

# Secondary Publication



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## Potentials of poetry and song lyrics for EFL education: An applied linguistic perspective

*I poured my aching heart into a pop song  
I couldn't get the hang of poetry  
(Arctic Monkeys: Suck it and see)*

*It's an insult to poetry to call it song.  
It's an insult to song to call it poetry.  
(Jaques Roubaud; transl.)*

### 1 Introduction

Even though some observers have emphasized the difference between poetry and songs as the former are read or said and the latter sung,<sup>1</sup> there has been as longstanding public interest in the issues (i) whether the two can be treated together due to some striking resemblances, and (ii) whether both should be seen as art forms on equal terms (that can be analyzed using similar approaches).<sup>2</sup> Actually, there is some evidence for two-way traffic between the literary and musical worlds, as several points of contact have been acknowledged. On the one hand, this pertains to a historical perspective, where Greek lyrical poetry as one of the oldest traceable literary traditions has commonly been viewed as "performed poetry, a poetry with music",<sup>3</sup> which is also reflected in the etymology of the word *lyric*, deriving from *lyre*, a string instrument regularly used to accompany poetic performances.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, we may look at individual artifacts in the sense of works simultaneously published as both poem and song, such as the "Ballad for Americans",<sup>5</sup> or poems put to music, such as the "The Star-Spangled Banner", which has officially served as the US National Anthem since 1931,<sup>6</sup> Ralph Vaughn Williams's accompaniment to A. E. Housman's "From Far, from Eve, and Morning",<sup>7</sup> or The Alan Parson Project's version of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven".<sup>8</sup> Further, it is worthwhile to look at points of contact at an individual level, that is, poets being or becoming musicians (e.g. Simon Armitage or Leonard Cohen) or vice versa (e.g. John Lennon or Tupac Shakur).

As regards popular reception practice, it is also evident that poetry and lyrics are often perceived at least as close relatives. There is even a journal dedicated to *Lyrics as Poetry*<sup>9</sup> that reflects such a conceptualization in its title.<sup>10</sup> The blurred lines between the two forms also are manifest in press coverage, where, for instance, Amanda Gorman's poems have been described as sounding like songs,<sup>11</sup> and, most notably, in the fact that Bob Dylan has been awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Older views from the domain of literary studies already recognized a crude but genuine poetry of contemporary pop music as well as the intentionality of both poems and lyrics in the sense of being texts written *for* someone.<sup>12</sup> More recently, song lyrics are conceptualized as part of the continuum of literary history, appreciated as "musical mediatization of poetic texts"<sup>13</sup> or "poetic language practice",<sup>14</sup> and thus are regularly discussed in academic treatments of poetry.<sup>15</sup> This specifically seems to hold true for rap lyrics, termed "at its base, [...] poetry"<sup>16</sup> and even the "new vanguard of American poetry".<sup>17</sup> Others, however, have been more cautious as regards such equations, emphasizing the historical separation of poetry and song,<sup>18</sup> or arguing that poems are unlike song lyrics as they by necessity rely on modern media and a specific voice/persona to be effective.<sup>19</sup> Some scholars therefore have claimed a hybrid status of lyrics, which is reflected in statements on the relationship between poetry and lyrics as "not siblings but cousins, maybe. Though they do share some DNA [...] they have very different contexts and constructions".<sup>20</sup> More concretely, this pertains to observations such as more repetition and less lexical density in lyrics, a potentially disintegrative effect of music on words, and a general parting of ways between modern free-verse poetry and songs.<sup>21</sup>

In language education, pop lyrics have been variously termed modern mass poetry, new poetry or people's poetry.<sup>22</sup> In this context, music is appreciated as a catalyst supporting the effect of lyrical texts,<sup>23</sup> as "lyrics can be viewed as a song when sung, and as a poem when read".<sup>24</sup> Due to the inherent poetic-literary quality of lyrics (which involves the use of metaphors, similes, and possibly "poetic" word choice) in combination with their everyday relevance and motivational potential for learners,<sup>25</sup> there have been repeated calls for pop songs to be included in the canon of poetry for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) purposes.<sup>26</sup>

