QUENYA IS PRACTICALLY A MAIN CHARACTER

Elvish-English Multilingualism in Tolkien-inspired Fan-Fictions

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ABSTRACT • In the last forty years, fan-fictions, derivative writings openly based on published works of fiction, have gone from being shared on semi-secretive zines circulating between a handful of people, to being hosted on public online archives, such as Archive of Our Own with 6 million registered users. At the same time, fan studies have grown into an interdisciplinary and transnational field. However, linguistic approaches to fan studies and fan fictions have always been quite marginal, and even more rare are the linguistic works investigating the use of conlangs in fan fictions. With a corpus-based approach, this study aims to analyse how fanfiction's authors use Tolkien's conlangs in their works, focusing in particular on the use of Quenya, by far the best documented language of Tolkien's Legendarium. The analysis gathers its empirical evidence from a corpus of publicly available fan fictions from AO3, all of them written in English with an explicitly stated use of Quenya. This investigation will have two main focuses: a) a pragmatic analysis of code-switching from English to Quenya and its stylistic purpose in Tolkien-inspired fanfictions; b) an analysis of the formal characteristics of Quenya in fanworks, aimed at verifying the authors' level of knowledge of Quenya and (possibly) the sources of such knowledge.

KEYWORDS • Conlangs; Quenya; Elvish Languages; Code-switching; Corpus Linguistics.

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen an increasing academic interest in the subject of constructed languages (conlangs), and especially in the linguistic features of fictional languages created for artistic purposes (artlangs). Among them, some of the most extensively investigated artlangs are the Elvish tongues created by the English writer and philologist J. R. R. Tolkien.

This paper aims to investigate how the most documented Elvish language, Quenya, is used in fan-fictions (FFs), derivative stories based on published works of fiction, generally produced by fans and non-commercialized.

* While this paper is the result of the combined work and dedication of both the authors, due to Italian academic reasons we underline that Gloria Comandini (Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici) is the author of sections 1, 3, 4, and 4.4, while Francesco Dedè (Università degli Studi di Milano) has written sections 2, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Section 5 is to be attributed to both authors.

FFs are a cultural phenomenon framed in the context of fandoms, understood as communities born around a work of fiction and composed by its fans (Jenkins 1992; Thibault 2020). Historically, FFs have been written mainly by women and fandoms are considered "a vehicle for marginalized subcultural groups (women, the young, gays, and so on) to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations" (Jenkins 2006: 40). Through the re-interpretation and the transformation of the original material, fan-writers (FWs) use FFs to explore themes dear to the queer community, while often maintaining a deep appreciation for the themes of the original work (Busse 2017; Click & Scott 2017).

After a brief overview on Tolkien's conlangs (section 2), we will introduce the QueEnFan Corpus and its annotation's methodology (section 3), followed by the presentation and discussion of the Quenya usages found in the corpus (section 4), focusing on the use of proper names (4.1), isolated words or phrases (4.2), full sentences (4.3) and fictional code-switching (4.4).

2. Quenya and Neo-Quenya: the problem of studying Tolkien's invented languages

Before going into detail about the structure of our corpus, it is necessary to make an introductory remark about the difficulty of studying fictional languages, and particularly Tolkien's conlangs.

The main problem with the scientific study of a conlang – and especially of an artistic conlang or artlang – is that in most cases they are either not studied at all, or they are studied by amateurs (in the most noble sense), that is people with little to no knowledge of linguistics. The situation is partly different in the case of Tolkien's fictional universe, because "the rigorous study of Tolkien's invented languages, which is nowadays officially referred to as Tolkienian linguistics, has definitely established itself as a legitimate area of interest among Tolkien scholars" (Dedè 2022: 66)[1].

A second element which makes the study of Tolkien's conlangs difficult is that Tolkien wrote many texts of philological and linguistic nature and that many of these texts are still unpublished. In addition, the many texts of linguistic argument that have been published are scattered among many different publications, and some of them are very difficult to access.

Furthermore, there is another major problem that must be faced in the study of Tolkien's Elvish tongues: they have been developed by Tolkien throughout the course of his life, often changing his mind and starting over. So, when we consider the 'Elvish material' that we have at our disposal nowadays, we must always bear in mind that it is made up of different layers of linguistic forms which do not constitute a uniform system and should not be put on the same level[2]. This fact has a direct impact on our corpus of fanfictions, since often the authors take whatever Elvish form they need for their writing purposes without considering the internal consistency of their lexical choices, as will be seen in par. 4.

Due to the ever-increasing interest of fans in the Elvish languages, a great mass of words and word-forms has been created and used in many texts published online. From the point of view

[1] It is worth noting that this particular field of study is primarily oriented to the philological and linguistic analysis of Tolkien's invented languages, not toward encouraging their use by a wider audience, as it was stated by Hostetter (2007: 24): "The purpose of Tolkienian linguistics, proper, as a scholarly endeavor is […] to understand and describe Tolkien's languages, and his writings in and about those languages, in their own terms and as they actually are".

