An Introduction to Phonetics
with Elvish Writing
Will Monroe
Splash! Teaching Program
April 17, 2011
A Disclaimer
The **Tengwar**

Appendix E

**WRITING AND SPELLING**

1

**A PRONUNCIATION OF WORDS AND NAMES**

The Westron or Common Speech has been entirely translated into English equivalents. All Hobbit names and special words are intended to be pronounced accordingly: for example, *Bolger* has *g* as in *bottle*, and *mahtom* rhymes with *fathom*.

In transcribing the ancient scripts I have tried to represent the original sounds (so far as they can be determined) with fair accuracy, and at the same time to produce words and names that do not look uncouth in modern letters. The High-elven Quenya has been spelt as much like Latin as its sounds allowed. For this reason *c* has been preferred to *k* in both Eldarin languages.

The following points may be observed by those who are interested in such details.

**CONSONANTS**

C has always the value of *k* even before *e* and *i*: *celb* ‘silver’ should be pronounced as *kelb*.

CH is only used to represent the sound heard in *bach* (in German or Welsh), not that in English *church*. Except at the end of words and before *t* this sound was weakened to *h* in the speech of Gondor; and that change has been recognized in a few names, such as *Rohan*, *Rohanin* (*Inarhai* is a Númenorean name.)

DH represents the voiced (soft) *th* of English *these clothes*. It is usually related to *d*, as in S. *golabh* ‘tree’ compared with Q. *aldu*; but is sometimes derived from *n + r*, as in *Carnadras* ‘Redhorn’ from *carnunnas*.

F represents *f*, except at the end of words, where it is used to represent the sound of *v* (as in English *of*): *Nindalf*, *Fladhrif*.

Illustrated by ALAN LEE

[Image credit: (left) Lee, Alan, from tolkienlibrary.com; (right) Tolkien, John Ronald Reuel, *The Return of the King*, from books.google.com]
How *Tengwar* Are Written

- Each of the main consonants has two parts: a **stem** and a **bow**.
- The stem can be **short**, extend **above** the bow, or extend **below** the bow.
- The bow can be single or **doubled**, face **up** or **down**, and be **open** or **closed**.
- Every main letter is a consonant; vowels are added as small marks (**tehtar**) above (or below) the letters.
Letters and Sounds of Tengwar

\[ \begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{p} & \text{t} & \text{p} & \text{ch} & \text{q} & \text{k} \\
\text{m} & \text{d} & \text{B} & \text{b} & \text{q} & \text{q} \\
\text{b} & \text{th} & \text{b} & \text{f} & \text{d} & \text{sh} & \text{d} (\text{kh}) \\
\text{b} & \text{dh} & \text{B} & \text{v} & \text{d} & \text{zh} & \text{d} (\text{gh}) \\
\text{m} & \text{n} & \text{B} & \text{m} & \text{c} & \text{c} (\text{ny}) & \text{a} (\text{ng}) \\
\text{r} & \text{r} & \text{B} & \text{w} & \text{a} & \text{a} (\text{lh}) \\
\end{array} \]

Image credit: user “Maxim Razin,” from commons.wikimedia.org
But Wait: There's More!
Dn't frgt bt th vwls...
Dn't frgt bt th vwls...

ǎt ĕt ĭt ōt ŏot ŭ/ət

rückrrpru

aa=ä ii=ē uu=ōo

į ĭ į

ay=ī ey=ā ow=ō yuu=ū

â ú ķāį
A Few More Miscellaneous Rules...

\[ \text{nt mp nk nd mb ng- ts x (ks)} \]

| "the" | "of" |
| "of the" | "and" |

Image credit: Måns Björkman, from at.mansbjorkman.net
Making Sense of the One Ring

Image credit: Tolkien, John Ronald Reuel, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, from 2lincolns.com
Break time!
### The Phonology of English

#### Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>bilabial</th>
<th>labiodental</th>
<th>dental</th>
<th>alveolar</th>
<th>post-alveolar</th>
<th>palatal</th>
<th>velar</th>
<th>glottal</th>
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<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>p</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dʒ</td>
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<tr>
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<td>f</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>ʃ</td>
<td>h</td>
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<tr>
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<td>v</td>
<td>ō</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>ʒ</td>
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<td>r</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>w</td>
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</table>

Source: Wikipedia (Don't use this for your research, kids.)
IPA in All Its Glory
Don't worry, this won't be on the test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>bilab.</th>
<th>lab.-dent.</th>
<th>dent.</th>
<th>alv.</th>
<th>post-alv.</th>
<th>retro-flex</th>
<th>pal.</th>
<th>velar</th>
<th>uvul.</th>
<th>phar.</th>
<th>glot.</th>
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<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t̚</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>q</td>
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<td>d</td>
<td>g̡</td>
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<td>b̠</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tap</td>
<td>b̠</td>
<td>r̠</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| fricative | voiceless | φ | f | θ | s | ʃ | ʂ | ʐ | ɹ | x̪ | x̪ | ɣ | h | h |
|           | voiced | β | v | ŋ | θ̣ | θ | θ̣ | θ | θ̣ | ɣ | ɣ | ɣ | ɣ | ɣ |
| lateral fricative | voiceless | b̠ | b̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ |
|         | voiced | b̠ | b̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ |
| approximant | w | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ | ɹ |
| lateral | b̠ | b̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ | t̠ |

Source: Peter Ladefoged, UCLA Phonetics Lab (phonetics.ucla.edu). Now that's a good source.
Vowels of the World

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

Source: Peter Ladefoged, UCLA Phonetics Lab
Is That It?

- Consonants
  - Other places of articulation
  - Gemination
  - Airstream
    - clicks and pops
    - ejectives
    - implosives
  - ...

- Vowels
  - Diphthongs
  - Length
  - Nasals
  - Voicing
  - Tone
  - ...

- ...

- ...
منجٍّ