In sum, we can establish a relative openness towards a unified treatment of poetry and lyrics in public perception and language education, while there is some skepticism in literary studies whether poetry and song lyrics align and should be studied together. Remarkably, in this regard it has been suggested that "[p]oetry and pop songs, as different as they are, are united in this: They are both equally impractical".<sup>27</sup> While this quote relates to the fact that both poetry and song lyrics are largely concerned with fictional people and identities and thus allegedly lack any tangible social impact, the present contribution rather argues that both poetry and lyrics are indeed practical for the purposes of EFL education at least. To this end, it intends to develop an applied linguistic perspective that addresses the following guiding research questions:

- Is the language of poetry and song comparable?
- Which linguistic aspects can potentially be addressed through using songs and poetry in the classroom?
- What are potential additional affordances of song lyrics that poetry lacks?

To pave the way for the analysis, the following part (Section 2) will contextualize the current approach within stylistic research on literary language. Section 3 contains the core linguistic portion and presents a register study that (i) contrasts the language of poetry and song lyrics with the help of Multi-Dimensional Analysis and that (ii) discusses conversational and non-standard usages in both forms. The results of these analyses will inform the discussion of implications for EFL education presented in Section 4. Section 5 offers a few concluding remarks and points to avenues of further research.

## 2 Background: Stylistics and literary language

A basic assumption repeatedly voiced in stylistic treatments of literary language is that literary fiction (in a broad sense, i.e. not merely comprising narrative fiction) is not *just* fiction as it relies on the same resources as everyday language.<sup>28</sup> However, literary texts (sometimes also labeled "verbal art") are marked for both form and style. The former acknowledges that literary texts may follow an added (strict) form, for instance through rhyme, meter, alliteration, or parallelism.<sup>29</sup> The latter relates to the observation that literary language varies in noticeable ways from everyday language (but without coding a different linguistic semantics). More specifically, linguistic stylisticians employ the concept of *foregrounding*. It describes an aesthetic effect through deviation from patterns of everyday language in the guises of "obtrusive regularity and obtrusive irregularity".<sup>30</sup> The former, also known as "equivalence", may pertain to formal elements as listed above as well as to the repetition of words and phrases, for instance. Irregularity (or "deviation") may occur as regards vocabulary choice, syntactic patterns used, or typical register features. Foregrounding in the sense described can also be studied in pop cultural artifacts,<sup>31</sup> and will be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively in the current analysis (Section 3).

Given the language-educational focus of the current contribution, a central question that arises is in how far (linguistic) stylistics is relevant in an EFL context. It is presumed here that, given their language-learning history, non-native speakers of English (especially at higher proficiency levels) commonly have some experience of (and confidence in) linguistic analysis, while literary responses they offer, particularly at lower proficiency levels, may be rather tentative. Therefore, it has been suggested that a linguistic description may serve as most meaningful entry point for learners to enhance their literary interpretation and aesthetic appreciation.<sup>32</sup> This motivates a linguistic comparison of the language of poetry and of pop song lyrics as undertaken in the following.

## 3 Poetry and song lyrics: Same same but different?

A fundamental question is how to operationalize a comparison of poetry and song lyrics if we want to go beyond a mere case study perspective (e.g. comparing a single poem or song with the help of traditional techniques used in literary poetry analysis). While several potential approaches of comparing and contrasting different text types have been championed in linguistics, the current study applies a register analysis in the form of (additive) Multi-Dimensional Analysis (MDA).<sup>33</sup> MDA establishes a combined linguistic-situational perspective in which the functions of linguistic forms in particular situational contexts are determined. It requires a representative sample (or samples) of texts to allow a contrastive view, which in the present study consists of the *Gutenberg Poetry Corpus*,<sup>34</sup> a collection of thousands of poems extracted from *Project Gutenberg*, and LYPOP, a database that contains commercially highly successful British and US pop lyrics.<sup>35</sup> Concretely, MDA automatically creates frequency profiles of multiple linguistic features (such as first person singular pronouns, verb types, premodification structures, etc.) and compares these frequency profiles across text types. In the present context, it thus serves to locate poetry and lyrics with regard to other (abstract) registers along six dimensions, for instance "involved vs. informational" as well as with (concrete) common text types, for instance conversation or personal letters. This type of bottom-up approach facilitates a global comparison of various text types while still identifying concrete linguistic features that are responsible for assigning text types to specific (reference) categories (e.g. how "conversational" a specific song lyric or poem is). The MDA tool used in the present study is the freely available *Multidimensional Analysis Tagger*.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.1 Situational characteristics