[2] Scholars usually divide Tolkien's linguistic production into three or four "conceptual stages". In our opinion, the best classification is the one made by Edouard Kloczko (see e.g. Kloczko 2015: 18-19).

of the scholar, it is essential to be able to clearly distinguish between forms which have actually been created by Tolkien himself and forms made up by other authors.

In this regard, the label 'Neo-Elvish' has been created to refer to words in the Elvish languages which are not directly attested in any text written by Tolkien. This usage, still not common among non-specialists, should be encouraged, as it greatly helps to clarify the status of a given Elvish form.

The problem is that it is not always easy to distinguish between 'original Elvish' and 'Neo-Elvish'[3]: this happens typically when Tolkien himself provide an example of a word inflected in a certain word form, for instance a noun in the nominative singular, and the authors of the FFs use that word in another inflected form, say the nominative plural, following the grammatical rules appropriate for Quenya in a given conceptual phase. How should we consider that form? As 'Neo-Quenya' or as an 'acceptable original form', even if it does not occur as such in any of Tolkien's texts? We will come back to this point in the conclusions.

3. Corpus and Methodology

The QueEnFan (Quenya in English Fan-Fictions) Corpus[4], which was manually assembled, is composed by 65 FFs from Archive of Our Own (AO3)[5] and has 435,650 tokens. The corpus' FFs are all written in English by a total of 41 different authors[6] and publicly available in the *TOLKIEN J. R. R. - Works & Related Fandoms* section on AO3[7]; all the FFs are between 1,000 and 20,000 words long and were published on AO3 between January 2021 and June 2024. Lastly, all the FFs in the corpus were tagged by the authors with the keyword *Quenya*, which by itself does not guarantee that Quenya has been used in the story, but that at least the language is somehow important for the narrative, from the FW's point of view.

Every FF in the QueEnFan Corpus was subjected to six layers of annotation, manually done by the two authors:

- Quenya proper names (PN) (*yes* or *no*): denotes whether Quenya proper names are present in the FF, whether it is either a systematic use or an isolated event (e.g.: Sindarin *Fëanor* vs Quenya *Curufinwë* or *Fëanáro*);

[3] On this topic, see Hostetter 2006: 240-243.

[4] The corpus is freely available at https://github.com/GloriaComandini/Corpora (last access 12/01/2025).

[5] AO3 (https://archiveofourown.org, last access 12/01/2025) is one of the largest online archives of transformative works and has over 6 million of active users and contains more than 6 million of FFs in a wide array of languages, although English is by far the most common one.

[6] Most of the authors (31) whose work is included in the corpus have written only one FF (for a total of 30 FFs), but the remaining 10 authors wrote the remaining 35 FFs of the QueEnFan Corpus, with an average production of 3.5 FF each. The most prolific FW in the corpus, called *starlightwalking*, has published 9 FFs. So, it is important to consider that the QueEnFan Corpus - in its present state - is clearly influenced by the personal taste and the knowledge of a small group of prolific FWs. However, since the 10 most prolific authors were generally also the most creative in their usage of Quenya, in the first phase of the creation of the corpus we chose to favor this creativity over a more neutral balance of the corpus itself.

[7] This section ideally encompasses all the fan-works based on Tolkien's works. Therefore, the corpus includes FFs based not only on the books that compose the *Legendarium*, but also on Peter Jackson's movies and on Amazon's television show *The Rings of Power*.

- Quenya words and phrases (WP) (*yes* or *no*): denotes the presence or absence in the FF of Quenya words or phrases;
- Quenya full sentences (FS) (*yes* or *no*): denotes if the FF presents full sentences[8] in Quenya;
- Innovation: denotes how innovative the Quenya used in FFs is. It has four options: *no* if there is no Quenya in the story, *word-for-word* if there are only literal citations from Tolkien's works, *neo-Quenya* if there are only neologisms created by the FWs or *both* if there is a mixture of literal citations and new formations;
- Metalinguistics considerations (MC): denotes whether there are any reflections in the story on the use of the Quenya language. It has four options: *no* if there are no considerations at all, *in fiction* if the considerations are a part of the narrative, *in notes* if they are present in the FW's notes before or after the FF, and *both* in mixed cases;
- Depth of metalinguistics analysis (DMA): denotes how much the FWs explicitly ponder on the use of Quenya. It has four options: *0* if there are no metalinguistics considerations at all, *1* if there is only a small lexicon with the translation of the relevant Quenya words (e.g. "Quenya guide: *nís* - woman, *fëa* - elven soul, *hröa* - elven body, *fána* - body of a Maia" [FFQ_08]), *2* if there is some kind of superficial analysis on the use of Quenya but without delving deep into it (e.g. "Use of Thorn because Feanorians" [FFQ_48]), and *3* if there is a more in depth analysis of Quenya's morphology or semantics (e.g. "For Luthien, I have settled tentatively on '*Lótyendë*' as a name, from '*lót-*' (flower) and '*-yendë*' (an older form of daughter), which means the same thing (daughter of flower(s))" [FFQ_02])[9].

