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Awareness, Creativity and Experiential Stylistic Patterns: An Analysis of 2023–2024 Ukrainian University Participant Productions

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in pedagogical stylistics, Literary Awareness has been systematised and described as an educational programme oriented towards sensitising readers to the emotive potential of verbal art by means of exposing students to what we have called experiential stylistic patterns. Based on this methodology, readers become aware of the linguistic choices responsible for certain effects after they experience the text for themselves. In doing so, the programme stimulates language learning, creative writing and critical thinking by encouraging students to explore their own reactions and substantiate their experience with linguistic evidence. Throughout the years, it has been adapted to a variety of educational and cultural contexts, to various teaching modes (in person or online), and to participants of different ages and levels of English proficiency. Many of these applications have been validated by empirical studies and have shown that the methodology adheres to the three basic principles of stylistics: it is rigorous, replicable, and retrievable. A follow-up from previous works that assess particularly two postgraduate workshops held in Ukraine (2023–2024), this paper innovates in that it focuses on participants' productions and illustrates how two patterns from each year were presented and how participants created their own texts, thus providing further empirical evidence for the contribution this programme brings to an aesthetic and emotional literary experience, to creative writing, and to critical reading and interpretation.

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1. Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "stylistics" emerged to refer to the study of linguistic features in literary texts in the latter half of the 19th century. By now, it is widely accepted that stylistics concerns "the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect" (Verdonk, 2002, p. 4). However, it was only fifty years ago that meaningful progress was made in bridging the gap between linguistic approaches and literary criticism. Despite its challenging journey, stylistics is today a vibrant field of enquiry with multiple applications, including educational settings, as described by Lambrou & Stockwell (2007, p. 1): stylistics is practised in its broadest terms across the world, across all the fields of literary scholarship, genre, culture and period, and is increasingly used as the core discipline for further interdisciplinary encounters with literary historiography, critical theory, second language and cultural pedagogy and other forms of literary and language study. More stylisticians are being trained and are holding important academic posts than ever before. More students and graduate researchers are being enthused by the energy and rigour of stylistics than ever before.

In the educational context, the field owes much to Henry Widdowson, whose aim was "to present a discussion of an approach to the *study* of literature and a demonstration of its possible relevance to the *teaching* of literature" (1975, p. 1, italics in the original). Interested in the kind of experience poems expressed, he wondered how to direct the learner towards an awareness of the effects verbal art conveyed (idem, p. 110).

Since then, much has been done in the area of that came to be known as pedagogical stylistics (Burke, 2010; Burke et al., 2012; Carter, 1989a; 1989b; Clark & Zyngier, 2003; Hall, 2014; 2022; Short, 1989; Watson & Zyngier, 2007; Zyngier, 2021, among others). The substantial body of work led to the need to distinguish between pedagogy of stylistics, which aims at educational practices, and pedagogical stylistics, which refers to research on what occurs when certain techniques or methods are applied (McIntyre, 2011). With the founding of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) in 1981 and its subsequent conferences, a growing body of research on the interface between language and literature has emerged (for an

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early overview, see Carter & Stockwell, 2008). Similarly, the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature and the Media (IGEL) and the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics (IAEA) have now also included presentations on stylistic approaches to literary education.

Despite these efforts, if "[t]o do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use" (Simpson, 2014, p. 3), the question of how much linguistic knowledge is required from learners before they can account for the effects of stylistic patterns remains. Especially in L2 or EAL settings, this question is crucial. We hold that it is possible to sensitise EAL learners to what we call experiential stylistic patterns (Zyngier & Chesnokova, in press), where language and emotion intersect. This involves a process where they may plunge into the experience that language patterns promote. In doing so, links between feelings, knowledge and understanding are created, and the workshop becomes a space where critical autonomy is developed. Irrespective of their proficiency levels in the second or additional language, this sensitivity to experiential stylistic patterns can be improved, as this paper will show.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Text and the Reader

Here, it must be noted that, concomitant with the rise of stylistics, reader-oriented theories in the 1970s also significantly influenced literary education. Moving from text-oriented theories (i.e., New Criticism and Structuralism, among others), these perspectives focused on how readers responded to a text and how their own emotions and beliefs shaped interpretation. To Barthes (1974, p. 4), "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text". And he adds: "[to] read, in fact, is a labour of language" (Ibid, p. 11). Barthes argues that the text is a physical object of the shelf that only comes into being during the act of reading. To Iser (1978), texts present gaps to be filled by the individual, whereas, according to Eco (1979), they are "open" and invite personal interpretations (for a comprehensive overview of the theories, see Newton, 1988). Decades earlier, the learner's personal engagement had been advanced by Rosenblatt (1995 [1938], p.

