

# Interfacing between Linguists and Literary Scholars: A Conference on Mixed-method Approaches and a First Survey of Italian Collaborative Practices

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## *1. The Beginning*

Let's face it—at the tertiary level of education, language and literature studies often co-exist as two parallel, independent strands of research. Practitioners in each field work side by side, rather than together. Linguists examine the lexis, grammar and structures of typically non-literary texts, with a view to accounting for their encoding patterns. Literary critics explore the content, socio-historical background and formal conventions of literary texts so as to come to plausible interpretations of their themes and worldviews. The authors of this Introduction are no exception.

We spent half a dozen years sharing the same office, busy—maybe too busy—working in the same degree courses and teaching the same groups of students, before starting to actually *talk to* each other, and thus discovering that we were similarly interested, both personally and professionally, in certain genres (i.e. prose fiction) and that our research approaches similarly involved paying close attention to the content and form of texts. Having finally really introduced ourselves, we found it natural to continue getting to know each other, exploring the recent trends in our disciplinary fields.

We were pleased to observe and report to each other a convergence of interests. Indeed, on the one hand, linguists are now more often considering works of fiction as the object of their analysis, and literary scholars are paying more and more attention to their lexical make-up. On the other, scholars in both fields are noticing the benefits that may derive from adopting mixed-method approaches to the study of texts, with

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<sup>1</sup> The authors are jointly responsible for designing and administering the survey, and for writing Section 3. In addition, the first author wrote Sections 1., 2. and 2.1, and the second author wrote Sections 2.2., 2.3 and 4.

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qualitative and quantitative investigations providing complementary insights into their structure, content and ideologies.

The outcome of our discussions was twofold: a decision to conduct an informal survey among our colleagues about their thoughts on the possible intermingling of interests in language and literature studies, and a parallel decision to hold a conference on the qualitative-quantitative interface in the study of literature.

### 2. *The Survey*

The goals of the survey were to informally explore how our colleagues in language and literary studies approach the study of literary texts, and how their complementary lines of research can fruitfully enhance their understanding of literature. Our survey consisted of two sets of questions, one targeting linguists and the other literary scholars, which addressed “parallel” topics, although from slightly different angles. We did not formally pilot the survey—after all, we were not conducting a study proper, but rather “probing the field”. Yet, we used each other as sounding boards, and revised our survey prompts several times until we were both satisfied with their content, form and scope. In the end, each set comprised 12 questions. We thought that, in this way, we would be able to collect enough information from our colleagues to have an understanding of their views on the intersection between linguistic and literary studies, without their task becoming too burdensome. With the help of a technician from our department, we set up the survey on line in such a way that, depending on whether a respondent defined themselves as a linguist vs a literary scholar, they would only see the set of questions relevant to their professional group. The various survey items comprised both *yes-no* and *wh*-questions, and these were formulated in general terms so as to let respondents feel free to address them in the way they liked best. The two sets of questions are reported in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Survey questions

Question No.	For linguists	For literary scholars
1	In general, when you set out to describe what written texts are like, what exactly do you focus your attention on (e.g. recurrent phrases, main topics, contextual elements reflected in the texts, likely effects on the readership)?	In general, when you analyse literary texts, do you usually focus your attention on the concerns that derive from your allegiance to a critical school, or is your curiosity driven by the very texts?
2	What approaches do you use to carry out your analysis (e.g. unmotivated looking, familiarisation with the texts through repeated readings, corpus-driven identification of frequent words/phrases, manual tagging of rhetorical functions...)?	In your analysis, what is the balance between critical orientation and openness to its revision?
3	When do you consider your work satisfactory? (e.g. when it discloses new avenues of research, when it provides evidence in support of a hypothesis, when it appears to be relevant to society at large besides academia...)?	Do you consider your work satisfactory when it provides a harmonious link between critical orientation and its application, or when it provides an unexpected disclosure of new avenues of research that may question your previous critical frameworks?
4	When you read other linguists' analyses of given texts, what makes you think that their work has met your expectations? (You can also make reference to the criteria put forward in Q3.)	When you read a literary scholar's analysis of given texts, what makes you think it has met your expectations? (You can also make reference to the criteria put forward in Q3.)
5	When you were a student of languages/linguistics, A) do you remember if a language/linguistics lecturer of yours ever presented to you some linguistic analysis of literary texts, either their own or somebody else's (e.g. through reading assignments)? B) If so, do you remember what was addressed or covered in that analysis? C) Also, do you remember how the analysis was carried out, and why or what for?	When you were a student of literature(s), A) do you remember if a literature lecturer of yours ever presented to you some linguistic analysis of literary texts—either their own analysis or somebody else's (e.g. through reading assignments)? B) If so, do you remember what was addressed or covered in that analysis—and how, and why or what for?