As mentioned in the preceding section, when comparing text types from a register perspective, it is considered instructive to determine situational characteristics, that is, to explicitly take contextual variables into account. Adapting a widely used scheme in register studies,<sup>37</sup> a relevant overview of contextual variables is presented as Table 1.<sup>38</sup> As can be seen, there are areas of difference (e.g. as regards communicative purpose and topics), but also of similarity (e.g. as regards the relations among participants) between poetry and song lyrics. Note that Table 1 represents "default" values applicable for prototypical (published) poems (as contained in the corpus data used) and songs rather than offering a scheme accommodating various exceptions (e.g. occasional poetry, a love poem written for one person specifically and only delivered orally once to them, a poem that is based on a factual event or personal situation, etc.). It will be relevant to revisit some of these after the linguistic analysis to establish their connection to linguistic forms.

		Poetry	Song lyrics
Participants	Addressor (speaker/author)	Speaker/voice ≠ author	Singer/persona author/lyricist ≠
	Addressee (intended listener)	Usually not defined	The pop music audience (potentially large and unidentifiable)
	On-lookers	Usually none	The pop music audience (potentially large and unidentifiable)
Relation among participants	Interactiveness	Monologic	
	Social roles/relative status and power	Hard to specify, probably high social distance	
	Personal relationship	Usually none (social distance)	
	Shared knowledge (personal and specialist)	Shared world knowledge	
Channel	Mode (speech vs. writing)	Writing	Written-to-be-sung
	Specific medium (permanent vs. transient)	Permanent (printed) electronic text (booklets/lyrics websites)	
			Transient sound waves (but repeatable)
Production/comp rehearsal circumstances	Planning	Highly pre-planned	
	Revising/editing	Revised and edited	
	Musical structure	Fitting a metrical structure	Fitting a musical structure
	Comprehension	Printed/electronic text: complete reader control	
		Sound waves: simultaneous hearing and understanding	
Setting	Shared time and place of communication	No	Usually not, unless live concert
	Place of communication (private/public/specific setting)	Variable, usually private	Variable
Communicative purpose and topic	General purpose	Variable (entertain, narrate, express attitudes, persuade, etc.)	
	Specific purpose	Variable (teach moral, tell personal story, etc.)	
	Factuality	Usually none	Mixed (factual information, personal opinion, speculation, fiction)
	Expression of stance	Mixed	Overt markers of personal attitudes and epistemic stance
	Topic	Variable	

Table 1. Situational characteristics of poetry and (pop) song lyrics.

### 3.2 Linguistic analysis

Even though additive MDA in principle allows the consideration of six dimensions (see Section 3), the current analysis focuses on dimension 1 ("involved vs. informational") as this dimension is often considered most important for distinguishing genuinely spoken and spontaneous from genuinely written and edited registers.<sup>39</sup> Figure 1 shows the MDA information for dimension 1.