4. Results

We were able to find 1,637 Quenya words in the corpus. Excluding PNs, the most common word is *fëa* 'spirit', with 153 cases (9.3% of all Quenya instances), followed by *hröa* 'body', with 96 appearances (5.7%). The most common semantic category are the appellative for relatives, such as *atto* 'daddy' or *haru* 'grandfather', with 314 cases (19%), followed by generic words to denote individuals, such as *nér* 'man' or *nís* 'woman', as seen in (1), with 114 instance (7%), and by affectionate appellatives for lovers and loved ones, such as *melotorno* 'love-brother' or *meldanya* 'my dear', as seen in (2), with 85 cases (5%).

As shown in Table 1, the annotation's results show that FWs use the tag Quenya for their stories accurately, applying it only if there is an actual use of Quenya in the FF, as in the QueEnFan Corpus there are not instances of FFs without a PN, an isolated WP, or a full sentence in Quenya.

	Proper Names (%)	Words of Phrases (%)	Full Sentences (%)
Yes	62 (95%)	55 (84.6%)	6 (9.2%)
No	3 (5%)	10 (15.4%)	59 (90.8%)

Table 1: Distribution of PNs, WPs and FSs in the QueEnFan Corpus.

[8] Intended as having a verb in a finite form, thus a form of explicit predication.

[9] For the metalinguistic in-depth analysis' score, we calculated the inter-annotator agreement comparing the results of the two annotators for the first 29 fanfictions. The agreement achieved is 0.765 (Cohen's Kappa), a substantial score for a task where personal interpretation and semantic analysis still play a role (Artstein 2017).

PNs in Quenya are extremely common in the corpus, with 62 FFs (95%) using them. As it will be discussed in more depth in par. 4.1, some FFs alternate between Quenya and Sindarin PNs in referring to certain characters, while others use exclusively Quenya.

Quenya WPs are also very common and are used in 55 stories (84.6%), while, on the contrary, only 6 FFs (9.2%) make use of FSs in Quenya. It is then clear that FF's authors favor the use of isolated words (1) or phrases (2) instead of full sentences (3). More precisely, isolated words are observed to be more common than phrases (e.g. *melin er* 'dear one', *melin hon* 'dear heart', *titta er* 'little one'[10]), and both are present especially in the form of appellatives for relatives (4) and loved ones (2).

(1) These are the oldest poems that I could find, written from one *nér* ('man') to another. [FFQ_33]
(2) "That, *melin er* ('dear one'), is a shooting star. You best make a wish." [FFQ_38]
(3) He tucked her into her bed, placing her new jewelry box onto her side table, removing her hair slides, and pressing a kiss onto her forehead. "*Lóre ehtelë, mime -iel*." ('sleep well, my daughter'[11]) [FFQ_38]
(4) "You knew, didn't you, *Atto* ('dad')?" [FFQ_37]

Surprisingly enough, all the FSs found in the corpus are neo-formations, ranging from modified versions of citations from Tolkien's works (5) to completely original creations (6).

(5) *Elen síla lúmenn' omentielwo*[12] ('a star shines on the hour of our meeting'), the tall, graceful, and immaculately dressed man said [FFQ_01]

[10] Unless otherwise specified, the translations provided are made by the FWs, which, however, are sometimes imperfect or entirely incorrect. Where necessary, translations will be discussed or commented on. In the examples cited above, for instance, we notice the usage of the form *er* 'one' as a pronoun; this usage, typical of the English word *one*, is never attested for Quenya *er* in Tolkien's texts and can therefore be regarded as a syntactic calque by the author of the FF.

[11] This Quenya sentence and its translation are wrong in multiple respects, which cannot be investigated here for reasons of space.

[12] This sentence is probably the most famous Quenya sentence ever written by Tolkien. Appearing in the third chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* as a greeting from the main character Frodo to the elf Gildor, it is widely known throughout Tolkien fandom (and beyond). The interesting fact is that in this FF, it comes with an almost invisible, yet extremely meaningful variation: in the text of *LoTR* (I: 81) the last word is written *omentielvo* 'of our meeting', while here the FW employs a form *omentielwo* which never occurs as such in any Tolkien's text. The form *omentielwo*, however, is perfectly plausible within Tolkien's linguistic universe, since it would be the equivalent of *omentielvo* – via regular phonological correspondences – in a different dialect of Quenya, namely the Vanyarin dialect, spoken by the Vanyar elves in the blessed realm of Aman. The FW's choice is undoubtedly deliberate, as they explicitly comment on it in their notes to the text, and testifies to their uncommon knowledge of Tolkien's fictional languages. One may wonder what the source of this specific piece of information is. Inside some of Tolkien's notes on the elvish forms used in *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a reference to the form *omentielvo* with a thorough discussion by Christopher Gilson, (Tolkien 2007: 12-14); however, since that passage makes no direct reference to a possible word form *omentielwo*, it is unlikely to be the direct source of our FF. A quick search on the Internet showed that the word form *omentielwo* is quoted mainly in a Quenya course by Helge Fauskanger, which is very famous among Tolkien's fans and could in principle be the source we are looking for. Nevertheless, *omentielwo* 1) is not quoted in the last available version of the Quenya course (available on Fauskanger's website:

(6) *Hara máriessë. Minë lambë lá ná farëa* (‘Stay in happiness. One language is never enough’) [FFQ_20]

Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, authors who tend to use Quenya PNs often also tend to use Quenya WPs, as 74% of the FFs with the former also display use of the latter, with an average DMA of 1.4, very close to the corpus’ average. The remaining 15.3% of the stories with Quenya PNs but without Quenya WPs also lack Quenya FSs and have an average DMA of 0.5, lower than the rest of the corpus (see Table 2). There is also a single FF with only Quenya WPs, and two FFs with Quenya WPs and FSs, but without Quenya PNs. Lastly, all FFs with full sentences also show the usage of isolated WPs or PNs and generally have a more profound metalinguistics analysis, with an average DMA score of 2.

