in Exeter College library… of a Finnish Grammar. It was like discovering a complete wine-cellar filled with bottles of an amazing wine of a kind and flavour never tasted before. It quite intoxicated me…”[[33]](#footnote-33)

Only a modest sampling of Quenya and Sindarin appears in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but those words and names which Tolkien did include are undeniably lovely. There is “Legolas,” for example, which translates to “Green-leaf” in Sindarin; “Arwen,” meaning “noble maiden”; and “Mithrandir,” meaning “grey wanderer” (from *mith*, grey, and *rhandir,* pilgrim). Names of Quenya origin include “Mar-nu-Falmar,” “the land under the waves,” and “Eldarion” (the child of Arwen and Aragorn)*,* “son of the elves.”[[34]](#footnote-34) The Elven languages also appear in verse: Quenya in the *Namárië*, which Galadriel sings as the Company leaves Lórien, and Sindarin in *A Elbereth Gilthoniel*, a hymn that the hobbits hear the elves sing in the House of Elrond.

These two most beautiful of Tolkien’s languages were, of course, reserved for the Elves, who were all unusually handsome, highly skilled in the arts, quick-witted, and light of foot, not to mention immortal[[35]](#footnote-35). Three or four other Elven languages - Telerin, Doriathrin/Ilkorin, and Nandorin – are also known, though they exist mainly in the form of vocabulary lists from thirty to a few hundred items long.[[36]](#footnote-36)

A few others – namely, Rohirric and Westron – exist only in a historical sense, in that there is no evidence that Tolkien had in mind an actual grammar or vocabulary for them at all, beyond a few choice words and names. Thus Rohirric is always represented in the series by Old English, and Westron – the Common Speech – always by Modern English. One of the few Westron words we know of is *kuduk*, the word for “hobbit,” which was derived from the Rohirric *kûd-dûkan* (hole dweller). Tolkien, ever meticulous, even translated the etymology of the word, as “hobbit” is said to come from the Old English *holbytla*, meaning hole-builder.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The remaining languages that we know of exist in fragments. Of these, Entish, the Black Speech, and Khuzdul are perhaps the most interesting, as they, too, exemplify the natures of the races by which they are spoken. The Ents, for instance, are an ancient, giant, tree-like race – slow moving, solemn, cautious, and patient. According to Appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings*, which details the languages of Middle-Earth, their language exhibits similar qualities; in its original form, it was “unlike all others: slow, sonorous, agglomerated, repetitive, indeed long-winded; formed of a multiplicity of vowel-shades and distinctions of tone and quality…” However, the Ents also loved the ancient High-elven tongue, and so the speech that the Ents use in *The Lord of the Rings* is actually Quenya “strung together in Ent-fashion”. One example Tolkien gives is “*Taurelilómëa-tumbalemorna Tumbaletaurëa Lómëanor”* (literally, Forestmanyshadowed-deepvalleyblack Deepvalleyforested Gloomyland), which was Treebeard’s way of saying, “There is a shadow of the Great Darkness in the deep dales of the forest.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

Tolkien also makes a few notes on the Black Speech, the terrible language created by Sauron himself. What we know ofthe Black Speech is limited to a few phrases, names, and curses, but even those fragments are sufficient evidence that Tolkien intended it to be as vile and evil sounding as possible. The inscription on the ring, for example, which is in the Black Speech – *Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatulûk agh burzum-ishi krimpatul –* is a series of harsh, jarring consonants and guttural snarling sounds. In fact, when Tolkien received from a fan the gift of a steel drinking goblet engraved “with the terrible words seen on the Ring,” he was so repelled that he never drank from it, but used it only as an ashtray.[[39]](#footnote-39) Sauron’s henchmen, the Orcs, also appropriated some words from the Black Speech – such as *ghâsh*, “fire” – but they had no true language of their own creation. Filthy, ugly, and savage creatures that they were, they “took what they could of other tongues and perverted it to their own liking; yet they made only brutal jargons, scarcely sufficient even for their own needs, unless it were for curses and abuse.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

Finally, there are the Dwarves, a race which Tolkien describes as “secretive, laborious” and “retentive of the memory of injustices (and of benefits)”. Even after befriending the Men of Middle-Earth, they did not share their language but spoke it in secret, as “it had become a tongue of lore rather than a cradle-speech, and they tended it and guarded it as a treasure of the past.” Khuzdul thus is known only in a few samples of text, including names, the inscription on Balin's tomb, and their famous battle cry: “Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-mênu!” (Axes of the Dwarves! The Dwarves are upon you!)[[41]](#footnote-41).

Language is the heart of Tolkien’s world and the foundation of its structure. His languages reflect the nobility of the Elves, the introspection of the Ents, the evil of Sauron, and the secrecy of the Dwarves. They form a framework within which the entire history of Middle-earth can be understood and the nature of the world itself made sense of.

The appeal of the fantasy novel lies in its ability to whisk readers away to far-off lands in whirlwinds of magic and adventure. When a person reads such a novel, he expects to be taken beyond the everyday. Unfamiliar words and languages have a natural effect of “distancing from the ordinary”[[42]](#footnote-42), but they are also crucial in laying a linguistic foundation that reflects the nature of the fantasy world and thus shapes the reader’s understanding thereof.

