

Quenya: The Influence of the Greek Language

Prologue

For all those who do not know what Quenya is, it is one of the many languages that J.R.R. Tolkien created for his much loved Elves. Quenya is the most developed language that we presently have in our hands now and also contains the greatest vocabulary. All the linguists and die hard Tolkien fans, who have studied the author's languages, would surely know that our beloved writer Tolkien based this language mainly on three other languages; Finnish, Latin and Greek.

It is well known that Tolkien not only "borrowed" the grammatical structure of Finnish but also Finnish vocabulary. Tolkien imbedded into Quenya grammar the phenomenon of endings added to nouns for the possessive and prepositions for example, rather than independent words preceding the nouns eg. Co**anya** = house **my**.

Also Tolkien used Finnish words such as the noun tie(=path) and the verb tul-(=to come) for his Quenya language which retain the same meaning. In other cases the words did not retain the same meaning. eg kuuma Finnish for hot, Quenya for the Void. Added to this preposition endings and pronouns such as -sse(=to) are very similar to Finnish -ssa/ssae(=to). In general the influence to Quenya by the Finnish language is large and evident, perhaps the greatest.

Latin was also an influence to Quenya in the form of soft sounds (also a characteristic of Finnish) and pronunciation. Moreover Quenya words have an accent on the second to last syllable unless a consonant cluster before that exists. Eg. COa(=house) coa**NYA**(=my house) This is a characteristic of Latin.

Despite all that I hadn't read a single article on the influence of the Greek language on Quenya. It is well known that Greek fascinated and intrigued Tolkien. He was a fan of Greek throughout his life. I read numerous times the sentence "quenya was influenced by Finnish mostly but also Greek and Latin" but no article pin pointed the exact ways Greek influenced Quenya.

In order to shed some light on the matter but also to help the understanding of Quenya I have decided to write this Essay. Hopefully it will help the Quenya linguists in their effort to expand and develop the grammar and vocabulary of Quenya. You will hopefully be as much surprised as I was while studying the language. I slowly noticed both hidden and obvious similarities between the languages.

Who am I?

That is surely a question many of you must have had while reading the prologue. My name is Andreas Andreou and I come from Cyprus. I am 19 years old. I have graduated from high school and currently I am serving in the Cyprus National Guard army (obligatory 25month long service). I am neither a Ph.D in linguistics nor an expert in Tolkien's work on Languages. But I do speak Greek-Cypriot, Greek, English, German and

French and I possess basic knowledge in Spanish and Japanese. As you can see I am not a linguist but I could be one! Enough about me, on to the truly interesting things!

I. The Sounds of Quenya and Greek

Firstly let's take a look on the consonants that exist in both languages. Note that I am not using actual Greek Letters. One reason is that not all are familiar with them, not all have Greek fonts installed and finally it will be easier for users of the Latin alphabet to see the similarities. I am using a transliteration of the Greek alphabet to Latin which can be found in Encarta:

Greek Alphabet							
Upper Case	Lower Case	Name	Transliteration	Upper Case	Lower Case	Name	Transliteration
A	α	alpha	a	N	ν	nu	n
B	β	beta	b	Ξ	ξ	xi	x
Γ	γ	gamma	g	Ο	ο	omicron	o (short)
Δ	δ	delta	d	Π	π	pi	p
E	ε	epsilon	e (short)	Ρ	ρ	rho	r
Z	ζ	zeta	z	Σ	σ, ς	sigma	s
H	η	eta	e (long)	Τ	τ	tau	t
Θ	θ	theta	th	Υ	υ	upsilon	u
I	ι	iota	i	Φ	φ	phi	ph
K	κ	kappa	k	Χ	χ	chi	ch
Λ	λ	lambda	l	Ψ	ψ	psi	ps
M	μ	mu	m	Ω	ω	omega	o (long)

Consonants:

Quenya	Greek
t, p, c	t, p, c(=k)
d, b, g	g(=y)
s, f, h, hw, hy	s, f(=ph), h(=ch)
v	v(=b)
n, ng, m	n, m
l, hl	l
r, hr	r
w, y	w(=b) y(=g)

We clearly see from the table that Greek and Quenya share many consonants. Some are consonant clusters in Latin transliteration eg. f=ph but nevertheless they represent the exact same sound and thus they are the same consonants. Note that the Greek Delta is dh in sound rather than d and g(gamma) is the Quenya 'y' in sound.