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38), who proposed a "*living through*, not simply *knowledge about*" the text. More recently, influenced by cognitive studies, embodiment theories have explained how the body is involved in the reading experience (Caracciolo, 2013; van Peer & Chesnokova, 2022, among others).

In sum, a substantial body of work holds that a text is made of language chosen and organised by an author, and it is context dependent. It involves "both the co-text, which surrounds that part of the text that is being analysed, the social and cultural backgrounds, which bring the text into being, and the social, cultural and cognitive positionings of those readers who interpret the text and give it meaning" (Bex et al., 2000, p. i). Evidently, the text depends on the reader's response for its materialisation.

Indeed, much has been written about the processes of comprehension, interpretation and evaluation of literary texts, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a survey of the most relevant theories (see, for instance, Eagleton, 1988). The way we think, feel, and imagine literature has been widely explored, and empirical studies have provided substantial evidence (see, for instance, Miall, 2006). However, few of these insights have been adopted in pedagogical settings (see Zyngier, 2006; 2020; Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2020; 2022; and Giovanelli & Harrison, 2022). According to Hall (2023, p. 257), the linguistic aspects of literary works are often underexplored in educational contexts worldwide. This paper aims to fill this gap by demonstrating how Literary Awareness workshops may promote a setting in which participants experience verbal art, use creativity to produce texts of their own, and justify their choices from a linguistically-based perspective.

2.2. Literary Awareness

Shifts in approaches to literary texts are a constant. As a result of the so-called cognitive turn in literary studies, several works have sought to explore how psychological processes, examined through the lens of cognitive science, interact with readers' emotions, meaning-making, and interpretive responses (for instance, Frijda et al., 2000; Miall, 2006; Oatley et al., 2006; Stockwell, 2019) and the experience of reading is now seen as an embodied activity where emotions play a decisive role (Simpson, 2014; Dijkstra & Post, 2015; van Peer & Chesnokova, 2022; 2025). Aligned with this development, pedagogical stylistics has been moving toward a

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deeper investigation of how readers respond to the stylistic patterns they come across in the texts they engage with.

Well before this shift, Zyngier (1994) had already defined and systematised "Literary Awareness" as a pedagogical method stemming from the NCLE working party's view that "Language Awareness is a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall, 1985, p. 7). She argued that learners could arrive at an understanding of how language triggers thought and emotion through their perception of linguistic patterns. To this end, she identified ten language patterns responsible for certain effects, proposing strategies that aimed at awareness of sound, sense, tone, register, and humour – ultimately enabling learners to understand both how and why a text achieves its impact. In this sense, the core principles underlying Literary Awareness are similar to those Verdonk (2013) defined for stylistics: choice and effect.

Whether dealing with canonical or non-canonical texts, a common and often unquestioned assumption in literary education is that learners already possess strong and nuanced reading skills. However, experience has demonstrated that meaningful, informed engagement with literary texts does not automatically occur from mere exposure. In response to this, and building on over three decades of methodological development, numerous studies have evidenced the validity of Literary Awareness workshops across diverse cultural and educational contexts, and involving readers at various stages of learning and language proficiency (Zyngier et al., 2007; Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2024; Viana & Zyngier, 2017, 2020).

The primary goal of such workshops is to promote a learning environment in which readers can explore how language patterns are used to create impact. These sessions emphasise engagement with the text through playfulness, imagination, emotional insight, problem-solving, and critical thinking, which are approached as forms of inquiry-based learning. Central to this methodology is the introduction of what we have termed "experiential stylistic patterns" (Zyngier & Chesnokova, in press), the focal point of the current phase of the evolution of Literary Awareness.

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In an era where literature increasingly intersects with digital media and diverse narrative forms, encouraging Literary Awareness workshops is more essential than ever. They enable readers to recognise stylistic techniques, uncover underlying themes and motifs, and develop a deeper appreciation of verbal art. There are also broader implications: these workshops engage readers with multiple experiences and different cultural viewpoints, allowing them to empathise with others. By working with experiential stylistic patterns – where language and emotion converge – learners move beyond passive reading and actively participate in the interpretive process. This not only enhances their critical and emotional engagement with texts but also reinforces the potential literature has as a transformative educational tool. In this sense, we believe this article contributes new insights to the field of pedagogical stylistics. It explores some productions of the most recent workshops, which add to the empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of a Literary Awareness methodology.

