

## Dialogic and multimodal approaches to teaching poetry: Theoretical and experimental insights

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### **Abstract**

*This study explores how multimodal approaches to poetry teaching can be integrated into a dialogic pedagogical framework in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) education under wartime conditions. Conducted as a qualitative explanatory case study in a Ukrainian upper-secondary school, the research examines how students' interpretations of poetry evolve across a two-lesson dialogic sequence involving auditory, visual, bilingual, and contextual multimodal variation. The study argues that multimodality becomes pedagogically significant not as an illustrative supplement to poetry, but as a dialogic provocation that destabilizes fixed interpretations and generates interpretive plurality. Special attention is given to the proposed typology of 'antitheses', which is conceptualized not as a classificatory mechanism but as a dialogic heuristic framework supporting comparison, mediation, and reinterpretation of meanings. The findings indicate that students shifted from searching for a single authoritative interpretation toward engaging in dialogically mediated meaning-making. The study further demonstrates that uncertainty, hesitation, and disagreement function as productive dialogic resources rather than pedagogical limitations. The article contributes to research on dialogic pedagogy, multimodality, and poetry interpretation in contexts of educational disruption.*

**Keywords:** *dialogic pedagogy, multimodal approach, poetry interpretation, typology of antitheses, foreign language teaching, interpretative plurality.*

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### **Introduction**

The rapid development of digital technologies has brought meaningful changes in nearly all spheres of human life, and education is no exception. Such advances challenge foreign language teachers to adopt

innovative strategies to teach their students to interpret texts and to explore alternative approaches that foster effective dialogue. As Kress (2011) rightly remarks, “Multimodality provides the tools for the recognition of all the modes through which meaning has been made, and learning has taken place” (p. 209). This idea is supported by research conducted by a team of computer science scholars in the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, demonstrating that children engage with multimodal digital environments from a very early age. Hourcade et al. (2015) report that by the age of two, 90 percent of children have a moderate ability to use a tablet. In modern educational institutions, the use of interactive presentations, infographics, video materials, educational computer games, and digital media has become the norm, requiring further development of learners’ ability to perceive and interpret information in a multimodal way.

In English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classrooms, however, poetry interpretation is often reduced to the identification of a single “correct” meaning, which limits students’ interpretive activity and positions them as passive recipients of authoritative knowledge. At the same time, the current tendency towards visualization and ‘clipped thinking’ raises concerns for language and literature teachers about creating pedagogical conditions in which students can engage with poetry that requires shared empathetic analysis of implicit, cultural, and emotional meanings. Dymoke and Hughes (2009) rightly emphasize the dynamic potential of poetry in a twenty-first-century curriculum, particularly when poetic texts are approached through multimodal forms of engagement. They emphasize that any multimodal text “can be woven by many makers who are also users/readers of that text” (p. 93). Importantly, this does not necessarily indicate that students are apathetic towards poetry; rather, they tend to approach it as a task of identifying an authoritative meaning, which may limit their willingness to express personal interpretations and engage in dialogue. From this perspective, the central problem addressed in the study lies in the persistence of transmissive approaches to poetry teaching, where meaning is treated as stable and predetermined rather than dialogically mediated.

These challenges become particularly acute in contexts of educational disruption. Since February 2022, the Eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv has been experiencing full-scale war, which has significantly affected students’ access to education and their engagement with formal learning. Frequent air raid alerts, displacement, and prolonged reliance on online instruction contribute to fragmented attention, emotional strain, and an increased dependence on digital communication. In such conditions, lessons often become one of the few structured spaces for sustained interaction, thereby increasing the significance of dialogic pedagogy as both a pedagogical and a relational practice. At the same time, students actively engage with multimodal content via social media, where poetic texts are often accompanied by images, music, and videos. This interaction may encourage surface-level interpretation, highlighting the need to create pedagogical conditions that foster deeper engagement and dialogic reflection. In this regard, dialogic pedagogy is not only a methodological choice but also a challenge, as it requires a balance between guiding interpretation and allowing space for uncertainty, disagreement, and the emergence of multiple voices. Thus, traditional teacher-centered approaches risk reinforcing passive participation and surface-level engagement, making the need for dialogic pedagogy particularly acute.

This study, rooted in the foundational works of scholars such as Bakhtin (1981), Freire (1978), Wells (1999), Wegerif (2007), and Matusov (2009), understands dialogic pedagogy as an approach based on the mutual interaction between a teacher and students as equal partners in the learning process. In this model, participants collaboratively make meaning through open dialogue. Following Matusov’s discussion of dialogic pedagogy “as an educational practice that is guided by a pro-dialogic project of education” (Matusov, 2009, p. 5), in multimodal poetry studies, it is dialogic pedagogy that offers opportunities for understanding the process of a poetic text interpretation by activating verbal, visual, auditory, and tactile modes. In poetry teaching, this approach expands the possibilities for individual meaning-making and creates an inclusive space for co-construction where each participant’s opinion is valued.

Thus, considering the theoretical, linguistic, and pedagogical challenges outlined above, this study argues that multimodal variation within a dialogically organized poetry classroom can function as a dialogic provocation that destabilizes authoritative interpretations and supports interpretive plurality under conditions of educational disruption. Specifically, the paper addresses two principal research questions. RQ1 aims to highlight how structured dialogic interaction enables students to become active agents of poetic meaning-making rather than passive recipients of authoritative interpretation. Simultaneously, the emphasis on dialogue between equal partners and interpretative plurality defines RQ2, which examines how multimodal elements (mainly visual and auditory) function as dialogic stimuli that reshape interpretations of a poetic text.