Some letters in Quenya are consonant clusters in Greek and vice versa. This is a clear evidence of transliteration of Greek to Latin alphabet which quite possibly Tolkien could have used! These are:

Quenya	Greek
d, b, g	nt, mp, gk
hl, hr,	(c)hl, (c)hr
ks, ps	ks, ps

In the first and second row as you may have noticed are Quenya letters which are consonant clusters in Greek and in the third row we Quenya consonant clusters which are Greek letters.

Some consonant clusters they share. All the consonant clusters for Quenya are:

cc, ht, hl, hr, hty, lc, ld, ll, lm, lp, lqu, lt, lv, lw, ly, mb, mm, mn, mp, my, nc, nd, ng, ngw, nn, nqu, nt, nty, nw, ny, ps, pt, qu (for cw), rc, rd, rm, rn, rqu, rr, rt, rty, rs, rw, ry, sc, squ, ss, st, sty, sw, ts, tt, tw, ty, x (for ks).

They share:

Ht, hl, hr, ll, lm, lp, lt, lv(=lw), ly (y=g in Greek) mb, mm, mn, mp, ng, nt, pt, rm, rn, rr, rt, rs, rw, ry, sc, ss, st, sw(=sv), ts, tt, x(=ks)

They may not seem many but many are ones which are not found in Finnish nor Latin(?). Nevertheless like indicated before, Quenya and Greek share many letters and specific consonant clusters in a special way.

Vowels:

Greek has 7 vowels but sound wise *iota=eta=upsilon* and *omega=omicron*. Therefore the Greek vowels in Quenya are *a, e, i, o*. The sound of “u” in Quenya is given in Greek by the vowel cluster (*diphthong*) *ou*.

The *diphthongs* in Quenya are **ai, au, oi, ui, eu, iu**. Now these diphthongs are rather rare if not existent in English, Finnish and Latin. Some of them on the other hand are very common in Greek. The diphthongs *ai, au, oi, iu* and *eu* exist in Greek. Only *ui* does not seem to exist in Greek but in the Greek Cypriot dialect it does exist. The following table shows that the diphthongs are used in very common words thus their frequency and appearance is high, a possible reason for Tolkien actually noticing them and using them for Quenya. Notice though that they have different sounds.

Diphthong	Greek Word	Meaning	Sound in Greek
Ai	kai	and	bed
Au	auto	this (neutral genus singular)	after
Oi	oi	the (masculine plural)	bee

Iu	ktiriou	building's	ew
Eu	eukolo	easy	effort

Strangely enough over at <http://move.to/ardalambion> the “vowel clusters” ie, ei, ea are not identified as diphthongs. Maybe I am mistaken but nevertheless all three are also found in Greek where Tolkien must have burrowed them from since I do not believe they exist in Finnish and English.

II. Grammar Similarities of Greek and Quenya.

Plural Formation of nouns:

Quenya has two ways of forming plurals for its nouns. When the noun ends in *-a, -o, -i, -ie and -u* we add the consonant *-r* to form the plural. This is totally irrelevant with Greek. The other form of plural formation in Quenya is the addition of *-i* for words that end in a consonant and the replacement of words that end in *-e* with *-i*. This is when things get interesting and there is a similarity with Greek.

