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СПОСІБ ЧИТАННЯ ЯК КОГНІТИВНА ЗМІННА В ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЇ ПОЕЗІЇ

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READING MODE AS A COGNITIVE VARIABLE IN POETIC INTERPRETATION

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У дослідженні вивчаються відмінності між читанням поезії мовчки і вголос, при цьому основна увага приділяється їхньому впливу на емоційну залученість, інтерпретацію та сприйняття поетичної мови. Дослідження ґрунтується на теоретичних підходах когнітивної поетики, лінгвістики та реценсивної естетики, які розглядають читання як активний і динамічний процес, що формується як під впливом текстуальних особливостей, так і факторів, пов'язаних із читачем. Емпірична частина дослідження базується на експерименті з використанням анкети, в якому взяли участь 30 осіб. Учасників було розділено на дві групи: групу, яка читала вірш мовчки, та групу, яка читала вголос. Учасникам було запропоновано прочитати один і той самий поетичний текст та заповнити структуровану анкету за шкалою Лайкерта, розроблену для оцінки їхніх емоційних реакцій, естетичних оцінок, когнітивних процесів та

інтерпретаційних відповідей. Результати показують, що спосіб читання впливає на сприйняття поезії читачем. Група, яка читала вголос, демонструвала стабільно вищі показники з точки зору емоційної інтенсивності та естетичної оцінки, що свідчить про те, що явне усвідомлення ритму, рими та інтонації посилює афективний вимір поетичного сприйняття. Водночас результати дослідження показують високий рівень згоди щодо інтерпретації головної теми вірша в обох групах, що підкреслює, що спосіб читання впливає на емоційну залученість, але не на розуміння основного змісту тексту. Дослідження робить внесок у сферу емпіричних літературознавчих досліджень та когнітивної поетики, підкреслюючи роль умов читання у формуванні сприйняття тексту. Результати можуть бути актуальними для подальших досліджень мультимодальних процесів читання та взаємодії між звуком, значенням і реакцією читачів.

Ключові слова: читання поезії, мовчазне читання, читання вголос, когнітивна поетика, теорія реакції читача, емоційна залученість, просодія, літературна інтерпретація

The study investigates the differences between reading and poetry silently and aloud, focusing on their influence on emotional engagement, interpretation, and perception of poetic language. The study is based on the theoretical approaches of cognitive poetics, linguistics, and reader's response criticism, which consider reading as an active and dynamic process that is shaped by both textual features and reader-related factors. The empirical part of the study is based on a questionnaire-based experiment, in which 30 participants took part. The participants were divided into two groups: the group which was reading the poem silently and the group which was reading aloud. Participants were asked to read the same poetic text and complete a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, designed to evaluate their emotional reactions, aesthetic evaluations, cognitive processing, and interpretive responses. The results show

that written mode influences the reader's perception of poetry. The reading aloud group demonstrated consistently higher scores from the point of view of emotional intensity and aesthetic evaluation, which claims explicit awareness of rhythm, rhyme and intonation enhances the affective dimension of poetic perception. At the same time, the results of the study show the high level of agreement in the interpretation of the poem's central theme across both groups, which highlights that the reading mode influences emotional engagement but not the main text comprehension. The study contributes to the field of empirical literary studies and cognitive poetics, highlighting the role of reading conditions in the formation of the perception of text. The results can be relevant for further research into multimodal reading processes and the interaction between sound, meaning and readers response.

Key words: *poetry reading, silent reading, reading aloud, cognitive poetics, reader-response theory, emotional engagement, prosody, literary interpretation*

Introduction: In modern literary studies, more attention is paid not only to textual structures as such but also to empirical and cognitive interaction between the reader and literary works. Recent developments in psychopoetics and empirical literary studies (van Peer & Chesnokova, 2022) highlight that literal reading includes complex psychological processes that extend beyond semantic comprehension and include effective, embodied, and perceptual reaction responses. From this point of view, reading is perceived as a multidimensional activity which integrates memory, attention, mechanisms of language processing and emotional reactions. Poetry is especially important in this regard, since its foregrounded structures, including rhythmical organisation, phonetic patterning, and semantic density, intensify the reader's cognitive and empirical involvement in comparison with most prose texts.

Another crucial aspect for reading silently is the role of inner speech, which in modern philosophy and cognitive science is conceptualised as a separate form of verbal recognition. According to Gregory & Langland-Hassan (2020), inner speech is not just a

passive echo of spoken language, but a functional cognitive process, which supports some regulation, planning and integration of the language meaning during reading. This form of inner verbalisation varies from concise symbolic notations to fully articulated inner monologue and plays an important role in how readers mentally interact with textual content to transform it.