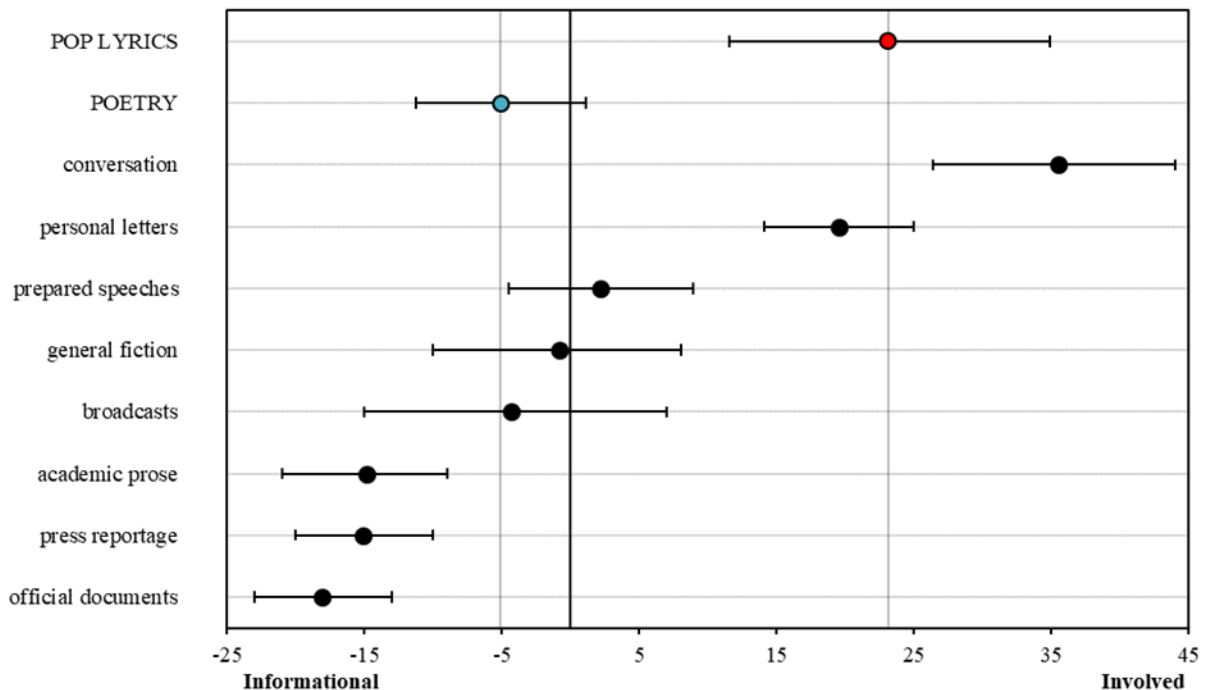


Figure 1. MDA scores for Dimension 1: Involved vs. informational production (dot = average; whiskers = +/- one std. deviation; black vertical line = 0; grey vertical lines = reference lines for poetry/song lyrics)<sup>40</sup>

Figure 1 offers several noteworthy insights regarding the question of whether the language of poetry and of song lyrics is similar. First, it shows that poetry and song lyrics linguistically associate with different established text types, with poetry appearing close to broadcasts and general fiction, while patterns in lyrics appear to map the ones found in personal letters and conversation. From the (more abstract) MDA dimension perspective, poetry and lyrics clearly diverge and the latter emerge as much more "involved" than the former. Concrete linguistic markers in lyrics that favor an association with the "involved" pole are high frequencies of first and second person pronouns, private verbs (*know, think, guess, forget, love* etc.), contractions, present tense, and negation. One concrete illustration of the density of relevant items in song lyrics is presented in the subsequent excerpt (taken from Steps:

**Our** love wasn't perfect, **I** know  
**I** think **I** know the score  
 If **you** say **you** love me, oh boy  
**I** can't ask for more  
**I'll** come if **you** should call (woah)  
**I'll** forgive and forget  
 If **you** say **you'll** never go  
 'Cause it's true what they say  
 It's better the devil **you** know

**1st person pronoun**  
**2nd person pronoun**  
 Private verb  
 Contraction  
 Negation  
 Present tense

“Better the devil you know”):

The presence of these items is highly suggestive of an affective and interactive type of communication, typically subject to constraints of real-time production. As the property of real-time production clearly is not fulfilled in pop lyrics (see Section 3.1), and they usually are highly edited and potentially revised multiple times, the functionality of these features can be considered worth exploring in more detail, also from a language-educational perspective (see Section 4).

Poetry, by contrast, appears towards the "informational" end in Figure 1. This means, that the language of poetry as contained in the present data is characterized by a high frequency of nouns and attributive adjectives,

longer word length, and an increased occurrence of prepositional phrases, for example. These results are typically indicative of a carefully crafted and highly edited text type. Note, however, that for the other MDA dimensions (not shown in Figure 1; but see online appendix)<sup>41</sup> large-scale overlap between poetry and lyrics can be observed, with minor tendencies of poetry to be more narrative, more situation-dependent, and more abstract, while lyrics represent more persuasive discourse.