In this study, it is proposed that the principles of dialogic pedagogy, together with intentional multimodal diversity, can transform interpretative uncertainty into a productive learning process. To investigate this process, the study introduces the concept of “*antithesis*” as a dialogic framework for mediating competing interpretations and examines how students’ interpretations evolve across a sequence of dialogically organized lessons conducted under wartime conditions.

## Methodology

### *Setting, participants, and teacher*

The study was conducted as an explanatory case study with one Grade 10 class ( $n = 24$ ; aged 16–17) at Kharkiv Lyceum No. 143 in Eastern Ukraine. In Ukrainian educational terminology, a ‘lyceum’ is a public upper-secondary education institution (III level) that provides profile-oriented education (CMU, 2021). The school is broadly representative of urban public schools in the region, while offering a linguistically oriented track with an emphasis on foreign language learning. The national educational standards mandate the inclusion of poetry in the EFL curriculum; however, the selection of texts and the dialogic instructional design were developed by the teacher-researcher specifically for this study.

The participants demonstrated English proficiency levels ranging from B1 to B2 according to the Council of Europe (2020). At the time of the study, students were geographically dispersed: nine remained in Kharkiv, seven had relocated to western regions of Ukraine, and eight were residing abroad as refugees. These conditions shaped diverse learning environments and influenced students’ participation and engagement in online lessons.

The teacher-researcher, who designed and implemented the instructional approach, had 32 years of experience in English language teaching and held advanced academic degrees in philological and pedagogical sciences. The lessons described in this study were designed and implemented by the teacher-researcher, reflecting her pedagogical intention to move beyond transmissive instruction toward dialogic engagement with poetic texts. The instructional design intentionally balanced curricular guidance with openness to students’ emergent, uncertain, and sometimes contradictory interpretations, which became an integral part of the dialogic interaction.

### *Learning conditions and online infrastructure*

Data collection took place in November 2025 over a two-week period within an English-as-a-foreign-language course. Due to ongoing war conditions, instruction was conducted primarily online using Microsoft Teams, which enabled both whole-class discussion and breakout-room interaction. Communication outside the lessons was supported through a Telegram channel used for coordination and safety notifications.

Although air raid alerts and power outages affected the broader educational setting, stable internet and digital device access remained consistent for all the participants during the recorded lessons. Offline learning opportunities were limited, with students attending in-person classes in protected environments (e.g., metro-based classrooms) only occasionally.

### *Procedure*

The study consisted of two 45-minute lessons (total recorded time: 90 minutes) focused on the dialogic interpretation of contemporary poetry through multimodal variation. Instructional materials included four poems originally published on social media platforms. The students were invited to choose the poem for in-depth analysis, and 78% selected the text that became central to the lessons.

The lessons were organized as a dialogic sequence in which meanings were not predetermined but emerged through interaction, mediation, interpretive uncertainty, and occasional disagreement among participants. In addition, students completed multimodal homework tasks ('trace maps') designed to externalize and reflect their interpretative processes.

### *Data collection and analysis*

The study employed multiple data sources to enhance validity and reduce single-perspective bias:

1. A post-lesson 5-point Likert-scale survey completed by all participants,
2. Verbatim transcripts of selected fragments of classroom dialogue from both lessons,
3. Students' written notes and multimodal 'trace maps',
4. The teacher-researcher's observation notes documenting questioning strategies, interpretative responses, and shifts in students' positions.

The data were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on dialogic interaction, including interpretive shifts, patterns of questioning, moments of disagreement, and the mediation of multiple meanings. Quantitative survey data were used to complement the qualitative analysis. The post-lesson survey included eight statements focused on students' perceptions of multimodal interpretation, dialogic interaction, interpretive confidence, and the use of the antithesis-based analytical framework. Responses ranged from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The survey was designed not to measure instructional effectiveness in a positivist sense, but to complement the qualitative analysis by identifying students' perceptions of their participation in dialogic meaning-making. The findings are presented as a narrative synthesis.

### *Ethics*

Participation in the study was voluntary, and anonymity of survey responses was ensured. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant review board prior to data collection.

## **Analytical framework**

### *Integrating the multimodal approach with dialogic pedagogical principles in teaching to interpret poetry*

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly expanded the possibilities for the creation, presentation, and interpretation of texts. Poetic texts in contemporary digital environments often feature visual, auditory, and contextual elements that shape how meaning is represented, perceived, and interpreted. As Alghadeer (2014a) notes, digital poetic texts may circulate across diverse cultural contexts, eliciting multiple and often divergent interpretations.

This shift has led to growing scholarly interest in multimodality, particularly within the framework of social semiotics (Gardner, 1993; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). From this perspective, meaning is not inherent in the text itself but emerges through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes and is shaped by the characteristics of both the sign-maker and the sign-user, as well as by broader contextual factors such as culture, ideology, experience, and social position. Meaning-making is therefore understood as a dynamic and situated process, in which each act of interpretation reconstitutes meaning anew.

Multimodality, from this perspective, refers to the interaction of verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural modes in communication. Its theoretical foundation emphasizes that meaning emerges not from isolated semiotic resources but from their interrelation within a broader communicative context. This perspective is particularly relevant for poetry interpretation, where implicit meanings, metaphorical structures, and symbolic associations frequently invite multiple interpretations and emotional responses.

In this study, multimodality is understood not as an inherent property of poetic texts themselves, but as a dialogic condition created through the introduction of visual, auditory, bilingual, and contextual variations surrounding the poem. These multimodal variations are treated as dialogic provocations that destabilize initially authoritative or stable interpretations and invite students to mediate competing meanings collaboratively.