This study is triggered by the growing interest in the cognitive mechanisms underlying reading processes and the need to specify how these mechanisms function across different reading modes. In the context of the present study, particular attention is given to the mode of reading – silent or aloud – as a factor that may shape the comprehension of structurally dense literary texts. Poetic discourse, because of its higher rhythmic organisation, semantic compression, and foregrounded sound patterns, is a particularly productive branch for studying cognitive load and affective engagement.

This article looks at the process of reading a poetic text as a form of cognitive activity of the reader. Attention is paid to the cognitive features of poetry comprehension, depending on the mode of reading – silently or aloud, in particular, differences in the involvement of working memory, attention and inner speech. Such differentiation allows one to focus on the text as such and not on the ways of its cognitive processing in different reading conditions.

We hypothesise that reading poetry aloud activates additional cognitive resources which are related to phonological processing and articulatory control. Engaging these processes increases general cognitive load and limits interpretation speed, which may lead to more consistent and structurally controlled comprehension. At the same time, since cognitive processing and emotional reaction are interrelated components of literary experience, changes in processing dynamics are likely to influence effective engagement. In contrast, silent reading allows greater flexibility in internal language and interpretation pace, which potentially allows deeper associative processing and more individualised emotional and semantic reaction.

Theoretical background: Modern approaches within psychopoetics conceptualise literary reading as an experience that emerges as a result of interaction between textual structure, cognitive processing and emotional engagement (van Peer & Chesnokova, 2025). Rather than narrowing reading to the decoding models or abstract comprehension, this structure highlights the role of prominent linguistic models in the formation of readers' mental and affective responses. Empirical research shows that structurally complicated poetic texts may create increased cognitive effort while simultaneously enhancing appreciation and emotional involvement. From this point of view, reading is perceived as a dynamic process in which formal text features guide attention, activate interpretation operations and contribute to the experimental dimension of meaning construction. Such an approach provides a productive theoretical basis for studying how variation of reading modes may influence both cognitive load and affective response.

This cognitive perspective opposes the reading as the active understanding of the text to the simple symbol scanning, highlighting that it includes the classification of language information, syntactic and semantic integration, and the ability to make inferences, in other words, to deduce meaning not only from obvious statements but also from the context of the text. In this sense, reading is a dynamic cognitive activity which unfolds over time and constantly adapts to the context and the structure of the text.

One of the basic concepts that explains the nature of the reading is the “Simple View of Reading” model (Gough, 1990), according to which $\text{reading} = \text{decoding} \times \text{language comprehension}$. In this formula, decoding is defined as the ability to transform written words into their sound and language equivalents (reading words), while language comprehension is defined as the ability to recognise their meaning and context. It's crucial that decoding should be adequate and accurate, but without a deep understanding of the meaning of this language, reading cannot be complete and vice versa.

Contemporary cognitive poetics, as claimed by van Peer and Chesnokova (2023), conceptualises literary reading as an experiential process in which textual form

systematically interacts with cognitive and affective systems of the reader. Poetic discourse is characterised by foregrounding, rhythmic organisation and pattern sound structures that deliberately attract attention and restructure processing dynamics, thereby intensifying both interpretative activity and emotional response. Within this framework, meaning is treated not as a fixed property of the text but as an emergent construct that results from the reader's active engagement with formal features that guide perception, memory activation and evaluated judgement. Such an approach allows poetry to be viewed as an area where cognitive effort and aesthetic experience are intertwined: deviations, repetition and prosodic regularities increase processing demands while simultaneously deepening effective involvement. Consequently, investigating different modes of reading of the poetry can be theoretically grounded in the assumption that variations in perceptual and articular engagement can reorganise the balance between cognitive load and emotional engagement.

The semantic component of working memory has a bigger influence on text comprehension than the phonological retention of the separate components. For example, a study by Nouwens et al. (2017) found that semantic retention is a better predictor of the text than phonological retention and that semantic working memory can partially explain individual differences in the extent of text comprehension. This highlights the idea that deep text comprehension, especially in the more complicated literary forms such as poetry, depends not only on the auditory processing but also vastly on the ability to retain and manipulate semantic connections.

Reading aloud, unlike reading silently to oneself, activates the phonological loop and the combination with articulatory processes and auditory feedback. This means that the reader simultaneously performs a receptive and productive speech task, which increases cognitive load and changes the nature of the text processing. Reading silently, conversely, is based on the inner phonological representation without external articulation, which allows controlling the reading pace and interpretive strategies more flexibly. As follows, the model of working memory provides theoretical tools for the

explanation of differences in the cognitive experience of the reader, depending on the reading mode.