Greek also has many forms of plural formation for nouns depending on the vowel that the nouns end in. For example:

Words that end in *-o* have it replaced with *-a*:
eg. augo(egg) -> auga (eggs)

Words that end in *-a* or *-e* (long) have it replaced with *-es*:
eg. gunaika (woman) -> gunai~~k~~es (women)
koree (daughter) -> kores (daughters)

Of course there are exceptions to these rules but they are irrelevant to this essay. The one plural formation of Greek that is similar to Quenya is the following:

Words that end in *-os* have it replaced with *-oi*:
eg. anthrwpos (human) -> anthrwpoi(humans)

You may wonder what does *-oi* have to do with *-i*. In Greek they have the exact same sound since in Greek *eta=upsilon=iota=oi=ei* sound wise. Therefore the plural ending in sound is the same in Greek as in Quenya.

Definite and Indefinite Article:

In Quenya there is no special word to be used as an indefinite article. In Greek there is no special word either. The English word for ‘a’ in Greek is given by the word ‘enas’ meaning one or even by the definite articles which are turned to indefinite by the sentence structure (any elaboration on the latter is irrelevant to this essay).

Moreover for Quenya 'i' acts as a definite article for both singular and plural. In Greek exist the following articles:

Genus	Article Singular	Article Plural
Masculine	o	oi
Feminine	ee(eta)	oi
Neutral	to	ta

We see that the article for Feminine nouns in singular is e(long) and for both masculine and feminine nouns in plural is oi. Both in terms of sound are the same as the definite article of 'i' for Quenya.

Verbs & Tenses:

This is a part of the Quenya grammar where I spotted a minor hidden similarity with Greek.

Present Tense:

All verbs in Quenya end in either a *consonant* or the vowel *a*. Yet when the present tense is formed all verbs end in *-a*. In the same way all verbs in Greek have their form ends in *-a* yet in the past continuous and past tense for the first person. For example:

Quenya present tense:

Lanta -> lantea (to fall-> is falling)

Tir -> Tiira (to watch -> is watching)

Lala -> Laalea (to laugh -> is laughing)

Greek Past Tense and Past Tense Continuous:

Pefto -> epe~~s~~a & epefta (to fall -> I fell & I was falling)

Parakoloutho -> parakolouthisa & parakolouthousa (to watch -> I watched & I was watching)

Trecho -> etreksa & etrecha (to run -> I ran & I was running)

Moreover one more surprising thing is that *some* verbs in Greek present continuous have the ending *-a* in the third person. Note that the Greek present tense is the same as the present continuous, which is more or less applicable for Quenya as well.

Greek Present Continuous/Present Tense for third person:

Milo -> Mila (to speak -> he/she/it speaks)

Tragoudo -> Tragouda (to sing -> he/she/it sings)

Koito -> Koita (to look -> he/she/it looks)

It is even more likely that our dear writer Tolkien was inspired by this Greek grammatical phenomenon to form the Present Tense and Present Continuous for Quenya.

Past Tense:

In Quenya the past tense is formed by adding *-ne* to the verb. For *-a* ending verbs there is no exception only few irregular verbs. But in consonant verbs if the *-ne* forms an impossible consonant cluster it changes position and sometimes even form.

Eg. *quet* -> **quente** (speak -> spoke)
wil -> **wille** (fly -> flew)

In Greek the ending *-ne* is the same for the past tense continuous of the verb 'to go' in the third person.

Genus	Third person	Verb to go = <i>peegainw</i>
Masculine	<i>Autos</i> (he)	Peegaine (went)
Feminine	<i>Auth</i> (she)	Peegaine (went)
Neutral	<i>Auto</i> (it)	Peegaine (went)

The ending may apply for this verb alone in Greek but it is a greatly important verb and almost all verbs in Greek end in *-e* in the past tense continuous and past tense for the third person like all Quenya verbs end in *-e* in the past tense. For example:

Greek Past Tense for third person:

Auth chorepse -> She danced
Autos eipe -> He said

Greek Past Continuous for third person:

Autos tragoudhouse -> He was singing
Auto choreve -> It was dancing

Perfect Tense:

While reading about the Perfect Tense for Quenya I was surprised because the rule for forming the perfect tense led to a specific group of Quenya verbs looking like Greek verbs in the past tense for the third person.