2.3. Experiential Stylistic Patterns

The patterns initially described by Zyngier (1994) have by now been redefined. Mostly, the perspective offered by embodiment theories (Barsalou, 2008; Caracciolo, 2013, among others) has helped shape how they can account for the processes of experiencing verbal artistry. Table 1 below lists the 10 patterns which have been used in two Literary Awareness workshops in Ukraine (2023–2024), five for each version.

Table 1. Patterns and Features

Year	Pattern #	Experiential Stylistic Patterns	Surface linguistic features
2023	1	Vagueness	Modals, plurals, adjectivation, listing
	2	Matching relations	Comparison
	3	Lexical cohesion	Repetition
	4	Perspective and point of view	Speech and thought presentation
	5	Register	Gauging context and language choice
20	6	Suspension	Parataxis and hypotaxis
	7	Contrast of moments in time	Tenses and time markers

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2 4	8	(In)coherence	Phonological/lexical/syntactical/discoursal neologism
	9	Iconicity	Layout, graphological features
	10	Personification/transitivity	Doers and processes

Source: Authors' Own Elaboration

The first five patterns in Table 1 have been described in Chesnokova and Zyngier (2024). The experiential stylistic pattern of "suspension" (Zyngier, 1994; 2026) accounts for the feeling the reader may have of being left in a state of anticipation for a period longer than anticipated before arriving at a conclusive point. It stems from Sinclair's "focalising categories of discourse" (or "focats", for short) of "arrest" and "extension" ([1972], reprinted in Sinclair, 2016, p. 95). In addition, according to Halliday (1990 [1985], p. 196), "primary" and "secondary clauses" may be arranged in a logico-semantic relation based on two fundamental relationships of (1) EXPANSION and (2) PROJECTION. In the former, the secondary clause expands the primary clause by (a) elaborating it, (b) extending it, or (c) enhancing it. In the latter, the secondary clause is projected through the primary clause, which instates it as (a) a locution or (b) an idea. There are many ways suspension may be realised linguistically, but in this specific workshop, the focus was primarily on the relations of parataxis and hypotaxis.

The second pattern for 2024, "contrast of moments in time", brings out how shifts in tense and time markers may impact the reader and create meaning. The third quite effective stylistic experiential pattern, "(in)coherence", relates to nonsense and neologism at different levels of language. It involves the incongruities or illogicality that unsettle the reader (Shires, 1988, p. 272) and stretch the limits of the possible. According to Lecercle (1994, p. 3), nonsense is "where rules and maxims appear to be joyously subverted". And he adds: "the genre is structured by the contradiction, which I shall eventually formulate in terms of a dialectic, between over-structuring and destructuring, subversion and support".

The fourth pattern mentioned in Table 1 for 2024, "iconicity", addresses the connection readers establish between the graphic realisation of a phonological sequence and the concept they associate it with (see Duchesne & Leguay, 1991, p. 206). The final pattern selected for the 2024 workshop, "personification /transitivity" (Simpson, 2014, p. 22; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010, p. 77), reflects how a functional linguistics perspective on different processes is

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represented in language. As explained by Halliday (1996), transitivity is the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the processes of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness, together with the participants in these processes and their attendant circumstances; and it embodies a very basic distinction of processes into two types, those that are regarded as due to an external cause, an agency other than the person or object involved, and those that are not. [...] Transitivity is really the cornerstone of the semantic organisation of experience" (p. 81).

In this light, this pattern involves the linguistic realisation of personification in discourse.

The language of literary texts always challenges readers into new insights, consequently implying that experiential stylistic patterns are innumerable and open to continual description and interpretation. The two reported workshops focused on ten, and the strategy used was to allow participants to "plunge into the experience" (Zyngier & Chesnokova, in press), feel the impact of the text, and only then create links between feelings, knowledge and understanding. As a result, participants were expected to justify their emotional response based on linguistic evidence, create texts with the pattern in focus, explain their choices based on the linguistic knowledge acquired, voice their opinion on the topic, and reflect on the pedagogical experience.

