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Use of a Constructed Language- Quenya,

in

"The Lord of the Rings": A Linguistic Study

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Introduction:-

“Constructed Language” is a language that has a phonology, morphology, syntax, and sometimes alphabet attributed to an individual human inventor. (Adelman, 2014) Language creation or “conlanging” is the process of inventing a new language. Though the extent to which a language is created varies, creators might include sound systems, grammars, and writing systems for their languages. Some creators are also interested in cosmogenesis: the creation of cultures and worlds in which their languages are used. (<http://conlang.org/press.php>, 2015)

The person who coined term “Constructed Language” was a Danish linguist Otto Jespersen in 1928. *Novial* was mainly based on Germanic and Romance languages and its grammar was influenced by English language. According to some linguists the term “artificial language” is a close synonym, some linguists believe that the term “artificial” has a derogatory connotation and thus should be avoided, while the other linguists prefer the terms “invented language” or “planned language”. Most of the linguists do not accept the core term and thus, constructed languages are best defined by their opposites: natural or ethnic languages.

There are a number of reasons for the people who create languages. Artlangs- “Elvish” language was created by J.R.R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*, Klingon in *Star Trek*, or Navi in *Avatar*. To prevent one being elevated over others or to make learning easier, International auxiliary languages are intended for communication between people of different native languages.

HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT OF QUENYA

Quenya, Noldorin and Ilkorin are the constructed languages of J.R.R. Tolkien, used by his fictional characters- the Elves in his works *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. Inside Tolkien’s fictive universe, Quenya is one of the many Elvish languages used by the Elves called ‘quendi’. The word Quenya is an adjective formed upon same stem as *Quendi* “elves”; the basic meaning is thus “Elvish, Quendian”. But the word *Quenya* was is also associated with the stem- “speak”, and indeed the



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stems *quet-* and *quen-* can be related. (<http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/quenya.htm>) It is also known as the elf-language. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the Noldors used Quenya primarily as a ritual or poetic language while the Vanyars retained the use of Quenya. Quenya was symbolic of the high status of the elves- the firstborn of the races of Middle-earth. The language was used extensively in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy as well as his posthumously published work *The Silmarillion*. The longest published text of Tolkien was the poem "Namarie". After Tolkien's death, scholars published his notes and manuscripts in the journals *Parma Eldalamberon* and *Vinyar Tengwar*.

J.R.R. Tolkien never intended to stop experimenting on his constructed languages, thus there were subjected to many revisions. During the first stage of its development i.e. 1910-1920, Quenya went through a number of major revisions in terms of its grammar, mostly in conjugation and the pronominal system. After the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, the grammar of Quenya drastically changed. And now it was defined as *late* Quenya. (Tolkien, *Outline of Phonology*, 2007) The later Quenya had different internal history, vocabulary, and grammar rules as described in the "Qenyaqesta" (Tolkien, "Qenyaqesta: The Quenya Phonology and Lexicon", 2006). In 1930s, Quenya was divided into proto languages like Lindarin, Telerin, Noldorin, Ilkorin, Danin, Taliska. It is believed that Tolkien borrowed five part plosive system of Proto-Indo-European, the ancestor of Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and others. In addition to that, Tolkien borrowed the dual grammatical rule from Old Greek, Old English or Sanskrit (Solopova, 2009)

Quenya was also influenced by Finnish and Latin and Greek language. J.R.R. Tolkien probably employed his idea of diglossia of Quenya with its highly codified variety.

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF "QUENYA"

J.R.R. Tolkien began to construct first Elven tongue in 1910-1911 while he was at the King Edward's School, Birmingham. He later called it Quenya, and in 1919, he changed the spelling to Quenya. After learning Latin, Greek, Spanish, and several ancient Germanic languages like Gothic, Old Norse and Old English, he created cryptographic codes. The Finnish language is considered to be the highest inspiration for Tolkien to construct Quenya. Tolkien writes:

The Ingredients in Quenya are various....

Finnish, which I came across when I



Had first begun to construct a 'mythology' 'was dominant influence, but that has been much reduced. It survives in some features: such as the absence of voiced stops b, d, g and the inflexional endings –sse, -nna and –llo: the personal possessives are also expressed by suffixes; there is no gender.

(Tolkien, From a letter to W.R. Matthews, 1964)





ELEMENTARY PHONOLOGY

Quenya has five vowels, a, e, i, o, u short and long; the long vowels are marked with an accent mark: á, é, í, ó, ú. The vowel a is frequently used. The pronunciation of these vowels resembles with Spanish or Italian. Tolkien has also made us of diaeresis in order to clarify the pronunciation for readers who use English as their communication. (<http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/quenya.htm>)

Neo Quenya has 7 diphthongs : ai, oi, ui, au, eu, iu, ei out of which first four are frequently used and last 3 are rarely used.

The Quenya has 6 main places of articulation of its consonants: labial, dental, alveolar-alveolar ridge, palatal and velar.

		Labial	Labiodental /Dental	Alveolar Plain/Postalveolar	Palatal	Vela r	Glottal
	Bilabial						
Plosive	Voiced	b	d			g	
	Voiceless	p	t			k	
Fricative	Voiced		v				
	Voiceless		f	s	(ç)	x	h
Nasal		M		n			
Liquid				l r		ŋ	
Semivowel s	Voiced	w					
	Voiceless	(m)					



(Tolkien, Outline of Phonology)

There are double consonants: cc, ll, mm, nn, pp, rr, tt, ss. They should be pronounced longer than their single counterparts

Stress

Generally in Quenya, stress depends on a long syllable. A syllable is called long if it has a long vowel, a diphthong or a short vowel followed by a consonant cluster. Generally a word with more than two syllables is stressed on the penultimate syllable if it is long and on the third syllable from behind.

