Research Paper on Fictional Language

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# Abstract

My name it Tyné Hazel. I was born and raised in New York. A question asked when you’re younger is: what would you like to be when you grow up? And like every stereotypical kid’s answer I said “veterinarian.” I enjoyed animals. I loved knowing facts about them. I even studied dogs and cat breeds. Though, something that I noticed about myself was that I enjoyed writing since I was in elementary school whether it be a small nonsensical poem to small assignment to just revising a sentence to make it aesthetically pleasing to the eye and euphonious to my ears.

I knew I wanted to pursue writing. I was infatuated with it. I never knew where this infatuation came from but it stuck with me. Despite having this love for writing, I rarely picked up a book. But that all changed in high school when I was given a literature assignment, and my teacher instructed me to pick a book from her library to read. After, I discovered that reading wasn’t as terrible as I made it seem and I picked up another, and that was how my obsession with reading started. I read the best sellers. Some books I've read were “The Hunger Games” trilogy by Susan Collins, “The Pretty Little Liars” series by Sara Shepard, “The Mortal instruments” by Cassandra Clare, “The Divergent” trilogy by Veronica Roth and “The Twilight Saga” by Stephanie Meyer.

This passion with reading had me contemplating if I could write an actual story since I’d read so many before. I started writing after I graduated from high school. At first, writing didn’t come easy to me. It wasn’t as simple as I thought it would be. After months of frustration and writer’s block,I had gotten some tips to advance my skills, and it started coming naturally.

I enjoyed writing and reading for several years in my life, so I considered pursuing a career in English literature, despite the many choices I had throughout adolescence like art, music, sports, yet, I quickly disregarded those thoughts because those were merely a hobbies.

Literature was the answer to the posing question of my future. Pursuing the career of my choice will help excel.

*Keywords*; Invented language, fictional language, constructed language. Dothraki, Klingon, Parseltongue, Linguistics, Star Trek, Game of Thrones,

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Main Body

My name is Tyne Hazel and I’m a transfer student. I’m transferring from Queensborough to City Tech I switched my major to Professional Technical Writing. The major is not where I would like to stay regarding my career, but it is definitely the first step. In lieu of writing manuals, business letters, memos, reports, and white papers which is undoubtedly PTW, I wanted to write creative stories. Generally speaking, to be a talented creative writer, one would have to be an avid reader. Reading and writing fiction are my passion. I would like to bring people out of their element and jump into a fictional world similar to the plethora of different categorized series I’ve come across while reading: Harry Potter, The Lord of The Rings, Star Trek, etc. It wasn’t hard to decipher what made these few franchises so compelling to their fans; it’s the usage of invented and fictional languages that helped thrive the franchise and make it seem more real to those it caters to. These fictional languages were adding to the plot and pushing the story along.

 Game of Thrones was one of those shows I disregarded for the sole fact I was never a fan of medieval fantasy, so I didn't bother to monopolize my time with watching something I scarcely found to be a decent show. But after being deprived of good shows during one winter break I decided to give it a chance and to watch what everyone deemed one of the best, if not the best-- shows out there and was blown away with what I experienced: the compelling plot, the visuals: landscape, the witty humor, unlikely character pairings, multiple storylines, no clear cut hero character, an author who isn’t afraid to kill off favorite characters, complex characters, controversial scenes, chess-like politics and culture pulled from history that cut together in a way that’s new but still familiar. *A Game of Thrones: A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R Martin should be considered one of the most brilliant works of our generations because its use of fictional language, lore, and symbolism.

Though I put the author, George R.R Martin on a high pedestal, I know he simply didn't make everything up on his own, he got his inspiration from real history. That is why when reading about places such as *Braavos* and *Winterfell* one can really envision being there in person. The cities are described in great detail and feel like they’re places one can actually visit. It’s a rich and absorbing world jammed packed with scenes inspired from real events from history, real culture, mythology and even sometimes--if there weren’t magical elements such as the knight king, white walkers, the army of the dead, dragons, giants, and skin changers--one may forget this wasn’t a popular fantasy novel.

After reading the article “*Game of Thrones’ Season 7 Finale Draws Record 16.5 Million Viewers,”* Joe Otterson claims that, “The “Game of Thrones” Season 7 finale set another ratings high with 16.5 million viewers on Sunday night, according to Nielsen data. That number includes people who watched the episode as it aired and night-of streams. The linear ratings alone put the series at 12.1 million viewers, making it the most-watched episode in series history. The 12.1 million number also represents a 36% increase over the Season 6 finale, which drew 8.9 million viewers in 2016.” Many people watch it.