At the same time, dialogic pedagogy offers a complementary theoretical framework for understanding how such interpretive plurality can be pedagogically realized. This perspective views dialogue not as a mere verbal exchange, but as a collaborative meaning-making process (Matusov, 2023; Roth, 2009). Drawing on Bakhtin (1981), meaning is inherently dialogic: every utterance responds to previous ones and anticipates future responses, making understanding an unfinished and relational process. This position is further developed by Freire (1978), who conceptualizes education as a practice of freedom grounded in dialogue, where knowledge is co-constructed rather than transmitted.

Similarly, building on Vygotsky's theory of socially mediated cognition, Wells (1999) conceptualizes the classroom as a community of inquiry in which meaning emerges through interaction rather than through the reproduction of predetermined knowledge. From this perspective, dialogic pedagogy directly challenges transmissive instructional models that position interpretation as singular, fixed, and teacher-authorized.

Research on classroom dialogue demonstrates an inherent pedagogical tension. While dialogicity presupposes shared responsibility and collective meaning-making (Alexander, 2006), classroom interaction often remains strongly shaped by teacher authority (Mercer, 2009). As Davis et al. (2017) observe, even apparently dialogic instruction may continue to discourage students from proposing alternative interpretations or questioning dominant readings. To address this contradiction, Ford and Forman (2015) introduce the concept of "limited intellectual authority", arguing that teaching should balance pedagogical guidance with openness to students' independent reasoning and interpretive agency.

This tension becomes especially visible in the teaching of poetry. The search for a single "correct" interpretation contradicts the nature of poetic texts, which are characterized by metaphorical density, implicit meanings, ambiguity, and interpretive openness. Within a dialogic pedagogical framework, poetry teaching is therefore reconceptualized as the creation of conditions in which multiple, often contradictory interpretations may coexist, interact, and transform one another through dialogue.

In multimodal learning environments, this dialogic interaction may become intensified because visual, auditory, bilingual, and contextual variations can destabilize previously taken-for-granted interpretations and generate interpretive disagreement. Meaning is constructed not solely through verbal language but through the interaction of multiple semiotic resources that shape how the poem is emotionally,

culturally, and cognitively perceived. Interpretation thus becomes increasingly layered and dynamic, emerging at the intersection of text, context, modality, and personal experience.

Of particular relevance to this study are the principles developed within the Ukrainian School of the Dialogue of Cultures, founded by educators in Kharkiv (Litovskii, Solomadin, Kurganov, Yampolskii). Conceptualizing dialogue as the interaction and mutual justification of different logics (Kurganov & Litovskii, 1983), this tradition introduced the notion of the *lesson-as-dialogue* (Solomadin & Kurganov, 1986). This framework organizes learning as shared meaning-making, with students actively contributing rather than passively receiving knowledge.

Applied to poetry teaching, this perspective reframes textual analysis as a dialogic process in which students engage not only with the poetic text itself but also with one another's interpretations and broader cultural associations. Interpretation extends beyond formal stylistic analysis to include negotiations of values, metaphors, emotions, memories, and personal experiences. Consequently, poetic understanding emerges not as the transmission of ready-made meanings but as collaborative interpretive work.

From this perspective, multimodality does not merely enrich engagement with the poem but alters the conditions under which dialogue and interpretation take place. As Hughes (2009) argues, a poem accompanied by visual elements may function as a new interpretive text, generating alternative possibilities for meaning-making. This idea aligns with the concept of multiliteracies (Cazden, 1996), which expands literacy to include diverse forms of meaning-making within digitally mediated and culturally heterogeneous environments. Research in this field (NATE, 2009; Templer, 2009; Bezemer et al., 2012; Xerri, 2012; Newfield et al., 2015; Wandera, 2016; Magnusson et al., 2019; Siry, 2020; Shah et al., 2023) highlights the importance of multimodal resources in fostering deeper interpretive engagement with literary texts.

Thus, this study examines multimodality not as an optional feature of poetry teaching but as a dialogic mechanism that generates meaning-making, interpretive movement, uncertainty, and mediation. Rather than reinforcing a single interpretation, multimodal variation creates conditions in which meanings may be questioned, reformulated, and collaboratively reconstructed. From this perspective, multimodality functions as a dialogic provocation that supports interpretive plurality and students' active participation in meaning-making.

### *A multimodality-oriented approach to poetry analysis: theoretical foundations*

A similar perspective is reflected in Stepanchenko's (1991) conception of text perception as a process connecting linguistic and mental structures within the reader's consciousness. Grounded in an anthropocentric and hermeneutic tradition (Humboldt, Husserl, Ricoeur), this approach emphasizes the active role of the reader in meaning-making and foregrounds interpretation as relational rather than fixed. This approach was supported and developed by Gonchar (2023/2025), who proposed a typology of poetic texts based on the ratio of projective and conceptual principles of the reflection of reality in a poetic text and the degree of explicitness of the evaluative paradigm. The scholar suggested that a poetic text's structural organization involves combining text units into paradigms, and that the primary emphasis is on the presence or absence of an explicit assessment as a kind of step-by-step procedure used to define the perception process. She introduced the category of 'antithesis' into a scientific circle; this category is considered a modification of the literary category of collision, a dialectical contradiction lying at the heart of any work's plot development (Gonchar, 2023).