One of the key aspects which emerges while reading dramatic or direct speech parts of the text is mental phonological simulation – imaginary “penetration” of the sound form of speech into the reader’s cognitive space, even in the absence of oral articulation. This phenomenon is well shown in the experimental research (Yao, 2021), where it is demonstrated that while silent reading of direct speech, the brain activates a more detailed phonological representation than while reading indirect speech. This is demonstrated through the effect of the so-called “visual tongue twister”, which perplexes the processing of direct speech precisely in the silent mode – the effect disappears when switching into oral reading, which indicates the specific participation of phonological representations in the silent reading mode.

These differences may also be relevant when considering the reading of poetry. Poetic texts often contain rhythmic structures, prosody, sound combinations, and phonetic patterns that can differently affect the reader depending on the mode of reading. Rhythm and sound in poetry play not only an aesthetic role but also activate phonological representations, which can facilitate a deeper semantic and emotional experience of the text when reading orally, whereas when reading silently, the reader can pay attention to the inner speech and individual cognitive strategic processes which shape the impression about the text for the person.

Another important phenomenon is inner speech – a form of self-talk which emerges in your consciousness while reading or thinking. Inner speech functions as a cognitive tool which facilitates attention, self-regulation, memory, and planning. Fernyhough & Borghi (2023) demonstrate that inner speech is actively engaged during reading silently and can be divided into phenomenological subtypes, for example, monologic or dialogic inner speech, that may have different effects on text processing, attention and meaning comprehension. Inner speech develops as a result of the internalisation of outer speech, transforming external dialect with other people into

internal speech processes that support cognitive functions, including reading. In the context of reading poetry, inner speech holds special significance, since poetic forms often appeal to internal rhythm, context, and resonance of the voice, which can activate different subtypes of inner speech.

Importantly, cognitive load during reading depends on the characteristics of the text and reading mode. Cognitive load describes the number of mental resources required for text processing, including information retention, meaning integration and attention regulation. This term comes from cognitive psychology and is actively used to explain why reading of the complicated text, especially poetry, can require more resources than simple decoding and how different modes of reading change the allocation of these resources.

In addition, Nouwens et al. (2017) hold that semantic processing may play a key role in shaping text comprehension. For instance, semantic components of the working memory can explain individual differences in reading better than phonological components, since semantic information is closer to the construction of meaning and interpretation of the text. In poetry reading, this is particularly relevant, since poetic text often contains metaphors, symbols and imagery that require a high level of semantic integration.

In sum, reading is a complicated cognitive process which interacts with the structure of memory, speech, attention, and imagination. The distinction of reading modes – aloud or silently – has both theoretical and practical significance, as it allows us to understand which mechanisms are more accurately activated during different forms of reading practice and how this is reflected in the perception of literary forms, in particular poetic ones.

Research Methods: The empirical part of this study was designed to examine how different modes of reading poetry influence the emotional engagement of the reader, interpretative strategies, and perception of sound patterns. In the reported experiment, two modes of reading were compared: silent reading and reading aloud, which allowed

analysis of whether the presence of external prosody affects the perception of poetic language.

In this experiment, 30 participants took part. They were randomly divided into two balanced groups: Group 1 (15 participants) for the silent reading mode and Group 2 (15 participants) for the reading-aloud mode. All participants were students with at least a B2 level of English proficiency, which ensured their ability to understand the poem without a translation and focus on its stylistic and emotional undercurrents. None of the participants had read this poem before, nor had they conducted a detailed academic analysis of the poem.

The independent variable was the mode of reading, silent or aloud, while the dependent variables were emotional response, perception of imagery, interpretative understanding, and awareness of phonetic and rhythmic features.

The material of the study was “Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe. We opted for this poem because of its easily recognisable reading structure, rhyme scheme, and melodic organisation of sounds, which make it especially suitable for studying the influence of phonetic and prosodic elements on readers’ perception. Additionally, the poem contains a strong emotional narrative, allowing us to study how different modes of reading affect emotional interpretation.

To collect the empirical data, a structured questionnaire was developed specifically for this study (see Appendix). The questionnaire consisted of five sections and included items on a five-point Likert scale as well open-ended questions. This hybrid design allowed us to both collect quantitative data and obtain qualitative insights into participant interpretations.

