EMPIRICAL STYLISTICS IN AN EFL TEACHING CONTEXT:

COMPARING VIRTUAL AND FACE-TO-FACE READING RESPONSES

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1. INTRODUCTION: TECHNOLOGY IN EFL CONTEXT

The 21st century has been undergoing rapid technological development which not only makes our lives faster but our actions more productive. New knowledge has also opened limitless possibilities in the area of education. Not surprisingly, this technological revolution has gone far beyond the borders of Sciences departments of modern universities. Learning languages and literature, especially EFL and EFLit (Zyngier 1994; Stockwell 2007), has also inevitably been affected by these changes (van Peer et al. 2010; van Peer et al. 2011). In his analysis of the World Wide Web impact, Carr (2010: 116) argues that "[w]ith the exception of alphabets and number systems, the Net may well be the single most powerful mind-altering technology that has ever come into general use. At the very least, it's the most powerful that has come along since the book".

Indeed, digital and web tools have penetrated all domains of aesthetic and humanities learning, cultural and literary research in particular (Piolat et al. 1997; Rose 2011): we read electronic books, literature can be perceived as an audiovisual performance either online or off-line, and in literary studies much of the search can be done with the help of Internet browsers in a split second while back in the previous millennium just checking a reference, a quote, or a date could take weeks, if not months, of tedious library and archive readings.

In addition to other influences, technological advancements have brought about a completely new group of young people, the so-called "Net Generation" (Baron & Maier 2005), or "digital natives" (Prensky 2001; Jones et al. 2010; Margaryan et al. 2011). These young people, who are currently studying at school or university, "have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age" (Prensky 2001: 1). Prensky (*idem: ibidem)* describes them as people who are:

> used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to 'serious' work.

Such group unquestionably includes students of the Humanities departments who, as the stereotype might erroneously suggest, have nothing to do with technology, gadgets or ultra-modern devices, which are typically seen as the tools of the Sciences. As we will demonstrate below, this biased perception does not hold as the situation has been dramatically changed with the influence of the technological progress on the educational practices not just in Sciences, but in all areas of academia.

It might seem obvious that technological advancements will automatically cause alterations in the way people live, behave and learn. The new tools are reported to physically change our brain (Carr 2010), to cause shifts in patterns of our cognition (Wolf et al. 2012) as well as to affect human information processing in general (Wästlund 2007).

Although there is still no consensus over the exact influence of digitised education on young learners (Bennett et al. 2008; Bennet & Maton 2010; Helsper & Eynon 2010; Livingstone 2012), the "digital native" students have been showing educators that the academic world has also changed, and that at least the elements of a new way of learning, "e-ducation" (E-ducation 2013), must find their way into the curriculum. In fact, as Prensky holds, "[o]ur students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach" (2001: 1).

It would be fair to mention that even before the "digital natives" were born, scholars had been discussing advantages of using personal computers in the Humanities (e.g., Andersen 1984). This early stage is now past as De Shmedt holds: "[t]he fact that students and staff have a computer on their desks instead of a pile of books is one visible change affecting the learning and teaching situation, even if it is a superficial one" (1999: 2).

A lot has been written in recent decades about how technology can be used in language and literature learning settings, about its potential in shaping the new millennium teaching strategies and more. The literature on the subject has at large focused on introducing multimodal electronic courses into curricula, using computer assisted language learning (CALL) or web-based stylistic courses (Short et al. 2007), implementing digital sources instead of traditional ones for the sake of easiness of storing information (Singh 2013), exposing EFL students to audio- and video authentic input sources, i.e., on using digital technologies as tools that are capable of enhancing learners' motivation and efficiency (e.g., Sharshenova 2007; Thomas 2011), and doing corpus analysis with students of literature (Zyngier 2008). As Bok claims, "[t]echnology is gradually causing a number of professors to re-examine the way they teach, away from a passive form of learning to a more interesting and active form" (*The Economist*, March 28th, 2015)[1].