Combinations of Quenya uses	N° of FFs	%	Average DMA score
PN yes, WP no, FS no	10	15.3%	0.5
PN yes, WP yes, FS no	48	74%	1.4
PN yes, WP yes, FS yes	4	6.2%	2
PN no, WP no, FS no	0	0%	none
PN no, WP yes, FS no	1	1.5%	1.33
PN no, WP no, FS yes	0	0%	none
PN yes, WP no, FS yes	0	0%	none
PN no, WP yes, FS yes	2	3%	2
Total / All corpus	65	100%	1.26

Table 2: Combinations of different Quenya uses and their respective average depth of metalinguistics analysis (DMA) score.

As shown in Table 3, it also appears that the FWs prefer to rely on Quenya based on Tolkien’s works: 52 FFs (80%) use both neoformations and literal quotes, while 11 (17%) use only word-for-word quotations, only 2 FFs (3%) do not use any Quenya at all (except for PNs). There are no instances of FFs with only neo-Quenya.

MC	N° of FFs (%)	Innovation	N° of FFs (%)	DMA	N° of FFs (%)
no	24 (37%)	No	2 (3%)	0	24 (37%)
in fiction	8 (12%)	word-for-word	11 (17%)	1	12 (18%)
in notes	15 (23%)	neo-Quenya	0 (0%)	2	17 (27%)
both	18 (28%)	Both	52 (80%)	3	12 (18%)

Table 3: Distribution of metalinguistics considerations (MC), Innovation and depth of metalinguistics analysis (DMA) score in the corpus.

https://ardalambion.net/qcourse.htm, last access 10/01/2025) and 2) is not explicitly described as a Vanyarin form. After another research, we think the direct source of *omentielwo* in FFQ_01 can be finally traced to a post on the website *Realelvish.net* run by Fiona Jallings (https://realelvish.net/phrase/elen-siila-luumenn-omentielwo/, last access 10/01/2025).

Concerning metalinguistic considerations, as shown in Table 3, 42 (64%) FFs in the corpus display some kind of thoughts on how or why Quenya is used. More precisely, 24 FFs (37%) do not display any kind of MC, while 18 (28%) include considerations both in the author's notes and in the story, 15 (23%) only in the notes and 8 (12%) only in the story.

The annotation of the DMA shows an average depth of 1.26 (see Table 2), and more precisely that 24 FFs (37%) have a depth analysis of 0, 17 (27%) have a depth analysis of 2, 12 (18%) have a depth of 1 and 12 (18%) have a depth of 3 (see Table 3). However, due probably to the small size of the corpus, there does not appear to be a statistically significant correlation between the DMA value with the other annotation levels or other features of the stories, such as their number of words, comments, views or year of publication. In essence, the FFs with higher DMA are not necessarily the longest ones, the most read ones or the ones with more comments. Similarly, neither does the location of metalinguistic reflections, or the mere presence of PNs, WPs or FSs in Quenya, and not even presence of innovation correlate with the DMA value. Therefore, it is only possible to make some qualitative observations on the annotation's results, based on the data shown in Table 4.

MC	Average DMA score	Innovation	Average DMA score
no	0	No	0
in fiction	1.5	word-for-word	0.9
in notes	1.86	neo-Quenya	none
both	2.33	Both	1.38

Table 4: Average DMA score related to the different position of MC and to the innovation's level of FFs in the corpus.

First, as seen in Table 4, the more a FF is focused on Quenya, the deeper its MCs will be. In fact, some fluctuations can be observed in the average DMA based on the location of the MCs in the fan-works: FFs with MCs only in the fiction have an average DMA of 1.5, while stories with MCs only in the author's notes have an average DMA of 1.86 and FFs with MCs in both notes and fiction have a DMA of 2.33.

Moreover, it seems that Quenya PN's are a high-availability information, possessed even by writers who do not demonstrate deep knowledge of Quenya. In fact, FFs with only Quenya PNs but without WPs or FSs have an average DMA of only 0.5, which is quite low in comparison with the QueEnFan Corpus' average (1.26) (see Table 2). Lastly, authors that use only literal citations from Tolkien's works exhibit a lower DMA, with an average of 0.9, while FFs with both Quenya and Neo-Quenya have an average DMA of 1.38 (see Table 4).