Thus, assuming that the author of a text directs the reader's cognitive activity through the text itself, this analytical approach has been developed to help systematize the content of poetic texts, highlight key conceptual and projective elements, and deepen the reader's understanding of their impact. Thus, poetic

works of a mainly conceptual nature involve the realization of three types of ‘antitheses’: ANTITHESIS–CONFLICT, ANTITHESIS–ANTINOMY, and ANTITHESIS–MANIPULATION. According to this theory, the typology includes ANTITHESIS–ANTINOMY, characterized by unresolved tensions and interpretive openness; ANTITHESIS–CONFLICT, involving explicit evaluative opposition; ANTITHESIS–MANIPULATION, where linguistic means guide the reader’s evaluative perception; and two projective types: ANTITHESIS–SITUATION and ANTITHESIS–IMAGE. A distinguishing feature of ‘ANTITHESIS–SITUATION’ of verbal texts is the possibility of its implementation of a predominantly projective nature. The ‘ANTITHESIS–IMAGE’ type of verbal poetic texts can be identified as predominantly realized at the projective level. It differs from the previous type in its high potential for metaphorical visual embodiment. The ‘ANTITHESIS–IMAGE’ (symbol) assumes a metaphorical description, in which the definite symbols serve as triggers for emotional reflection. Consequently, in some poems, figurative language, encouraging the reader to react, may implicitly indicate the author’s inclination to one or another position, although it does not give an unambiguous interpretation.

However, within the framework of this study, this typology is used not as a rigid classificatory tool but as a dialogic heuristic framework that helps make contradictions and competing meanings visible and discussable. Rather than resolving ambiguity, the concept of ‘antithesis’ functions as a stimulus for dialogue, encouraging students to formulate, compare, justify, and mediate interpretations collaboratively.

From this perspective, the analytical model does not aim to establish a single authoritative reading of the poem. Instead, it creates pedagogical conditions for interpretive plurality and dialogic inquiry. In this sense, the concept of ‘antithesis’ aligns with the principles of dialogic pedagogy by positioning students as active participants in meaning-making and poetic interpretation as an open-ended dialogic process.

Within multimodal learning environments, such an approach becomes particularly productive because different semiotic modes may foreground different dimensions of the poem’s internal tensions. Visual, auditory, bilingual, and contextual variations can therefore shift interpretive attention, destabilize initially stable interpretations, generate discussion, and stimulate reconsideration of meaning. Interpretation consequently becomes not a movement toward closure, but an ongoing dialogic exploration shaped by interaction, perspective, and context.

## **Implications for dialogic education and lesson design**

The lessons proposed in this study were conceived not as isolated teaching activities, but as a coherent dialogic sequence aimed at transforming students’ engagement with poetic meaning. This design responded to a persistent pedagogical problem: students’ tendency to approach poetry as a task of identifying a single, authoritative interpretation — a tendency shaped by monologic teaching practices and reinforced in online learning environments.

In contrast, the instructional approach developed in this study sought to create conditions in which meaning could emerge as open, negotiable, and context-dependent. Across both lessons, the key principles of dialogic pedagogy were consistently enacted: the coexistence of multiple meanings, students’ active participation in meaning-making, and the collective exploration of multimodal elements as shared objects of inquiry. Analytical tools and multimodal resources were introduced not as mechanisms for achieving a “correct” interpretation, but as means of making interpretive tensions visible and discussable. The teacher’s role was not to finalize meaning, but to sustain dialogue and support the emergence of multiple voices.

Within this broader pedagogical framework, Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 functioned as sequential stages of a single dialogic process. Lesson 1 established a dialogic baseline by introducing students to an

analytical model of poetry interpretation while simultaneously moving them beyond the expectation of a single “correct” meaning. Lesson 2 functioned as the central analytical episode of the study, demonstrating how multimodal variation destabilized students’ initial interpretations and generated dialogic provocation, disagreement, and interpretive mediation.

### *Lesson Design 1: Opening Interpretation as a Dialogic Baseline*

The first lesson was designed to establish interpretive openness before introducing the analytical framework of antithesis. Before students engaged in lexical and stylistic analysis through close reading of the poem, it was necessary to create a dialogic space in which poetic meaning could be experienced as open, negotiable, and context-dependent rather than as a fixed answer.

Thus, the lesson emphasized the activation of collective memory, recognition, and shared comprehension, positioning students as co-participants in interpretation. In this respect, the design directly addressed RQ1, which examines how dialogic interaction stimulates students’ interpretive abilities.

Students encountered the poem in two linguistic versions — the original Ukrainian text and its English translation. This dual-language presentation was pedagogically significant because it immediately introduced the possibility that meaning may shift across linguistic and cultural contexts rather than remain stable.

#### **English translation** (by H. Gonczar)

I've packed it in my suitcase... another autumn.  
It became harder to carry. There is more 'was'.  
Another cobweb got tangled in my braids,  
Another furrow ploughed my forehead.

In a bouquet of 'will be' there are fewer flowers,  
In the morning prayers there are more words...  
I sincerely thank God for the years I have lived,  
For the happy moments and nights without dreams.

And from the horizon the sun brings hope —  
There will be springs and summers, and flowers in  
the garden.  
It's not over yet — just one more autumn...  
I packed it in my suitcase, and I will go further.

I packed it in my suitcase... another Autumn.

#### **Original Ukrainian text** (by O. Greiner Savich)

Спакувала в валізу іще одну осінь.  
Стало важче нести. Стало більше "було".  
Ще одна павутинка заплуталась в коси,  
Ще одна борозенка зорала чоло.

У букетику "буде" поменшало квітів ,  
У молитвах ранкових побільшало слів .  
Щиро дякую Богу за роки прожиті,  
За щасливі хвилини і ночі без снів.

А з-за обрію сонце надії виносить —  
Будуть вєсни і літо, і квіти в саду.  
Ще не фініш — я просто іще одну осінь  
Спакувала в валізу і далі піду.

Спакувала в валізу... іще одну Осінь.

After reading, students were invited to share their spontaneous impressions, emotional reactions, and initial hypotheses about the poem, responding to open-ended questions: *What ideas and images occurred to your mind after the first reading? Did anything surprise, excite, or upset you? What do you think this poem is about?* Importantly, students were explicitly encouraged to suspend the expectation of identifying a single authoritative interpretation.