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6	If you answered Q5 in the affirmative, can you tell us A) what you enjoyed and what you did not enjoy about that experience, and B) why or why not?	If you answered Q5 in the affirmative, what did you and what did you not enjoy about that experience, and why?
7	In your work, A) have you ever been interested in exploring literary texts? B) If so, what genres did you consider (e.g. narrative, drama, poetry) and why? C) If not, why not?	In your work, A) are you interested in the (often machine-driven) observation of interesting linguistic phenomena that would otherwise escape your attention? B) If so, in what genres (e.g. narrative, drama, poetry) and why? If not, why not?
8	Are you familiar with any mixed-method approaches (i.e. combinations of qualitative and quantitative approaches) to the study of literary texts?	Are you familiar with any mixed-method approaches (i.e. combinations of qualitative and quantitative approaches) to the study of literary texts?
9	Have you ever carried out mixed-method investigations of literary texts, or are you planning to devote your attention to them in the near future? Why or why not?	Have you ever carried out mixed-method investigations of literary texts, or are you planning to devote your attention to them in the near future? Why or why not?
10	How would you describe the ideal literary scholar you might want to work in collaboration with? What positive qualities would you be looking for in them?	How would you describe the ideal linguist you might want to work in collaboration with? What positive qualities would you be looking for in them?
11	In general, what do you think that linguists or literary scholars, or scholars more at large, would have to gain or lose from crossing their disciplinary boundaries regarding A) their research, B) teaching and C) career goals?	In general, what do you think linguists or literary scholars, or scholars more at large, would have to gain or lose from crossing their disciplinary boundaries for their research, teaching and career goals?
12	Any other comments?	Any other comments?

We circulated the link to the survey via email among our specific professional contacts, and also publicised it thanks to the Italian Association of English Studies (*Associazione Italiana di Anglistica*), of which we are both members. As a result, we mostly contacted academics in English studies, presumably reaching about 600 people. Only 63 colleagues completed the survey, more specifically 40 linguists (64.1%) and 23 literary scholars (35.9%), most of them coming from Italy (55,

i.e. 87.3%), and a few from other countries (i.e. France, Germany, Norway, the UK and the USA). Of the respondents, 2 (3.2%) are emeriti professors, 13 (20.7%) full professors and 25 (39.7%) associate professors, 20 (31.7%) assistant professors, junior researchers or contract teachers, and 3 (4.7%) graduate students. Given the low, albeit not unexpected, number of respondents—some of whom chose not to answer all the questions in the survey—and considering that the sample is not in any way representative of the target population, what we present is merely an anecdotal snapshot of the views held by English Studies academics on the interface between language and literary studies.

### *2.1. The linguists' views*

In answering the first question, the linguists reported that their analyses mostly focus on “formal” features of texts (e.g. coherence, cohesion, argumentation, information flow, structure; 35.0%), but also their content (22.5%), phraseological patterns (17.5%), context (15.0%) and lexis (12.5%). The variety of responses indicates that, to the linguists, every aspect of the texts being analysed is worth exploring as potentially interesting (e.g. “all kinds of linguistic and stylistic devices”), but also that what is chosen as the object of analysis “depends on what kind of texts they are”, to the point that the first research goal could be differentiating the texts “according to text type”.

When asked to explain how they carry out their text analyses, the linguists responded that they mostly rely on corpus-based/driven or computational methods (42.5%), repeated readings (22.5%) and, less frequently, the examination of text structure (5.0%), the description/discussion of their context of production (2.5%) and their lexis (2.5%). Specific responses made reference to the “macro and micro structure” of texts, the “identification of frequent words”, the testing of informants, the “manual tagging of stylistic and rhetorical features”, a consideration of “linguistic theories”, and also “multilevel linguistic labelling” and the “analysis at morphological or sentence level” phenomena.

In their answers to Question 3, the linguists also stated that they consider their work satisfactory when it provides evidence in support of hypotheses (47.5%), discloses new avenues of research (37.5%), produces something relevant to society (17.5%), discovers something

new (15.0%) and achieves clarity (2.5%). The respondents commented that their research is adequate “when it deepens the knowledge of a given field”, “when it provides: sound parallels with other texts and languages”, “when results can be economically useful”, “When it reveals new insights into grammatical theory” and “when students understand/enjoy the topics of the course”.