4.1. Proper names

As previously seen, the usage of PNs in Quenya is sort of a hallmark of the Tolkien-based FFs, and more precisely the usage of the names of the descendants of Finwë, the High King of the elven clan of the Noldor. If we look at the 'Top-five' list of Quenya names in Table 5, we find that four out of five of these names belong to descendants of Finwë, and that the first two names, *Findekáno* and *Maitimo*, occur in the FFs almost three times as often as the third-ranked.

Quenya PN	Sindarin equivalent	N° of Quenya PN
Findekáno	*Fingon*	1,374
Maitimo	*Maedhros*	1,195
Lómion	*Maeglin*	475
Makalaurë	*Maglor*	463
Fëanáro	*Fëanor*	459

Table 5: The most prominent Quenya PNs in the QueEnFan Corpus.

It must be noted that these fictional characters became known to the wider public with the publication of *The Silmarillion* in 1975, but in that book they are mostly referred to by their Sindarin names, while most of their Quenya names didn't become of public domain until the publication in 1996 of the book *The peoples of Middle-Earth*, which never achieved the same popularity as *The Silmarillion*.

There are various reasons for the presence of the Quenya names of Finwë's descendants in the FFs: first of all, the narratives of the First Age of the World in Tolkien's fictional universe are centered on the events that involved the royal family of the Noldorin elves, so it is quite obvious that their names should be mentioned above the others in stories set in *The Silmarillion*.

Moreover, the stories of these characters are dramatic, often tragic in their nature, and this feature seems to be very attractive to the authors of the FFs who quite often try to write 'alternative happy endings' for them or to describe more in detail their inner sufferings.

Another reason for the massive presence of the Quenya variants of the names of the 'Finwëans' is that Tolkien himself wrote two very important essays relating to this topic. One of them is an essay named *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* (Tolkien 1996), published in the already mentioned book *The peoples of Middle-Earth*, in which the Quenya names of the Noldorin kings and princes (and princesses) appeared for the first time. The other essay is *Laws and customs among the Eldar* (Tolkien 1993): in this essay, Tolkien describes the peculiarities of the process of name-giving among the elves (who had various names throughout their lives).

Although the information contained in these texts nowadays can be found in some of the already mentioned Tolkienian websites, we cannot rule out the possibility that at least some of the authors of these FFs actually read these (and other) linguistic essays written by Tolkien. On the contrary, sometimes we have direct evidence that they read them, as it can be seen in (7) and (8).

(7) For names, I have decided that Feanor's would be put as '*Fayanáro*', which HOME 12 (The Peoples of Middle-earth) states as an archaic variant of '*Fëanáro*'. I am very much open to suggestions (read: I have no idea what I'm doing), so please tell me if you have better alternatives! [FFQ_02]

(8) For Luthien, I have settled tentatively on '*Lótyendë*' as a name, from '*lót-*' (*flower*) and '*-yendë*' (an older form of *daughter*), which means the same thing (*daughter of flower(s)*). Reminder that I have little idea of what I'm doing [FFQ_02]

Example (7) is a case of non-innovation: the FW declares with a lot of understatement that they – literally – "have no idea of what they are doing" regarding their decision to use the form *Fayanáro* to refer to the famous elf Fëanor, but in support of their choice they refer to Tolkien's (1996) essay. Moreover, the author also affirms that in that essay the form *Fayanáro* is presented as an archaic variant of the name, but this statement is actually not found in the text: it can only be inferred based on the knowledge of Quenya's phonetic development.

In example (8), the same author proposes an innovative Quenya form for the name of the Sindar elven princess Lúthien. The form *Lótyendë* is undoubtedly Neo-Quenya. Again, the FW reminds us that "they have little idea of what they're doing", and again they are somewhat lying, since not only do they show some skills in choosing Quenya elements which are appropriate, but they are aware of the interpretation given by Tolkien of the name Lúthien as 'daughter of flowers', a later interpretation of the name that was only made known to the public in 2007, when a very philological-linguistic text by Tolkien was published in the fanzine *Parma Eldalamberon* (see Tolkien 2007: 160-161): this is a text known only to a fairly small circle of enthusiasts. Again, this information is nowadays available on some online sources, but in the case of this author we have the legitimate suspicion that they actually know what they are doing.

The innovative usages on Quenya names can extend also to derivational morphemes. In the case of (9), the patronymic suffix *-ion*, meaning 'son of' is attached to the names *Fëanor* (= *Fëanarion*), *Írissë* (= *Írission*), *Eöl* (=*Eölion*). Note that not all names to which the suffix is attached are Quenya. Although they are formally Neo-Quenya, these forms are actually well-formed.

(9) He'd been distrustful and suspicious, but he'd followed Morifinwë Carnistir *Fëanarion* home anyway, taking upon himself the mantle of Lómion *Írission*. No longer Maeglin *Eölion*, Lómion had lost or killed that part of himself during his months long captivity. [FFQ_07]

(10) *Valariande* had fallen. [FFQ_17]

In example (10), we see the use of the Quenya form *Valariandë* instead of the more common Sindarin form *Beleriand* to refer to the land in which the events narrated in *The Silmarillion* take place. The form *Valariandë* in the nominative singular is not directly attested in Tolkien's texts: what we actually have is a genitive form *Valarianden* from the third conceptual phase of Quenya, found in drafts of the history of *The Silmarillion* dating back to the 1930s and published in 1987 in the book *The lost road and other writings*, which is, again, a book that only the most enthusiastic fans usually read. Consequently, these forms can be classified as 'Neo-Quenya' on formal grounds, but are also formed based on an earlier phase of Tolkien's conception of Quenya. Again, this form is also found on some online sources, so we cannot say for sure whether or not the Authors read the original texts by Tolkien.