3. Method

3.1. Context and Participants

Both workshops were structured based on the same framework (for a detailed description of the 2023 workshop, see Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2024). In 2023, 30 MA and PhD students from English Philology and Translation Studies, aged 21–25, and 15 staff members, ages 28–72 enrolled. Despite some turnover in attendance due to the war situation, the core group consisted of 20 members. In 2024, participation included again 30 MA and PhD students who enrolled voluntarily, as well as 6 academic staff members from the English Language/Literature and Translation Departments. None of these participants were English speakers as a first language. They were all Ukrainians whose level of proficiency in English (in line with the enrolment or employment requirements) was C1–C2, and none of them reported difficulty understanding the presentations or readings, or creating their own texts.

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3.2. Materials and Methods

Since it was first systematised (Zyngier, 1994), the objectives, strategies and methods for developing Literary Awareness have been discussed widely (Viana & Zyngier, 2017; 2020; Hall, 2014; 2022; 2023; Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2024; Fialho, 2024, among others). In the two reported workshops, six 90-minute sessions were organised, with an interval of one to two days between them, so that participants had enough time to create and reflect.

The workshops opened with a more formal lecture by the first author of this article, who defined and situated the area as a branch of pedagogical stylistics, whereas the other five sessions focused on an experiential stylistic pattern each. All sessions were conducted via Zoom, and participants' involvement included using chat boxes and/or microphones. In each session, they would read and react to texts that contained the selected pattern. However, no initial description was given to avoid pre-empting the participants' reactions. Only after some discussion would the pattern be pointed out and explained. The next step involved the production of texts based on the pattern under focus, followed by a reflection on the process. Due to the conditions under which the workshops were conducted, participants could send their work to the lecturer after each workshop, but before the next one, when the group would discuss their production.

Although the quality was not the main priority in the productions, some creations proved particularly engaging. Due to space limitations here, we will discuss two examples from four of the ten patterns (two for each year), aiming to showcase the results that can be obtained. From the various productions, we selected those that were brief yet sufficiently representative. We also avoided reproducing those that demanded work on layout (for instance, those on iconicity). For further samples and information, please contact the authors.

4. Results: Production

Assessments and pre- and post-tests for 2023 and 2024 have been analysed, compared, and discussed elsewhere (Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2024; Zyngier & Chesnokova, in press). Our aim here is to show how emotional engagement and linguistic knowledge may translate into

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meaningful experiences of verbal art as evidenced in participants' productions[1]. We hold that by engaging in the process of textual intervention and creation, participants may be in a better position to interpret texts from a more informed linguistic perspective. In a sense, Literary Awareness workshops may thus provide an answer to the question posed by Widdowson in the Introduction above.

Vagueness (Pattern 1: 2023)

At the beginning of the session, participants were asked to read a descriptive passage from Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac* (1984, p. 7), starting with "From the window" and ending with "snow might already be slightly and silently falling", and to draw what they thought was being described. Since the sessions were held over Zoom, the drawings could not be completed in real time, as they would in an in-person session. Instead, they were scanned and submitted to the lecturer afterwards. When discussing their work in the following session, participants were intrigued by how they varied. Due to imprecisions in the language of the passage they had read, they realised how they had worked hard to fill in the gaps in the description of the landscape. Their drawings reflected a wide range of emotions and individual conceptual representations.

[1] This research project has been approved by the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University Ethics Committee (Ukraine). Participants are not identified for the sake of anonymity.

Figure 1. Drawings by Participants

These two drawings reflect how inconsistencies, looseness, and contextual shifts in the language used caused a blurring effect. In the sentence which they attempted to represent figuratively ("From the window all that could be seen was a receding area of grey"), the adverbial is fronted, making it the theme. There is also the use of an agentless passive where the phenomenon is experienced, but the senser is omitted. Additionally, more linguistic choices contribute to the blurring effect: the modal "could", destabilising the certainty of the proposition; the indefinite pronoun "all"; the complex nominal phrase "receding area of grey" and its semantic overtones; and the lexical choice itself ("receding" and "grey"). In the ensuing discussion, participants noticed that pluralisation, adverbials, listings, lexical choice, and modals, among other linguistic elements, fuzzified the text, creating a sense of vagueness. The narrator's place is not well defined either. The drawing on the left presents the perspective of someone who feels to be part of the landscape, looking at the mountain and the lake. There is also some indeterminacy in the drawing, as in the bottom right and left, we do not know whether hands or leaves are depicted. If they are hands, the narrator is viewing the landscape through a windowpane. If they are leaves, the narrator is inserted in the landscape. In the drawing on the right, the narrator is clearly enclosed in a room, experiencing the scene from a distance, protected by a framed window with curtains. One can also see candles on the sill.