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[1] See http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21646986-online-learning-could-disrupt-higher-education-many-universities-are-resisting-it-not. Accessed June 15, 2015.

Although much has been done in the area of using digital technology in literary education, not enough has been achieved. For instance, Opas-Hänninen (2010) has shown the value of computer analysis of stance in fiction, and Miall (2010) has ironically suggested devising an imaginary "reading machine". In addition, Heller (2010) has demonstrated how canonical authors can be taught by way of play production and technology integration. There even has been a claim in favour of including more scientific subjects, like maths or statistics, into the Humanities curricula (Juola 2010) so as to enable literature students to work with the necessary tools to, for instance, identify the authorship of a literary piece with the help of reliable techniques. These and similar research enable teachers and curriculum designers to consider the benefits and drawbacks of digitizing literary education.

However, few attempts have been made to understand how technology affects the central agent in any educational process, that is, the learner (Bellard-Thomson 2010; Potter 2012), and how the use of modern innovation influences the core technique of the teaching process, that is, reading (Davis 2002; Keogh 2012; Oku 2012; Kim & Kim 2013; Mangen et al. 2013; Margolin et al. 2013).

In their study on the influence of reading medium and a paratext manipulation on cognitive and emotional engagement with textual narratives, Mangen & Kuiken (2014) investigate whether readers who, irrespective of their previous reading experience on electronic media, are confronted with narrative texts on a digital "page" (a screen) reveal the same narrative engagement as readers of a paper page (a booklet). The authors hold that:

> [b]ecause the print book medium has been dominant for so long, perhaps we
> have become oblivious to the affordances specific to its interface (e.g., page

turning, browsing, bookmarking). Comparison with new media, then, may not only disclose what is distinctive about texts presented on screen but also unveil the affordances of the traditional print medium (*idem*: 151).

The medium the readers use indeed affects reading. Mangen & Kuiken (*idem*: *ibidem*) discuss the difference by arguing that "[p]rint texts are fixed and tangible; they are physically contiguous with the medium. In contrast, screen-based texts are intangible and virtual; they are physically separable from the medium," and this difference may affect readers' responses, as we will see below.

Literary reading contributes to cognitive (such as vocabulary and reading comprehension) and emotional (such as empathy) skills development as well as to academic skills improvement (*idem*: 153). Thus it is vital to know whether these affects are similar or different in case reading is done not from a paper, but from a digital source.

To this end, Mangen & Kuiken conducted an experiment in which participants were invited to read a narrative text in one of four experimental conditions: medium condition (a paper source or a digital one) and paratext condition (fictional or nonfictional text). Results (*idem*: 159–163) indicate that tablet readers proved to be dislocated in the narrative. They also acknowledged that they felt discomfort in handling the medium. Additionally, the two groups in media condition reported considerably different levels of narrative coherence. When told that they were exposed to a nonfictional text, the readers who were reading the story on an iPad were less likely to report narrative coherence and transportation. The paper source readers, however, were more likely to report narrative coherence. Yet another finding of the research demonstrates that, unlike electronic media readers, booklet ones more often reported a close link between transportation

and empathy, thus lending support to the assumption that the present-day transition from paper to a screen has a significant affect on readers' comprehension of a text.

The times have indeed changed for the reader and the student of language and literature. As Short commented much earlier, most students in his setting "appear to think that doing English means to curl up by the fire and read a novel, prior to having a cosy and informal chat about it" (1996: 43). Instead of just sitting with a book in hand in a cosy armchair and then discussing about it in class, modern teenagers or university students prefer a computer screen or a tablet (Igbokwe et al. 2012; Minzesheimer 2013).

It might seem obvious that it is not just about *preferring* computers or digital sources to print ones. Much more crucial is the fact that with the advent of the World Wide Web reading habits of people (not in a technical, but rather in a psychological sense) have been considerably changing (Liu 2005; Minzesheimer 2013). Today students spend hours (Jones et al. 2009) surfing the Internet. They browse different websites, communicate in social networks, listen to music and watch movies online – sometimes several things at a time. This makes us assume that technology is likely to influence their attitude to reading *per se* and the reception of literary texts in particular. But how much do we know about these changing habits? What kind of impact does technology have on students of language and literature? Should classroom instruction change? In what ways?

