Teaching English poetry to Saudi students: an exploratory study for applying a Systemic Functional Linguistic based pedagogy for improving the reading, analysis and interpretation of poems in the English language

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Title:

Teaching English poetry to Saudi students: an exploratory study for applying a Systemic Functional Linguistic based pedagogy for improving the reading, analysis and interpretation of poems in the English language

By

Haifa Saad Almufayrij

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctoral Thesis of Loughborough University

(2016)

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to a number of individuals who have generously offered me their advice, encouragement, wisdom, their expertise, and their time. The completion of this dissertation will not have been possible without the valuable assistance and immense support I received from my dissertation advisor and mentor, Dr Arianna Maiorani. Respectively, my sincere thanks go to her for her words of advice, encouragement, constant notes and friendship over these years. I am indeed fortunate to have a magnificent supervisor who motivated me to finish this challenging research undertaking.

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A special thank you and appreciation to Dr Laila Al-Akresh for her help and support during data collection, thanks for your friendly support in so many different ways.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, husband and children. I wish to convey my utmost love and gratitude to my late father Saad Almufayrij who encouraged me to complete this research and for the support he provided me through my entire life and to my mother Aljohara Al-Harab for a lifetime of unconditional love and guidance. To my husband Khalid Almusallam, I would like to thank him for his belief in me and for his remarkable patience and unwavering support over the course of my research. To my wonderful children, Naif, Nouf, Danah, Saud and Llama, Thank you for your love and support. Finally, I would like to thank the rest of my family, mainly to my dear sisters and brothers.
ABSTRACT

This study formulated and applied a Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) based pedagogy which is culturally appropriate for Saudi students in King Saud University for improving the reading, analysis and interpretation of poetry in English. Ian Haneur affirms the necessity of the implementation of cultural knowledge for the reading of poetry; he states that cultural knowledge is “important in that it provides a basis through which understanding is achieved.” (2001: 4). This approach is concerned with linguistic applications which aim to improve analytical powers, in particular, the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 2004; Thompson, 2004). This pedagogy gives Saudi students a tool for reading poetic texts in English and critically analyzes them independently. An attempt which has not been approached much due to concerns of Arab educators about the values of English and American literature and its effects upon readers and a concern over the confrontation of the various moral, social, religious, national, political, historical, and even geographical contexts in the foreign texts (G. Rababah, 1983; M. Obeidat, 1996; Zughoul, 1987; and Asfour and Dahiyat, 1983). Furthermore, in this dissertation, I also attempted to address the impact that social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences have on the students' reading and interpretation of poems in English by exploring the perceptions of Saudi students regarding these issues. In my case study, a preliminary questionnaire with closed and open ended questions, class practice answers, post teaching interviews and observation notes were examined using selective coding to interpret the collected data. Analysis of student perceptions in relation to the social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences and the influence they had on their reading of poetry in English revealed meaningful high percentages of agreement which prove that Saudi students were facing problems in all these areas. The analysis of the application of SFL based pedagogy for the Saudi students provided significant evidence that SFL was a useful theory of language which played a purposeful role in showing the architecture of the English language and provided the students with a decoding tool for interpretation.
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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

I have been trying to think and teach by keeping one foot inside the system and the other foot outside. Of course, I cannot be totally outside the system if the system continues to exist. I have to be in it. Naturally, this generates a certain ambiguity and this ambiguity is often risky. That’s why many people keep both their feet squarely inside the system. I know people who sometimes slowly try to place their right foot outside, but they are immediately overcome by fear. They see other people who have stepped outside the system and are punished (Freire 1985, 178).

1.1 Introduction

This study presents a new method for teaching Saudi students poetry in the English language, an innovation in the context of the traditional approach to teaching poetry at King Saud University (KSU). I chose to take a ‘foot’ out and make this change in the teaching of poetry in the English language because of the problems Saudi students faced when reading poems in English and their inability to analyse and interpret them independently. One particular classroom situation, which occurred during the teaching of the poem ‘Richard Cory’ by Edwin Arlington Robinson, inspired this study. The poem (see Appendix 1) uses symbolism to present social issues. I began to read the poem with the students and they were very interested in it and could connect and relate to most of its parts and yet, when I began to read
the last two lines, I was faced with a problem. “And Richard Cory, one calm summer night, / Went home and put a bullet through his head”. I looked up expecting to see faces filled with fear, astonishment or any other emotion provoked by the unexpected death of the title character, but all I saw were blank faces. At that moment I realised that students had not understood the ending of the poem because they could not read critically and construe the idea of suicide. As a result, they could not interpret the concept behind the poem to appreciate it. I saw that traditional teaching techniques were not working for these students and that an alternative approach would be necessary. Poetry is one of the core courses of the English language and literature department at King Saud University, and, therefore, it is important for teachers of literature to attempt to find the major problems students confront in studying this course.

This introductory chapter includes the statement of the problem concerning Saudi students’ reading and interpretation when studying poetry in the English language and the reasons for my attempt to step outside the traditional teaching system. The chapter will then present the objectives and the significance of the study. In the end an overview of the chapters of this thesis is outlined.

1.2 Statement of problem

As a lecturer of poetry in English at King Saud University and drawing on my teaching experience, there are specific factors that prevent Saudi students’ when studying poetry to critically read and analyze poetry in English. It involves two main areas, Saudi students’ background and the teaching methodology at KSU.

1.2.1 Teaching methodology at KSU

The problems with the teaching methodology are rooted in the intended course aims and objectives for the Saudi students. The teaching objectives require students to read and analyze independently in the poetry class, yet the teaching methods lack the supportive skills to achieve them. I will provide a brief account of the curriculum of studies in the English department at King Saud University and the intended aims and objectives for studying poetry
in the English language (list of the objectives for the poetry classes are in (Appendix 2) and discuss how they are problematic for Saudi students.

The basic objective of the BA programme in the department of English is to produce graduates who have sufficient competence and proficiency in the English language to cope with various academic and professional demands such as teaching English language, translation, professions related to banking and diplomatic work. The programme seeks to develop the standard of its students in various genres of English literature and linguistics. Furthermore, it trains students to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills to promote content and language learning for English language and literature courses. The following tables show the course plan for the first two years.
Table 1: BA Programme

## Level 1 Level 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hrs</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 111</td>
<td>Basic Language Skills (1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eng. 114</td>
<td>Composition: Writing paragraphs. (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 112</td>
<td>Listening and Speaking (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 115</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 113</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 116</td>
<td>Remedial Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 118</td>
<td>Translation (E-A)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 122</td>
<td>Listening and Speaking (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 120</td>
<td>Vocabulary Building</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 181</td>
<td>Introduction to Literary Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arb. 101</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Slm. 102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slm. 101</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Level 3 Level 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hrs</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 212</td>
<td>Translation (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 231</td>
<td>Appreciating Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 213</td>
<td>Composition (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 312</td>
<td>Essay Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 241</td>
<td>Appreciating Drama</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eng. 323</td>
<td>Linguistics II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 251</td>
<td>The Rise of the Novel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eng. 328</td>
<td>Phonetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng. 320</td>
<td>Linguistics (1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eng. 371</td>
<td>Introduction to American Lit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The course plan for first year students focuses on developing their language skills, but not on the analytical skills required in the literary courses they study. There is only one introductory course that prepares them for the specialised literary courses ahead. The course plan lacks courses that should build on developing students’ techniques of analysis and evaluation of literary texts. As such, some students are inadequately prepared for the materials they are expected to handle.