Section A, “Emotional Engagement”, focused on immediate emotional responses to the poem and the intensity of the reader's experience. Section B, “Perception of Poetic Form and Complexity”, looked into the aesthetic evaluation of participants and interpretative judgements. Section C, “Cognitive Load”, examined cognitive processing and imagery, particularly how vividly readers imagine the scenes described in the poem,

and to what extent they perceive rhythm and sound patterns. Section D, “Text Comprehension”, included open-ended questions that explored participants' interpretations of the poem's themes, emotional tone, and narrative events. Finally, section E, “Reading Experience”, evaluated the general impression of the reading, including the perceived impact of reading mode on comprehension and emotional engagement.

Results: Results from section A, “Emotional Engagement”, demonstrate a noticeable difference between the two modes of reading: in Group 1, which was reading the poem silently, responses to the Likert-scale items measuring emotional intensity show that 57% of participants have chosen value 4, while 29% have chosen value 5, which indicates a generally strong emotional reaction to the poem. However, some participants showed moderate responses to all the statements, for example, in the item related to emotional perception, 57% have chosen value 3, which suggests a more neutral assessment of emotional intensity.

In contrast, the reading aloud group demonstrated stronger emotional engagement. Ratings on the Likert scale show that 54% of participants chose value 4, while 46% have chosen value 5, implying that 100% of participants reported high emotional intensity. This highlights that reading a poem aloud intensifies emotional experience, likely due to a clear awareness of rhythm, rhyme, and intonation.

In section B, “Perception of Poetic Form and Complexity”, the results show that both groups perceived the poem as aesthetically expressive, but the reading aloud group demonstrated consistently higher ratings. For example, in the first statement, “The rhythm of the poem was noticeable to me”, 64% of participants of the silent reading group chose values 4 and 5, while in the reading aloud group, this percentage rose to 86%.

Similarly, in the statement about sound patterns prominence, most of the participants in the reading aloud group chose value 4 (64%), indicating significant

agreement on the expressive qualities of the poem. These results suggest that prosodic realisation during reading aloud can improve aesthetic perception.

The results of section C, “Cognitive Load”, reveal differences in cognitive load between the two groups: in the silent reading group, most of the answers were centred around value 3, which implies a moderate level of imagery and comprehension. For example, in the statement claiming that the poem required considerable mental effort, 64% of participants chose value 3, indicating that imagery was perceived as clear but not exceptionally vivid. In comparison, the reading aloud group gave more varied responses with the higher percentage of extreme values (1 and 5). Such a distribution suggests that reading aloud can divide cognitive attention between semantic interpretation and phonetic production, which can influence how readers process imagery and meaning.

Open-ended questions showed a high level of agreement between the two groups about the central theme of the poem. In both groups, 86% of participants interpreted the poem as a tragic story of love about a young woman who dies and a man who continues to love her after her death.

The thematic interpretation also showed significant overlap. In the silent reading group, the most common answers were eternal love (36%) and love after death (29%). In the reading aloud group, the dominant topic was love after death (43%) and then just love (21%).

When participants were asked about the emotional tone of the poem, the most frequent answers in both groups were eternal love, grief, devotion, and melancholy. These results indicate that the main thematic interpretation of the poem remained stable regardless of the reading mode, suggesting that the reading mode influences emotional intensity, but not the understanding of the narrative.

In the final section of the questionnaire, “Reading Experience”, the general assessment was examined. In the reading aloud group, answers were relatively balanced, with the most responses centred around values 3 and 4. Conversely, the reading aloud group demonstrated a stronger positive assessment in the option “I was aware of my

voice (or inner voice) while reading”: 57% chose value 5, while 29% chose value 4, implying a more intense and memorable reading experience.

The comparison of the two groups was based on descriptive analysis of Likert-scale responses. The reading aloud group consistently demonstrated slightly higher scores on statements related to emotional intensity and aesthetic perception, while the reading silently group demonstrated a more moderate response. This pattern suggests that reading aloud intensifies emotional and sensory perception of poetry, while reading silently allows readers to focus more on semantic interpretation and cognitive processing.

Conclusions and discussion: The reported study examined the differences between reading poetry silently and aloud as well as how these two modes of reading influence emotional engagement, interpretation, and readers' response. The results of the experiment demonstrate that reading mode significantly affects emotional perception of the poem and the depth of interpretation by the reader. Results support the theoretical assumptions of a reader response criticism, according to which meaning arises through the interaction between the reader and the text and is not fixed in the text itself. Readers actively take part in the meaning creation, and that's why different reading conditions can lead to different interpretative results.