These questions led us to check the impact of technology in a class of EFL university learners. To this purpose, 135 Humanities Ukrainian students were asked to respond to a canonical piece of poetry – in a conventional academic setting and online – so that we could empirically test whether their reaction depended on the form and the format of exposure. The experiment will be detailed in Section 3 of this chapter.

2. EMPIRICAL STYLISTICS IN EFL CONTEXTS

In any EFL teaching environment an empirical approach – both as a research methodology and as a teaching tool – offers well-needed mechanisms for literature instruction. Unfortunately, we do not have enough empirical evidence of what has been happening in various educational contexts, particularly in a stylistics class (Fialho et el. 2012; Fogal 2015). As Bellard-Thomson holds, a number of questions on educational techniques still remain unanswered: "What are my students learning? How do I know what they are learning? How is what they are learning affecting the way they use English, if it is?" (2011: 52).

Understanding what and how students are learning is crucial in all fields of instruction, including stylistics. Stylistics, or the linguistic study of literary texts (Halliday 1970), has been widely shown to be of use in literature classrooms (Widdowson 1975; Short 1989; Carter & McRae 1996; Chesnokova & Yakuba 2011). Following Carter & McRae (1996: XXIII), "[l]iterary texts are […] so much more than their language", and it is stylistics that leads students to "discovering things for themselves, and *feeling* the significance of what they are told as well as *understanding* it intellectually" (Short 1996: 48).

At this stage, more empirical work is needed so that the effects of stylistics classes on mastering EFL can be empirically tested. We agree with Zyngier (2001: 372–374) that stylistics is "the approach that […] best accommodates developments in linguistic, literary and cultural theory", and that it studies "the sociocultural implications of the choices and effects that are responsible for the creation of instantial meaning in a text, which, in its turn, results from the articulation of different sociohistorical agents". However, at this stage we also need to add empirical research to

observe how the theory can work in classrooms so that we can better understand how real student-readers function, thus developing effective evidence-based interventions.

Not only can empirical stylistics test the validity of classroom practice (van Peer & Nousi 2007; Zyngier & Fialho 2010; Hakemulder & van Peer 2013; Fialho & Zyngier 2014), but it can also be used as a teaching instrument in EFL contexts. For instance, students can be involved in independent research projects designed to enhance their language awareness and skills in interpreting literary texts (see Chesnokova & Yakuba 2011). In EFL contexts, stylisticians have already started using technology (e.g., Sousa & Costa 2001) to increase the students' motivation and stimulate awareness of EFL patterns.

Having said that, in the context of post-Soviet countries, educational professionals still remain rather conservative in adjusting classrooms to the current technological world. This includes the Ukrainian setting where the study reported here has been conducted. The two schools involved in the reported case below are an exception: most classrooms have modern high-speed computers with access to the Internet, smart boards are used in the majority of rooms, and Smart Tools application is common practice. Most students use computers on a daily basis, including laptops and tablets, both for educational and personal purposes. E-learning is declared as a perspective priority of both schools' strategic development (E-environment). And yet the way literature teaching is dealt with remains fairly traditional in the sense that literary pieces are mostly read from paper sources unless a student opts for downloading the digital version for his / her own convenience. Though highly computer-literate, both teachers and students rarely treat this skill as an asset in literature classes.

3. CASE DESCRIPTION

The reported research was carried out in March and April of 2013 at the same time at two Ukrainian universities.[2] Both are state-owned institutions that have Schools of Humanities in their structure. To enter both universities, a potential student is expected to score very high on the English language examination. Consequently, the students involved in the research were treated as proficient EFL learners with high level of sensitivity to both the verbal artistry and the style of the experimental textual material.