The teaching approach for the poetry courses at King Saud University are to a great extent periodical and traditional. Poetry courses are taught according to periods and movements: Neo Classical, Romantic, Victorian and Modern poetry. These courses introduce students to and develop their understanding of the nature of each period and the circumstances of the movements by teachers supplying their students with close critical commentary for the assigned texts from major poets of the period. It is also aims at introducing students to different themes, trends and genres pertinent to each era in each poetry course which defines the period they are studying. Students are thus expected to be acquainted with the social, political, historical and literary background of each period before they begin the textual analysis of poems. The problem here for Saudi students is that the teaching approach emphasises in-depth historical information. The historical, political and social background of the poems is discussed extensively by the teacher of the poetry course and this knowledge is to be memorized for their examination. Hence, students are overwhelmed with the extensive amount of knowledge expected from them which causes their disinterest. Saudi students who need to learn tools to improve their critical reading ultimately devote an immense of time on historical knowledge. This does not in any way suggest that students should completely ignore the basic historical background, yet teachers can be careful when selecting the historical knowledge to include only what is necessary for the interpretation of the poem in the English language. This also minimizes the time and effort given to the teaching of the historical background and the memorization of it. Hence, class time will be utilized for developing students’ critical reading.
In the teaching of poetry in English, the development of students’ analytical skills was rarely addressed. Yet, one of the intended aims for the Saudi students is to read and analyze a large selection of poems. In the course description, it states that students are expected to analyse poems through in-class reading of poems. Afterwards, they are expected to participate in class discussions and think critically. The problem here is that the intended aim is expecting them to learn and apply skills that they have not been taught or that they have not practiced in class. The actual situation in the poetry classes is that students study the poems in English depending mainly on the teacher’s analysis of the poem. The teacher chooses the ‘correct’ interpretation based on a selection from the interpretations from popular critics which she considers to be suitable for her class. A poetry course can be taught by more than one tutor and usually each class will be expected to memorise the interpretation presented by its own tutor. Thus, it is possible that students are exposed to different interpretations of a particular poem, but this is only in the context of the competing demands of tutors, not that of students’ independent analysis. The problem is that students themselves are not developing independent reading and analytical skills.

The familiarity with several critical approaches to poetry is also expected from the students and an intended aim which is not being taught by the teachers. The problem is illustrated in the difference between the knowledge or skill the course is intended to develop and the actual teaching and assessment process. The course expects the students to be able to think critically and analytically yet nowhere are they taught any analytical tools or strategies to be used in the course to develop that knowledge or skill. Also, students are not assessed or evaluated on any independent analysis of poems in the English language. Their critical thinking is also very limited when the teacher is supplying the students with selected interpretations for the poems they study. In the course description, it states that students are mainly expected to ‘recollect’ for the examinations. They are not being encouraged to give their personal responses through critical reading when the focus for assessing the student is on ‘recollecting’ which refers to memorizing the historical background and the critical commentary given to them by their teachers. Hence, teachers set specific objectives and aims for the poetry course and when they are assessing the students, teachers set examinations that require different learning strategies.
1.2.2 Saudi background

The second problematic area for Saudi students reading of Poetry in English is the different linguistic and cultural background. This is problematic because it prevents them from reading poems in English critically when the attitudes and ideas they express are unfamiliar to them and when the architecture of the English language is different. To explain this problematic area, I will highlight some relevant facts about Saudi culture and language.

1.2.2.1 Saudi culture

All the students in the English Department are from Saudi Arabia and are pursuing an undergraduate degree. Students are brought up in an Arab-Islamic environment, and have strong nationalistic attitudes. They share the same Islamic and Arabic teachings and traditions. Al-Saif (2003) states that Saudi traditions are very rich and rooted in Islamic teachings and heritage. Islam’s most central belief is monotheism. Islam defines the Saudi way of life, which has a direct impact on almost every aspect of life and society, from relationships to the economy to inheritance. The Saudis value generosity, hospitality, courage and honour, and these values have been passed on for generations. Despite the rapid economic growth of the last twenty years, traditional cultural and social values have been maintained. Family and tribe are still considered the basis of the social structure. Al Saif (2003) explains that Saudis are proud of their heritage and appreciate their extended and nuclear family. Saudis take their responsibilities to their family, especially their elders, seriously. Families tend to be large and to support every member in times of need.

The Saudi students also share the same background knowledge with the Arabic poetry. Arabic poetry (ash-shi’ru al-’Arabīyu) is the earliest form of Arabic literature. This phrase “register of the Arabs” (dīwān al-’Arab) acknowledges the importance and status of poetry among the Arabs. Roger (2012) states that it shows the position that poetry has always held in the Arabic culture. Arabic poetry is of major significance since it reflects the true sense of Arab self-identity and history. This high regard for poetry is a reason many students opt to study poetry in English in the English department. Jayyusi (1977) explains that researchers and critics of Arabic poetry usually classify it in two categories: classical and modern poetry.
Classical or traditional poetry was written before the Arabic renaissance and was based on a horizontal structure: the unity of the poem was based on the unity of the line (wehdat al-bait). This concept depended on each line being grammatically and semantically complete. The major themes of traditional poetry focused on tribal and cultural values. Jayyusi (1977) explains that some classical critics identified three major principles for the public performance of poetry. The first is called panegyric (madḥ), which praises the tribe or the elders and was the main form of the tribal tradition. The second type is the lampoon (hija), in which the poet takes verbal aim at the community’s enemies for the sake of honour. The third type is the elegy (riṯāʾ), which is the writing of an obituary (cited in Badawi, 1999).

Modern poetry, which dates from the nineteenth and early twentieth century’s, on the other hand, diverges from the traditional or classical (500–1250 c.e.) poetry in content, style, structure, rhyme and theme. Modern poetry avoids the display of verbal skill for its own sake, but does not avoid using archaic words entirely because traditional values were always the backbone of the Arabic poetry. The modern poets believe that their writings should express an attitude to existence, and poetry therefore becomes more personal in nature. Some of the major types of modern poetry are Wasf, which is a descriptive poem, and Ghazala, a love poem, which is one of the most popular forms of Arabic poetry. This form extends to all forms of love, including the expression for the love of one’s home, country and nature. Poetry in Arabic is traditionally grouped into collections of poems called the Diwan, which are arranged according by poet, tribe, topic or the name of the compiler. A large proportion of all Arabic poetry is composed using monorhyme. According to Badawi (1999), the serious poetry (Qasidah) has monorhyme, repeated musical sounds at the end of each line in a monometre poem. This poetic form is appropriate for simple desert imagery. Jayyusi (1977) states that monometre is simply using the same rhyme on every line of a poem. Although this might seem an unusual rhyme scheme to readers of western poetry, it is perfect for the Arabic language, which has only three long or short vowels. Arabic poetry differs in many respects from poetry in English. Saudi students, studying in the English department come to the poetry courses in English with an assumption that Arabic poetry carries some of the characteristics of the Arabic poetry. They also assume they may carry this knowledge of Arabic poetry to help them study poetry in English. A problem arises when the students discover the contrast between the two. Ulla Connor (2003) in exploring the field of contrastive rhetoric, states that the existence of a contrasting L1 cultural background can negatively interfere with L2 learners, and differing linguistic and social conventions can keep L2 learners “at distance
from achieving a native-like performance” (17). Connor also believes that where cultural differences can cause setbacks, learners “need to be explicitly taught in order to acculturate … to the target discourse community” and he explains that L2 learners need more than just the recognition of the cultural differences between L1 and L2, thus stressing the need for improved and tailored teaching methods (2003, 17). I could observe this happening in the poetry classes I taught and I perceived its negative intervention. The Saudi students come to the poetry classroom with their own knowledge based on the Arabic and Islamic tradition and poetry, and when they study poetic texts in English they face problems due to these differences. Students have various backgrounds, yet many of the Saudi students are not familiar with the English or American background, which is the basis of most of the poetic works in English they are supposed to study, especially those with Christian or Latin references. For example, some poems may deploy biblical references as a central means of developing the poem. Many Saudi students will not understand such references, and thus the entire meaning of the poem is lost to them.