4.2. A "þorny" problem

Coming to discuss the innovations at the level of WPs, there is a particularly interesting phenomenon that can be only labeled as a 'thorny problem'. As it is well-known among Tolkien's fans, in the Quenya variety spoken by the Noldor elves, a sound change transformed the original [θ] sound into a [s] sound, in all contexts. For instance, the name of the Moon is *Ithil* in Old Quenya, but it became *Isil* in the Quenya of later stages.

This change, however, did not affect the Noldorin dialect spoken by the elven prince Fëanor, his descendants and his followers (the so-called 'Fëanorians'), who retained the older variant [θ]. In the end, the free variation between [θ] and [s] became a sociolinguistic marker separating the Fëanorians from the rest of the Noldor. The story of this sound change is told in the already mentioned *Shibboleth of Fëanor* (Tolkien 1996), and many FWs seem to be very fond of it, since they use it as a key-element of their FFs.

Speaking of which, example (11) is a metalinguistic comment by a FW, who interestingly use to refer to this phenomenon the everyday term *lisp*, which refers to the pronunciation of [s] as [θ] usually due to the incapability of the speaker to correctly articulate the sound [s].

(11) For the lisp I mentioned Maglor having about, I was referring to the Fëanorian lisp. The Sindar elves were the ones who had the letter "s," the Noldor had "þ," which is like a soft "th." Maglor's lisp only comes out when he's relaxed or not really thinking about it, or when he's cursing. Ára will have the lisp in her elvish and in English when she's not disguising it. [FFQ_38]

The most interesting fact is that in this FF we have the meeting between present-day speakers of English and Tolkien's elves who end up on Earth, and the elven fictional character Ara, who speaks the Fëanorian variety of Quenya, tends to pronounce [θ] in place of [s] also when speaking English. So, this is an instance of a fictional, contact-induced, transfer of a Quenya phonological feature into English.

Example (12) presents an exploitation of the Quenya [θ]/[s] alternation, which is full of metalinguistic reasoning, as it is also explained by the author in their notes at the end of the FF (13), where they refer directly to *The Shibboleth of Fëanor*, so it is reasonable to assume that the author actually read it.

(12) "I hate her and that decaying mortal but I hate Elwë *Þingollo* most!" […] Caranthir could not believe it. Was he really watching Thingol's minstrel drunkenly cursing the King of Doriath in Quenya? Using correct pronunciation? [FFQ_41]

(13) *Singollo*, Quenya form of Thingol. Fëanor (and his sons) would have adhered to the 'proper' pronunciation with Þ instead of S (ironically, Doriathrin 'Thingol' is closer to this 'correct' Quenya pronunciation). See *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* (because honestly it's the best). [FFQ_41]

Example (12) is a dialogue between Caranthir, one of the sons of Fëanor, who of course speaks Fëanorian Quenya, and Daeron, a Sindar elf of the court of king Thingol. For context, in the kingdom of Thingol speaking Quenya is strictly forbidden and the people have a particular hatred against the descendants of Fëanor, due to internal historic reasons. In this context, Caranthir is baffled at hearing a Sindar elf of the court of Thingol speaking Quenya, in particular the Feanorian variety of it. Even more striking is the fact that Daeron is cursing his own king, calling him with the Quenya equivalent of his name, *Thingol*.

The form *Þingollo* is in itself Neo-Quenya, since in Tolkien's texts only the form *Singollo* with [s] is attested; but in the case of this feature of Quenya it is absolutely easy to create forms which Tolkien himself could have created, since the FWs just have to switch between [θ] and [s].

4.3. Neo-Quenya sentences

At last, it is interesting to comment on two small examples, (14) and (15), of innovation in Quenya sentences.

(14) "Stop," but the soft sound of Sindarin "*daro*" is lost in the roar. Quenya is sharper: "*Á hauta, Galadriel, Galadriel* - [= Stop Galadriel, Galadriel]" [FFQ_20]

(15) "Better than having none!" Daeron responded in like manner, their faces now inches apart. "*Caretya lusta ná*! [= Your head is empty!]" [FFQ_41]

In (14) the imperative form *Á hauta* is used, which is not found in Tolkien's texts and is thus a Neo-Quenya form. What we do have is a verb stem *hauta* from the 3rd conceptual phase of Quenya (that is, the phase preceding the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*) and an easy rule

devised by Tolkien himself to make the imperative form by the addition of the morpheme *á*. Again, this is a case of a Neo-Quenya form that can be easily created based on our knowledge of the 'real' Quenya grammar by Tolkien.

In (15) we find the sentence "*caretya lusta ná*!", meaning "Your head is empty!", which is fairly well-formed, even if such a sentence is never found in Tolkien's texts and is an example of Neo-Quenya.