In line with the tenets of the Empirical Study of Literature (Schmidt 1980), this study measures, compares and makes inferences about how real readers in Ukraine react to the same poem read in different environments: in off-line academic and online virtual settings. Supporting the tenet "that text-meaning is not an intrinsic property of a physical text and that meaning is created in the process of response" (Zyngier 2001: 372), we decided to check how Ukrainian readers attribute meaning to a piece of poetry in these two different reading situations. We hypothesised that both the reading situation (the setting) and the format of the text itself significantly influence their responses. The analysis was guided by two major research questions:

(1) How do Ukrainian students majoring in Linguistics respond to a canonical piece of poetry – in a conventional face-to-face academic setting and online?

(2) Do their reactions depend on the form and the format of exposure?

In the following section, we detail the methodology used in this study.

3.1. Design

As we wanted to check whether the students were affected by (a) the reading context itself and (b) the text format in particular, the research design required five different groups comparable in size and homogeneous in terms of the general profile of the sample. The random sampling

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[2] Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and National Aviation University.

technique was applied. Group 1 was the control group that read the authentic text by Dickinson in a conventional academic setting during their university class. Groups 2 – 5 were experimental ones (see Table 1).

Group number	Reading context	Text format
1	University class	Printed text: original
2	University class	Printed text: manipulated
3	University class	Printed text: manipulated
4	Outside university	Facebook survey
5	University class	YouTube recording

Table 1. Experimental design

For Groups 2 and 3, the text was manipulated as described in 3.2.2. Groups 4 and 5 were exposed to it in non-conventional virtual setting. Group 4 read the text on Facebook in their free time outside the classroom and answered the questions online by way of a Facebook survey. Group 5 listened to the text read by a professional actor on YouTube in class and answered the questions immediately after the exposure.

3.2. Method

A combination of research methods was used in the study. As the experimental tool was the questionnaire (for the questionnaire sample, see Appendix), we applied mixed methodology: the answers to closed questions were processed in a quantitative way while the information obtained from open questions was given qualitative treatment.

3.2.1. Participants

We invited 135 undergraduate and graduate students majoring in English Philology or Translation Studies to participate in the research. Both majors imply the English language fluency as a qualification, and the curricula for both of them include a minimum of 6 to 10 hours of EFL a week with extra hours allocated for World Literature classes and, possibly, translation practice. The participants profile was rather typical of Ukrainian Humanities departments (8.2 % male and 91.8 %, female). The mean age of the sample was 22.7.

3.2.2. Materials

"A slash of Blue" by the Late Romantic American poet Emily Dickinson (J 204, Dickinson 1961: 95) was selected for the experiment. One reason for choosing this poem was the fact that Dickinson is viewed as a canonical author in Ukraine, and all university students of literature read and analyse her poems during their EFL and Literature classes. In addition, it was assumed that the participants would not have any difficulty in understanding the verse implications with its simple wording and transparent imagery. Finally, unlike other poems by Dickinson, this one is not included in local university curricula, which means that the participants would unlikely be influenced by the prior knowledge of the text. No indication of the author was given as we thought the prestige of the canonical writer could affect the response: the students could have rated the verse in a socially-desired way simply guided by the assumption that whatever is produced by a famous author is supposed to be rated as beautiful (van Peer & Fuchs 2007). Though not asked whether they could recognize the poem or whether they had read it before, in their comments the respondents have written that "[i]t is modern art or very old poem", and that they "[w]ould like to know the author", indicating therefore that they did not recognise Dickinson's style.

A slash of Blue —

A sweep of Gray —

Some scarlet patches on the way,

Compose an Evening Sky —

A little purple — slipped between —

Some Ruby Trousers hurried on —

A Wave of Gold —

A Bank of Day —

This just makes out the Morning Sky.

The short two-stanza description of dawn and sunset is typical of Dickinson's poetic vision with its clear focus on the beauty of the New England nature. The broken rhythm is created and enhanced by the poet's favourite poly-functional dashes. The words used by the author are mono- or bi-syllabic, the lines are short, the vocabulary of motion dominates (*slash, sweep, on the way, slipped, hurried on, wave*), and the foregrounded image of "Ruby Trousers hurried on" creates the picture of ongoing natural evolution.