In parallel, other linguists’ work was said to be useful and relevant when it: provides evidence in favour of hypotheses (22.5%); is original, new or modifies expectations (20.0%); is thorough and methodologically sound (17.5%); illuminates the text (15.0%). Reference was thus made to the process of research (e.g. “When it is clear that analytical tools have been adapted to suit the specific text”; “when the analysis is carried out in a wide and reproducible way”) or its outcome (e.g. “there has to be something in it that I didn’t know before”; “If they show how language patterns contribute to the message of the text”), sometimes with warnings against unwanted effects (e.g. “too much academic work is done exclusively to get published”).

Interestingly, over half of the respondents (53.5%) reported being instructed in some form of linguistic analysis of literary texts, 15.0% of them more specifically making reference to rhetorical figures and metaphors, or poetic language. Instead, 27.5% did not state having this experience. The comments here were quite varied, both referring to different approaches to, or elements of, the texts to analyse (e.g. “phonological/graphic peculiarities”; “the approach was based on stylistics”; “multiculturalism”), and also revealing different views on the matter (e.g. “certain forms of linguistic analysis (e.g. discourse analysis) are little more than close readings of texts”; “I recall a suspicion of anything that threatened to break the mould”; “language and literature were taught separately”).

Only a few respondents further indicated that they enjoyed this kind of “training” (17.5%), and in particular, the narratological-semiotic approach (2.5%), the fact of crossing borders and getting to know the methods used in other fields (2.5%), and the possibility of modifying one’s observations (2.5%). Instead, 15.0% stated that they did not care much for this “choice”, or that it did not apply to them. Some comments, however, evidenced the ambivalent nature of the experience. This was depicted as rewarding, but challenging (e.g. “The enjoyable thing was to see something going on in the language Of [sic] the literary text that one

didn't know before. The downside was that sometimes the nitty-gritty of the analysis could be boring or technically difficult") or defined as a set of non-illuminating drills ("I was worried that most of the time it was a simple [...] exercise with no scientific drawback [sic]") or described as profitable only in certain contexts (e.g. "this kind of approach makes sense only if you teach quite advanced students").

A majority of the respondents (65.0%) expressed an interest in the analysis of literature, especially, but not exclusively, prose texts (e.g. "I believe that linguistics must always consider all types of verbal productions"; "poetry, because it has the highest concentration of hidden meanings to explore"), while a minority (17.5%) stated they were not interested (e.g. "no, I study languages for specific purposes").

Half of the respondents (50.0%) reported familiarity with mixed-method approaches to the study of literary texts, while 20.0% stated the opposite. A few others stated their familiarity with mostly qualitative methods (5.0%) or corpus-driven methods (2.5%). The value of such approaches was stressed in some of the comments, as evidenced by their being described as almost a necessity (e.g. "When studying scansion patterns in a poetic tradition that has not been properly understood yet [...] quantitative and qualitative approaches *have to* be used."; "I suppose it's a very common approach, and sound as well (perhaps also *inevitable*)"; "corpus stylistics *requires* corpus tools but also qualitative reading"; my emphases).

Actual, direct involvement in mixed-method investigations of literary texts was mentioned only by 50% of the respondents. Instead, 35.0% of them stated the opposite, while the remaining 25.0% presented this as an option for the future. The specific responses provided reveal the respondents' mixed feelings about, or divergent views on, the topic: from sceptical (e.g. "I prefer to follow my specific path"; "I find corpus linguistics boring and often of little validity") through optimistic (e.g. "a combination of qualitative and quantitative is more powerful") and matter-of-fact (e.g. "It is the typical stylistic approach in French academia") to selective (e.g. "only on multimodal texts").

Question 10 contains at least two presuppositions: one, that collaborating with a literary scholar is indeed a possibility; two, that a partner in a possible joint research project could be a person who is nice to be around. We formulated our question with these in-built presuppositions on purpose, so as to "force" our respondents to think of

the scenario we presented before them as a concrete, rather than a remote, possibility. The respondents wrote that the qualities they would appreciate in a literary scholar they might collaborate with included: being open-minded, flexible, willing to risk/experiment (25.0%), attentive to textual data (12.5%), knowledgeable about linguistic/discursive matters (10.0%), but also enthusiastic and passionate (5.0%). The comments stressed both professional qualities (e.g. “somebody aware of the complexities of language in use and of the time depth of these phenomena”; “well-versed in reading methods”) and personal traits (e.g. “not career-oriented”; “I have never thought about an ideal literary scholar”). Basically, this hypothetical ideal collaborator from the literary field was described as someone not set in their ways and with a useful background in things linguistic.