1.2 Differences between Arabic and English

There are differences between the Arabic and English languages and the differences present problems for the Saudi students reading of poetry in the English language. Some of the characteristics of the Arabic language are its indirect, symbolic, implicit and non-linear nature, with high dependency on context, and these is due to its Semitic nature. Bateson (2003) explains in her insights and perspectives on Arabic literacy that since Arabic is a Semitic language; its grammar is dissimilar to that of English. The different characteristics of the Arabic and English languages cause confusion for Saudi students and create difficulties in the critical reading of poetry in English. In the Arabic language there are two main types of sentences, verbal and nominal. Sentences that start with a verb are called verbal sentences. Huntington (2012), showing the differences of the Arabic and English languages in her dissertation, explains that in verbal sentences, it is generally agreed by grammarians that the unmarked word order is verb-subject-object. In contrast, the nominal sentence begins with a noun and may or may not have a verb. There is controversy among Arabic grammarians about the word orders of nominal sentences that do have a verb: there is agreement on the order of the sentence, but there are different theories about the function of the variations. Wright, in his work on Arabic grammar, shows that the:
The difference between verbal and nominal sentences, to which the native grammarians attach no small importance, is properly thus, that the former relates an act or event, the latter gives a description of a person, or thing either absolutely or in the form of a clause descriptive of a state. This is the constant rule in good old Arabic, unless the desire to emphasize a part of the sentence is the cause of change in its position (cited in Huntington 2012, 251).

Huntington (2012) also claims that one of the reasons for the confusion suffered by Arabs who are learning other languages is that Arabic has three consonant roots as its basis and all the parts of speech are formed by combining them with fixed vowel patterns and, sometimes, affixes. The root and pattern system comprises a fixed series at the verbal, nominal and morphological levels for the Arabic reader and has lexical meaning. Huntington explains that Arab learners of English will be perplexed by the lack of patterns that would allow them to distinguish nouns from verbs or adjectives in the language. Bateson (2003) adds that Arabic has no verb *to be* in the present tense and no auxiliary *do* such as *She smart child, when you go to America?* These differences result in complications in recognizing and distinguishing tenses. While English sentences depend largely on word order to determine the function of each word in a sentence, Arabic sentences use case markings and agreement to identify the grammatical functions of sentence components. Thus in Arabic it is possible to change the word order of the sentence to highlight a specific part of it. Yet, in the English sentence such an act would require the sentence to be restructured intensively. It is clear that the English and Arabic languages are different syntactically and that Arabic demonstrates greater syntactic flexibility. Dickens (2009) explains in an article about the Syntactic, discoursal and denotative features of Arabic that there are innumerable ways in which Arabic and English combine information into coordinate and subordinate clauses and concludes that Arabic connects clauses with greater flexibility of denotative meaning (1076-1077). This can be problematic for Saudi students who are used to syntactic flexibility and expect to find it in English. Furthermore, there are differences in tense. Bateson (2003) shows that there is a single present tense in Arabic, whereas English has both simple and continuous forms. These differences result in problems for Saudi students reading English texts when they compare the two languages because Arabic does not differentiate actions completed in the past with or without a connection to the present. Arabic requires the inclusion of the pronoun in relative clauses, unlike English, where the pronoun can be omitted. Adjectives in Arabic are different to those in English: in Arabic they follow the noun they qualify, while in English they
precede the noun they qualify. This leads the Saudi student to make word order mistakes in the poetic text, which can be mitigated by the use of teaching techniques which explain the structure of English sentences.

The different Arabic and English thought processing when reading, analysing and responding to a non-native text causes confusion for the Saudi students. Very little work has been done on the comparative nature of Arabic and English thought processing and language structures and its effect on reading poetry. Some interesting comparative studies have partially addressed this field (Will 2001; Kanso and Nelson 2002). An outline based on the previous studies is shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Previous studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholar</th>
<th>Characteristics of English and American Language</th>
<th>Characteristics of Arabic Language</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Avoid sentiments</td>
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<td>Hall (1976)</td>
<td>Low-context</td>
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<td>Ting-Toomey (1985)</td>
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<td>Implicit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meaning in code</td>
<td>Meaning in code Meaning in context</td>
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<td>Speaker is more responsible for message comprehension</td>
<td>Audience is more responsible for understanding message</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kluckhohn and</td>
<td>“Doing” orientation</td>
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Preferences for messages:

- Clarity
- Affect
- Objectivity
- Repetition
- Accuracy
- Symbols
- Actions
- Over-assertion
- Understatement
In English, the language is clear, explicit and direct, yet the Arabic Saudi students come to a poetic text in English with a frame of mind that expects it to be symbolic, highly embellished, sentimental and implicit language. It is also important to consider the thematic and structural differences shown in the chart, because they explain Saudi students’ confusion when they are asked to analyse poems in the English language. English language stresses organisation, mostly focused on one theme in a singular experience, whereas the Arabic language does not stress organisation and presents multiple themes and group experiences and works towards affect. The differences presented in Table 2, shows that Saudi students are not only faced with different linguistic structure but also different rhetoric. The differences in rhetoric were a major obstacle for Saudi students’ critical reading of poetry in the English language.

Rhetoric refers to the language style and the principles of composition; according to Piper (in Panetta, 2000) “understanding the rhetorical deviations apparent in languages would bridge the gap between cultural encoding and decoding” and this would be vital for instructors in realizing that “it could be a pedagogical contributor to rhetoric reading and writing issues ... and students could be taught about language characteristics and differences among cultures (4). The Arabic language carries with it cultural implications that can hinder Saudi students’ reading and interpretation of poetic texts in the English language. Ellen Feghali (1997) in her article about Arab cultural communication patterns says that Arab culture adheres to and promotes collectivism rather than individualism. Feghali also states that Arabs’ loyalty to their extended family and larger ‘in-group’ takes precedence over individual needs and goals” (352). This explains the more group-oriented usage of pronouns that express collectiveness such as ‘we’ and ‘us’. This factor was recurrent and very confusing for Saudi students studying poetry in English, which predominately focuses on individualism, because they naturally try to apply Arabic rhetoric to the English text. D.R. Ferris (2001) also stresses that it is important that “theorists and teachers to understand that significant differences exist across L2 contexts and populations” (299).

The significance of such differences has been noted by some Arab scholars and educators on the problems of teaching English language and literature at Arab Universities (Obeidat 1996; Al Maleh 2005; Zughoul 1983, 1987; Asfour and Dahiyat 1983) who have recognised the social, cultural and religious differences inherent in studying a non-native text and have suggested various ways of improving the reading and interpretation of different literary texts in the English language. One possible cause of difficulty is concern about addressing the
various moral, social, religious, national, political, historical and even geographical contexts of American literature and in particular about the values of American literature and the their effects on non-native readers. Researchers such as Obeidat (1996) and Asfour and Dahiyat (1983) argue that a conflict of interest occurs when there is a constant problem with representing cultural and moral issues that occur in any non-literary text to students. It is difficult for them to disconnect from their own cultural tenets, they begin to search for ideas related to their own background knowledge and consequently misread the text.

Zughoul (1983) discusses the complex language of poems, which often deviates from natural or common language. He explains that poetry clearly uses language with greater complexity than the average user, which makes it difficult for teachers to explain literary texts of all kinds: poems, short stories, novels and plays. Zughoul also argues that teaching British and American literature clashes with the cultural and ethical codes of Arab students and suggests that the teaching of poetry in English should be abandoned.

One major obstacle to pedagogical innovation in the Arab countries is the fear of allowing students to interpret poems in English and literature in general independently due to the different social and religious ideals that are presented in literary works. Layla Al-Maleh (2005) recognises that teaching English literature to Arab students is highly challenging for the teacher. She believes that there is a distinction between acceptance and agreement and suggests that teaching “amorally” will give the reader some freedom of interpretation (269).

Al Maleh also emphasises that the social and political dispositions of Arab countries represent a major obstacle. Al Maleh explains that one of the biggest setbacks faced by innovative Arab educators when they propose new teaching techniques is the fear that the exploration of some Western literary themes (for example, sexual liberation, and gender equality) might pose a threat to Arab society. These are viewed negatively by authority figures as well as by some professors and students, whose attitudes have caused scholars to propose restrictive strategies for the teaching of literature.

