

## **Beauty Lies in the Ear of the Beholder: Phonaesthetics of Constructed Languages in a Multilingual Perspective**

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Constructed languages (conlangs) in the fantasy and sci-fi genre are usually designed to convey a specific expression of the people speaking these languages. Two famous examples are the Elvish language Quenya (Tolkien) and Klingon (Star Trek) which were intended by their creators to sound particularly pleasing and harsh, respectively. Such conlangs, created for popular movies, video games or books, are often tailored to cater to an English-speaking audience. Our previous studies (Mooshammer et al., 2023) have confirmed that most conlangs make an impression as intended on native German speakers, even when they were produced in a neutral tone without emotional involvement or special sound effects. The Elvish languages Quenya and Sindarin were rated significantly more positively than Dothraki (Game of Thrones) and Klingon by German participants.

In order to test whether our findings are stable across typologically diverse natural languages, we ran several online rating experiments. We tested 56 stimuli from 14 conlangs (Neo-Orkish, Quenya, Sindarin, Khuzdul, Adûnaic, Klingon, Vulcan, Atlantean, Dothraki, Na'vi, Kesh, Fjerdan, Horn, and ƆUiƆuid) on three Likert scales (pleasant–unpleasant, good–evil, peaceful–aggressive) using the Percy Platform (Draxler 2017). The stimuli were produced by two native speakers of German (1 male, 1 female) in a neutral voice without emotion. The experiment was translated into 14 natural languages: Arabic, Bulgarian, Cantonese, English, Georgian, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Khoekhoe, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish.

The results indicate that some conlangs, such as Klingon, seem to employ more universal phonaesthetic means in conveying the intended impressions whereas others depend more on the native language of the listeners. We will discuss which phonetic and phonological features explain best the universal and language-specific aspects of phonaesthetic preferences.

### **References**

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Mooshammer, C., Bobeck, D., Hornecker, H., Meinhardt, K., Olin, O., Walch, M., Xia, Q. (2024). Does Orkish sound evil? Perception of fantasy languages and their phonetic and phonological characteristics. *Language and Speech*.