When asked to reflect on linguists and literary scholars crossing the boundaries of their fields, the respondents stated that this would be beneficial for research (97.5%; e.g. “It cannot be denied that literature is an interesting and rich field of research. But linguistic tools are essential to face it in the most effective way”; “my [... research] units comprise both experts in American literature and historical linguists”) and teaching (62.5%; e.g. “students like this kind of approach”), but not so much for one’s career (17.5%) or not at all (2.5%; e.g. “this would be quite bad for linguists, since they are still struggling to be taken seriously as scientists, and collaborating with humanities people would not serve this cause”). Whether or not the above sentiments are justified, there appears to be some worries among the linguists about possible negative side effects of not conforming to the traditions within one’s field.

However, the participants occasionally volunteered additional comments through which they positively evaluated the goal of the survey (12.5%), stated their interdisciplinary research interests (7.5%) or expressed their wish for a (re)unification of language and literature (7.5%) (e.g. “I would be pleased to be informed about the publication of the conference proceedings”; “I am very pleased that finally somebody asks the question”; “Linguists and literary scholars speak different languages”; “We should believe a bit more in the “political” value of our research”). These comments suggest that, at least for some, more interdisciplinary collaboration would, or might, be useful to all parties involved in the long term.



Overall, therefore, the linguists stated a preference for: the form more often than the content of texts (Question 1); corpus-informed analysis, rather than repeated readings, of texts (Question 2); the provision of evidence in support of hypotheses and the disclosure of new avenues of research more than the relevance of their research to society (Question 3). High value was attributed to the provision of evidence (Question 4), originality (Question 4) and methodological soundness of analysis (Question 4). Also, the respondents stated that, as students, a majority experienced, and some enjoyed, linguistic analyses of literary texts, especially poetry (Questions 5 and 6). Additionally, a majority expressed their interest in exploring literary texts (Question 7); an interest in, and familiarity with, mixed-method approaches to literary texts (Questions 8 and 9); a willingness to work with open-minded and linguistically versed literary scholars (Question 10). They also stressed the importance of crossing disciplinary boundaries for research and teaching (Question 11). Finally, a minority stated their appreciation for the survey and expressed the hope in future collaborative projects (Question 12).

### *2.2 The literary scholars' views*

Most (73%) of the respondents to Question 1 mentioned "the text(s)" as their only driving force, especially the literary texts "that cannot be pigeonholed", the "case studies that might in fact undermine or problematise critical allegiances" and produce "unexpected outcomes that ... prompt new research". Only 9% pointed to a critical school, a sharp decrease if compared with what respondents might have said on this point ten or twenty years ago. Nearly all (22 out of 23) stated that the "text" was the only force or one of the two. "Both" text and theory were equally interesting for 17%, with one saying that, however, the text prevails. "Curiosity" and "the unexpected" (see also Question 4) were both mentioned only once. However, a few respondents said they had been driven by those "case studies that [seemed to] undermine or problematise critical allegiances" or by the "unexpected outcomes that [...] prompt new research".

The results of Question 1 are somehow mirrored in Question 2. Slightly more than half of the respondents (57%) said they were driven mainly by the constant revision of their critical orientations. As in

Question 1, the prevalence of critical orientation was clearly disappearing (9%), reflecting the relative abeyance of once towering critical schools such as New Historicism, Historicism, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, etc. One respondent claimed that “one must be open to the text first, and what is there, without trying to fit it into a specific critical mould”. A balance between critical orientation and openness to revision was advocated by 26% of the respondents. Uncertainty was reported by only two respondents (9%).

The preference for the unexpected that already surfaced in Question 1 was confirmed by the answers to Question 3. The respondents preferred the “unexpected disclosure of new avenues of research” (65%), which seemed to be in line with the prevalent emphasis on the text (Question 1) and the revision of critical orientation (Question 2). As one colleague said, “Literature is made up of texts where things don’t add up—or at least that’s the literature I’m interested in”. Only 9% of the respondents aimed at an ideal union of orientation and application.

The answers to Question 4 also showed a general preference for those readings that produce an unexpected outcome, rather than those that confirm a critical theory or set of assumptions. The unexpected disclosure or outcome was selected by 44% of the respondents. These respondents liked those readings where, for instance, “the ‘obvious’ and ‘mainstream’ are deconstructed and when an open and multidisciplinary approach is adopted as a framework for interpretation”, when a reading “tells me something about the text I had not thought before”, “sheds a new light on those given texts and reveals new meanings”, provides “interpretation/information I was unaware of”, “opens my eyes to new perspectives”, especially if the scholar carries out their research with “as few expectations as possible”. 26% of the respondents encouraged instead the well-formed nature of the whole process. They stated that research offers the tools and the bibliography needed to study that topic and is satisfactory if it is “plausible and not too biased”; “puts forward a motivated interpretation”; proves to be “more closely connected to the text; do[es] not limit itself to a single critical approach, but use[s] many such approaches combined to extract meaning”; offers “solidity of the argumentation for a given thesis [and] the tenability of the thesis more than its novelty”; “the text does what it says it will do in the introduction”. 17% argued that good research should be instead based on the close analysis of the text and its historical, linguistic, literary and

cultural context. Only 13% underlined the ideally joint presence of both rigour and new outcomes.