It is a documented fact that native language reading comprehension involves knowledge of the world and knowledge of native organization of information in a text (Langer and Smith-Burke 1982; Spiro, Bruce and Brewer 1980). The research on cross-cultural rhetoric is an
important area to explore in the context of teaching non-native readers of poetry in the English language. An important factor for this research will be a focus on how meaning is construed. John Lye (2008) discusses the source of the reader’s response by explaining that meaning exists only insofar as it means to someone, and art is composed in order to evoke sets of responses in the reader. Then he lists three important components for understanding meaning. The first is that meaning is ‘social’, which means that language, and conventions work only as a shared meaning and the way we view the world can exist only under the idea of ‘shareable’. Lye believes that a ‘response’ is not merely individual, but is part of culture and history. This reinforces the fact that differing cultural backgrounds can be problematic, because if a reader is exposed to a culturally different poem which does not contain the ‘shareable’ knowledge of his particular native society then he is unable to respond. Lye’s second point is that meaning is contextual and that the meaning will be changed when the context is altered. It is therefore important to understand the cultural ideologies of the poet or the poem because they create the context of the poetic work itself. A third important point made by Lye is that “texts constructed as literature, or ‘art’, have their own codes and practices”, and the more knowledge we can infer from them, the better we are at decoding them, which ultimately improves interpretation. A decoding system is fundamental for improving the non-native reader’s critical reading, so it is necessary for this study to consider what constitutes an appropriate decoding system. Ian Haneur (2004) also stresses the implementation of cultural knowledge because he believes that it can provide the referential knowledge that allows interpretation to take place. A lack of diverse cultural knowledge can limit the learner to his own culture. While some referential knowledge may be shared by many cultures, there could be specific situations in which a learner is at a loss. Thus, cultural knowledge is “important in that it provides a basis through which understanding is achieved” (2001, 4). Furthermore, as language is not detached from the socio-cultural milieu in which it evolved, it is also imperative for educators of non-native students to propose new teaching techniques.

Moody (1983) argues for new pedagogic techniques for literature. He explains “that both those who teach literature, and those who teach subjects, have a steady view of the potential of literature in the total curriculum, which is neither exaggerated nor undermined. Particularly important is it to ensure that teachers understand how to present literature (which may involve more than conventional teaching) so that its potential can be fully realized” (1983, 18). Moody further emphasis his point by recalling Alex Rodger (1969), he believes is an
ideal example for literary studies. Rodger argues that the job of teachers of literature is not to
give students “predigested meanings” to read and accept as concrete critical opinions of these
works; rather readers should be “reasonably skilled and sensitive readers, able to feel and
judge for themselves, with fidelity to the textual facts, in response to any work of literature
they may choose to read” (89).

It is within this argument, new and improved teaching techniques must therefore be
incorporated in the teaching methods for poetry in English at KSU and an explanation of the
architecture of the English language must be provided to give specific direction for reading
poems in the English Language. I argue that the traditional teaching techniques at King Saud
University need an innovative pedagogy tailored for poetry classes to target problematic areas
for reading poems in English critically. These problems were not due to Saudi students’ lack
of effort, and after constant observation I discovered a tangible issue that explained them. To
address these problematic issues a linguistic based teaching pedagogy will be necessary to
demonstrate the structure of the sentence and clause to Saudi students and offering them a
theoretical explanation of how the English language works. This study looks at the pedagogy
of poetry from a new angle by introducing new analytical techniques through a linguistic
framework, and targets particular weaknesses in poetry reading. More specifically, it focuses
on the need to help Saudi students by training them to critically read poetic texts in English
independently and cross-culturally to interpret them. The main focus in this approach is the
text itself, not commentary or extensive background knowledge of the poet and his period.
This is desirable because ultimately most Saudi students in the English department choose
professions that require a strong grasp of the English language, particularly teaching and
translation or professions related to government administration, banking, the media and
diplomatic work.

1.3 Objectives
My thesis will investigate the extent to which Saudi students’ linguistic and social
backgrounds can interfere with their critical reading and interpretation of poetry in English.
This investigation will be used as a guide for evaluating problematic teaching practices for
the study of poetry. It is especially important to explore Saudi students’ perceptions on the
role of traditional teaching techniques, their openness to new techniques that empower them
with new analytical tools that are based on a Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) teaching approach to improve their independent critical reading of poetry in English.

In expanding on the benefits of the SFL framework for studying poetry in English, I endeavoured to broaden the teaching techniques and experiences at KSU with new methodology. Specifically, I envisioned a model that can improve students’ critical abilities when they are reading and interpreting poetry independently. As part of this effort, I intended to describe Saudi students’ perceptions of SFL-based pedagogy and highlight their experience of it. The findings of this study could be employed:

a) To attempt to improve teaching approaches by making recommendations for teachers of poetry or literature that will help them to be aware of the differences in background and linguistic knowledge and to address these problems;

b) To show how Systemic Functional Linguistics can provide support in culturally appropriate teaching.

1.4 The significance of the study

My research will attempt to address an area that is rarely studied and has not been given enough attention. The pedagogical technique I have formulated is a response to a particular problem within a specific context. It therefore goes beyond the mere application of discipline, which falls within the scope of pedagogical linguistics in the analysis of poetry in English. This research proposes culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings 1995) and argues for its centrality in the improvement of the Saudi students’ reading and interpretation of poetry in the English language. The study is significant because, to the best of my knowledge, it is the first of its kind to investigate the problems faced by Saudi university students in the study of poetry in English. It addresses the need for a tailored teaching approach for Saudi students of poetry in the English language at KSU. Moreover, this study is an attempt to change and develop the position of students from that of traditional passive learners of critical commentaries to that of more independent critical analysts and thinkers who are capable of elaborating on poetry and its content.
The information obtained from the application of my teaching method and from investigating the Saudi students’ beliefs will help to develop more effective pedagogical techniques. It could provide an opportunity to design new teaching materials to equip students with new strategies for poetry and other literary studies. There is a need to investigate further the extent to which Saudi students’ background knowledge can impede their reading and interpretation of poems in English. The findings of this study could be instrumental in that respect.

Cohen et al. (2006) in his book on research methods for education suggest that research will be judged “methodologically and by the contribution that it makes to the field” (39). This thesis is essentially attempting to contribute to the teaching methods of poetry in English for Saudi students. This will be done by supplying students with tools for interpretation to improve their independent critical reading which can also improve their reading in other linguistic or literary courses and even in other fields of study. Thus the study is relevant academically and professionally for the Saudi students. In this study I use terms that are specifically relevant to Systemic Functional Linguistics and have given definitions of some of the key terms that are relevant to this study in Appendix 3.

1.5 Overview of the chapters

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which provides an overview of the research, statement of the problem and the context of the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to the subject of the research study. It addresses literature in the fields of teaching methodology and Systemic Functional Linguistics. The chapter also reviews the idea of cultural difference, in particular with respect to poetry and problems of reading and construing meaning. It explores the literature relevant to the theories and approaches that influenced my formulation of a culturally appropriate teaching methodology for the poetry classroom at King Saud University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It also presents various methods for improving the reading and interpretation of poetry in English that have been used by researchers and educators and enriched and grounded my own research.

Chapter Three explains and justifies the research methodology employed in this study. It then addresses the research design and explains the criteria that informed the selection of the analytical tools. The chapter also describes the participants in this study and the data collection procedures that were employed. It explains how the data were coded, analysed and
interpreted and also covers issues of validity, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

The findings of the preliminary questionnaire are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter four focuses on the findings that are related to the open and closed questions which investigate the various factors that can impede Saudi students’ reading and interpretations of poetry in English and addresses social, cultural, religious and linguistic issues. Chapter Five presents the class practice and related findings. This class practice aims to explore how the SFL-based teaching methodology raises students’ awareness of language structures. Chapter Six presents an analysis and discussion of students’ responses to the teaching experiment using three data collection methods: post-teaching open questions, focus group interviews and class observation notes.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion. It highlights theoretical and practical contributions and directions for further research. The limitations of the study are also discussed.
CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of the literature will discuss previously published works in the fields of poetry, theory and pedagogy that are relevant to implementing a teaching method for studying poetry in English for Saudi students, and will also draw on more general research relating to these fields. The literature review will be divided into four parts. The first part will present studies that investigate the effects of learning English literature and poetry in a Saudi and Arab context and culture-specificity of poetry. It also reviews the theoretical underpinnings and research concerned with methods for teaching poetry in English. This is followed by more specific teaching applications for poetry in English that are specific to non-native students. The third section draws on studies related to culturally relevant or appropriate pedagogies. The final section addresses Systemic Functional Linguistics.