Generally the rule for forming the perfect tense in Quenya involves taking the stem vowel of the verb and placing it in front of the verb as a prefix and then adding the ending *-ie* to consonant verbs and replacing the *-a* with *-ie* in a-verbs. Stem vowel

lengthening is also applied if the vowel is not followed by a consonant cluster. For Example:

Lanta (to fall) -> **alantie** (has fallen)
Tec (to write) -> **eteecie** (has written)
Cen (to see) -> **eceenie**

The verbs that look like Greek ones in the past tense for the third person are the verbs with a stem vowel of 'e' like *tec-* and *quet-* (to speak).

Pefto (to fall) -> **epesa** (I fell)
Grafo (to write) -> **egrapsa** (I wrote)

As you can see generally if the verb starts with a consonant in Greek we usually add an *e-* in front of the verb along with the change of the verbs ending to form the plural. (some irregular verbs exist) Also if the Greek verb starts with a vowel with add no *e-*. This is like Quenya where it does not allow the stem vowel of a verb starting in a vowel to be added in front.

It seems to me that Tolkien did draw the formation of the Past Tense and the Perfect Tense of Greek to form the ones in Quenya. It appears that he had exchanged the formation of the tenses in Greek to create the forms in Quenya.

Genitive:

Genitive:

Genitive in Quenya is used in order to indicate that:

- a) Something has its origin from some other thing
- b) Something is part of something else
- c) Something is the topic of a tale

Its actual meaning in English is 'of' eg. of a leave/leaves. It is formed by adding *-o* to the noun unless it ends with *-a* when in this case we replace *-a* with *-o*. Plural is formed with *-on*.

In Greek the corresponding grammatical phenomenon for this is as follows. Firstly it is formed by placing the articles *tou/this/tou* = of (masc./fem./neutral singular) in front of the word and changing the ending according to the vowel at the end of the noun eg. *-as* -> *a*.

In the Greek singular form there is no similarity but when we come to the plural things get more interesting. The article for 'of' changes to 'ton' for all genus and the ending for words to *-on*.

Eg. *tou anthropou* -> **ton anthropon** (of a human -> of humans)
tou andra -> **ton andron** (of (a/the) man -> of (the) men)
ths ginaikas -> **ton ginaikon** (of (a/the) woman -> of (the) women)

tou paidhiou -> ton paidion (of (a/the) child -> of (the) children)

The ending phonologically is the same as Quenya as in Greek. Note that the sound 'o' in Greek for genitive is actually the vowel omega. Possesive and Genitive in Greek is formed in the same way.

Possessive Endings:

One similarity between Quenya and Greek is that possessive pronouns are possessive endings in both languages. Greek though does not add the ending to the word itself but it placed right after it as a separate word.

Possessive Endings for Quenya

Possessor	Singular	Plural
1.Person	-nya (my)	-lma -mma -lva (our)
2.Person	-lya (thy)	-lla (thy)
3.Person	-tya (your)	-cca (your)
4.Person	-rya (his/hers/it)	-nta (their)

Greek Possessive Endings:

Possessor	Singular	Plural
1.Person	mou (my)	mas (our)
2.Person	sas (thy)	sas (thy)
3.Person	sou (your)	sas (your)
4.Person	tou/this/tou (his/hers/it)	tous (their)

Have you noticed the further existing subtitle similarities? Firstly the Quenya possessive ending for exclusive plural is *-mma* and for Greek *mas*, which is similar. Furthermore as you can see from the table the sound 'a' in the possessive endings is also common in Greek especially for the plural. 'A' is the same vowel that makes personal endings to possessive ones in Quenya by replacing *-e* with *-a*.