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1. The question of Dasein. The word literally means “being-there,” but some translate it as “being-in-the-world.” Albert Hofstadter, philosopher and Heidegger scholar, defined Dasein as “the name for the being, das Seiende, which each human being is,” though he, too, emphasized its temporal connotations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Ek-sistence” was Capuzzi’s translation of Dasein. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Heidegger, Martin. “Letter on Humanism.” Translation by Frank A. Capuzzi. Web. 11 Jan. 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gadamer, Hans. Translation by W. Glen-Doepel, edited by Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. *Truth and Method*. 2nd, rev. ed. London: Continuum, 2004. Print: p. 440. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It does, however, mean that they are better at certain tasks than others, such as locating due North and remembering spatial arrays in terms of the cardinal directions; see Gumperz, John; Levinson, Stephen, eds. (1996), *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Print: p. 180-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “From Elfland to Poughkeepsie.” Guin, Ursula K., and Susan Wood. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. New York: Putnam, 1979. Print: p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I can attest to this. The Sims is a very stressful game. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Rowling, J. K.. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York: A.A. Levine Books, 1998. Print: p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. VonHilsheimer, Tessa. *Word Magic: Defining Harry Potter’s World in New Terms.* Dissertation, East Carolina University, 2011: p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Rowling, J. K.. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 1999. Print: p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Nilsen, Alleen Pace and Don L. F. Nilsen. “Latin Revived: Source-Based Vocabulary Lessons Courtesy of Harry Potter.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Oct., 2006): p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Nilsen: p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. “1999: Archive of J.K. Rowling Interviews.” *Accio Quote!*. Web. 12 Jan. 2013. <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/1099-orangecounty-takahama.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Nilsen: p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. One might also consider the Latin noun *porta* (gate). However, this root does not convey the same sense of movement as *portare*, which Rowling probably had in mind, as Harry’s movement with a Portkey is usually described as “a jerk behind the navel as though an invisible hook and line had dragged him forward” (Rowling, J. K.. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007. Print: p. 67), rather than a smooth disappearance and reappearance in another location. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. “1999: Archive of J.K. Rowling Interviews.” *Accio Quote!*. Web. 12 Jan. 2013. <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/1099-orangecounty-takahama.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Carroll, Lewis, and Martin Gardner. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-glass*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000. Print: p. 148-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Carroll, Lewis, and Frank Hinder. *The Hunting of the Snark*. Flemington: Carroll Foundation, 1989. Print: p. x. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “Jabberwocky.” *Lenny's Alice in Wonderland Site*. Web. 12 Jan. 2013. <http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/jabberwocky.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *The Annotated Alice*: p. 144-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *The Annotated Alice*: p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Rasula, Jed, and Steve McCaffery. *Imagining Language: An Anthology.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998. Print: p. 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. I tried looking up “mome rath” in the dictionary, but all it had was a picture of Professor Katz. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. A few of Carroll’s neologisms have actually been incorporated into the English lexicon, which may diminish the sense of strangeness for modern readers; “galumph” and “chortle” have been listed in the Oxford English Dictionary since 1898 and 1889, respectively. They are accredited to Lewis, although the meaning of the former has been distorted somewhat; the entry for “galumph” notes that the word, probably a portmanteau of “gallop” and “triumph,” originally meant “to march on exultingly with irregular bounding movements,” but now usually means “to gallop heavily; to bound or move clumsily or noisily.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Tolkien, J. R. R., Humphrey Carpenter, and Christopher Tolkien. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981. Print: p. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In a letter dated March 2nd, 1916, Tolkien had written to his wife, Edith, “I have done some touches to my nonsense fairy language – to its improvement. I often long to work at it and don't let myself ‘cause though I love it so it does seem such a mad hobby!” [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Letters*: p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Creator of the website Ardalambion, devoted to the languages of *The* *Lord of the Rings.* [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. “Tolkien's Not-So-Secret Vice.” *Ardalambion*. Web. 11 Jan. 2013. <folk.uib.no/hnohf/vice.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. I would also suggest that *tad*, “two,” may have been the source of this linguistic quirk. From “tad, neledh” to “tad, neled” seems an even smaller leap than from “neledh, canad” to “neled, canad,” since the accidental utterance of the hard *d* seems like it would be more likely to occur if uttered in the preceding syllable (rather than in the word following). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Tolkien, J. R. R., and Christopher Tolkien. *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays*. London: HarperCollins, 1997. Print: p. 211 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *The Monsters and the Critics*: p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Letters*: p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. “Name Lists.” *Merin Essi ar Quenteli!*. Web. 10 Jan. 2013. < http://www.realelvish.net/book\_names.php>. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Except if physically injured, or if they lost the will to live. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. “Tolkien's Not-So-Secret Vice.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Tolkien, J. R. R.. Appendix F. *The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Print: p. 1111. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Appendix F. *The Lord of the Rings*: p. 1105. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Letters*: p. 422. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Appendix F. *The Lord of the Rings*: p. 1105. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Appendix F. *The Lord of the Rings*: p. 1106. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See again Ursula Le Guin’s wonderful essay, “From Elfland to Poughkeepsie” (Guin, Ursula K., and Susan Wood. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. New York: Putnam, 1979. Print: p. 83-96). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)