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.”

About Literature Online

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Powerful cross-searching of authoritative and essential resources which have been carefully selected according to expert editorial guidance makes Literature Online a reliable literary research database that is used daily by scholars worldwide in their academic research.

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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,
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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.

Literature Online and linguistics research

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.