Emphatic Pronouns:

In Quenya we have emphatic pronouns which emphasize the person pronoun. They are similar to Greek personal pronouns.

Possessor	Singular Quenya	Singular Greek	Plural Quenya	Plural Greek

1.Person	Inye(I)	Ego (I)	Emme, elme, elve (we)	Emeis (we)
2.Person	Elye (thou)	Eseis (thou)	Elle (thou)	Eseis (thou)
3.Person	Etye (you)	Esi (you)	Ecce (you)	Eseis (you)
4.Person.	Ero(he), Ere(she), Erye(it)	Autos (he), Autee (she), Auto (it)	Ente (they)	Autoi (they), Autes(they), Auta (they)

I believe it is more than clear that most pronouns in Greek and Quenya they start with *e-* and have 'e' in their second syllable. In addition they seem to have a similar structure by containing the same sounds.

Negation Using Ume:

Quenya uses the word *ume* or the prefix *u-* in front of verbs and adjectives for the English word '(is/are) not'. Greek uses mostly the word *dhen* but also has the ancient *ou(/ouk)* which is the same sound as 'u' in Quenya.

The Dative:

The Dative in Quenya is used for English expressions involving mainly 'for someone' or 'to someone'. It is formed by adding *-n* to the singular or plural form of a noun for the corresponding desired result. The Greek word for 'for' is 'gia'. It is similar to Greek because *-n* is added to masculine nouns in the singular that follow the word 'gia'. For example:

Quenya: *lassen* (for a leaf)

Greek: *gia enan anthropon.* (for a human)

Gia ton antran (for the man)

To be more accurate the above rule of adding *-n* is mostly found in Ancient Greek and not Modern. Nevertheless Tolkien studied Ancient Greek is as well.

The Perfect Passive Particle

The Perfect Passive Particle is formed by adding directly to the verb stem *-na* for singular and *-ina* for plural. The endings in Greek are different. (in bold)

In this example we take the Greek verb 'dino' (to give).

Possessor	Singular	Plural
1.Person (I am/We are)	Dosmenos/ nee (given) (different if u are a male or female)	-noi -nes -na
2.Person (You are)	Dosmenos/ nee/no	-noi -nes -na
3.Person (He/she/it is /	Dosmenos/ nee/no	-noi -nes -na

they are)		
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You can clearly see that the ending for forming the perfect passive participle for the plural neutral genus in Greek is *-na*. *Dosmena* = (They) Given. This ending is identical to Quenya but for singular.

Modern and Primitive Imperative:

In modern Quenya the Imperative is formed by adding “aa” in front of the infinitive form of a verb. This is not quite similar to Greek. The Archaic Quenya formed the imperative by adding *-a* to the consonant verbs and leaving the *a*-verbs as they are. For example:

Heca! (Be gone)
Ela! (Look)

The examples of the verbs above are still in use in Modern Quenya. This form is closer to Greek as some verbs have their imperative also ending in *-a* and surprisingly enough the Quenya imperative for look, *Ela!*, is the same word for, *Come!*, for Greek. Other Greek verbs that have similar imperative are:

Trecha! (Run!)
Koita! (Look!)
Stamata! (Stop!)

Locative

Although I know that probably all believe that *-sse* in Quenya came directly from Finnish I was surprised to see that this grammatical rule is also observed in Greek though slightly differently.

Quenya:
Coasse (in a house)
Tauresse (in a forest)

Greek:
Se spiti (in a house)
Se dhasos (in a forest)

It seemed to me as equally as possible that Tolkien took the Greek version of **se** and applied Quenya grammatical rules to it; thus it turned into the ending *-sse*.

Endings:

In Quenya when we wish to say 'son of...' we use the ending *-ion*. Eg. Feanaaro aranion (=Feanor, son of the king) In Greek it is similar. Eg. Feanaaro, **ios** tou vasilia. **Ios** in greek (pronounced as i-os) means son as Quenya's **-ion**.