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After many of the drawings were discussed, participants were asked to read a passage from *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, specifically the one in which Clarissa enters the flower shop (1925, pp. 17–18). They were asked to point out how vagueness and imprecision were linguistically obtained. After analysis and discussion, they were given a passage from Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea,* which provided a simple, direct, unadorned piece of prose. The point now was to intervene with it, first by thinking of an effect and then by blurring the discourse to obtain it. They were also encouraged to reflect on their productions and share their ideas with the class.

The original passage was the following: "When the boy came back the old man was asleep in the chair and the sun was down. The boy took the old army blanket off the bed and spread it over the back of the chair and over the old man's shoulders" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 18).

Two examples below illustrate how different effects were aimed at and how the text was manipulated to create the intended impact (henceforth, the students' productions are quoted *ipsis litteris*).

Participant A

When the tall, weary boy, around 11–12 years old, came back to the room of the time-worn cottage by the marshy river bank, the old man with skinny arms and legs was asleep in the red wooden chair and the sun that was casting long shadows just a few minutes ago was down putting the room in the darkness making it look like an abandoned dwelling where only some evil spirits can roam from corner to another. The boy not thinking long about the feeling that overwhelmed him, took the old army blanket off the spring bed and spread it quickly over the back of the shabby chair and over the old man's thin shoulders that had been the boy's support and protection since his first day in this world.

The participant made it clear she intended to bring out the old man-boy's relationship and imply the love they felt towards each other. To blur the text, she determined the approximate

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age ("around 11–12") and introduced many adjectives ("time-worn cottage", "marshy river bank", etc.), dimming out the light until darkness prevailed. The old man's frailty and vulnerability are highlighted. The participant informed that the scene evoked a protective instinct in the boy, and this emotional dynamic served the author's purpose of eliciting empathy from the reader. This example illustrates how the conscious use of vaguer language lends the original a more introspective quality and increases the emotional impact.

A completely different effect using the same pattern is obtained by Participant B, who mentioned she wanted to create uneasiness, alarm, and tension.

Participant B

When the boy came back, having finished his unknown business, the unusually pale old man was suspiciously quiet, sitting in the chair. He was asleep, or was he? The sun was already down, giving no light to them. In the dark, the boy took something off the bed. It seemed like the old army blanket. Hesitant, the boy spread it over the back of the squeaky chair and over the old man's... shoulders.

The participant showed how tension was created with vague language (Channell, 1994), among other elements, by means of questions "or was he?", by imprecise noun phrases ("unknown business", "unusually pale old man" and "squeaky chair"), the introduction of "something" and "seemed" as well as the use of reticence.

These examples indicate that the participants showed an increase in pattern perception. They became aware of how so-called precise formulations can be transformed into vague, tentative, and suggestive language that creates the intended impact on the reader.

Lexical Cohesion (Pattern 3: 2023)

This specific pattern imparts lexical cohesion by means of repetition, although other types of cohesion are not ruled out. Repetition is a complex linguistic phenomenon realised on

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different levels of language and functioning as a meaning-making strategy. Impact depends on the connections readers construct between the individual repeated items. Whether through sound patterns like alliteration and assonance, or through lexis and syntax, the pattern plays a role on the ideational, textual, and interpersonal levels. At the ideational level, it enables the reader to build logical relationships, moving from the perception of semantic clusters to the emotional experience the text may bring. At the textual level, repetition reinforces coherence and cohesion, ensuring the text's unity. At the interpersonal level, it reflects the writer's choices and intentions, revealing stance and inviting the reader to engage with the text. By thinking about the intended effect and understanding the links created between repetitions, the writer may affect the reader.