To verify whether the exposure setting affected the reception (see Research Question 1), we presented the poem to Groups 1 – 3 in class, and to Group 4 on Facebook so that the participants could read it from the screen. To Group 5, the text was offered on YouTube so that the respondents could at the same time read it and listen to the poem recording (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. YouTube page sample. Group 5.

As we also wanted to check (see Research Question 2) whether the form of the text influenced the reception, we manipulated the poem. To this end, Group 2 was offered to read the text from which major foregrounding devices had been taken away in the sense that the verse was edited for conventional capitalization and punctuation – exactly as the editors had done with Dickinson's poems when they were first published:

A slash of blue,

A sweep of gray,

Some scarlet patches on the way

Compose an evening sky.

A little purple, slipped between,

Some ruby trousers hurried on,

A wave of gold,

A bank of day —

This just makes out the morning sky.

Group 3 was given the same text with the wording and mechanics intact, but the poem was re-organized not in stanzas and in a single paragraph as if it were a prose piece:

A slash of blue, a sweep of gray, some scarlet patches on the way compose an evening sky. A little purple, slipped between, some ruby trousers hurried on, a wave of gold, a bank of day — this just makes out the morning sky.

3.2.3. The questionnaire

Students were asked to fill in a questionnaire, reporting their response to the verse by way of a post-test. In the introductory part of it, they had to indicate their gender, age, university and their major (see Appendix).

Participants were then invited to read Dickinson's poem and answer a number of questions. The first question ("How beautiful do you find the text?") was meant to check the level of beauty the students attributed to the verse on a five-point scale, ranging from "not beautiful at all" to "very beautiful". To give textual support to the judgement, the participants were afterwards asked to supply up to three phrases that had stricken them in the text as the most beautiful ones.

Next, the respondents were asked whether they wanted to read more works of the author (a "yes / no" question), whether they believed the text was modern ("yes / no"), whether they thought the writer was a man or a woman, and whether they supposed the lines could be song lyrics ("yes / no") with the request to justify their opinion and, in case of the positive answer, to allocate a music genre to it.

At the end of the questionnaire, space for additional comments restricted by five lines was given. So as to guarantee the respondents' openness and willingness to cooperate, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that it took participants not more than 15 minutes to answer.

3.3. Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were processed with the help of the computer program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*)*. Apart from descriptive statistics procedures, ANOVA test of variance was used for comparing the responses of the five groups. The answers to open questions were given qualitative treatment by way of content analysis. The results were compared between groups. The findings of the present study are reported in the next section.

3.4. Results

Quite predictably, as the wording of the poem remained unchanged for all five samples, the respondents mentioned predominantly the same elements that impressed them as the most beautiful ones, and that resulted in no statistically significant differences.

The most frequently mentioned phrase was *wave of gold*, which was selected by 47 % of the original version readers, by 52 % of the edited version readers, and by as many as 68 % of the

prose version readers. The next positions were taken, in descending order, by *slash of blue* and *the morning sky* (or *this just make out the morning sky*).

The most beautiful elements selected by Group 1 participants, who read the authentic text in a conventional setting, were more complex as compared to YouTube versions readers. In the former, longer phrases (e.g., the morning sky [this just make out the morning sky], a little purple [slipped between] and scarlet patches [some scarlet patches on the way]) were used as examples. In contrast, the YouTube group participants opted for simpler and shorter clusters: a bank of day, a wave of gold, a slash of blue or a sweep of gray. One possible reason for the difference in reception is the anticipation of YouTube audience of a song-like text, in which vocabulary and syntax would be simple as it is in most modern songs students listen to. Most probably, the automatic connection between what the respondents expected and what they had really heard came into play here. This interpretation is supported by the fact that quite a number of YouTube version respondents answered affirmatively the question about whether they thought the text could be song lyrics (see Graph 2 further on). The possible genre was identified predominantly as pop, and justification was sometimes offered, e.g., "It sounds melodical [*sig*]", "It influences me and I begin to relax and think about good things", or "No strict rhyme, but there is a rhythm, so it's pop" [herein and on the students' comments are quoted *ipsis litteris*].