Question 5 made reference to the respondents' days as students, inquiring about their possible early exposure to literary scholars' linguistic analysis of literary texts. Interestingly, 74% mentioned having experienced this teaching method, while only 26% stated they did not. These respondents stated that linguistic analysis cannot be avoided: it has "always [been] very important", it was "important, and frequent". Among the topics of linguistic analysis that should be investigated, they included: "the phonological, lexical, structural levels"; "the presence of any semantic lexical field or some syntactical features"; "the linguistic patterns that such writers employed according to their feelings and personalities"; attention to semantic fields; narratological analyses of stories, often with reference to the then (early 1980s) current critical approaches (e.g. structuralism, semiotics). Among the genres quoted, poetry seemed to be slightly prevalent.

The answers to Question 6 reveal that this was a positive experience for 70% of the respondents: "It could be difficult, but it offered me interpretative keys, or it could validate my interpretations"; "it communicated and shared enthusiasm about the text"; "it shaped my own way of reading" by offering "a sort of close reading, every time closer"; it penetrated "the structure of the text thanks to the knowledge of its basic components"; it was a "linguistically-oriented input [that] still ... attracts me"; "I never really thought that separating literature and linguistics sharply was possible". Only 18% argued that the experience was in some way positive, but there were some circumstances that prevented it from being totally so: insufficient knowledge of the foreign language; insufficient systematic grounding of that approach and its limitation to poetry only; or insufficient appreciation of the otherness of literature: "I do not enjoy [it] when literary texts are considered 'normal' texts, as they are not. I enjoy [it] when I realize that the linguist has helped me to see further in[to] the very nature of the word texture"). 12% were decidedly negative: there is "no pre-made path for the connection between a literary and linguistic analysis of the texts, therefore the whole experience seemed to me somehow impressionistic"; one "reacted critically to mechanical statistics".

The interaction between the observation of linguistic phenomena and literary analysis occupied Question 7. The majority of respondents (74%)

were interested, though with limitations. One would like to “gradually lose sight of the temporal order between the two procedures and rather see them as parallel sequences that mutually feed each other”; this approach was interesting “in some cases if the linguistic analysis can tell us more about the language of the period in a ‘history of the language’ perspective or if it can shed light on some thematic issues of the text”; “I am interested, as long as the quantitative observation is not the sole outcome. Literary texts sometimes speak through absence, instead of presence, of phenomena. Furthermore, I appreciate [it] when the machine-driven observation accompanies a more careful attention to the cultural meaning of the observed phenomena”. It was said to be especially useful for the analysis of poetical texts, but it was not sufficient in itself. There was no clear prevalence of a literary genre. Some indicated all genres (26%), and others a slight preference for poetry (17%), narrative (8%) or drama (8%). 22% were simply not interested.

The interest in mixed-method approaches does not necessarily include personal knowledge, as shown in Question 8. 65% of the respondents were familiar with mixed-method approaches, though not to the extent that they believed it to be necessary, and 30% said they had no familiarity with them. As one respondent said, “I don’t really know to which extent I am familiar with them—perhaps not at the level of conscious adoption of specific frameworks”.

Complementary results occurred in response to Question 9. 59% stated that they had carried out mixed-method investigations of literary texts, with quite varied degrees of completion. 14% had not carried them out yet and were not interested in them. 17% said they would perhaps consider them in the future, though they are held back by the lack of resources, interest, software, skills, etc. One said that they were daunted by the initially mechanic nature of these queries: “I do not exclude that linguistic analysis might turn out to be a useful instrument for the research I will be pursuing in the future, e.g. in the comparative study of literary translations”. Another respondent claimed: “I do plan to use them in the future, because of my interest in the theoretical underpinnings of some phenomena”.