Overall, when we integrate the contrastive situational view (see Section 3.1) with the linguistic analysis, it emerges that there is quite some overlap as regards context and that songs actually are not too far away from poems. However, the MDA suggests that lyrics are much more involved and thus much more conversational.<sup>42</sup> In terms of their purpose, it has been argued that they "function more in the way of plays than as poems",<sup>43</sup> which could motivate their higher degree of conversationality.

### 3.3 Poetry, lyrics and conversational/non-standard usage

Following up on the abovementioned quantitative result that lyrics are highly conversational, this section shifts to a qualitative perspective (based on findings from the previous literature, which partly relied upon the same data as in Section 3.2) and addresses whether and how poetry and lyrics represent non-standard usages. This is relevant as literary language has been claimed to deviate from standard patterns to foreground particular passages or items (see Section 2). At the same time, it has been purported that lyrics are characterized by "ungrammatical" forms (i.e. ungrammatical if a prescriptive, standard, formal, writing-oriented stance is taken).<sup>44</sup> This perspective is worth exploring from both linguistic and language-educational vantage points.

Research apparently confirms that poetry features non-standard forms. A salient area is syntax, where observers in particular have concentrated on the functions of inversion, that is, not following the default Subject + Verb + additional element (Object, Adverbial, or Complement) order of English. Inversion may change the information structure and place emphasis on an item that is not in focus in the regular order. However, it may be argued that inversion in this sense is a regular occurrence in language in general, so it could be discounted as a poetic usage. Inversion may be caused by constraints of rhyme and meter and may also be associated with poetic license in the sense of foregrounding through deviation from regular patterns as a norm in poetic language.<sup>45</sup> Further, the presence of dialectal and sociolectal features in literary texts has been interpreted as a conscious "socio-political act".<sup>46</sup> This means that writers of poetry commonly will only use such features for specific effects or within forms such as dialect poetry, as the majority of literary language follows standard patterns.

Lyrics, by contrast, have been found to regularly feature non-standard forms in the sense of regional and social variants. Research based on the list of non-standard items of English represented by the *electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (eWAVE)<sup>47</sup> has identified lexicogrammatical areas such as pronoun usage (see examples 1 to 3) and morphosyntactic aspects such as multiple negation, regularly involving the usage of *ain't* (see examples 4 to 6), among others, as characterized by considerable variation.<sup>48</sup>

- (1) Whatever *youz* was working I hope that it was worth it baby (Usher: "Truth hurts")
- (2) *Y'all* stuck on super A-shit (Black Eyed Peas: "Boom boom pow")
- (3) Oh my god *you guys*, I totally had more than 300 calories today (P!nk: "Stupid girls")
- (4) We *don't* need *nobody* 'cause we got each other (Lana del Rey: "Body electric")
- (5) On the avenue, there *ain't never* a curfew (Alicia Keys: "Empire state of mind part II")
- (6) *Ain't no* chance of the record company dropping me (Robbie Williams: "Kids")

Further pervasive items occurring in lyrics are contractions and innovative features such as quotative BE *like* and emerging (contracted) modals (*wanna*, *gonna*), for instance.<sup>49</sup> By way of an interim summary, it transpires that indeed non-standard grammatical patterns are salient in both poems and lyrics. However, they are of dissimilar types: Poetry mainly features syntactic aspects (word order/inversion), while lyrics are mainly characterized by dialectally/sociolectally motivated lexicogrammatical and morphosyntactic variation as well as by the presence of informal/conversational features (see also Section 3.2). Note that the general results as regards the salience of dialectal/sociolectal features may change if dialect poetry was included in the data analyzed.<sup>50</sup>

## 4 Implications for EFL education

This part of this contribution is dedicated to establishing an explicit connection between the observations from the preceding sections and EFL education, and explores areas in which poetry and lyrics can potentially be treated together. The underlying assumption is that if there are striking resemblances between the two manifestations (and thus lyrics can be viewed as a form poetry), EFL educators can confidently employ lyrics to introduce poetry after all.

