

Theme Day and Symposium

From Poetry to Song Lyrics: Analysing and Teaching Verse

Book of abstracts



Introductory lecture by Valentin Werner (University of Bamberg): Potentials of poetry and song lyrics for English language education: An applied linguistic perspective

Friday, 4. February 2022, 9:15-10:15

Music lyrics (and, among the various genres, rap lyrics specifically) are often viewed as some kind of modern poetry, while previous research has also emphasized the conversational nature of song lyrics. At the same time, Amanda Gorman's poetry, for instance, has been assigned a "song-like" quality. In order to address the issue whether the verse represented in poetry and song lyrics actually share similarities, this talk intends to highlighting commonalities of and differences between the two genres from a linguistic perspective. To this end, text-linguistic findings from fields such as register studies, stylistics and literary linguistics are combined, with a view to exploring the potentials of both manifestations when it comes to the teaching of linguistic structures.

Valentin Werner is associate professor of English Linguistics at the University of Bamberg. His research and teaching interests lie in the fields of applied linguistics, media linguistics, language variation and change, stylistics, as well as language and culture.

Workshop by Eva-Sabine Zehelein (University of Bamberg): P!nk politics – Alecia Moore and the American President

Friday, 4. February 2022, 10:15-11:15

P!nk is one of the most successful, as well as distinctly outspoken and political singer-songwriters of our time. Most recently, she has criticized the anti-vax movement and protested the new anti-abortion laws in Texas. In this workshop we will be looking at P!nk's political songs and think about ways in which these can be used in the classroom.

Eva-Sabine Zehelein is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Bamberg. She specializes in 20th and 21st century North American literatures and cultures. With colleagues from Italy and France, she leads an interdisciplinary research group on "Family Matters", investigating (American) families and their colorful and multifaceted lives in cultural texts. Her own research currently focusses on families and reproductive justice.



**Workshop by Kerstin-Anja Munderlein & Theresa Summer (University of Bamberg):
Shakespeare and music: Analysing and adapting lyrical texts in *Twelfth Night***

Friday, 4. February 2022, 11:30-12:30

“If music be the food of love, play on!” – This opening line of William Shakespeare’s play *Twelfth Night* is programmatic. Programmatic for the play, which is the most “musical” of Shakespeare’s plays, and programmatic for Shakespeare’s oeuvre overall. Many of the Bard’s plays feature songs at crucial points of the plot, serving dramatic or narrative functions, developing character relations, or generally adding to the atmosphere of the scene. This workshop focuses on audience and reader perception of the play’s text as it is read, spoken, and acted. To do so, we will focus on some of the songs within *Twelfth Night* to exemplify their functions in the specific scenes and the play in general. We will also explore how teachers can use a musical and creative approach to teaching Shakespearean plays by combining Shakespeare’s writing with the language of current pop songs with the double aim of fostering language awareness as well as the creative adaptation of lyrical texts.

Kerstin-Anja Munderlein is a research assistant and post-doc at the Department of English Literature at the University of Bamberg. She has worked on trauma in the poetry of the Great War, Gothic and Gothic parody, and is currently working on gender representation in Golden Age and Neo-Golden Age Crime Fiction.

Theresa Summer is associate professor of TEFL at the University of Bamberg. She taught English and Music at secondary schools for several years and her research focuses on pop culture, critical pedagogy, global education, and the learning and teaching of grammar.

WegE lecture by Amos Paran (University College London): The Journey from ‘All my loving’ to ‘All The Lonely People’: The Beatles in the EFL Literature classroom

Friday, 4. February 2022, 14:00-15:00

The Beatles, one of the most outstanding cultural phenomena of the 20th century, continue to fascinate even people born more than one generation after the group disbanded. The recent publication of Paul McCartney’s *The Lyrics* provides us with a rich source of material – both extensive commentaries by McCartney and visual materials – which we can combine with the lyrics themselves, as well as with critical, journalistic and scholarly evaluations of this body of work. In my talk I will discuss ways in which teachers can triangulate different sources to form text ensembles dealing with these works and create classroom activities to help our learners appreciate the development in complexity of the Beatles’ lyrics and music. I will also look at ways in which teachers in EFL settings can move away from using songs merely as illustrations of language patterns and vocabulary to considering them as poetic and cultural artefacts.

Amos Paran started his career teaching EFL in secondary schools in Israel and is now Professor of TESOL at the UCL Institute of Education. Publications include *Literature in Language Teaching and Learning* (TESOL 2006) and *Testing the Untestable in Language Education* (Multilingual Matters 2010). He has worked with teachers in many international contexts, including visiting appointments at the universities of Tubingen and Szeged. He is a tutor on the free MOOC, *Teaching EFL/ESL Reading: A Task-Based Approach* and is co-convenor of the AILA research network, *Literature in Language Learning and Teaching*.