The portrait of the ideal linguist and research mate was a highly varied one, as can be seen in the answers to Question 10. Among the behavioral qualities singled out by the respondents, there was an

emphasis on openness and multidisciplinary (39%). The ideal linguist should be an “open minded one, possibly open to new approaches and with a knowledge in the corpus linguistic [sic]”; they should show “openness towards new avenues never before taken”, should be “someone capable of applying new methods of investigation to tenets of literary analysis”; they will have to be “open-minded, interested in the specific information that qualitative scholars might contribute and in the mutual exchange of ideas, deprived of any sense of disciplinary hierarchy”; they should show “openmindedness”, good “team-working” skills, interdisciplinary attitude, literary sensibility”. They should be patient and accommodating, be ready to share results, show flexibility and a capacity for critical revision of group work. Among the scientific qualities, respondents quoted “a non-stereotyped, non-descriptive approach that might instead embrace and foster complexity without any oversimplification of outcomes”. Other virtues included the attention to text-coherence, information structure, modality (4%). The ideal linguist should know the “most suitable IT to process literary texts”. They should be analytical, skilled in linguistic, with an eye for detail. Their interest in literature was quite predictably cited by 35% as the best scientific quality. They should be “smart and interested in literature”, show “curiosity, a sense of literary usage, the capability to savor the (linguistic) complexity of literature”. They should be “as much a literary critic as I am a linguist”, “open to learn from literature as I am open to learn from linguistic”. They should be “aware of the specific nature of literary texts”. They do “not ignore literary texts” and “lov[e]” literature. More specific requests (indicated by 35%) included, for instance, the ability to work on historical linguistics; knowledge of hybrid languages; language history, diachronic (etymological) approach to the analysis of language, interest in and understanding of non-verbal languages, pragmatics (and possibly intercultural pragmatics).

An overwhelming preference for collaboration emerged from the answers to Question 11. 90% of the respondents argued that the collaboration would be positive. This interdisciplinary approach might help the two types of researchers “forget their disciplinary constraints in terms of priority or precedence and instead focus on how a literary text may be fruitfully cross-questioned [sic]”; it would enable positive traits such as “crossing borders, mixing knowledge, hybridize [sic] fields”, “curiosity and open-mindedness, [towards] literature is an

interdisciplinary discipline and we do not mind to listen [sic] to other people, we are less prescriptive and assertive". It would give them "the possibility to look at a text from complementary perspectives"; it would show "how deeply true is the unity of knowledge"; "literary scholars would have more instruments to offer better, deeper analysis of literary texts; linguists would investigate the usage of given phenomena on a larger scale". It would provide a new "attention to details", a new set of tools. So there would be "everything to gain, especially from the point of literary criticism, which often tends to "go out on a tangent" and forget about the text itself". Scholars would have "to adjust their terminology: less terminological precision would have to be expected. Also, the topics would have to be of broader interest". It would be "productive", and there would be everything "to gain, provided it is not just an attitude of purely theoretical significance". Only 10% said that the "two fields are [too] different" and that, career-wise, the Italian university system of scientific-disciplinary fields did not encourage such interdisciplinary efforts; scholars would probably have to pay for that in terms of personal career.

The "open section" represented by Question 12 revealed that most of the respondents found this questionnaire interesting and thanked us for the effort. However, one said that questions were hard, answers were open, and questionnaires not anonymous: how were we going to process them? We hope we have, though imperfectly, tried to address this objection.

More generally, it seems that the literary scholars preferred attention to texts, openness to critical revision and unexpected disclosure over critical orientation and coherence (Questions 1-4). They gave increasing importance (Question 10) to crossing disciplinary boundaries, hybridizing fields, enhancing the complementarity between the ideal linguist and the literary scholar. The ideal linguist should possess openness, multi- and inter-disciplinarity, patience, and an interest in literature. As students (Questions 5-6), a majority of the literary scholars experienced—and some enjoyed—linguistic analyses of literary texts, especially poetry; in terms of choices, though, genres did not show a clear hierarchy. A majority declared interest in, and familiarity with, mixed-method approaches to literary texts (Questions 8-9), if integrated with a qualitative approach to literature. Most of them either carried out mixed-method investigations of literary texts or were planning to do so

in the near future, in the belief that all scholars could only gain by it. They also showed appreciation for the survey and hope in future collaborative projects.

### 2.3. *Let's "Open at the Close" (Harry Potter)*

Admittedly, the sample of our survey participants was a restricted convenience one, made up of volunteers who were largely sympathetic with our effort and, more in general, with the idea of giving at least a thought to the collaboration between linguists and literary scholars. The data we collected are therefore not meant to be representative of the larger population. However, to our knowledge at least, this remains the first, if still incomplete, attempt in Italy at seeing if this collaboration already exists, might exist or is just a hope for the remote future. We think that, despite its avowed limits, this survey might be indicative of trends and hopefully stimulate more thorough analysis in future.