The students’ responses revealed interpretive plurality from the outset:

- “A suitcase... For me, it feels heavy... and not only physically...”
- “Two words impressed me: a suitcase and another — it made me think about time and distance.”

- *"In Ukrainian the poem sounds softer, more intimate."*
- *"In English it feels like travelling to other countries..."*

Rather than being evaluated for correctness, these responses functioned as provisional interpretive positions that became objects of further dialogue. In this way, interpretation was established as an ongoing process rather than a finalized result.

Only after this initial stage of interpretive exploration were students introduced to the analytical framework of lexical and stylistic analysis within the typology of poetic texts (Gonchar, 2023). They were asked to identify lexical paradigms, determine the main idea and hyper-antithesis, define the type of antithesis, and indicate multimodal images. However, the teacher explicitly framed this model not as a tool for producing a single interpretation, but as a means of clarifying differences, ambiguities, and interpretive tensions.

During group work, students identified four dominant lexical paradigms: LYRICAL CHARACTER, NATURE, EVALUATION, and TIME. Yet the task did not produce a unified analytical scheme; instead, it exposed semantic ambiguity and interpretive divergence.

A key dialogic moment emerged around the word *'prayers'*:

- *"Do prayers belong to LYRICAL CHARACTER?"*
- *"I think it belongs to EVALUATION."*
- *"Perhaps both..."*

Rather than resolving this uncertainty, the teacher sustained it as a productive dialogue. Students justified their positions and recognized semantic overlap. Thus, analytical uncertainty became a resource for meaning-making rather than a problem to eliminate.

As the discussion developed, students identified key metaphors and interpreted them in relation to life experience, aging, and hope. They defined the central antithesis as AUTUMN–SPRING, associating it with the cycle of life, and tentatively approached the poem through the framework of ANTITHESIS–ANTINOMY.

However, this interpretation did not close the discussion. A particularly important shift occurred when students reflected on differences between the Ukrainian and English versions:

- *"In English, it feels like traveling."*
- *"In Ukrainian, suitcase reminds me of people leaving their city because of war..."*
- *"In English it feels colder, more visual..."*
- *"In Ukrainian it feels warmer... reminds me of my granny..."*

These responses demonstrate that meaning was shaped by language, memory, and lived experience. Interpretation thus became explicitly contextual and relational.

Therefore, Lesson 1 functioned as a dialogic baseline for the study: students were introduced to an analytical framework while simultaneously beginning to move beyond the expectation that the poem contains a single authoritative interpretation. Rather than treating analysis as movement toward interpretive closure, the lesson positioned poetic meaning as provisional, negotiable, and context-dependent, thereby preparing the dialogic conditions necessary for the multimodal destabilization of interpretation explored in Lesson 2.

*Lesson Design 2: Multimodal Variation as a Trigger for Dialogic Reinterpretation*

The second lesson functioned as the central analytical episode of the study and was designed to examine how multimodal variation reshapes students' interpretations of the same poetic text. While Lesson 1 established a dialogic baseline by introducing students to interpretive openness and moving them beyond the expectation of a single "correct" meaning, Lesson 2 intentionally destabilized these initial interpretations through altered semiotic conditions. Its primary pedagogical goal was to help students experience interpretation not as stable comprehension, but as a process continuously reshaped by context, modality, emotion, and dialogue.

In this respect, the lesson directly addressed RQ2 by exploring how multimodal elements function not merely as supplementary resources but as dialogic provocations that generate, challenge, and transform poetic meaning. The lesson was therefore constructed around a deliberate principle of interpretive destabilization: students revisited the same poem, but encountered it through different auditory, visual, and contextual frames capable of shifting their understanding of the text.

The students were divided into six groups, each working with the same poem under different interpretive conditions. Importantly, the differentiated tasks were structured through the typology of poetic texts introduced in Lesson 1, which provided a shared analytical language while still allowing interpretive plurality to emerge. The purpose of this design was not to produce six "correct" versions of the poem, but rather to expose the instability of interpretation itself and demonstrate how meaning changes when the same verbal text is encountered through different modes and contexts.

*The first group* listened to an artistic oral reading of the poem, accompanied by the rustling of autumn leaves and the barely audible joyful laughter of small children and their young parents.

*The second group* listened to the same reading against the background of sirens and the clatter of wheels.

*The third and fourth groups* interpreted the poem through different visual images.

*The third group:*  
illustration A



*The fourth group:*  
illustration B



*The fifth and sixth groups* received the poem supplemented with contextual information about the date of writing and brief information about the author, thus encouraging historically and biographically inflected interpretations. Consequently, *the fifth group* worked with the contextual note “September 13, 2019, @ Greiner,” while *the sixth group* received “November 07, 2023, @ Greiner Savich (Kherson, Ukraine).” These contextual additions became particularly significant because they implicitly positioned the poem within either a peaceful pre-war reality or the traumatic wartime experience associated with occupied territories.

The differentiated tasks unexpectedly generated radically contrasting interpretations of the same poem. Thus, multimodality in this lesson did not simply “illustrate” the text; rather, it activated a process of dialogic reinterpretation in which students confronted the contextual dependency of their own earlier assumptions. The lesson therefore transformed interpretation into an explicit object of inquiry.

For analytical clarity, the students’ responses may be grouped into three broader interpretive constellations.

*The first constellation* included the responses of *the first, fourth, and fifth groups*. These interpretations preserved and strengthened the optimistic and philosophical dimensions initially identified during Lesson 1.