Talk by Silke Braselmann, FSU Jena: “This thing we call rap” – A critical approach to teaching English with hip hop

Friday, 4. February 2022, 15:45-16:30

With its great artistic variety, focus on contemporary issues, as well as its creative and ever-evolving use of verse and rhyme, hip hop music has much to offer for the innovative EFL classroom. As it is still one of the most favorite music genres among young adults, hip hop presents highly relatable starting points for discussion, offers fresh opportunities for text analysis, and can hone listening comprehension skills. However, teaching hip hop also requires careful preparation, scaffolding and – as this paper argues – should be taught with a critical approach that bears in mind the genre’s specific cultural background. By looking at the potential (and the pitfalls) of teaching English with hip hop, this paper wants to show that a focus on genre-knowledge and critical analysis of the lyrics can help learners to practice self-reflexivity and foster critical thinking skills.

Silke Braselmann is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer for Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. Her research interests include antiracist and diversity-sensitive teacher education, inter- and transcultural learning in digital spaces, Young Adult Literature, as well as (critical) media literacy/multiliteracies.

Talk by Carsten Albers (University of Halle-Wittenberg): Dealing with difficult emotions in pop songs of recent years

Friday, 4. February 2022, 16:30-17:15

Needless to say, pop songs are not always about positive things. In fact, they often deal with difficult emotions ranging from anger and disappointment to rage, grief, and depression. In my talk, I will focus on several songs by singer-songwriters of various styles from this and the previous decade. The questions that need to be addressed when using these songs in the EFL classroom include the following: Which emotion(s) does the singer express? Which effect do the emotions have on the speaker in the song? Which circumstances (physical, psychological, and social) are the respective emotions connected with? How does the speaker use the poetics of song lyrics to turn these emotions into art? Which potential effects could the lyrics have on individual listeners? Could dealing with the song lyrics even help stabilize the listeners’ mental balance?

Carsten Albers is professor of English Teaching Methodology at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg. He has dealt with teaching poetry and song lyrics in several seminars at the University of Paderborn, the University of Cologne and Halle University.

Talk by Christoph Bode (LMU München): Now More Than Ever: Why Poetry Matters

Saturday, 5. February 2022, 09:00-09:45

My presentation will address two key points of the teaching of English: first, why the teaching of *poetry* is absolutely essential to it, then, why the experience of teaching poetry in English is often such a frustrating experience for both teachers and students. As often in life, the reason for this is not that it is done at all, but *the way it is done*. While my statement is not of a didactical nature narrowly defined, it can be understood as an intervention on behalf of a particular philosophy of teaching.

Christoph Bode was Chair of Modern English Literature at LMU Munich until 2018 and Visiting Professor at the University of California Los Angeles in 1997 and at UC Berkeley in 2012. He has published 30 books (e.g., *Einführung in die Lyrikanalyse*, 2001, *Romanticism and the Forms of*



Discontent, 2017) and some 90 scholarly articles, most of them in Romanticism, Twentieth-century Literature, Travel Writing, Poetics, Narratology, and Critical Theory.

Talk by Laurenz Volkmann, Jena: Tackling the issue of teaching poetry: Shifting the argument from defence to offence

Saturday, 5. February 2022, 09:45-10:30

Poetry as the genre conspicuously known to engage in “artificial”, even “deviant” language use (Widdowson) has been relegated to the margins of EFL discourses for decades. And now, in the educational arena of multiliteracies it is once more sidelined as the Cinderella genre. How, then, can one seriously argue *in defense of poetry* when it comes to teaching “twenty-first century skills” in the EFL classroom? In my presentation I will outline the scope of arguments in favour of poetry in the foreign language classroom. Different approaches and methods as well as suitable, “teachable” poems (Bode) will be discussed. The scope of approaches will range from “a sneak approach to teaching poetry” (“poetry in through the back door”, Schroeder-Thürauf) to focusing on the very issue of artificial, stilted, in any case “deviant” language of poetry for the purpose of fostering “language awareness” (Kramtsch).

Laurenz Volkmann is Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena. He has published various articles on teaching poetry in *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* and in books on teaching gender awareness and teaching Shakespeare.

Talk by Katrin Thomson (University of Augsburg): Negotiating cultural identity in bilingual Slam Poetry: Spoken word art in ELT

Saturday, 5. February 2022, 11:00-11:45

As a literary genre, slam poetry holds much educational value in the contexts of TEFL. Its diverse multimodal performance modes appeal to teenagers and young adults just as much as the difficult and often thorny issues that slammers address. Often revolving around the slam poets’ personal lives and subjective experiences within the larger social, cultural and political discourses which they are a part of, these lyrical narratives can be seen as staged forms of emotional self-expression and performed negotiations of cultural identity. In *bilingual spoken word art* as a specific type of slam poetry, language itself takes center stage in the performative act of negotiating cultural identity: while slam poets may use one language for the better part of their performance (e.g. English), they occasionally code-switch to another (e.g. their heritage language) – be it, for instance, to celebrate their cultural roots or, on a more critical note, to reveal the cultural politics und undercurrents of marginalizing ethnic minorities in a predominantly anglophone society. Taking English-Spanish slam poems as an example (YouTube videos), it will be shown that bilingual spoken word art provides valuable gateways for language learners...