Secondly when we wish to say that something is little in Quenya we can add to the noun *-lle*. This is similar to Greek as both use the sound 'l' at the end.

Eg. Anthropos (man) -> Anthropoulis (little man)

Ginaika (woman) -> Ginaikoula (little woman)

Prepositions:

The Quenya preposition for 'towards/to' is *na*. This is identical to the Greek word 'na' which means 'to' but only in front of declined verbs to make them infinitive.

Eg. I want **to** go -> Thelo **na** pao

I want **to** sing -> Thelo **na** tragoudhiso

The Quenya preposition for 'if' is 'ai'. The Greek is 'an'.

Eg. Ai ceenan orco cee autuvan -> If I would see an orc, I would run

An evlepa ena ork tha etrecha. -> If I would see an orc, I would run.

Wishes using nai:

In Quenya we express wishes by setting in front of an ordinary sentence the word *nai* which is translated as "may it be that":

Eg. **Nai** veryuvante I osto! (May they protect the town!)

Nai hiruvalye I harma! (May you find the treasure!)

In Greek expressing a hope or a wish is formed with 'makari na'

Eg. **Makari na** prostatepsoun tin polee! (May they protect the town!)

Makari na vrite ton thisavro. (May you find the treasure)

In some cases in Greek we use the past tense of the verb 'to be' along with 'makari na' to express wishes.

Eg. **Makari na eetane** alitheia! (May it was true!)

Makari na eetane psemata! (May it was a lie!)

It is quite obvious that both languages have the syllable 'na' in front of a normal sentence to express wishes. It is also noticeable that the Quenya 'nai' is found in Greek in a hidden way. In the second way to form wishes in Greek we have 'na ee-'. A possible inspiration for Tolkien perhaps.

Conclusion:

I really do hope that I made a thorough and good enough essay to show the similarities between Quenya and Greek. Some similarities are subtle and hidden while others are strong. I undoubtedly believe that Finnish had a major influence to Quenya but I also undoubtedly believe that Greek had perhaps an equally important influence as well since there are so many similarities between Greek and Quenya at all levels of grammar. This is an essay to see what other language influenced Quenya in an effort to understand this beautiful language more. It also aims to help the experts in Quenya in their effort to fill in vocabulary and grammatical gaps in Quenya. Thank you for reading. Namaarie!

III. Vocabulary Similarities

These are just **some** words in Quenya that are similar or the same to Greek:

Quenya	English	Greek	English
Ora- (v)	to urge/to impel	Ora(n)	Hour
Calima (adj)	Bright	Kalimma (n)	Cover
Metta(n)	End	Meta (n)	After(wards)
Pee (n)	Lip	Pe (v-imperative)	Say
Oron(n)	Mountain	Oros (n)	Mountain
Na (prep)	To	Na (prep)	To
Elen (n)	Star	Eleni (name)	Torch
Cala (n)	Light	Kala (adj)	Fine, Ok, Alright, Well, Good
Apsa (n)	Cooked food, Meat	Apsa (n)	Pepper hot
Isse(n)	Art, Lore	Eisai (v)	You Are
Heri (n)	Lady	Cheri (n)	Hand
Caano (n)	Commander	Kano (v)	To do
Siire (n)	River	Seira (n)	Row
Alma (n)	Good Fortune, Wealth	Alma (n)	Jump forward.
Pata- (v)	To Tap	Pata (v)	Step on.
Papa- (v)	To Tremble	Papas (n)	Father, Priest
Riima (n)	Border	Rima (n)	Verb

Aara (n)	Sunrise		Ara	Therefore
Cee	Maybe		Kai	And
Maa	Hand		Ma	But
Lusta (adj)	Empty		Lousta (v- imperative)	Shower them/Throw water at them
Yerna (adj)	Old		Gerna (v)	He/she/it grows old
Asto (n)	Dust		Asto (v -imperative)	Let it go
Orco (n)	Orc		Orcos (n)	Oath

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