After listening to the poem accompanied by autumn leaves and children’s laughter, the participants of *the first group* emphasized warmth, continuity, and gratitude associated with the transience of life. Their comments included:

- “With children’s laughter, the poem feels calm and warm...”
- “It seems thankful, like life goes on naturally...”
- “I can imagine my grandmother when we used to go to the park...”
- “It brings warm memories about my granddad...”

The auditory background significantly influenced the students’ interpretation of lexical paradigms. While students still identified the four dominant paradigms — LYRICAL CHARACTER, NATURE, TIME, and EVALUATION — the composition of EVALUATION shifted noticeably. Lexical units such as *flowers* and *nights without dreams* acquired distinctly positive connotations associated with family continuity, peaceful aging, and emotional security.

As a result, the central idea of the poem was reformulated not simply as a reflection on aging, but as a hope for continuity and future peace. The students’ dialogue demonstrated how auditory framing redirected the dominant antithesis from AUTUMN–SPRING toward broader evaluative oppositions such as PAST–FUTURE and HAPPY CHILDHOOD–HIGH HOPE:

- “My grandparents have high hopes for me...”
- “It brings hope that peaceful life will come true...”
- “Children are our future...”

This shift was analytically significant because it demonstrated that multimodal variation did not merely reinforce the original interpretation but reorganized the poem’s central semantic opposition.

Similar tendencies emerged in *the fourth and fifth groups*. *The fourth group*, working with a visual image dominated by blue, white, and yellow colors, interpreted the poem as philosophical and hopeful. The

students associated the blue background with wisdom, reliability, and belief in the future, while flowers symbolized the possibility of “filling one’s life suitcase” with personally meaningful experiences.

*The fifth group*, influenced by the pre-war date “September 13, 2019”, interpreted the poem within a peaceful socio-historical context. The students emphasized the inevitability of aging alongside the continuing possibility of happiness, defining the poem as an example of ANTITHESIS–ANTINOMY. Here, multimodal contextualization stabilized the interpretation around existential rather than traumatic meanings.

*The second interpretive constellation* included *the second and sixth groups*, whose interpretations shifted dramatically toward wartime experience, displacement, and existential catastrophe.

*The second group* listened to the poem against the background of sirens and mechanical sounds associated with evacuation and war. Under these conditions, lexical units that previously carried positive evaluative meanings became reinterpreted through tension and contradiction. Words such as *hope*, *flowers*, and *happy* no longer functioned as straightforwardly optimistic images, but acquired tragic and almost oxymoronic meanings.

The students explained:

- “*The positive words sound tragic with the sirens...*”
- “*It feels like gratitude for simply staying alive...*”
- “*Hope sounds painful here...*”

The auditory mode thus transformed the emotional architecture of the poem. The students noted that the central antithesis shifted from AUTUMN–SPRING toward PAST–FUTURE, understood as a catastrophic rupture between peaceful life and wartime reality.

Importantly, the students themselves explicitly recognized the role of multimodal contextuality in shaping interpretation. Several participants admitted that before the lesson, they had underestimated how strongly sound and context could influence poetic meaning. Accordingly, the lesson fostered not only interpretive plurality but also metacognitive awareness of interpretation.

A similar reinterpreting movement emerged in *the sixth group*, which received wartime contextual information about the author from Kherson. Students immediately associated the lexeme *suitcase* with forced displacement, fear, and exile:

- “*It feels like leaving home forever...*”
- “*It becomes a choice between your own home and a foreign place...*”

Consequently, the central antithesis evolved further into OWN–ALIEN and WAR-TORN HOME–SAFE ABROAD. Here, contextual framing transformed the poem from philosophical reflection into a deeply socio-historical and emotionally charged narrative connected with wartime displacement.

However, the most intensive dialogic moment of the lesson emerged in *the third group*, which worked with the image of a suitcase beside a pumpkin near a passing train. Unlike the other groups, this visual stimulus generated explicit disagreement within the group itself, producing a sustained dialogic struggle over meaning.

Some students interpreted the pumpkin symbolically as warmth, continuity, harvest, and hope. For them, the poem remained fundamentally optimistic and existential:

- *“The pumpkin symbolizes happy life and hope...”*
- *“The poem is about continuation...”*

At the same time, other students associated the pumpkin and railway imagery with evacuation, war, and painful displacement:

- *“For my family, a pumpkin near a suitcase means evacuation...”*
- *“It means uncertainty and leaving home...”*
- *“I do want to return home...”*

The disagreement intensified because the same visual symbol activated radically different personal and cultural associations. One student even jokingly recalled the Ukrainian symbolic association of pumpkin with rejection in marriage, while others connected it with family cooking traditions or wartime migration. Consequently, the image became a dialogic trigger through which personal memory, cultural symbolism, and wartime experience collided.

This moment became particularly important analytically because the students did not simply produce alternative interpretations; they openly mediated, challenged, and revised the poem’s central antithesis itself. Some participants reformulated it as WAR-TORN HOME–SAFE ABROAD, while others continued to defend more hopeful readings grounded in continuity and survival.

Crucially, these interpretive shifts did not emerge through teacher explanation. They arose dialogically through disagreement, questioning, and collective mediation:

- *“So... is the poem tragic or optimistic?”*
- *“Is it about hope or loss?”*
- *“Maybe both...”*
- *“Maybe it depends on what reality you hear behind the words...”*

These exchanges demonstrate the central finding of the lesson: multimodal variation functioned not as decorative enrichment but as dialogic provocation capable of destabilizing initial interpretations and generating new interpretive possibilities.

The teacher’s role throughout the lesson was therefore not to resolve disagreement or guide students toward a preferred interpretation, but to sustain the dialogic space in which conflicting meanings could coexist and develop. Interpretive disagreement was treated not as a pedagogical problem, but as evidence of genuine dialogic engagement.