Data analysis revealed several clear trends in the reading responses of participants. Group 1, which was reading the poem silently, tended to show more moderate scores on the Likert scale in several sections, especially in questions connected with the emotional intensity and auditory perception. In contrast, Group 2, which was reading the poem aloud, demonstrated a higher score of answers of strong agreement, particularly in questions which are related to emotional engagement and the perceived atmosphere of the poem. This suggests that vocalisation can enhance emotional immersion and increase the immediacy of the reading experience. Similar conclusions were made by Jacobs (2017), demonstrating that the experience of reading poetry includes not only interpretative processes but also emotional and aesthetic reactions which emerge during the interaction between the reader and the text. These reactions are formed due to

linguistic features of the text such as rhythm, imagery, and sound patterns, which can intensify the interaction between the reader and poetic language. In this sense, the mode of reading may influence how strongly these aesthetic and emotional reactions are experienced.

Another important finding concerns interpretative agreement between the two groups. Despite the differences in emotional intensity, both groups largely agreed on the central theme of the poem. Most of the participants from both groups interpreted the poem as a tragic love story that continues after death, which signifies that the main semantic interpretation remains stable regardless of the reading method. This result confirms the argument that although emotional engagement can vary depending on reading mode, the wider interpretative framework of literary text can remain relatively consistent.

At the same time, the emotional vocabulary used by participants was different among groups. The reading aloud group showed a greater number of emotionally intense responses, particularly in categories such as grief, devotion, and eternal love, while the silent reading group showed more balanced division on emotional categories, including melancholy and nostalgia. These results suggested that auditory engagement with poetic rhythm and sound patterns may enhance emotional resonance. Processing of poetic language often includes both cognitive interpretation and affective modelling, and vocalisation can enhance the affective component of this process.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that reading mode plays a significant role in the information of the aesthetic and emotional experience of the reader, even when the interpretative core of the text remains stable. Reading aloud seems to increase emotional intensity and engagement, while reading silently can encourage more reflective and internally mediated interpretation. These findings contribute to the broader field of empirical literary studies and cognitive poetics, providing further evidence that reading is a multi-modal activity, which is influenced by sensory, cognitive and emotional factors.

Further research could involve larger and more diverse groups of participants and also include additional empirical methods, such as eye-tracking, physiological measurements and think-aloud protocols. Such approaches can provide a deeper understanding of cognitive mechanisms which underlie different ways of reading and further clarify how readers construct meaning, interacting with poetic text. Furthermore, comparative studies involving different genres of poetry or readers with different levels of literary expertise may help to determine if patterns observed in this study remained the same across different literary contexts.

Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

Reading Mode and Poetic Interpretation

Text: “Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe

Reading mode: (choose one)

☐ Reading aloud ☐ Silent reading

Instructions:

Please answer the following questions based on your personal experience of reading the poem. There are no right or wrong answers.

For Sections A–C and E use the following scale:

1 – Strongly disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neutral 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly agree

SECTION A. Emotional Engagement

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The poem is emotionally powerful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The poem moved me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt emotionally immersed while reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The poem created a strong atmosphere.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt empathy toward the speaker.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The poem made me reflect on love and loss.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The poem gave me goosebumps or other physical sensations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt personally involved in the poem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would like to read this poem again.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The poem left a lasting emotional impression.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION B. Perception of Poetic Form and Complexity

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The rhythm of the poem was noticeable to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The sound patterns (rhyme, repetition, melody) were prominent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The poem felt stylistically rich.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The language of the poem seemed complex.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had to concentrate carefully to follow the structure of the poem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The repetition in the poem influenced my perception of meaning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was aware of the musical quality of the text.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C. Cognitive Load

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I had to concentrate intensely when reading the poem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The poem required considerable mental effort.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt that my attention was constantly engaged.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I found it difficult to process meaning and sound at the same time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I experienced mental fatigue while reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I needed to slow down to understand the poem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt that the way I was reading increased the effort	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

required.

The poem was easy to follow. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

SECTION D. Text Comprehension

1. In your own words, what is the central theme of the poem?

2. Which statement best summarizes the poem?

☐ A tragic love story about a young woman who dies and a man who continues to love her beyond death.

☐ A story about jealousy between angels and humans.

☐ A reflection on childhood friendship that gradually fades over time.

☐ A philosophical poem about nature and the sea.

3. Which emotions dominate the poem? (choose up to 3)

☐ Grief ☐ Eternal love ☐ Nostalgia ☐ Anger ☐ Melancholy ☐ Devotion ☐ Bitterness ☐ Hope

4. Why does the speaker believe Annabel Lee die?

☐ Because of illness ☐ Because angels envied their love ☐ Because of war ☐ Because she left him

SECTION E. Reading Experience

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I was aware of my voice (or inner voice) while reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt physically engaged in the	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

reading process.

I was conscious of the sound of the poem while reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The reading process felt effortful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt actively involved in producing or processing the words.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would prefer to read poetry in this way in the future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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