Sentences like these are the examples of the highest level of innovation found in the QueEnFan and are comparatively rare. The most interesting thing is that this sentence can be found on the already mentioned (above, fn. 13) website *Realelvish* that has the purpose – among others – of supplying FWs with ready-to-made words and sentences in the languages of Tolkien's fictional universe.

4.4. Fictional multilingualism: features con code-switching between Quenya and English

Fictional multilingualism has a long and varied history of linguistic studies, related to the analysis of code-switching[13] (CS) in both ancient and modern literary works, and in migrant or postcolonial literature and cinema[14]. The techniques used by authors to represent multilingual communication (Stenberg 1981) and the possible functions of CS in fiction (Locher 2017) are extremely varied and often influenced by the medium used to convey the story, as there are significant differences between how different languages are depicted in books (Camarca 2005) or in movies (Bleichenbacher 2008).

Conlangs and artlangs like Tolkien's elvish tongues often appear in situations of fictional multilingualism (Adams 2017; Locher 2017), but the linguistic features of CS with artlangs have been rarely studied (Erazo 2020; Sadrai et al. 2023). Even less studied is the presence of CS in FFs, whether they involve multilingualism between non-fiction languages (Leppänen 2012) or CS with conlangs (Meluzzi 2019; Thibault 2020).

Using the empirical data from the QueEnFan Corpus, it is possible to gather a better understanding on how Quenya is inserted into the FF's narrative and, more precisely, what kind of fictional situations are depicted using CS.

The CS analyzed is between Quenya and English, which is the most widely used language for writing FFs and the one that we included in the QueEnFan Corpus. In this regard, it is important to underline that English is the language used most often in international fandom spaces, serving as a lingua franca not only for interactive communication (as it happens in forums or social networks), but also for fan-works written by non-native English speakers (Franceschi 2017).

As it happens also in traditional literature (Camarca 2005), the CS found in the corpus tends to exhibit a mimetic function, because it attempts to give to the readers an accurate impression of how the characters actually speak. For the sake of brevity, it will be impossible to do an in-depth analysis of the CS functions and techniques used in FFs, but we think it is useful to point out the two different scenarios in which CS is prevalently used, which we will call CS reenactment and expressive CS.

[13] While CS is a complex concept, for the economy of this analysis and following the methodology of previous literature (Camarca 2005), we will use CS as an umbrella term to describe all instances where two or more different languages are used in a fictional interaction. Therefore, we include in CS also all cases of fictional multilingualism, such as code-mixing or loanwords from Quenya.

[14] For an overview on the past studies on fictional multilingualism, see Gardner-Chloros & Weston (2015).

CS reenactment occurs when Quenya is used to represent a different language from the one spoken by the character holding the point of view. For example, in (16) an American girl stumbles upon a group of Feanorians elves that happened to be transported in a rural part of the United States; however, while the protagonist speaks English, she is trying to gain a rudimentary understanding of the language spoken by the elves, starting from the Quenya words for *yes* and *no*, *ná* and *lá*.

(16)Fëanáro looks at her for a moment, then he copies her nod. "*Ná*. Yes?" "Yes," Mari agrees. "*Ná*? Yes *ná*?" "Yes *ná*." He shakes his head. "No? *Lá*?" Mari nods and shakes her head again, using *ná* and *lá* this time instead of *yes* and *no*, and looks at him to confirm. Okay, good, she has words for *yes* and *no* now. [FFQ_09]

CS reenactment is also used to mimic a realistic interaction between characters from different linguistic backgrounds in Tolkien's fictional world, as in (17). In this example, the FF's protagonist, the elf Celeborn, whose native language is the Doriathrin form of Sindarin, speaks Quenya with his wife, Galadriel, who is a native speaker and thus can correct his pronunciation.

(17)[…], he gathers her in his arms and repeats Quenya verb conjugations. *Calë, cála, calë, caluva, caltanë, acálië. Váquet, váquetë, váqueta, váquetë, váquetuva*. More and more of them until she calms, and then relaxes against him, and then starts to correct his Doriathrin accent ("all the vowels, remember") with the first ghost of a smile on her face. [FFQ_20]

However, CS reenactment is quite rare in the FFs composing the QueEnFan Corpus, due to the fact that most characters are elves that come from the same linguistic background.

The most common one is the second scenario, expressive CS, as it happens when all the characters are speaking Quenya. Therefore, the insertion of Quenya words is not a way to represent the alternation between two languages, but it is an expressive and stylistic tool used to enhance the reader's immersion inside the fictional scenario and "a linguistic device that brings a cultural enrichment" (Camarca 2005: 232). Expressive CS happens in three circumstances.

The first one takes place when the inserted Quenya words denote a familial or otherwise intimate and affectionate relationship. This kind of CS is very common, as we can see with the frequency of words for relatives (*haru* 'grandfather', *ammë* 'mum'), especially for fathers (*atya* 'dad', *atar* 'father'), for loved ones (*melin er* 'dear one') or for lovers (*melotorno* 'love-brother'). For example, one of the most prolific user of the word *ammë* is the author of FFQ_28 (18), where the affectionate world for mother is used both by a child character, Lómion, and by his uncle, King Turukáno, while talking to the child about his convalescent mother in a reassuring way.