As homework, the students were invited to create “trace maps” of the poem, selecting images, vocal emphases, colors, quotations, and personal associations that reflected their individual interpretations. These tasks extended the dialogic process beyond the classroom by encouraging students to visualize and externalize their evolving meaning-making trajectories.

Thus, Lesson 2 demonstrates that multimodal variation does not simply support interpretation but actively transforms it. By placing students in contrasting semiotic environments, the lesson destabilized authoritative readings and stimulated dialogic reinterpretation. Students became not passive recipients of poetic meaning but active co-authors mediating competing interpretations through dialogue. The students became increasingly aware of the contextual dependency of meaning and demonstrated a willingness to revisit initial assumptions in response to other perspectives. Importantly, interpretive disagreements were

neither evaluated nor hierarchized; they were sustained as intellectually and emotionally meaningful positions within the dialogue.

From the perspective of dialogic pedagogy, this is the central finding of the lesson. The sounds of sirens and laughter, the visualization of the keyword *suitcase*, and the addition of biographical or historical information did not simply deepen comprehension in a linear sense. They transformed the conditions of understanding itself, making students not passive readers but active co-authors of the poem's meaning and of its principal antithesis. In this way, Lesson 2 shows how multimodality can function as a dialogic provocation that fosters conceptual flexibility, empathy, and interpretive responsibility. Therefore, this lesson directly addresses RQ2.

Overall, the two lessons demonstrate a clear progression. Lesson 1 established interpretive openness, while Lesson 2 intensified it through multimodal disruption. Importantly, multimodality did not clarify meaning — it destabilized and reoriented it, making interpretation a process of mediation rather than discovery.

Hence, the lessons provide an empirical basis for understanding multimodality as a dialogic provocation, which will be further discussed in the following section.

## Discussion

Previous studies on multimodality in education emphasize that engaging learners with poetic meaning through multiple modes may enhance involvement, interpretation, and literacy development (NATE, 2009; Templer, 2009; Alghadeer, 2014b; Newfield et al., 2015; Wandera, 2016; Magnusson et al., 2019; Xerri, 2012). The findings of the present study support this view but refine it in an important way. In the analyzed lessons, multimodality did not simply make the poem more accessible or engaging. Rather, it functioned as a dialogic provocation: it destabilized the originally taken-for-granted meanings and created conditions for interpretive comparison, hesitation, disagreement, and shared meaning-making.

This finding becomes especially clear when the two lessons are considered as a dialogic sequence. Lesson 1 established a dialogic baseline: students were introduced to an analytical model while being invited to move beyond the expectation of a single “correct” interpretation. Their initial responses already revealed plurality, but this plurality became pedagogically meaningful because it was not evaluated or closed by the teacher. Instead, it was treated as a starting point for further inquiry. Lesson 2 then became the central analytical episode of the study, showing how multimodal variation — auditory, visual, and contextual — destabilized the initial interpretation and generated new interpretive possibilities.

From the perspective of dialogic pedagogy, this movement is theoretically significant. It resonates with Bakhtin's understanding of meaning as relational and non-finalizable: meaning does not exist as a fixed entity inside the text, but emerges in response to other voices, contexts, and perspectives. It also corresponds to Matusov's formulation of dialogic rights, including the right to be taken seriously, the right to introduce one's own concerns, and the right to disagree or remain in disagreement (Matusov, 2009, 2023). The classroom episodes analyzed in this study show these rights in practice. Students' interpretations were not assessed according to correctness, and disagreements were not resolved through teacher authority. Instead, competing readings were sustained as meaningful dialogic positions requiring justification, response, and reflection.

The qualitative analysis shows that multimodal variation did not lead students toward a more unified interpretation. On the contrary, it generated interpretive movement. The same poem was read differently when accompanied by sounds of children's laughter, sirens, visual images, or contextual information about

the author and the date of writing. Lexical units associated with hope, gratitude, or continuity were reinterpreted under wartime auditory and contextual conditions as signs of survival, loss, displacement, or fragile endurance. Thus, multimodality did not expand meaning in a linear way; it introduced tension that made dialogue necessary.

The clearest example of this process appeared in the discussion generated by the visual image of the suitcase, pumpkin, and train. The same image activated divergent meanings: for some students, the pumpkin evoked warmth, home, continuity, and family memory; for others, placed beside a suitcase and railway tracks, it became associated with evacuation, displacement, and wartime uncertainty. This disagreement was not a failure of understanding. It became the central mechanism through which students tested the poem's possible meanings and reconsidered its dominant antithesis. Accordingly, disagreement functioned as a form of dialogic accountability: students were not merely expressing opinions, but positioning their interpretations in relation to others.

The survey data complement this interpretation. A large majority of students, 87.5% (rated 4–5), agreed that multimodal versions of the poem helped them understand or rethink its meaning. These data should not be interpreted as indicators of instructional efficiency in a transmissive sense. Rather, they point to students' participation in a process of dialogically mediated meaning-making, where understanding remained open, revisable, and responsive to multiple perspectives.

Similarly, 79.2% of participants (rated 4–5) agreed that considering alternative interpretations made them revise or expand their own understanding. This result supports the qualitative finding that dialogue functioned as the primary mechanism through which poetic meaning emerged. The students revised their interpretations not because the teacher supplied a better answer, but because other voices, semiotic modes, and contextual frames made their initial assumptions questionable.

The statement concerning movement from personal interpretation toward shared understanding also received full agreement from participants. In the revised two-lesson design, this result is understood in relation to students' work with different modes, interpretive conditions, and multimodal trace maps. These activities required students not only to interpret the poem individually but also to make their interpretations visible, shareable, and open to others' responses. Importantly, "*shared understanding*" should not be confused with consensus. It refers instead to a common dialogic space in which students articulated, compared, challenged, and positioned meanings in relation to alternative perspectives.