The colour imagery used by Dickinson triggered sensitivity of a considerable number of the respondents. In the comments, they mentioned that "I've noticed variety of colours in this text. I think this makes a text an elegant one," "May be the colors can appear to be a significant feature of the author," or "While reading one can literally see all the colors mentioned in a poem".

In spite of relative unanimity in identifying the most beautiful textual elements in the verse, the level of attributed beauty of the poem was assessed by the participants of the five groups

significantly differently ($p = 0.007$). For Group 1 that read the authentic text, the average beauty level was M = 2.90 with SD = 1.12; for Group 2 reading the simplified edited poem M = 3.64, SD = .96; for Group 3 reading the prose version M = 3.43, SD = 1.14; for Group 4 reading the poem on Facebook M = 3.05, SD = 1.05, and for Group 5 that received the text from the YouTube screen M = 3.56, SD = 1.05.

As we can see from the data, the highest level of beauty was, unexpectedly, attributed to the edited, simplified version as well as to the text recited by the actor on YouTube. The possible explanation for the latter may be found in the fact that participants watched a movie-like presentation together with listening to the poem recited. Alternatively, the reason could lie in relative simplicity of decoding these versions and the fact that students may not have associated beauty with complexity. The poem read on Facebook was mostly rated neutrally though it was heavily commented in a non-academic casual way, which is typical of this mode of online communication: "Reminds [me of] French poetry", "the word 'trousers' is a bit confusing here... Perhaps I just don't know all the meanings?", etc.

The original version of Dickinson's poem read in class (and just a couple of decades ago that had been the most widely used, if not the only, strategy EFL teachers would apply) was rated as the lowest in beauty level. The students' comments on the authentic version only contributed to the negative assessment data. The participants were rather straightforward and categorical in their unenthusiastic judgments: "Maybe I just don't understand the beauty of this poem. A little more rhyme won't hurt," "A lot of " – " looks [*sig*] strange," "More rhyme should be used" or even "I don't like it as I don't understand it".

The attempt at the author's gender prediction by the readers proved equally unsuccessful. Though the difference was statistically non-significant, 63.9 % of the original version readers

believed that the author was male, as compared to just 42 % of the edited version respondents, which clearly testifies to failure of the reception of the authentic poem by Dickinson.

Additionally, we had wanted to check the quality of the verse reception in connection to the ability of respondents to identify the text as an example of *modern* poetry or not. Since the author of the text was not mentioned in the questionnaire, we counted on the sensitivity of the participants, as advanced EFL learners, to textual patterns, figures and tropes used by Dickinson. Yet again the data obtained for the response to the original version stand somewhat apart as compared to reaction to manipulated texts and to the poem accessed online though the analysis yielded no statistically significant results either. 75 % of the original version readers erroneously identified the author as a contemporary writer. Unlike it, only 50 % of YouTube version audience attributed the text to modern literature. We may assume that the style of reading by the professional actor together with the slow and melodious background music contributed to the choice.