(18)"Mama!" Lómion shrieks. "*Ammë, Ammë,* wake up! No sleeping!" […] "[…] As soon as we're back, we'll have lunch and tell your *Ammë* all about it," he [Turukáno] says. [FFQ_28]

The second case concerns words used to convey Tolkien's specific concepts, such as the difference between the soul (*fëa*) and the body (*hröa*) of an elf, or the different kind of names given to Noldorin elves by their fathers (*ataressë*), their mothers (*amilessë*) or as honorifics nicknames (*epessë*) (19).

(19)"I just don't want to make it worse. What if he doesn't understand what an *epessë* is?" [FFQ_24]

The third circumstance of expressive CS happens when a Quenya word is used to express a concept that is very clearly alien to Tolkien's works, but it is nonetheless deemed interesting for the FW to explore through Tolkien's world. Thus, we have concepts like the difference between gender and sex expressed through the Tolkienian concepts of *fëa* and *hröa*, as it can be seen in (20).

(20)Sometimes children were born whose *fëa* and *hröa* had differing expressions of their gender, something Coivenquamë and Curvo had talked about early in the pregnancy. [FFQ_18]

In other cases, fan writers create completely new words for concepts like transgender or gender non-conforming people, as it happens in (21): *lethanássë* (translated by the author as 'free-nature') for 'transgender' and *lethanér* for 'transgender man'; the FF also contains the Neo-Quenya *lethanís* for 'transgender woman'.

(21)"He coined a term for it: *lethanássë*. He is a *lethanér*. […]" [FFQ_57]

5. Discussion and Conclusions

First, considering the levels of complexity considered in our annotation, the overall picture is clear: there is a quasi-implicational hierarchy that could be proposed as: PNs < WPs < FSs. So, if a FW uses FSs in Quenya, they will likely use WPs, and if they use WPs, they are most likely to use PNs. There are a few exceptions in our corpus, but these exceptions are justified by the very peculiar character of these FFs. More precisely, instances of FFs with only WPs (but devoid of PNs and FSs) are all set in fictional contexts where the use of Quenya is generally rare due to the gradual disappearance of Noldor characters, thus the characters may speak Quenya but have names in other languages. Generally, it seems that WPs are easier to insert in the text and are easily retrievable from online dictionaries, while FSs require a higher competence in Quenya. On the other hand, FSs are less common because Tolkien's sentences are not only quite rare, but also not particularly useful for the expressive and narrative goals of FWs, who are focused on personal and sentimental struggles.

Secondly, it is difficult to say with certainty whether these FWs actually read Tolkien's more difficult texts or if they just took their information from online sources. Anyway, there is some evidence that at least some of them have first-hand knowledge of various texts of philological and linguistic nature. Most of these FFs display some kind of Quenya neo-formations, but it seems that the FWs always rely also on Quenya formations attested in Tolkien's works. The most innovative forms are FSs, where the FWs had to be more creative to convey their intended meaning. In fact, FWs tend to focus more on the characters' personal struggles and on their relationships, romantic or otherwise; this focus clearly influences the Quenya used in the stories, which is particularly focused on affectionate appellatives.

Moreover, Quenya is generally used as a mimetic pragmatic strategy, perceived as a way to ensure some sort of cultural enrichment in the context of Tolkien's fandom. The fictional multilingualism depicted in FFs, especially in the case of expressive CS for familial relationships,

can also mimic the way in which multilingualism can be used in real life, when the two codes have different symbolic social connotations, and one language is used in emotionally charged contexts (Alfonzetti 1992). It would be then interesting to analyze the eventual use of Quenya in less controlled writings in fandom's spaces, such as the other users' comments to FFs, exploring their relationship with juvenile languages (Comandini 2020).

As for the problem of 'real Elvish' vs. 'Neo-Elvish', the boundary between the two is mostly clear, but sometimes becomes blurred, as we have seen. The best course of action is - arguably - to maintain a 'philological perspective', labelling as 'Neo-Elvish' all instances of Elvish tongues that are not directly attested in Tolkien's texts, even if their formation would perfectly 'fit' the rules set out by Tolkien himself.

Such a perspective, which we recognize can seem a bit too pedantic, would help both the scientific study of Tolkien's artlangs and the activity of the fans who want to insert some Quenya words and sentences in their writings for their artistic purposes. Everyone would benefit from an increasingly clear distinction between what is 'original Tolkien Elvish' and what is not. And, interestingly enough, the FFs that we have included in our corpus often make such distinction clear, so, they are an example of 'good practice' in this field.

Of course, the QueEnFan Corpus and this research suffer from the limited amount of Quenya found in the analyzed FFs: 1,637 Quenya words can give us an idea of how FWs use this conlang in their stories, but a larger sample written by a more varied group of authors would provide better data. Perhaps, it may be possible to analyze a much larger sample of FFs with computational methods, taking this opportunity to investigate if large language models, such as GPT or Llama, can identify Quenya, or even Sindarin or Khuzdul.

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