When taking a step back, it can be argued that poetry and lyrics at least show overlap in terms of Wittgensteinian family resemblance. This applies to both (more or less) obligatory criteria (e.g. use of meter, lines, stanzas) and several features of a larger optional set (e.g. rhyme, rhythm, brevity, figurative language, dreamlike imagery and transitions, a 'lyric' personal voice).<sup>51</sup> The situational register analysis (Section 3.1) yielded quite some overlap as regards contexts. However, it has been suggested that songs (as entities) should be conceptualized as "lyrics+" (+ music/+ voice/+ visual elements) if their genuine manifestation and specific purpose is taken seriously.<sup>52</sup> The highly specific nature of lyrics in linguistic terms also emerged from the MDA (Section 3.2) and the consideration of non-standard items, with song lyrics occurring not too far away from poems for several MDA dimensions but being much more conversational and informal. From a descriptive point of view, these findings tie in with previous classifications of lyrics as unique literary practice and special register.<sup>53</sup> From an applied point of view, they provide support for a qualified "yes" in response to the question whether using lyrics in EFL education opens avenues to go from poetry to *poetries* in the sense of broadening the canon of texts studied in classrooms, overcoming the issue of whether lyrics are on an aesthetic par with poems.<sup>54</sup>

More specifically, it can be argued from a stylistic perspective that typical foregrounding features of poetry, such as rhyme, meter,<sup>55</sup> alliteration, and parallelism can well be exemplified with lyrics. This similarly applies to additional features such as assonance, which can be addressed in EFL contexts to raise the learners' phonemic awareness.<sup>56</sup> This can conveniently be illustrated with the example in the following excerpt, contrasting the end of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 (left) with lines from Eminem's "Lose yourself" (right):

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,	Snap back to reality, ope there goes gravity, ope
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.	There goes Rabbit, he choked, he's so mad but he won't
	Give up that easy, no, he won't have it, he knows
	His whole back's to these ropes, it don't matter, he's dope

Arguably, Eminem in this case takes assonance to a next level as the song presents it in a highly concentrated format with considerable repetition, which usually is considered conducive to learning efforts.<sup>57</sup> Lyrics thus clearly possess the potential to illustrate core linguistic strategies used in poetry.

It is suggested here that lyrics as a special register offer additional options for EFL education.<sup>58</sup> First, given their "involved" nature (see Section 3.2), they can be used to introduce conversational grammar with contextualized illustration and practice and simultaneously provide the opportunity to expand grammatical knowledge on informal/innovative items. Thus, they present (informal) grammar as an inherent part of communication/discourse. Second, lyrics allow work on variation and informality with a view to embracing language diversity and discussing related sociolinguistic issues. This includes highlighting language variation as a natural and highly functional and systematic property of the grammar of all languages as well as challenging prescriptivist, dichotomous conceptualizations of grammar and traditional views of a language as a monolithic block and stable entity.<sup>59</sup> Third, using song lyrics opens avenues for broader critical reflection on the production circumstances and their modes of circulation as well as for the development of language awareness, for instance on the issue of how lyrics as a scripted (mass-)media artifact representing performed language succeed in creating a "conversational feel" through selectively employing informal spoken features.<sup>60</sup> Overall, it is proposed here that working with lyrics in EFL possesses additional potential for the development of sociolinguistic competence and language awareness, precisely as it facilitates the assessment of appropriateness and acceptability of informal and non-standard variants and a discussion of related aspects such as stigmatization and identity.