Fictional languages are an interesting case. Many people are interested in fictional worlds and want to feel immersed in them. As for me, I watch Game of Thrones. Listening to a character such as Daenarys Targaryen reciting a speech so vehemently in fictional languages makes fans want her to win all the more.

Fictional languages are proof that technology improves the storytelling because they allow fans to be captivated in fictitious worlds like Westeros and Esos. Salikoko Mufwene argues that language is a technology and that language can be used as a tool/technology to create new, albeit fictional ones. Mufwene’s “Language as Technology: Some Questions Evolutionary Linguistic Should Address,” redefines language from a natural ability like Fromkin, to a technology broadly defined. A system used to get the work of communication done for to solve the problem communication within an agree upon system of encoding, and deciphering sound utterances. He argues that because language is “a means to fulfill purpose” and mean “can be knowledge when used or explain something else. Practice, when extended to a solution to a problem or science as in scientific and technology. When scientific knowledge assigned to a practical thing in order to make our life easier to help us solve problem.” all of which are broad definition for technology.

Language itself is technology Mufwene say. Or a means to fulfil a purpose namely communications. There are some connections between Victoria Fromkin and Mufwene. Fromkin defines language as the sound that human beings use to communicate by sending or encoding and receiving decoded sounds we produce. She tells us the system of speech and mutual understanding of that speech by others who use that language by knowing language. “You have the capacity to produce sounds that signifying certain meanings and understand or interpret the same sounds produced by others.” After reading *In the Land of Invented Language*, Okrent claims, “The “language as mathematics” idea, as well will see, had a resurgence to the late 1950’s, another era of science and computation, it would be used as tool of inquiry and experiment, a way to discover how language, might work and how our minds might work.” In the land of invented languages: a celebration of linguistic creativity, madness, and genius.” (pg. 73. 2nd paragraph. 2010; Okrent, Arika.)

One of the first fictional languages that I encountered is Parseltongue. It is an important component in the Harry Potter novels by J. K. Rowling. Parseltongue is the language of serpents and those who acquire the rare skill to speak with them. A person who is able to speak parseltongue are known as a Parselmouth. Knowing Parseltongue isn’t the same as learning any language. It’s not learned, it’s innately known. It is a rare language with the exception of the direct descendant from Salazar Slytherin; Harry Potter, Herpo the Foul, and Voldemort, can use this fictional language, too. With the ability to speak Parseltongue Harry communicates this to the Horcrux.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows by* J.K Rowling. “"I'm going to ask it to open, using Parseltongue," said Harry. The answer came so readily to his lips that thought that he had always known it deep down: Perhaps it had taken his recent encounter with Nagini to make him realize it. He looked at the serpentine S, inlaid with glittering green stones: It was easy to visualize it as a miniscule snake, curled upon the cold rock.” Harry knew he had to use parseltongue for the Slytherin heirloom, in order to command it and open the lock to the chamber of secrets.

Next fictional language, is the granddaddy of fictional language. Klingon was created by Marc Okrand and his intention with the language was for it to sound unreal, not like human language at all, though the actors were unable to perform these sounds with the sounds a human are capable of making, he had to incorporate sounds that already exist. Klingon has a vocabulary of three thousand words and only increasing due to the duration it had been around. There are about 100 people who can speak fluent Klingon, and much more who speak it partially. After reading the article, “*Who Speaks Klingon,”* Michael Adam claims, “In total, 109 people responded, 79 of whom identified as Klingon speakers. This level of response may not be enough to build a profile of the average Klingon user, but most of this surveys’ findings are corroborated by those of an earlier web survey conducted in Sweden, with 604 respondents (Annernas 1996), and an interview study with nineteen advanced Klingonists by Wahlgren (2004).” Some people even went out of their way to take exams simply for mastery. I even hear that the Shakespearean masterpiece *Hamlet* was translated with Klingon. It’s only improving in time. Nick Partridge from *Explore the Museum in Klingon* claimed that, “The Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum is one of the galaxy’s most popular tourist destinations, and celebrates infinite diversity in infinite combinations among its visitors. Although we are fairly certain there are no longer undercover Klingon agents on staff, we welcome citizens of the planet Kronos to explore the history of flight on Earth alongside our terrestrial visitors.” Patridge goes along saying, “To help increase Klingon visitorship, we turned to Earth’s premier extraterrestrial linguist and former Smithsonian post-doctoral fellow, Marc Okrand. Okrand developed the Klingon and Vulcan languages for the Star Trek franchise, and was kind enough to translate and record a 60-minute highlights tour below and in the Museum’s new app ‘Go Flight’.”