2.2 English poetry: A Saudi and Arab context

Saudi and Arab researchers and educators have attempted to approach the problem of the reading of poetry in English and literature. Research that has been done in the Arab region
will be presented to show that there is a problem with Arab students’ reading and interpretation of poetry in English and that a new pedagogic approach is required.

Arab scholars and educators have recognised the existence of social, cultural and religious differences in encounters with non-native texts. Salloum Habeeb (1994) describes the difficulties faced by students of English poetry caused by the teaching techniques at a Palestinian University. Habeeb characterises the teaching approaches in many Arab universities as “teaching-centered”. He also observes that students are “rarely indulged in any interactive teaching process” (17). He explains that although students may prefer an easier method of ready-made interpretations of a poetic text, this technique of teaching does very little to enhance their reading abilities. This research notes a teaching technique in an Arab context to help to identify the nature and complexity of providing ways of teaching that can improve reading of poetry.

Al Sheikh (1997) observes that the reading abilities of Arab learners who are usually exposed to traditional reading instructions are challenged by non-native texts and independent interpretations. Shih (cited in Ali 2004) also recognises that learning difficulties for the majority of Arab learners are caused by difficulties in reading and studying the content of texts and that this is high on the list of problems cited in surveys of non-native students. This study looks specifically at the topic of the pedagogy of poetry and alludes to the necessity of improving the reading techniques.

There are two important literary figures from Saudi Arabia who express valuable opinions on the purpose of poetry and address a problem in the teaching techniques for reading and writing poetry. Ghazi Alqasabi (cited in Halprin 2005) states that “A person who does not possess something cannot give it to someone else; a teacher who does not fully enjoy poetic imagery will not be able to convey this pleasure to his or her pupils” (16). What is essential in his teaching process is “to get away from the traditional word-by-word concentration on meaning, inflection and figure of speech” (16). He also believes that teachers should be able to see the whole picture like an oil painting and should aim to make the “features of that painting elucidated” (16). This perspective emphasises reconsidering teaching techniques. Alqasabi argues for innovative teaching strategies in the poetry classroom to serve as an inspiration for teachers and students.
Similar comments on the Arab and Saudi disposition to the teaching of poetry are expressed by Mansour Alhazmi (cited in Halprin 2005). He states that it is difficult to explain or define “the purpose of poetry”; he attempts to explain poetry by connecting it to the goals and objectives that a poet wishes to achieve and states that it is vital to understand that the present age is not the same as the poet’s. He explains that when one reads a particular poetic text it may be perceived in various ways and that this is “a difficult task, not only for young people but even for persons who are highly educated” (17). Alhazmi also believes that teachers need special training before they can be expected to teach poetry and that it is “essential to create a suitable climate for interaction between teacher and student” (17). An important point brought up by Hazmi is teachers should be actively involved through their teaching methods in helping students with the difficulties found in poetry. He also expects teachers to develop their own teaching methods through special training. Although his opinion is valuable, it is also important to focus on new theories for reading poetry independently. Improvements to teachers’ teaching techniques should be based on the introduction of new approaches to reading that empower students to become independent critical readers.

Several Arab researches address non-native Arab students’ problems with English literature (Rababah 1983; Obeidat 1996; Al Maleh 2005; Zughoul 1987; and Asfour and Dahiyat 1983). A special conference on “The Problems of Teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities” was held in Amman, Jordan in 1983. Participants focused on issues that caused great difficulty in teaching English poetry or literature in general. Ghaleb Rababah, a Professor in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) who teaches at KSU, presented a paper on the communication problems of Arab learners of English in general, and on problems specific to English language majors in Arab world universities. Although Rababah focuses on communication problems in language, he does not specifically attend to problems with reading of poetic texts in English. Some Arabic researchers have dealt with one or many of these problems (Obeidat 1996; Al Maleh 2005; Zughoul 1987; and Asfour and Dahiyat 1983). Obeidat (1996) question whether it was “risky to teach Arab students literature that poses a major problem for English departments morally, culturally, and socially; whether teaching a foreign literature has advantages; and what its moral effect might be” (19). He explains that few students take foreign or non-native courses in which they “encounter, with such intensity, foreign and non-native cultures so thoroughly new and challenging to them; so much so that their eagerness and curiosity to know about the
literature of the United States as ‘America’ become a great discomfort in the face of human knowledge and culture” (37). He explains that for the majority of the students, there is not only concern about the values conveyed by American literature and their effects upon readers, but also over the confrontation with various American moral, social, religious, national, political, historical and even geographical contexts. Obeidat also raises very crucial questions about Arabs and foreign literature in ‘Departments of English in the Arab World’ and questions the basic approaches to teaching non-native literary texts in the first place. He asks “Do we teach its history and background, or do we simply teach the literary text itself (the words on the page)? Do we need to teach it as something else may be – the text as language, for example?” (1996, 38). He then suggests that we teach Arab students’ English literature by teaching them how to read closely and critically and by simultaneously supplying them with the proper analytical skills. This, he believes, opens the door to a deeper appreciation and understanding of literature, not only as an object of ideological and cultural analysis, but as a linguistic activity based on reading and writing about ‘the other’. In such an approach, a great deal of responsibility will be put on the instructors’ choice of texts and teaching method in terms of how they address the religious, moral and cultural barriers that the Arab student might encounter. Obeidat’s approach to teaching an Arab student to read independently and critically is valuable since it emphasises the active role of the student in improving the teaching situation in the poetry class. Obeidat also emphasises the need for an instructor to work closely with the non-native student to identify learning obstacles and take steps to overcome them. Yet, this method depends on the instructors’ selection of poetic texts which is limiting for the students reading of poetry in English.

Asfour and Dahiyat (1983) show a similar concern with cultural bias and prejudice when Arab students study English literature. They state that a conflict occurs in which there is a desire to expose students to English literature and a desire to protect them from cultural attitudes that are considered immoral or undesirable while reading any non-native literary text. Another conflict which occurs is between the cultural values in the texts themselves and the cultural values the students are bringing to their study of the text. It is difficult for them to disconnect from their own cultural background, leading to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. This point of cultural conflict alludes to complications regarding reading non-native texts which could also lead to confusion.

Zughoul (1987), on the other hand, believes that the teaching of British and American literature is solely an attempt to spread racist, reductionist, prejudiced and hostile views. He
explains that, in “English Departments in Third World Universities” (57), it is not necessary to teach foreign Western views that sharply conflict with the cultural and ethical codes of Arab students. Zughoul also questions the validity of the inclusion of literary courses in English departments in Arab universities and suggests that poetry classes be abandoned because poetic language deviates from natural or common language. He explains that literature clearly uses language with a greater complexity than the average user is able to handle which makes it difficult for teachers to explain literary texts of all kinds, including poems, short stories, novels and plays. This study highlights the complexities that Arab students face when studying poetry in English and recognises the difficulties inherent in teaching it, but these alone should not be a reason to abandon it completely. Rather, it should be an incentive to find teaching methods that facilitate critical reading of poetry in English where students are encouraged to overcome such a complexity.