- to explore the powerful relationship between language, culture and identity,
- to experience (receptively and productively) the aesthetic quality, vitality and emotional expressivity of (nonverbal) language in performed poetry,
- to develop translanguaging skills and (trans)language awareness, and thus
- to gain access to and partake in multilingual discourses.

Katrin Thomson, PhD, is post-doc TEFL researcher at Augsburg University (2017–) and has recently held the position of Interim Professor of TEFL at Regensburg University (3/2020–9/2021). She is a fully qualified secondary school teacher for English and German and worked as TEFL researcher and teacher



educator at Jena University, Münster University and Wuppertal University before she joined the Chair of TEFL in Augsburg. Her main research interests lie in the areas of teaching literature and culture as well as in EFL teacher education and teachers' classroom discourse competence.

Talk by Luisa Alfes (University of Duisburg-Essen): Instapoetry: a multimodal analysis to multimodal texts

Saturday, 5. February 2022, 11:45-12:30

'Instapoetry' (i.e. poetry that is published on Instagram) has been on the rise for years and is becoming increasingly popular, being accessible and relatable to a great audience. Poets like @rupi_kaur and @rmdrk inspire their mainstream audiences on social media with verses about themes like mental health, racial identity and female empowerment. Instapoetry features various modes that convey meaning – not only textual but also visual elements as well as 'likes' and comments of respective followers – and thus require a multimodal act of reading that considers the different modes. With this relatively new type of literature, new ways and paths towards analysing and teaching verse in the foreign language classroom can be pursued.

Luisa Alfes, PhD, is currently teaching English as a Foreign Language education with a special focus on the value of literature and culture in the foreign-language classroom at University of Duisburg-Essen. She is further interested in combining her two subjects, EFL and Fine Arts, which she taught at secondary level.

Talk by Martina Pfeiler (University of Vienna): Cultural agency and vocal vitality: Taking lyric poetry into (and out of) the mediatized 2020s classroom

Saturday, 5. February 2022, 14:30-15:15

This presentation focuses on new ways of teaching lyric poetry by highlighting two aspects: firstly, lyric poetry's thriving cultural agency in digital media and, secondly, its vocal vitality within the realm of spoken word. Working at the crossroads of cultural legacy and creative reinvention, filmmakers remediate lyric poems from the past by digitally combining them with music, sounds, written text, visuals, performance, dance etc. While poetryfilms, such as Kylie Hibbert's *Mirror* (2005) are appealing to pupils, spoken word poetry is undergoing novel experiments as well. Through popular events such as poetry slams, and poetry outreach programs such as the SLAMBassadors in the UK, young adults turn themselves into the very embodiment of a lyric poem by taking it not only into the classroom but also out of it onto the streets.

Note: Examples that I seek to address will include Kylie Hibbert *Mirror* (2005), based on Sylvia Plath's poem "Mirror" (1961), Lemn Sissay's *Darwin Originals: What if?* (2011) and Prince Ea's *I Quit* (2020)

Martina Pfeiler, PD Dr, is a senior researcher at the University of Vienna (see <https://poetryoffthepage.net/>). She is the author of *Sounds of Poetry. Contemporary American Performance Poets* (2003) and *Poetry Goes Intermedia. US-amerikanische Lyrik des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts aus kultur- und medienwissenschaftlicher Perspektive* (2010).

(<https://martinapfeilercrossroads.com>)



Talk by Michael Meyer (University of Koblenz): Responding to poetry: from affect to answer

Saturday, 5. February 2022, 15:15-16:00

The gap between the alienation of experiencing poetry and the required understanding in the classroom should no longer be considered an impediment to teaching poetry but a resource in the sense of productive perturbation: if you are not confused, you haven't understood anything. Beyond transcultural similarities that aid understanding, intercultural differences add to the unfamiliar foreign language in general and the defamiliarizing poetic language in particular. This paper proposes to apply phenomenology as an approach because it addresses the gap between embodied experience and cognitive understanding in a nuanced way. Waldenfels's *Phenomenology of the Alien* understands encountering the Other as a process that includes pathos as affect and appeal, and response in the shape of attention, ethos, and answer. Paying close attention to the process of encountering poetry in a foreign language will do justice to functions of poetry and open up avenues of learning in class and beyond.

Michael Meyer is a Professor of Anglophone Literatures and TESOL at the University of Koblenz–Landau. Among his publications are articles and collections on Romantic literature, 20th and 21st century British literature, Postcolonial literature, teaching literature, trust and credibility, and film. He wrote monographs on British autobiography, British poetry, analyzing literature, and teaching English. His current research interest focuses on travel writing, postcolonial literature, and visual media. (He loves sports, traveling, and good food in good company.)