Some similarities between the two sets of responses indeed emerged. These include attention to texts (even if "text" means different things to linguists and literary scholars), openness to new interpretations, eagerness to explore new types of research, concern about originality, interest in the other field (though with a difference between linguists (LIN) 47.5% and literary scholars (LIT) 74%). Other similarities include familiarity with mixed-method approaches (yes: LIN 50%; LIT 65%; no: LIN 20%, LIT 30%) or previous experience in working with them (yes: LIN 50, LIT 59%; no: LIN 35%, LIT 14%; maybe: LIN 17.5%, LIT 17%), willingness to work with colleagues who are open-minded and knowledgeable (LIN 25%, LIT 39%), and the belief that crossing disciplinary boundaries is beneficial.

To be honest, differences also emerged. Interdisciplinary experiences in one's student days were more common among the linguists, but more enjoyable for the literary scholars; preference was respectively given by linguists to "evidence in support of hypothesis [sic]", and by the literary scholars to "revision of critical orientation" and "unexpected disclosure"; the literary scholars stressed the importance of the awareness of research background and coherence, while the linguists that of linguistic evidence; a sort of "proprietary" preference was accorded by the linguists to "attention to textual data" (12.5%) and by the literary scholars to "interest in literature" (35%); the linguists warned of the risks of inter-

disciplinarity for one's career goals, and the literary scholars were more grateful for and enthusiastic about the survey.

### *3. The Conference and This Special Issue*

From our recurrent one-on-one discussions over several months—which found partial confirmation in the survey among our colleagues—we came to realise that a fruitful point of contact between our disciplinary backgrounds and a promising line of development for our research could be the application of mixed methods to the investigation of literary texts.

A mixed-method investigation serves two main research goals: on the one hand, detecting patterns and themes that might otherwise go unnoticed if the overall content and context of literary works were not taken into consideration; on the other, collecting and systematizing quantitative evidence for testing qualitative interpretations of and hypotheses about those works. A versatile combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches enables scholars to address such issues as describing an author's style, comparing and contrasting an author's works with those of given time periods and/or genres, identifying the genre membership of texts, detecting topics in texts, outlining the personality traits of fictional characters, and discovering the connotations of key terms on the basis of their lexical associations.

We thus decided to host an international conference—"The Literature-Linguistics Interface: Bridging the Gap Between Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Literary Texts" (Department of Linguistic and Literary Studies, University of Padua, 7-9 June, 2018)—which could become an open encounter for linguists and literary scholars eager to explore how a combined qualitative and quantitative analysis of literary texts can lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their emotional and intellectual appeal.

The theme of the conference raised the interest of scholars investigating the formulation, structure, content, cultural salience and social import of literary communicative practices in a variety of languages and across different time periods. The participants gave presentations on various topics relevant to literary criticism, stylistics and literary linguistic analysis, which were approached from a combined qualitative-quantitative perspective.



The present issue of the *Nordic Journal of English Studies* includes a selection of papers originally delivered at the conference plus one written by a young scholar who attended the conference and felt inspired by it to try her hand at applying a mixed-method of analysis to literary texts.

The issue opens with two papers on the use of corpora and keyword analysis in literary analysis. **Federica Perazzini's** ("La Sapienza" University of Rome) "Figures of Fictionality: Keywords of the Eighteenth-century English Novel" presents an exercise in computational criticism about the linguistic and ideological constructions at the basis of the rising genre of Augustan England: the novel. It examines the keywords at the core of the extensively theorised modern paradigm of empirical narratives, revealing the lexical units which are distinctive in fictionality and which constitute the figure of the novelistic canon. The paper shows how the application of quantitative methods in literary and cultural scholarship can enhance the quality of individual research in the pursuit of the validity of interpretation.

**Beatrice Righetti's** (University of Padua) "How Women Wrote: A Quantitative Comparison of Women Writers' Defences in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century England" investigates the relations between five English texts written by women within the Renaissance *querelle des femmes* by means of a mixed-method approach. Quantitative analyses of high and low frequency words highlight differences in use of specific *querelle*-related lemmas, which point to women's growing self-affirmation as authors rather than as mere subjects of this narration.

An example of corpus stylistics is **Erik Castello's** (University of Padua) "Dickens's *Pictures from Italy* vs. Murray's *Handbook to Northern Italy: An Investigation into Adjective Use*", which explores the use and distribution of predicative, attributive and postposed adjectives and adjective compounding in Dickens's *Pictures from Italy* and Murray's *Handbook to Northern Italy*. It illustrates how Dickens uses more adjectives, including hyphenated compound adjectives, and some that were infrequently used in late modern English. The findings suggest that *Pictures from Italy* is a more inventive and sophisticated piece of writing than the *Handbook to Northern Italy*, which mainly addresses independent travellers rather than conventional tourists.

