



Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz, Lecturer in English Language at the University of Liverpool, UK

Dr. Gonzalez-Diaz's background is in historical linguistics. In recent years, however, her research interest has gradually widened to considering selected aspects of the interface between linguistics and literature. She teaches undergraduate and MA classes, as well as supervising PhD students researching, among other areas, the development of English degree adverbs and morphological productivity in the history of English. In her research, teaching and supervision she uses and creates literary corpora, and accesses primary works from *Literature Online* as her source texts.

As her research is based on English language, she uses *Literature Online* predominantly for the primary works, and notes that "all my students from the second year onwards are trained to use computers for linguistic analysis". "I also use the *MLA [Modern Languages Association International Bibliography]* on a regular basis, and I teach my students how to use it, not only to provide them with a model that will help them to cite properly in their essays, but also as a way of helping them to find up-to-date research literature for their essays, projects and dissertations."

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*Literature Online
is a priceless
resource for the
kind of research-
led teaching that
I'm interested in.*

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Using *Literature Online* to teach language and linguistics

Gonzalez-Diaz finds that undergraduate teaching modules have shifted a little in recent years, from historical linguistics to more stylistic research. For example, she teaches on subjects such as "The Language of Shakespeare", "Language and Literature", and will soon be involved in courses bringing together the language

and the literary culture of 18th century England.

The novel of sensibility

One of the many tasks that could be used in a computer-based, stylistic session on the language of sensibility is the analysis of body parts. Given that the body is a

particularly important vehicle for the social manifestation of sensibility, Gonzalez-Diaz might ask students to look at instances where heroines blush, faint, or fit. For example, they might examine use of the word "heart" or "mind" and compare how it is used in selected late eighteenth-century novels (for instance,

novels of sensibility that are in some way descendants from Richardson's epistolary novel *Clarissa*, published in 1748). Their textual analysis then leads the discussion into the wider context, and better understanding, of the broader literary trends of the period.

The language of Shakespeare

"Students do find Shakespearean language inaccessible, so I use BBC productions in class to help them with the texts."

A typical seminar with students might involve analyzing the stylistically-marked variation of the use of "you" and "thou" in Shakespeare's plays. The session begins with the student watching the BBC dramatization of a scene from one of Shakespeare's plays (for instance, the wooing of Lady Anne by the Earl of Gloucester in *Richard III*) in order to aid their understanding of the extra-linguistic, contextual factors surrounding the speech event. The text is then analysed (i.e. the

students are asked to find the instances of "thou"/"you" in the extract), and a discussion of when and why the speakers shift from using "you" to "thou" and vice-versa will follow. Their textual analysis is then used as the starting point of a discussion about the representativeness of Shakespeare's pronominal usage in comparison to that of his literary contemporaries and the general usage of the forms in non-literary texts of the period.

Literature Online and linguistics research

As well as linguistics and literary research, Gonzalez-Diaz is also part of the research group "Eighteenth Century Worlds", an interdisciplinary initiative involving some three dozen scholars and curators at the University of Liverpool and National Museums Liverpool. Its objective is to promote study and research in the political, social, economic, intellectual, and cultural life of the global eighteenth century across disciplines and departments at the University of Liverpool. She is also working with colleagues from politics and psychology departments on the linguistics of the portrayal of terrorism in contemporary newspapers.

Research applications of *Literature Online's* primary texts

Adjectives and the history of adjectives

"Adjectives typically become more subjective over time. For example "sweet" refers to taste and is fairly objective, but over time it came to be used to describe character, which is unrelated to the original meaning. This process is called subjectivisation, and, as previous scholarship has noted, it was very prominent in the late eighteenth century" says Gonzalez-Diaz. She selects adjectives, studies their use in primary works found in *Literature Online*, and

looks at their more objective or subjective use in different eighteenth-century novels.

Double periphrastic comparatives

Gonzalez-Diaz has also used the online versions of a number of Early Modern English dramatists (Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, Heywood) to trace the socio-stylistic development of double periphrastic comparatives (e.g. *more better*, *more friendlier*) in English.

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