The statement "*I feel confident expressing my interpretations through multimodal means*" received strong support, with 91.7% of participants selecting the highest rating. This suggests a stronger willingness to contribute personal interpretations to a shared dialogic space. Interpretation thus became not only a cognitive task, but also an ethical act of response — to the poem, to others, and to the realities that students brought into the classroom.

Although most students reported active participation in discussions, some also indicated that applying the proposed analytical typology was initially difficult. This difficulty should not be treated as a weakness of the lesson design. From a dialogic perspective, it reflects the challenge of entering an interpretive space where meaning is not predetermined. The ambiguity generated by the task prompted students to draw on prior knowledge, ask additional questions, and engage more deeply with the poem and with one another. Collaborative dialogue did not remove uncertainty immediately; rather, it transformed uncertainty into a productive condition for meaning-making.

The role of antithesis typology is important in this regard. The findings suggest that its pedagogical value lies not in directing students toward final classification, but in helping them to make tensions within

the poem visible and discussable. In response to the statement “*The typology of ANTITHESES helped me analyze the poem, while its opposing poles helped me engage in dialogue to develop shared interpretation with my classmates,*” 87.5% of participants selected the highest rating. This suggests that the typology functioned as a practical dialogic heuristic: it helped students identify, compare, and mediate competing meanings without prematurely closing interpretation.

Finally, 100% of participants fully agreed with the statement “*I shifted from searching for a single ‘correct’ interpretation to exploring multiple interpretations.*” This is perhaps the most important survey finding, as it directly addresses the central research problem of the study. It indicates a shift away from authoritative reading practices toward interpretive plurality, which lies at the heart of dialogic pedagogy.

The wartime context of the study further deepens the significance of these findings. Students’ interpretations were shaped by lived experiences of displacement, uncertainty, and disrupted schooling. Multimodal stimuli did not impose these meanings from outside; rather, they activated experiential frames already present in students’ interpretive repertoires. The classroom, therefore, became a space where literary interpretation intersected with lived reality. Dialogic pedagogy made it possible for these experiences to enter the discussion as legitimate contributions to meaning-making, rather than as subjective deviations from an authoritative reading.

Taken together, the findings suggest that multimodality and dialogic pedagogy are not simply compatible but mutually reinforcing. Multimodality introduces variability, tension, and competing frames of interpretation, while dialogic pedagogy provides the conditions under which these tensions become intellectually and pedagogically productive. Poetry teaching, in this framework, moves beyond the transmission of a fixed meaning and becomes the organization of a dialogic encounter in which meanings remain open, situated, and contestable. Uncertainty and disagreement are therefore not obstacles to understanding, but among its most important resources.

## Conclusion

This study explored how a multimodal approach to poetry teaching can be integrated within a dialogic pedagogical framework and how such integration shapes students’ meaning-making under conditions of educational disruption. The findings suggest that multimodality and dialogue should not be understood as separate instructional components, but as interdependent conditions of interpretive inquiry. While multimodal variation foregrounded interpretive uncertainty, contextual plurality, and competing perspectives, dialogic pedagogy created the conditions under which these tensions could become educationally productive.

Across the two-lesson sequence, students moved from initial individually grounded responses toward dialogically mediated interpretations shaped by auditory, visual, bilingual, and contextual variation. Lesson 1 functioned as a dialogic baseline in which students began to move beyond the expectation of a single “correct” interpretation, while Lesson 2 demonstrated how multimodal variation destabilized earlier readings and generated reinterpretation, disagreement, and comparative meaning-making. In this process, multimodal elements did not merely enrich the poem or clarify its meaning. Rather, they reoriented interpretive attention, challenged previously taken-for-granted assumptions, and made the contextual contingency of understanding visible.

The study also demonstrates that the proposed antithesis-based framework is compatible with the principles of dialogic pedagogy when used not as a classificatory mechanism but as an interpretive heuristic framework. Its pedagogical value lies in helping students identify, articulate, compare, and negotiate

tensions within the text without reducing them to a single authoritative interpretation. In this sense, antithesis supports not interpretive closure, but dialogic movement and interpretive plurality.

One of the central contributions of the study lies in showing that uncertainty, hesitation, and disagreement should not be treated as pedagogical shortcomings. On the contrary, they constitute essential dialogic resources. The findings indicate that moments of ambiguity and interpretive tension encouraged students to justify their positions, reconsider assumptions, engage with alternative perspectives, and participate more actively in collaborative inquiry. Meaning, therefore, emerged not through the reproduction of fixed knowledge, but through dialogue, response, and mediation.

The findings are particularly significant in relation to the wartime educational context in which the study was conducted. Under conditions of displacement, online learning, air raid alerts, and ongoing social instability, dialogic pedagogy became more than a classroom methodology. It functioned as a way of sustaining interpretive agency, relational engagement, and educational connectedness. For students living through war, opportunities for dialogue and meaningful communication acquire special importance, as they provide not only cognitive engagement but also a space for expression, recognition, and shared meaning-making. In such conditions, multimodality intensified this process by activating different experiential and emotional frames already present in students' lived realities.

The study is limited by its relatively small scale, short duration, and focus on a single classroom in a specific educational context. Future research may extend this inquiry to other literary genres, age groups, and learning environments, as well as examine more longitudinally how dialogic competence develops in multimodal educational settings.

Nevertheless, the study suggests that integrating multimodality within dialogic pedagogy opens productive possibilities for teaching poetry in contemporary education. Within this framework, poetry learning moves beyond the transmission of a stable meaning and becomes a shared, open-ended process of inquiry in which interpretation remains contextual, contestable, and educationally meaningful.

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