GRAMMAR

Quenya is an agglutinative subject/verb/object language. It has a free word order as most information is expressed morphologically rather than syntactically and secondly it is an inflectional language like Latin.

Nouns

Quenyan nouns can have maximum four numbers: singular, general plural, particular/partitive plural and dual. However not all the Quenyan nouns have four numbers since some of them do not have singular variant referring to a single object, such as *armar* meaning goods.

Pronouns

The following table reflects various pronouns of Quenyan language.

Quenyan Pronouns	Subjective	English Pronouns
1 st person singular	<i>nyë</i>	I
2 nd person familiar singular	<i>tyë</i>	Thou
2 nd person formal/polite singular	<i>lyë</i>	You
3 rd animate person singular	<i>Stë</i>	He, she
3 rd inanimate person singular	<i>Ssa</i>	It



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Impersonal singular agreement		
1 st person plural inclusive	<i>lwě/lvě</i>	We (with you)
1 st person plural exclusive	<i>Lmě</i>	We (without you)
2 nd person imperious/familiar plural	<i>Ncě</i>	You guys, you all
2 nd person formal/polite plural	<i>ldě/-llě</i>	You
3 rd animate person plural	<i>Ntě</i>	They
3 rd inanimate person plural	<i>Nta</i>	They
Impersonal plural agreement	<i>R</i>	
1 st person dual inclusive	<i>ngwě/-nquě</i>	You and i
1 st person dual exclusive	<i>mmě/-nwě</i>	(s) he and i
2 nd person imperious/familiar dual	<i>xě/-ccě</i>	You two
2 nd person formal/polite dual	<i>llě/-stě</i>	Both of you
3 rd person dual	<i>sto/-ttě</i>	Those two
Impersonal dual agreement	<i>t</i>	

(wikipedia)

Verbs

Quenyan verbs are divided into two categories: basic-primary and A-stems-derived verbs. The smallest group is termed as basic verbs. It represents a basic root with no addition. For example, the verb *mat*-“eat” and *tul* –“come”.

The second larger group of Quenyan verbs are termed as derived verbs. They all have a final vowel –a but it is not part of the basic root. The endings –ya and –ta are the commonest. For instance *tul* means “come” but *tulta* becomes “to summon” and *tulya* means “to bring”. (FAUSKANGER)



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Special Verbs

Quenya has two verbs that correspond to the English verb “to be”: *na* and *ea*

Na is used in the following cases:

-to connect two nouns

Sambe sina na caimasan “this room is a bedroom”

-to connect a noun and an adjective:

Samba sine nar pitye “these rooms are small”

Ea is use to denote existence at a location:

I harma ea I sambesse “ the treasure is in the room”

Ean tauresse “ I am in a wood”

The Article

Quenya has only a definite article **i** and it is unchangeable

A word in the singular without article is translated with an indefinite article

For instance elen “a star”; i elen “ the star”

eleni “stars”; i eleni “the stars”

Tenses

The linguists have been able to recognize five tenses of Quenya: Aorist, present, past, perfect, and future (<http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/quenya.htm>)

The Aorist expresses general as well as time less truths i.e. I carrir quettar meaning “those who make words.” (<http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/quenya.htm>)

Generally an explicitly ongoing activity is identified is referred with a Quenyan present tense. For instance, the verb *sil* means “to shine” and *sil* becomes “is shining”, the verb *mat* is “to eat” and *mata* “is eating”.



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Quenyan past tense will always have the final vowel- *ë*. For instance *ora*- “to urge”, and its past tense will be **oranë**.

English language has no unitary perfect tense but has a circumlocution verb “have” or “has”. Perfect tense of Quenya has the ending- **ië**. For instance *mat*- “to eat” will be *amatië*, *tec*- “to write” will be *etecië*. (has eaten) (<http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/quenya.htm>)

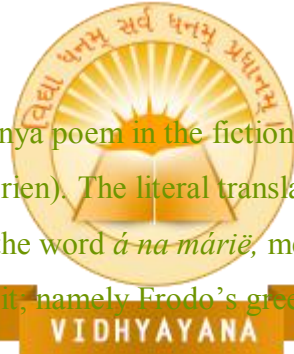
The Quenyan future tense has a suffix called *-uva*. For instance, the future tense of the basic verb *mar*- “dwell, abide” will be *ma ruva*. (Tolkien, "Words, Phrases and Passages")

Vocabulary

As of 2008, about 25,000 elvish-quenyan words have been published as much of Tolkien’s writing in Elvish-Quenyan language has remained unpublished (Kclockzo, 2008)

Use of Quenya in *Namárië*

Namárië is the longest Quenya poem in the fiction *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Rings*, book 2, chapter “Farewell to Lorien). The literal translation of the word *Namárië* is “farewell”. The Quenya word *Namárië* is taken from the word *á-na márië*, meaning literally “be well”. The first sentence of this poem is uttered by a Hobbit, namely Frodo’s greeting to elves: *elen sila lumen omentielvo*



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Conclusion

The most striking feature of Quenya is that it is highly agglutinative language, meaning that multiple affixes are often added to words to express grammatical function. Its grammar is influenced by the Finnish language, the grammatical inspiration also comes from Latin and Greek; the phonological rules also more or less influenced by the Finnish language as well. The development of Quenya can be seen in the fictional works, letters, and linguistic papers of J.R.R. Tolkien, published posthumously in the journals like *Vinyan Tengwar* and *Parma Eldalamberon*. Quenya is one of many constructed languages introduced over the years by science fiction and fantasy writers. (Tolkien, From a letter to W.R. Matthews)



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