Another item in the questionnaire concerned the willingness of the respondents to read more works of the poet, and here the participants again demonstrated no significant difference. Almost unanimously, as seen in Graph 1 below, 73.2 % of the original, 78 % of the edited and 71 % of the YouTube version readers mentioned that they wanted to read more poems of the author. The data for the prose version appeared to be a bit lower (57 %).
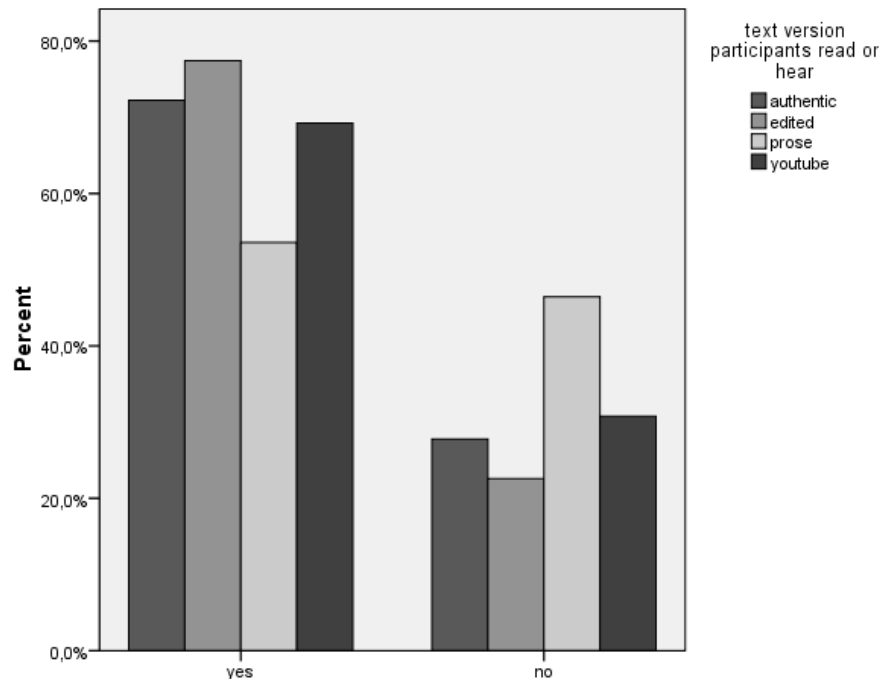
Graph 1 – Willingness to read more works by the same author.

In their answers to the question whether the participants regarded the text as possible song lyrics (see Graph 2), more than 60 % of the original version readers responded positively, justifying the opinion by saying, for example, that "It has a romantic style", "It is pleasure to sing" or "It is quite romantic and calm." The same choice was made by 58 % of the prose version readers who claimed that the text could be a song because of "kind of romantic style", "good sound" or simply as "it sounds like a melody." The YouTube version, in contrast, was classified as a possible song by just 38 % of readers who believed that "it is difficult to put these words to music", or that "it does not sound like a song" as "it is too short."
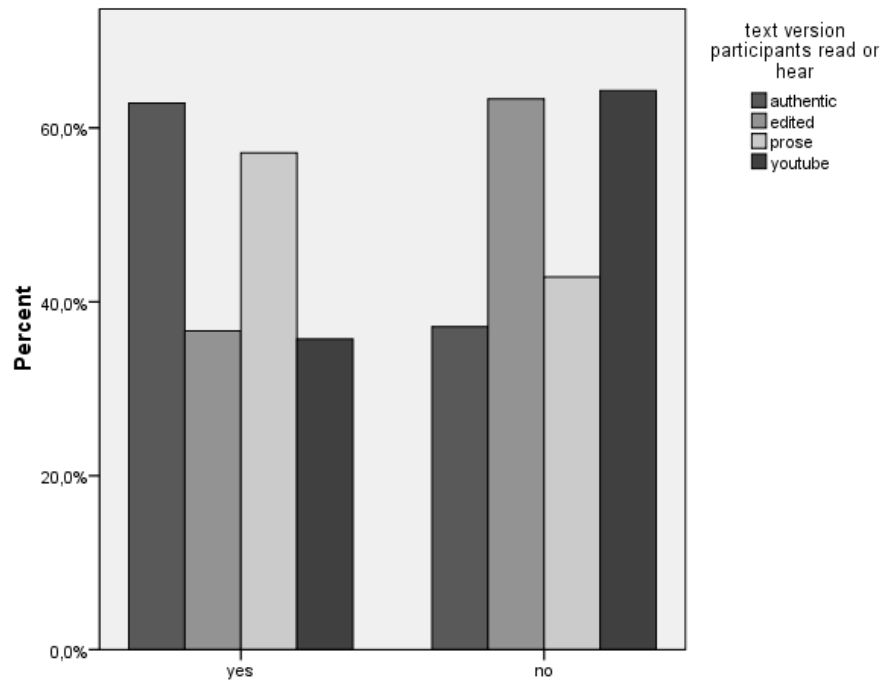
Graph 2 – Responses on words as song lyrics

In addition to the main questions, the analysis revealed that the gender and age factors, though not being the focus of the research, had no statistically significant influence on the results.