Layla Al-Maleh (2005) argues for the importance of teaching English Literature to Arab Muslim students and recognises that doing so can be highly challenging for the teacher (269). She emphasises independent interpretation and recommends teaching literature “amorally” to avoid alienating Arab Muslim students (273). She believes that this can be done by making a distinction between acceptance and agreement and suggests that teaching “amorally” gives the reader some freedom of interpretation, allowing Muslim Arab students to “accept the text, reject it, feel suspicious about it, adopt it, or simply feel totally neutral towards it away from the hegemony of the dominant criticism which, more often than not, is western oriented” (273). Al-Maleh suggests that acceptance is not necessarily tightly related to belief and that if an argument is right then the reader can ‘accept’ the moral presuppositions of a work without necessarily agreeing with it (274). Such an approach can ease the trepidation Arab educators have when proposing new teaching methods that allow for independent analysis or criticism. Al-Maleh also explains that one of the biggest obstacles Arab educators face when proposing the implementation of new teaching techniques that allow for individual interpretation is the fear that the exploration of some Western literary themes (for example, sexual liberation and gender equality), which are viewed negatively by authority figures as well as by some professors and students, could have detrimental consequences. These attitudes have caused scholars to propose restrictive strategies for the teaching of literature. This study touches on the sensitive topic of exposure to western ideologies, which students do not ordinarily encounter. This situation has led to a lack of interest in searching for innovative teaching approaches which can improve the teaching of poetry in English. Based on my own
experience and communication with other Arab and Saudi educators, this is a concern for many Universities in Saudi Arabia. Yet, these fears should not stand in the way of improving teaching techniques based on negative assumptions of some educators.

Bin Mohamed (1999) suggests that instructors should select texts that convey “positive, moral and universal values” (48). He explains that the instructor should ensure that the content of the poetic texts is appropriate. Such an approach is unfair on Arab Muslim students who are limited to studying texts based on their instructors’ beliefs about what is positive and morally appropriate. It limits students’ knowledge and exposure to the wealth of experience in poetry.

All these scholars recognise the problems faced by Arab learners and the factors which stand in the way of their reading and interpretation, but recognition alone is not enough. It also demonstrates that Arab scholars focus more on the content of the text and its suitability for the Arab Muslim students than on techniques for teaching literature and, indeed, those Arab scholars barely discuss specific issues pertaining to the reading and interpretation of poetic texts. The recognition of problematic issues regarding Arab students studying Poetry in English is instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the appropriate tools with which to improve the pedagogy of poetry. Hence, for the purpose of this study, research which argues for the necessity of the recognition of cultural difference for implementing a teaching method for studying poetry in English will be reviewed. In order to determine what connections researchers made for making pedagogical decisions.

2.3 Culture-specificity of poetry

Cultural difference has been discussed in a number of research studies that explore problems of understanding that arise when reading poetry. A number of researchers have hypothesised that cultural difference can present hindrances in reading and in particular in reading poetry. Native language reading comprehension involves knowledge of the world and knowledge of text structure (Langer and Smith-Burke 1982; Spiro, Bruce and Brewer 1980). Research on cross-cultural rhetoric in poetry is relevant to this study because cultural differences can cause a problem in the critical reading and interpretation of poetry in English.

According to Totten (1998, 30), the role of the reader is dynamic. Totten asserts that each reader comes to a piece of literature with a specific background of worldly experience and a
broad knowledge base in different subjects. He explains that this simply means that most readers will likely have unique insights into a piece of literature. This perception goes against the view that literary works carry a single, ‘correct’ meaning. This view entails decisions to be made about what and how to teach poetry regarding cross-cultural rhetoric in poetry with the recognition of poetry not having a single correct meaning.

John Lye (2008) details the culture-specificity of poetry. He begins his argument by questioning whether meaning exists ‘in’ a text and whether the basic properties of a text, like its imagery, grammar and language, themselves produce meaning. The idea behind these questions is that readers ultimately come to the same meaning because they are using the same components in their interpretations. Lye goes on to state that it is impossible to know whether the same interpretations came about because of the readers’ shared encoding resources or because they had been exposed to the same teaching methods for understanding and interpreting texts. Since it is not evident that meaning is in the ‘text’, it is possible that meaning arises from conventions of usage and practice, which are culturally related. Thus, according to Lye, if we share common conventions our analyses and interpretations will be similar, but if our cultural settings differ then so will our understandings, and thus our readings and interpretations. He explains that on the one hand a text is a historical document, and on the other meaning is derived from cultural and contextual components, so it is difficult to state that a text has the same meaning for an individual reader or a group. Meaning exists only insofar as it means something to someone, and art is composed in order to evoke sets of responses in the reader, which further complicates the situation. He lists three important factors for understanding meaning. The first is that meaning is social: language and conventions work only as a shared meaning and the way we view the world can exist only with the support of shared ideas. This means that reading a text entails participating in social or cultural meanings. Lye believes that a response is not merely individual, but is part of culture and history. This reinforces the fact that differences in cultural backgrounds can be problematic because if a reader is exposed to a culturally different poem that does not contain knowledge that is shared with his particular native society then he will be unable to respond to that poem. The second factor that Lye identifies is the fact that meaning is contextual, so if the context is changed then the meaning is altered as well. This also emphasises the need to understand the cultural ideologies of the poet or the poem which themselves creates that poem’s context. The third factor is particularly important for this study. Lye states that texts
constructed as literature, or ‘art’, have their own codes and practices, and that the more knowledge we can infer from them, the better we are at decoding the text and, ultimately, the better our understanding. This argument emphasizes the need to consider an appropriate decoding system for the study of specific texts and to identify particular hindrances to reading in order to develop an improved decoding system. From this statement, I can establish an important fact that Saudi students, when faced with poetry in English, are faced with texts from a different culture and more often than not need intervention to clarify particular social, religious, cultural or linguistic points that are not obvious to a non-native reader of poetry in English.

Similarly, Compaore (2004) affirms that diverse cultural contexts account for differences in expression in writing, reinforcing Lye’s argument that cultural differences can cause differences in knowledge and experience. Furthermore, as language is not detached from the socio-cultural milieu in which it evolved, it is also imperative for a non-native speaker to have some degree of immersion. Hence, the area of diverse cultural contexts and teaching of poetry need to be equally recognized to help teachers reflect on the connections between students’ knowledge and their teaching practice.

Some researchers have emphasised and encouraged new teaching approaches that focus on different kinds of cultural knowledge. Bartolome (1994) has denounced the search for the ‘right’ teaching strategies and argued for a “humanizing pedagogy, one that respects and uses the reality, history, and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice” (173). The implementation of this method of teaching depends on each classroom situation, the students’ skills and their background knowledge. Educators’ practice must relate to the circumstances in which they are teaching poetry. The best teachers turn their students into self-learners and make them teacher-independent. Teaching poetry should encourage students to read on their own and to develop their interpretive skills. Research of this type supports the idea that the practical classroom setting is the appropriate place to find out about classroom transactions and problems that students face, based on the true experiences of teachers. Educators must be confident when they conduct research into their own practice (Zeichner and Tabachnick 1991). Their findings and unique pedagogic practice must be recognised and valued. In this respect, Simawe (2001) stresses the need to situate language in cultural, historical and linguistic contexts, which could greatly improve cross-cultural reading and
interpretation of poetry. It is in this spirit that my research situates itself in a particular discipline, in order to better identify the tools necessary for improving reading and analytical techniques for teaching poetry. Some, linguists like Topping (1968), go as far as arguing against the inclusion of poetry in English as a second language (ESL) curriculum because of its “structural complexity, lack of conformity to standard grammatical rules and remote cultural perspectives” (cited in Spack and Zamel 1998, 704). The idea that only what is intellectually familiar should be taught is intellectually limiting and a way of avoiding difficulties, which goes against everything this study stands for and is working towards.

Furthermore, Ian Haneur (2001) affirms the necessity of implementing cultural knowledge to reading poetry. He believes that doing so can provide referential knowledge which will allow reading and interpretation to take place. A lack of diverse cultural knowledge can limit the learner to his texts of own culture. While some referential knowledge may be shared by many cultures, there could be specific situations where a learner is at a loss. Thus, cultural knowledge is “important in that it provides a basis through which understanding is achieved” (4). Haneur further explains the uniqueness of poetry: “unique as poetry is in its ontological and epistemological properties as a literary genre, its linguistic and epistemic expression attracts attention to particular use of language and allows for diverse responses” (2003, 79). I draw on this unique nature of poetry in my study which does allow for distinct readings and interpretations and that this attribute is central for searching for reading techniques to improve the teaching of poetry. Yet, all the works above recognise the need for appropriate cultural knowledge in order to practice more effective reading of poetry.