David Peterson said, “I used linguistic evolution as a characterization tool. Basically giving in sight to the history of the speakers,” In Season 1 of Game of Thrones, Danaerys Targaryen is sold to a warlord, Khal Drogo, who naturally speaks Dothraki and the actor--Jason Momoa-- articulates it well, and Danaerys, by default has to learn it. One can hear she’s not a native speaker, and that she doesn’t speak it well at all until later on in season 6; it is brandished that she’s grown as a fluent speaker in the language when commanding her dragons, the unsullied or the Dothraki army, and it’s senseful from a storytelling point. It’s not just the actress getting more proficient at her job, it’s for the character’s, Danaerys Targaryen, development. It’s the series showing us the story of her becoming a better speaker on this language. Jan Hayon Rolwes, who is the dialect coach in Game of Thrones, practices Valyrian and Dothraki with the actors claims the actor’s pick it up well. Jason Momoa can be pegged as a native speaker in the language. That’s amazing considering the actor who doesn’t speak in any language other than English. It’s it a fully developed language compared to most when it comes to vocabulary. It has about 3,000 words, Valyrian only has 1,000, but it is growing.

Peterson said, “To create an authentic sounding language one needs to employ an authentic methodology.” After reading the article, *Questions Answered: Invented Languages*, The Opinion page recited, “The result was an embarrassment of riches which took Paul and Arika some time to sort through and cogitate upon. Schott’s Vocab is profoundly grateful to Paul and Arika for such detailed and thought-provoking answers, and to the co-vocabularists who posed the questions.

Q.

*What is the process for “making up” a language? —**[Hillary](https://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/12/q-and-a-sprechen-sie-elvish-esperanto-klingon-navi/?apage=3#comment-62129)*

*Do you just go on inspiration, or is there some preconceived structure to your work? In what order do you proceed? —* [Tom Heines](https://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/12/q-and-a-sprechen-sie-elvish-esperanto-klingon-navi/?apage=3#comment-62137)

*Where do you start? —**[Ryan](https://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/12/q-and-a-sprechen-sie-elvish-esperanto-klingon-navi/?apage=3#comment-62175)*

A.

**Arika Okrent**: Throughout history, languages have been invented for many different reasons – to expose the truth of the universe, to bring humanity together, to avoid the pitfalls of natural languages – and inventors have used methods tailored to their specific purposes and influenced by trends in the way people have thought about language in different eras. We are in an era now where the majority of languages being invented are invented for artistic purposes alone. Not to heal the world, or cure language, but to express a personal idea of what a language could or might be.

These languages, (called **conlangs**, or **artlangs**) and the processes people use for making them up, vary a great deal. Some begin by imagining a whole world or culture, and then feel they want to make a language to fill out that culture. Some begin out of a love for a natural language – they just love Italian, or Navajo, or Japanese, and they want to take the thing they love about it (the way it sounds, the way it creates new words, the way it encodes social roles) and riff on it artistically. Some are philosophically curious about the relationship between language, mind, and society, and end up drafting “thought experiments” to see what kind of relationships a language might theoretically capture. Some just want to come up with the most bizarre, original language they can think of. And some (OK, vanishingly few) are contracted by major motion picture studios to make a language that’s an artistic match for an already imagined world.

So there may be as many processes for making up a language as there are reasons for making it in the first place. However, there is a structure to the process that is generally followed, and this structure, unsurprisingly is cribbed from the way people study natural languages – by focusing, in turn, on phonology (the sound system), morphology (the system for creating words), syntax (the system for creating sentences) and the lexicon (the vocabulary, or the stuff you have to just memorize).”

In conclusion, writing creatively is what I want to flourish in and PTW is a foot into the door in helping with my career path. Being a decent creative writer, doesn’t necessarily mean a talented one, but I would like an attempt to captivate people and stimulate their minds by jumping into a fictional world similar to Hogwarts in Harry Potter, The Shire in The Lord of The Rings, etc. The inner nerd in me always tend to get unreasonably excited when reading/ watching my favorite series/novel. Posing questions in my head like who will teams up with who, who dies next, who could possibly rule this one world I’m so immersed. There should be no reason for someone to get this excited over a televisions show but it feels like do much more than a television show, it feels real, captivating, especially with: their compelling plot, the visuals, the witty humor, unlikely character pairings, multiple storylines, and no clear cut hero character, an author who isn’t afraid to kill off any of its favorite, complex characters, controversial scenes, architecture, artifacts, chess-like politics and culture pulled from history that cut together in a way that new but still familiar. *A Game of Thrones: A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R Martin should be considered one of the most brilliant works of our generations because its use of constructed language, lore, and symbolism. It’s the usage of invented languages that helped thrive the franchise and make it seem more real to those it caters to. These fictional languages were adding to the plot to push the story along. My life would feel complete if I made someone feel the way A Game of Thrones makes me feel experiencing something so vivid.

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