## 5 Concluding remarks

The present contribution examined poetry and lyrics from an applied linguistic point of view. To this end, after providing some background on stylistic analysis of literary language, it offered a combined quantitative-qualitative approach to assess similarities and differences between the two forms and specifically considered the occurrence of non-standard patterns. The aforementioned areas were then revisited from a language-educational perspective and affordances and limitations of both lyrical text types were discussed. While the study was thus intended to contribute to the growing body of work on pop culture in language education,<sup>61</sup> it certainly has not exploited all options. Further relevant aspects, ignored for lack of space, are vocabulary (e.g. expression of emotion) and lexical density as well as the use of metaphors.<sup>62</sup> In addition, rap as "aesthetic placement of rhymes over musical beats"<sup>63</sup>

will merit some specific treatment as a (poetry-like) genre in which the linguistic construction of authenticity is prevalent and where learners could represent a valued situated interpretative community.<sup>64</sup>

A different aspect concerns the additional significance of poetry as regards the development of language awareness. Poetry here could serve as a means to encounter older forms of English ('tis, thy, thou, thee, o'er, hath, thine, doth, ere, hast, oft) and could involve appropriate contextualization (How did people speak and write 500 years ago? Are older forms of English accurately represented in current media representations (think of popular series such as *Game of Thrones*)?). At the same time, such an engagement with historical stages of English could again point to the dynamic nature of language, an aspect occasionally swept under the rug in current EFL practice that places a focus on "rules" (in the sense of formal, standard patterns).

From a broader language-educational point of view, it may also be worthwhile to address additional aspects. These could include an approach to poetry and lyrics explicitly as part of the continuum of audiovisual, spoken, and written language use to familiarize learners with the conventions of various text types and to develop their multiliteracies.<sup>65</sup> Further, learners' aesthetic appreciation of lyrical texts (and possibly also their creativity) could be fostered through an application of (literary) models of poetry analysis to individual lyrics, thus using lyrics as a bridge to literary analysis.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christgau (2018), 43.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., [www.bostonreview.net/forum\\_response/difference-between-poetry-and-song-lyrics](http://www.bostonreview.net/forum_response/difference-between-poetry-and-song-lyrics), [www.oxfordstudent.com/2014/01/27/should-song-lyrics-be-considered-poetry](http://www.oxfordstudent.com/2014/01/27/should-song-lyrics-be-considered-poetry), [www.reasonatorock.com/elements/words.html](http://www.reasonatorock.com/elements/words.html), and [www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37637797](http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37637797). The instructional videos available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3K9pd6h9JT0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3K9pd6h9JT0) and [www.flocabulary.com/unit/what-is-poetry](http://www.flocabulary.com/unit/what-is-poetry) are cases in point as expositions of poetic principles and terminology in the very guise of a rap song.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson (1982), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Carter (2020), 6. He also draws attention to the fact that poetry sometimes is conceived of as "spoken song".

<sup>5</sup> Shelley Rubin (2007).

<sup>6</sup> Zehelein (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Goatly (2021); [www.youtu.be/6-ZKFUBwL1w](http://www.youtu.be/6-ZKFUBwL1w).

<sup>8</sup> See Hammond (2017); [www.youtu.be/YAE1XTvKLXA](http://www.youtu.be/YAE1XTvKLXA).

<sup>9</sup> [www.lyricsaspoetry.com](http://www.lyricsaspoetry.com).

<sup>10</sup> Müller & Böttcher (2021), 2. For further examples, see also [www.fr.de/kultur/literatur/songtexte-sind-dichtung-11397000.html](http://www.fr.de/kultur/literatur/songtexte-sind-dichtung-11397000.html) and [www.powerpoetry.org/actions/7-famous-poetic-pop-songs](http://www.powerpoetry.org/actions/7-famous-poetic-pop-songs).

<sup>11</sup> See [www.spiegel.de/spiegel/spbest/index-2021-2.html](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/spbest/index-2021-2.html) *Spiegel Bestseller* (June 2021), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson (1982), 26; Schogt (1988), 84.

<sup>13</sup> Moser (2010), 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Fabb (2015). See also Yılmaz & Scheffler (2022), who even view song lyrics as "a sub-category of poetry".

<sup>16</sup> Pate (2010), 25.

<sup>17</sup> Bradley & DuBois (2010), xxvi.

<sup>18</sup> Ramazani (2011), 716.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Ramazani (2014); Achermann (2019). On the issue of the musical persona (the lyrical *I*), see Muns (2021).

<sup>20</sup> Carter (2020), 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ramazani (2014).