Regardless of the strong support for the notion of culturally specific themes, concepts and ideas, there are also scholars who oppose and dispute the arguments that claim that poetry is culturally specific and that its reading and interpretation requires culturally specific knowledge. Hogan, (2002) believes in the universality of poetry based on its abstract underlying structures and claims that the differences between languages are trivial. He supports this statement with his belief that there is only one true language and that is the human one. This recognition of the universality of poetry concedes with the unique nature of poetry which allows for various responses.
2.4 Teaching poetry: Theoretical underpinnings and research

Poetry is presumably written as an aesthetic form of communication; yet the communication is in many situations limited to situations in which the poet and the reader share the same background. Poetry appeals to our preconceived conceptions, emotions and cultural ideals. The poets’ representation of this individual experience is unique to poetic discourse and provides the reader with insight into diverse experiences. An overview of both the linguistic and literary approaches to teaching poetry will discuss research that is relevant to improving the reading of poetry. This area of research is broad and it is not my intention to cover the full scope of literary theory and poetry reading and teaching, yet I will present various accounts for the purpose of appropriately contextualising this field and demonstrating the problematic issues facing other educators of poetry.

The editors of Poetry and Pedagogy, Retallack and Spahr (2006), reflect on the present reformation for teaching poetry. To highlight the innovative pedagogies introduced for writing poetry by the poets themselves, they state that “In the second half of the twentieth century, there were dramatic departures from the familiar in both poetry and pedagogy in America” (2006, xi). Their concern, however, is not focused on this revolutionary period. In fact, they include essays in their collection by various authors that reinforce the areas which need concentration. There is emphasis on new pedagogic techniques for literary teaching and they state that “unfortunately, a similar revivification of the teaching of poetry as literature has not occurred” or at least “not anywhere near as widely. With some notable exceptions, most teachers of literature are not avant-garde poets, not that they should be, and/but a gap has occurred that this book tries to address. Contemporary literary pedagogy is chronically behind contemporary literature by about a half a century” (2006, xii). They explain that the essays collected in their book aim not to “invent a new pedagogy, but to suggest that education must be in touch with the historical contemporary intersection” (2006, 2). They believe that the real question facing teachers and researchers is “how to invent a living poetry classroom, one that invites students to experience and make meaning of the forms of their era. This at the very least requires cognizance of the plurality of poetries that come out of our blatantly ‘multi’ world – multicultural, ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic” (2006, 3). I have selected works from this book and other valuable researchers to illustrate the following section on literary approaches.
2.4.1 Literary approaches

This section reviews some of the contributors to literary theory and more specifically to the analysis of poetical works. The basic concept which dominates this section is the resistance or apprehension that students feel to poetry and how it can be addressed. Greene (2006), Lupton (2003), Dubrow (2006) and Haugen (2006) have all looked at the problem of reading poetry and found various strategies for resolving it.

Roland Greene, in an essay in *Poetry and Pedagogy*, presents an interesting pedagogical methodology based on the innovative course called ‘New World Poetics’, which concentrates on early modern European texts about the Americas. The course presents itself as an investigation into “how American cultures are realized”, which is achieved by studying “the intersections of events, writings and large scale systems of thought” (2006, 80). Greene suggests a new way of teaching poetry by emphasising international and “trans historical perspectives” (80). He gives less attention to the author of a work because “New world studies is not a perspective but the possibility of many perspectives” (2006, 100). This teaching technique focuses on international perspectives in a poetic text, an approach which this study, with its focus on developing a teaching method that allows for improving the reading of poetry and individual perspectives, finds valuable.

One particularly ingenious teacher and researcher is Julia Reinhard Lupton (University of California, Irvine), whose work is described in Elaine Showalters’ book *Teaching Literature* (2003). Many teachers use metaphors and themes as ways of understanding the meaning of a poem. An example of her teaching ideas is her use of flower imagery to organise a course on the Renaissance lyric. She describes the social life of flowers in the contemporary world, and then draws on students’ local knowledge as a resource for reading Renaissance poetry. She believes that the trade in flowers depends on love and death, concepts which in turn indicate particular meanings in the reading of the poem. Lupton makes the important point with this particular application that teaching techniques should be based on the students’ knowledge. This supports the idea that it is necessary to plan a teaching method based on the circumstances and understanding of the poetry class being taught.

Heather Dubrow (University of Wisconsin) is another important educator, researcher and genre critic. Many believe that genre criticism is an outmoded approach to literature, but Dubrow finds it an appropriate way to teach poetry. She applies this idea in a course on
sixteenth-century poetry which she organises in terms of genre. She believes this makes it easier for undergraduates who have difficulty relating to specific literary forms. This method allows students to connect and relate genre to popular and social forms that they already know. Genre criticism itself is not the focal point, but a way of allowing the students to connect and relate to complex and important ideas. Students may become uninterested when they cannot basically connect to a poetry class. This was evident in my class: when students could not relate to the specific ideology of the poems in English due to the traditional teaching techniques, they became indifferent. I can draw from this literature that students need teaching techniques to help them connect and relate with the poems they are studying to improve the teaching of poetry. An example of such an attempt is Kristine Haugen teaching method. She has adopted a really innovative method of teaching poetry. She believes that parody is an excellent method for teaching poetry. In her poetry classes on “The Rape of the Lock,” she has the students work in groups of four on creating their own satirical productions.

Helen Vendler (2010) describes her approach in reading poetry in her book, Poems, Poets, Poetry. In this chapter she explains that the most valuable source for learning about poetry is a focus on language. She asserts that we need to model the readers experience with a text through close reading. This point reinforces a teaching technique with a focus on an approach which develops the reading of poetry.

Furthermore, Barbara Duch (2001) promotes A Problem-based learning (PBL) approach to reading poetry which originated from the theory that learning was a process in which the learners actively construct knowledge. This approach basically works around engaging students in learning through problem solving. Students are presented with a problem and work with other students to identify the problem statement and generate learning issues for their own self-directed learning. This belief supports the use of referential knowledge which will allow reading and interpretation of poetry to take place.

Similarly, Gilbert Muller (2003) a professor of English from Stanford University illustrates that an approach to poetry necessitates an understanding of works in the context of time and culture. Thus, according to Muller the context of a poetic work and learning poetry are connected and recognized to formulate an improved teaching approach.
There is also a group of researchers in Elaine Showalters’ book (Bloom 1984; Quinn 2003; Collins 2003) who believe in the effectiveness of memorisation as a pedagogic approach to teaching poetry. Although memorisation is one of the causes of the lack of critical reading and interpretation in the Saudi experience, this does not mean that memorisation as a skill in the poetry class is not practical in some learning situations. Memorisation is looked at by the following researchers as a skill which stimulates and improves the reading of a poem. It is also considered a teaching approach that enables the reader to experience the full potential of the sensibilities of the poem.

Harold Bloom (1984) strongly believes in the power of memorisation, which is one of the oldest pedagogical methods for teaching poetry. Learning poems by heart was once the sign and the pride of an educated person. Now it is not valued as a skill and is disappearing (cited in Greene 2006). Many believe that asking students to memorise poems can be a dull exercise that is inappropriate in a classroom which has limited time. Yet many poets and distinguished teachers of poetry still recommend memorisation as a useful pedagogical tool. Bloom believes that memorisation can be the first significant step in learning the true art of reading poems. These intensive moments of rereading can lead to discoveries of the inner meaning of the poem and can also help induce a sense of transcendence in the reader who recites it. This method would be appropriate for a native reader with knowledge of the structure of the language and sufficient referential capacity for the majority of the themes and ideas in the poem studied.

Alice Quinn, the poetry editor of the New Yorker, is another advocate of the memorisation method. Quinn explains that memorising is a special experience which allows you to come into contact with language in a very private form of experience. When you are memorising poems, you are connected intimately to the poet. She believes that the experience of memorising a poem can be a profound source of spiritual nourishment for the reader. In her poetry course at Columbia University, she says that she asks her students to memorise the poems they are analysing. She believes that although many educators refute the idea of memorisation, as a teaching technique it can distinctively change the students. Therefore, it is not strange that poets who also teach demand that their students recite poems from memory: “It gives them a great sense of how the thing is made, the sounds, how the words are chiming, a great sense of the current of the thought and the beautiful labour poems achieve” (2003,
This literature depicts a form of teaching which becomes effective when designed for specific classes and that seem to be based on the class situation and its needs.