To exercise this pattern, the participants were asked to think of a sentence and repeat it three or more times, leaving space to add more text in between, and to end either with an unexpected break in the pattern or with a repeated phrase. Here is what Participant C produced:

Participant C

I won't give up,
On this winding road

I won't give up,
In the face of the storm

I won't give up,
Amidst the darkest night

I won't give up,
For dreams are worth the fight

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I won't give up,
When hope feels out of sight

I won't give up,
With strength to set things right

I won't give up,
Through trials, I'll take flight

I won't give up,
In every battle's fight

I won't give up,
With all my strength and might

I won't give up,
Just continue my life

This poem consists of 10 stanzas with two lines each. The words are mostly monosyllables, except for "winding", "amidst', "darkest", "trials", "battle's" and "continue". After the first two stanzas, the other eight create a rhyming pattern, maintaining a regular beat. The sound iconicity of the assonance /ai/ resembles that of a cry (for more on phonetic iconicity, see Auracher, Scharinger & Menninghaus, 2019; Tsur & Gafni, 2022; van Peer & Chesnokova, 2025). In the process of creation, the participant demonstrated understanding of the pattern. She mentioned that the intended effect was resilience and determination, and that the repetition of "I won't give up" guarantees this effect. She argued the poem conveyed a sense of commitment and resolve to continue striving for one's goals and not succumb to adversity.

The work Participant D submitted is similar in that it uses repeated sentences, but in this case, she offered a statement followed by a tag question, which adds uncertainty and a tone of sadness. Every line opens anaphorically with "It's over," while lines 1, 3, 5, and 7 are completely identical. In their turn, in lines 2, 4, 6 and 8, the opening phrase is followed by negatively coloured clauses that offer justification to the intended sadness: "'cause you're gone", "I'm alone", "it feels wrong" and a final evaluation "time to mourn". On a phonetic note, the /o/ sound prevails in the poem, reinforcing the idea of a lamentation.

Participant D

It's over, isn't it?
It's over, 'cause you're gone
It's over, isn't it?
It's over, I'm alone
It's over, isn't it?
It's over, it feels wrong
It's over, isn't it?
It's over, time to mourn

Suspension (Pattern 6: 2024)

In engaging with a text, readers and writers establish formal and semantic hierarchies by assigning greater relevance to certain ideas over others. This prioritisation may rely, among other possibilities, on the structural principles of hypotaxis and parataxis. In hypotactic constructions, one clause is subordinate to another, creating a hierarchy of meaning. In paratactic constructions, the relationship is established on an equal status, with one clause initiating and the other continuing. Depending on the intention, the conclusion may be deliberately postponed by having additional ideas embedded within the structure. This creates

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a sense of suspension, as the resolution is delayed and the reader is left in a state of anticipation. With this specific pattern, the participants became aware of the effects syntactical nesting offered. Here are two examples of sentences with suspension:

Participant E

With the sky darkening, the wind howling, and every second feeling like an eternity, she finally opened the door.

The sentence opens with three secondary adverbial clauses in the gerund ("darkening", "howling", and "feeling"), which postpone the conclusion and create anticipation. The semantic field of impending misfortune also promotes an atmosphere of fear or premonition. The anticipation dissipates as the main clause, with an unemotional, everyday and familiar movement ("she finally opened the door"), is introduced.

Participant F offers a longer suspended structure:

Participant F

It was when I, inspired by the sun that shines brightly and nourishes nature, the wind that gently caresses my face, ruffles my hair and makes trees sing, the flowers that fill the air with the sweet smell and welcome butterflies to flip their colourful wings nearby, and the water that brings the wiseness of the time far away and is rattling and tickling my ankles, realised that life is beautiful.

Here, the main clause ("It was when I … realised…") is expanded by a complexity of syntactical nestings, each referring to a different aspect of nature (the sun, the wind, the flowers, and the water), which leaves the reader in suspension as the linguistic choices work to evoke an overall atmosphere of gentle and profound sense of wonder. The resolution of the main

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sentence at the end, centered on the verb in the past tense ("realised"), provides an evaluation of the experience.

(In)coherence (Pattern 8: 2024)

The purpose of this pattern is to explore the subversive language of nonsense – a mode of expression that stretches the boundaries of conventional language and logic. In the process, signs are interpreted through established patterns that serve as springboards for new forms of linguistic creation. Here, participants experiment with sounds, words, and meaning, challenging the existing system by establishing new connections and constructing alternative networks of signifiers.

Nonsense can be generated through various linguistic strategies, including phonological associations, semantic prosody, and the unexpected use of register (Shires, 1988; Lecercle, 1994). At the phonological level, novel combinations of sounds may result in the creation of new words, or lexical neologisms. For example, in "abracadabra", repetitive sounds accumulate, resulting in a new word, which functions for incantatory effects. At the lexico-grammatical level, new coinages may emerge by agglutination, or words may be recategorised and attributed a different grammatical function. For instance, in the example below, according to Participant G, "dreffy" is a combination of "dreary" and "fluffy", "splishing" is derived from "splash", and "spaddling" is a combination of "splashing" and "paddling".