4. OUTCOMES AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

As discussed above, the literary education classroom practice should go beyond traditional textual interpretation to stimulating and eventually assessing students' sensitivity to the verbal mastery of an author. Stylisticians have already made a considerable step forward by accepting the challenge of shifting from subjective speculation to testing stylistic insights empirically, as many chapters in this volume indicate.

The results reported in this study point out that reader's response to poetry does depend on how and where learners are exposed to the text, and these findings offer empirical evidence for some of the technological and contextual implications involved in literary reading. As the research

reported here has indicated, readers from different experimental groups attribute different level of beauty to the same poem, which could be explained by a number of factors: by the format of the text as well as by the context of exposure. This needs further empirical verification, yet the findings need to be taken into account when working on university curricula and building efficient strategies to facilitate EFL students mastery of the foreign language as well as foreign literature appreciation.

As shown above, empirical stylistics can help educators collect real-life data to inform effective methodologies. This is one of the reasons why educators should move from a traditional approach to teaching language and literature to a more technologically advanced one, or, in the least, for a reasonable combination of both.

Being well aware of the indisputable merits of computer revolution in the Humanities, we have to keep, nevertheless, a very well-balanced viewpoint. It is more of a wake-up call to 21st century educators: digital technology is certainly a benefit though never a mechanical substitution to what can take place in a physical learning environment. Careful balance is important as, even though most modern universities have every facility for a student to read digitally, work online, etc., reading the pages of a book, as also proven by Mangen & Kuiken (2014), and sharing the experience in a class add much to what electronic reading can offer.

To this end, empirical stylistics can supply educators with powerful tools and techniques of assessing real-life academic cases, detecting and measuring effects of the practices so that the teachers themselves can consciously choose a way, or a number of ways, to teach a literary text to the EFL class. Empirical stylistics can show what these options and the potentials are.

For future research, it would be worthwhile to replicate the study in other countries so as to allow more general conclusions about teaching literature to EFL university students via face-to-face interaction or digitally. From a more general perspective, what the present study shows is that the path for empirical investigations in this area has already begun.

APPENDIX. QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE. GROUP 1.

RESPONDING TO A TEXT

This questionnaire will be used in an empirical research. Your participation is vital to the successful outcome of the investigation. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions below. You might need about 10 minutes to answer them. This is an anonymous questionnaire, so your identity will be preserved.

We *thank* you for your collaboration.

1) Sex
      (   ) Male
      (   ) Female

2) Age _____

3) University _____

4) Major _____

Please read the following text.

A slash of Blue —
A sweep of Gray —
Some scarlet patches on the way,
Compose an Evening Sky —
A little purple — slipped between —
Some Ruby Trousers hurried on —
A Wave of Gold —
A Bank of Day —
This just makes out the Morning Sky.

1) How beautiful do you find the text?

      (   ) Not beautiful at all.
      (   ) Somewhat beautiful.
      (   ) Undecided.
      (   ) Rather beautiful.

( ) Very beautiful.

2) Which phrase strikes you as the most beautiful one? You may choose up to 3.

_____
_____
_____

3) Would you like to read more works of the author?

( ) Yes.
( ) No.

4) Do you think the text is modern?

( ) Yes.
( ) No.

5) Is the author a man or a woman?

( ) Man.
( ) Woman.

6) Do you think these are song lyrics?

( ) Yes.
( ) No.
Why or why not? _____
If yes, then what is the music genre? _____

Place for additional comments:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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