<sup>22</sup> Faulstich (1978); Xerri (2014); Huber (2019).

<sup>23</sup> Wrobel (2021), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Tsang et al. (2023), 1122.

<sup>25</sup> Usbeck-Frei (2019); Werner (2020); Summer & Werner (2022).

<sup>26</sup> Finch (2003); Thaler (2016); Munden & Skjærstad (2018).

<sup>27</sup> Bradley (2017), 312.

<sup>28</sup> Goatly (2021), 128; cf. the discussion in Fischer (2016), 339-340. It is suggested there that the (non-)fictional status of poems, for instance, is a contentious issue..

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- <sup>29</sup> Fabb (2019).
- <sup>30</sup> Short (1996), 10-12.
- <sup>31</sup> Werner & Schubert (2023).
- <sup>32</sup> Goatly (2021), 129.
- <sup>33</sup> Biber (1988), Biber & Conrad (2019). Please refer to these works for further methodological information that is ignored here for lack of space.
- <sup>34</sup> [github.com/aparrish/gutenberg-poetry-corpus](https://github.com/aparrish/gutenberg-poetry-corpus).
- <sup>35</sup> See Werner (2021a, 2021b, 2021c) for details on content, scope, and compilation principles.
- <sup>36</sup> Nini (2019); accessible at [sites.google.com/site/multidimensionaltagger](https://sites.google.com/site/multidimensionaltagger).
- <sup>37</sup> Biber & Conrad (2019), 43; see Werner (2021a), 245-248 for more detailed explanation and further references on the individual categories.
- <sup>38</sup> From the overview it emerges that views of poetry as "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" as voiced in the preface to Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* ([www.interestingliterature.com/2021/02/wordsworth-spontaneous-overflow-of-powerful-feelings-meaning-analysis](http://www.interestingliterature.com/2021/02/wordsworth-spontaneous-overflow-of-powerful-feelings-meaning-analysis)) may be a (Romantic) idealization, given their actual planned and revised production.
- <sup>39</sup> Biber (1988), 115.
- <sup>40</sup> The freely available *XLdotplotter* (Sönning 2016) was used to create figures. Dimension scores and ranges for all registers other than poetry and song lyrics are taken from Biber (1988).
- <sup>41</sup> [osf.io/q8b5d/](https://osf.io/q8b5d/). The data additionally contain information on dimension scores for rap..
- <sup>42</sup> See also Werner (2021a, 2021b, 2021c).
- <sup>43</sup> Astor (2010), 147.
- <sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Usbeck-Frei (2019).
- <sup>45</sup> Hebron (2004), 87; see also Fabb (2019).
- <sup>46</sup> Short (1996), 87.
- <sup>47</sup> [cwave-atlas.org](https://cwave-atlas.org).
- <sup>48</sup> Werner (2019a), 11–15.
- <sup>49</sup> Werner (2021c), 92–94.
- <sup>50</sup> To the best of the knowledge of the author, a representative corpus is yet to be compiled.
- <sup>51</sup> Criteria for poetry vs. prose as established in Ferber (2019), 12-13.
- <sup>52</sup> Wrobel (2021).
- <sup>53</sup> Griffée (1992); Werner (2012); Huber (2019).
- <sup>54</sup> Thaler (2018).
- <sup>55</sup> Meter possibly can be excluded from the list as lyrics have been found to be mostly isometrical; but see Murphy (2022).
- <sup>56</sup> Gulla (2018), 1.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>58</sup> See also Werner (2019a, 2021c).
- <sup>59</sup> Pennycook (2010); Mahboob (2018); Wolfram (2014, 2019).
- <sup>60</sup> Queen (2018); Werner (2021d).
- <sup>61</sup> Werner & Tegge (2021).
- <sup>62</sup> Kreyer (2012); Jacobs (2018).
- <sup>63</sup> Alim (2012), 388.
- <sup>64</sup> Bartosch (2019); Werner (2019b, 2023); Levine (2022).
- <sup>65</sup> Moser (2010), 13.
- <sup>66</sup> Albers (2015); Fischer (2016); Huber (2019).