Participant G

The Crying Cloud
A cloud was dreffy and full of rain,
It floated down, feeling the pain.
The wind whispered, making it shake,
And then it laughed, by mistake!

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Plop! The raindrops fell with a bound,
Splishing and spaddling all around.

On the syntactic level, a part of the clause is used in an unusual function. For example, in E.E. Cummings' poem "anyone lived in a pretty how town" (1985 [1940]), the adverb "how" is used as an adjective, and in the line "He danced his did" a verb in the past tense is used as a direct object (and also with a phonological association with "gig"). On the level of textual organisation, nonsense works on coherence, since it depends on the breach of logical expectations, as in the example by Participant H.

Participant H

The purple cat wore a hat of jam,
I danced with a toaster and called it Sam.
A fish on a bicycle sang with cheer,
While clouds played chess with a chandelier.
The moon gave a wink, then disappeared!

In this poem, a surreal world transcending everyday knowledge and experience, emerges for the purpose of fun and entertainment. In a way, it follows the logic of Edward Lear's limericks (see Wales, 2025). It has five lines and, to a certain degree, follows an AABBB rhyme scheme. "Cheer" /ʧɪə/ and "chandelier" /ʃændəˈlɪə/ have different syllable structures, but they have a near rhyme if the opening sound of the voiceless, alveo-palatal, fricative consonant / ʃ / is considered added to the vowel sound /ie/. The same goes for "disappeared" /dɪsə'pɪəd /, which rhymes with the vowel /ɪə/ sound in "cheer" and "chandelier". Whether the images could have been taken from well-known sources or not, the fact it that the participant subverted the idea even further. There is a poem by Dr Seuss, "The Cat in the Hat," and the animation "The Cat Who Wore the Purple Hat" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23fXfXNOOHs).

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However, by colouring the cat purple and creating a hat of jam, subversion is extended. The same seems to have happened with dancing with a toaster (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NTZwAgEHQk), but it is given a name. The fish on a bike is also current by now (see "Fish on a Bicycle", a 1996 Guinness ad campaign that featured a computer-generated image (CGI) of a fish riding a bicycle (https://www.flickr.com/photos/55366415@N08/54343550603), but in this poem it sings. This reveals how, perhaps drawing on prior knowledge, the participant stresses the limits of the possible, thereby creating surreal verbal art.

5. Discussion and Conclusion: From Sensitivity to Production

Assessments of the impact that Literary Awareness workshops can have on creative writing and stylistically based literary interpretation with participants from different contexts, ages, and degrees of proficiency in English have already been conducted, as indicated above. However, these workshops still need to be adopted more widely. There is a notable lack of literary education programmes that systematically address key issues, such as how real readers account for the way language may evoke emotion, either in the texts they read or in the ones they create. The productions analysed here stand as illustrations of how participants have been sensitised to the effects of verbal art. By spotting and responding to experiential stylistic patterns, they entered the game of creative exploration that led them to emotional and aesthetic experiences.

There are many challenges ahead. Now that Literary Awareness has been widely accepted as a concept (Chesnokova & Yakuba, 2011; Sayuti, 2020), one of them is adapt workshops to learners' mother tongue and to young children. A pilot project has been carried out in an elementary public school in Brazil, and the results are still being studied. Another possibility is developing projects for preschool children, one of which is currently underway.

In sum, the emotional involvement Rosenblatt (1938–1975) advanced can now be achieved through Literary Awareness workshops, such as those conducted in Ukraine in 2023–2024. Adding to Miall's approach to reading (Miall, 2006, p. 43), we hold the premise that participants/learners should feel, find, experience and produce. Never to impose.

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Data Availability Statement

The data analysed in this article consist of anonymised participant productions, drawings, and reflective materials generated during the Literary Awareness workshops conducted in Ukraine in 2023–2024. Selected anonymised examples are reproduced in the article for analytical and illustrative purposes. The full dataset is not publicly available because it contains participant-generated educational and creative materials. Further information may be requested from the corresponding author, subject to consent, anonymisation, and relevant ethical or data-protection restrictions.

Ethics Statement

This research project has been approved by the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University Ethics Committee (Ukraine). Participants are not identified for the sake of anonymity.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Use Disclosure

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation, writing, editing, analysis, interpretation, or revision of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article.

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