An intratextual quantitative and qualitative analysis of a single literary work is offered in "The Qualitative Analysis of *Fahrenheit 451*°: Mapping the Linguistic Make-up of Literary Texts" by **Marina Gorlach**

(Metropolitan State University of Denver). The paper examines Ray Bradbury's (1953, 1964) *Fahrenheit 451*° by considering the role of word systems—i.e. matrices of words with a common formal or content-related denominator—in conveying its message. The findings show that the portrayal offered of the massive attack of 'consumer civilization' standards on the traditional cultural values of society is conveyed via several word systems (e.g. phonological, the conceptual-associative field 'dark-cold-empty', the metaphoric-metonymic systems 'hands and body parts' and 'show-carnival', the use of internal dialogue and monologue).

Two papers focus on metaphor, a distinctive device of literary texts. "The Metaphor in Literature and the Effect on Translation", by **Christos Stavrou** (University of Cyprus) and **Anna Chita** (University of Cyprus) focuses on the translation of metaphor as a cultural concept on the basis of Newmark's theory. It considers a Greek and a German translation of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and through extensive examples it shows how the extent to which metaphors can be non-anomalously reproduced in the target language depends on how deeply embedded they are in the source culture.

A study of a megametaphor (scattered metaphorical domain references) is offered in "Pinnacles in Long-form Literary Texts: Cross-textual Evidence for the Pervasiveness of Megametaphorical Expression" by **Daniel C. Strack** (The University of Kitakyushu). It shows how the relatively uncommon but metaphorically replete word *pinnacle* contributes surreptitious metaphorical meaning to the 50 literary texts in which it is examined, highlighting climactic scenes or emphasizing key turning-points in protagonist character development. The study further shows that metaphorical lines of interpretation may be detected also through the electronic searching of multiple text corpora, while also hinting that megametaphor is not a rare and idiosyncratic type of literary artifice.

The literary text and its afterlife are studied by **Francesca Bianchi** (University of Salento) and **Sara Gesuato** (University of Padua) who explore the issue of adaptation of prose fiction to the screen in "*Pride and Prejudice* on the Page and on the Screen: Literary Narrative, Literary Dialogue and Film Dialogue". More specifically, they explore the similarities and differences in content between the dialogic and the narrative parts in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and between the dialogues in the novel and the dialogues in its 1940 and 2005 film

adaptations. The findings show how the dialogue in the novel covers conceptual areas largely complementary to those of the narrative, cleverly adapting its multiple communicative functions to the semiotic needs and goals of film adaptations.

*4. Conclusion: Can our Paths ever Cross in a Profitable Way?*

In 1874, during the first meeting of the *New Shakspeare Society*, Shakespearean scholar James Fleay began his talk on the application of metrical tests to dramatic poetry by first quoting in dead earnestness Gradgrind's words in *Hard Times*: "Now what I want is Facts... Facts alone are wanted in life... Stick to fact, sir!... In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts". Then Fleay spelt out his manifesto: "our analysis, which has hitherto been qualitative, must become quantitative ... If you cannot weigh, measure, number your results, however you may be convinced yourself, you must not hope to convince the others, or claim the position of an investigator; you are merely a guesser". The scholars who generously accepted our joint effort and sent their proposals to our conference first, and answered our call for papers later, definitely knew better. We were happy to welcome them to our University, which has long been an international meeting-place for scholars regardless of their nation, faith, or methods, even when the faultlines separating confessional boundaries are far more contentious than the ones between linguists and literary scholars. We were even more delighted that the depth and richness of their proposals bore out the hope we had placed in a fruitful encounter between the two "tribes" on the same literary turf and with an eye to the usage of mixed-methods.

We think that the preliminary results of our survey, as well as the contributions to this special issue, show how close and interested we all are regardless of our institutional affiliations and bureaucratic straitjackets.

What next? We have each thought of the next questions one might want to face.

Sara's perspective as a linguist offers this trio of questions:

- What questions do literary scholars ask of texts?
- How do they approach them?
- How can linguistics be of use, if at all, to their questions and their approach to them?

20 *Sara Gesuato and Rocco Coronato*

As a literary scholar, Rocco offers these three questions:

- Why are we so afraid?
- Does our incipient distrust of theory matter?
- Are literary scholars expected to provide only their qualitative effort or is some quantitative knowledge required of them?

Like the collaboration between linguists and literary scholars, such questions open the way to the possibility of many interesting discoveries in the future.