Billy Collins is also another strong advocate of memorisation: “Anyone who has taken a poetry course with me […] knows that I am big on memorization” (2003, 23). He believes that it is important to memorise because when a reader memorises a poem, he makes it part of himself. Collins believes that poetry is especially suited for this because it began as a memory system, “Mnemosyne”. He explains that in poetry’s most ancient form, now familiar features like rhyme, metre, repetition and alliteration were simply “mnemonic devices – tricks to facilitate the storage and retrieval of information, and vital information at that.” In his utopian university, all students would recite a few lines from a poem as they receive their degrees (2003, 23). Although there have been some positive results in using memorisation as a teaching technique, these researchers do not actually try to improve independent reading techniques.

These forms, however, would be inappropriate for Saudi students who need to improve their reading and interpretation to allow them to engage with the poems. Yet, I can observe from these researchers in this section that they used a particular theoretical approach based on literary theory, which constitutes their individual investigation of poetry and pedagogy. This has been done because each undertaking evolved from different teaching or reading circumstances which lead to individualised attempts to present a particular framework as a medium for studying poetry.

### 2.4.2 Linguistic approaches

This section reviews some of the approaches to reading and analysing poetry based on linguistic theory. Researchers and educators such as Bernstein (2006), Jenkins (2006), Middlebrook (2003) and Kenner (2006) have addressed this issue by focusing on the language of the poem.

A researcher and teacher, Charles Bernstein, is a professor of poetry who has tried to implement a new strategy based on aspects of New Criticism. His response to “this chronic poetic euphoria is to provide intensive poetry immersion courses, something like teaching poetry like a second language.” (2006, 275). One particular feature in his approach requires
the usage of a particular tool that he devised called the “Poem Profiler”. The “Poem Profiler” is an “extension of aspects of New Criticism, one of whose significant virtues was its focus on the formal and linguistic features of a poem” (2006, 277). With this approach, students are asked to assess the levels of a variety of rhetorical features, including “stylistic textures and poetic diction” (2006, 277). This is done to help the student understand the organising concepts behind a poem and can thus be a guide to reading. Bernstein believes that reading poetry is not aimed at deciphering a fixed attainable meaning, but rather encourages “performing and responding to overlapping meanings, then difficulty ceases to be an obstacle and is transformed into an opening” (2006, 279). Bernstein goes further in his defence of the necessity of poetry, pedagogy and theory when he states that we need to think about the practical educative force of poetry and, from another angle, about the “performative” poetic practice of pedagogy (2006, v). He explains that poetry has a political role in society and in the schools, which serve society. Schools so often treat poetry as ornamental or value it for its conceptual form, but not for its performative practice. An important point stressed by Bernstein and relevant to this study is that poetry has a proactive role and students are taught to understand the organising concepts behind a poem to improve their reading.

Another important researcher and teacher is G. Matthew Jenkins, who teaches a literature course at Davenport College in Indiana. Jenkins believes that each student is able to make sense of a poem if he is taught to depend on his ability to interpret its meaning using four main components in analysis: “syntax, context, denotation and connotation” (2006, 214). This research is important because it allows for different inputs by different students, which ultimately changes the reading of the poem because, according to Jenkins, different class chemistry and various socioeconomic, gender, age or racial make-ups will bring out different interests in a particular work and can inspire teachers to change their presentation (2006, 221).

Another important educator is Diane Middlebrook, who is described in Elaine Showlaters’s *Teaching Literature* (2003). Middlebrook is a poet and researcher who perceives the major drawback to learning poetics to be students’ resistance. She suggests that poetry should be presented as an abstract concept before it exists in particular in order to allow students to grasp the platonic idea of poetry more easily. The most effective teaching moments are when students understand the sonic and auditory relationship. The sonic patterns represent codes for understanding the meaning of the poem. Middlebrook also thinks that it is of utmost importance that students read everything, including punctuation, because it is all vital for the
interpretation of a poem. She also stresses the need to learn in groups, because poetry is not something that can be learnt alone. Interpretation requires students to hear other people's comments and views on a poem. A significant point for this study which Middlebrook states is that professors should not impose a “swift closure” on meaning without allowing students to contribute their own interpretation, because “two equally plausible interpretations can exist together” (2003, 26). She stresses that the potential power of teaching poetry depends on active student engagement with both poetic language and meaning. This point is important for this study which endorses a teaching method that depends on students’ involvement.

Hugh Kenner (2006) in Elaine Showlaters’s *Teaching Literature* (2003) is a researcher in the physical properties of poetry. His method of teaching poetry is based on reading it aloud. Kenner believes that by reading aloud or listening to exemplary readings, students can understand the poem much better, because the force of the poem comes to them slowly. He believes there are many advantages to this method, but this slowing down of the pace of reading is the most significant. Kenner makes an important point that is related to this study; he emphasises a method of teaching that nudges students, continually, from eye to ear and allows phonetics and reading to work hand in hand for a fuller appreciation of the poetic text.

Another important theory is that of Widdowson (1979), who argues that studies of reading have represented it as a “reasoning activity” (cited in Grabe 1988, 56). This means that the reader creates meaning on the basis of textual clues. Widdowson explains that readers develop a coherent interpretation of texts through the interactive process of “combining textual information with the information a reader brings to a text” (cited in Grabe 1988, 56). This particular study combines two pertinent factors, teaching poetry to non-natives who are bringing in their Arab linguistic and cultural knowledge and supporting them to read a poetic text.

Alex Rodger has a principle for reading literature and especially poetry based on the primacy of communication awareness and language consciousness. He says that students need gradual and systematic training to read literary works. They also need to learn to comprehend “the ways in which authors, especially poets, exploit the possibilities latent in the established code or system of the language in order to create and convey their uniquely personal kinds of meanings” (1983, 39). This study and the above literature on linguistic approaches to reading and analysing poetry seems to focus on innovative teaching strategies which can be productive for the student and even for society (Bernstein 2006). Some educators indicate
that the physical properties of the poem need to be central to the study of poetry (Kenner 2006). The findings of Jenkins (2006), who teaches the interpretation of the meaning of a poem using syntax, context, denotation and connotation, are successful and allow for different inputs from different students. These different approaches and critical views support the idea that the class environment should be examined so that pedagogical practices can be based on students’ specific needs. These teaching methods, with their distinctive and individualised strategies for a better reading and interpretation of poetry in English, support the possibility that teaching techniques and learning skills in the poetry class can be improved.

It is essential for this study to look at the major issues which affect non-native students and at teaching approaches that address non-native English speakers’ problems when they study poetry in English. Later sections explain the various teaching strategies for non-native readers of poetry, which attend to cultural themes with which the students are unfamiliar.

2.4.3 English poetry-Approaches to non-native English speakers

Different educators may face different obstacles, yet the most important theoretical applications in this thesis are those that are directly related to the non-native situation. There have been many attempts to apply theoretical frameworks to create new approaches to reading poetry.

This section will begin with Smita Mujumdar, a teacher of English literature in India who also recognises the racial, cultural and linguistic difficulties that face non-native students. She believes that these obstacles do not reduce the necessity of teaching poetry in English. She states that the non-native readers will not be “familiar with the history or social upheavals of that country” (2010, 211), yet new teaching skills can contribute to their effective learning. Traditional one-sided lecturing should be replaced with new teaching skills that allow learners to feel the experience of the writer. Methods of teaching should be modified to concentrate on skill-based and self-learning techniques by using audio and video aids and participation in seminars. Mujumdar believes this will “remove the cultural and linguistic barriers and make the learning more fruitful” (2010, 213). This study is significant in its focus on modifying teaching techniques to concentrate on skill-based and self-learning techniques which can remove the cultural and linguistic barriers.
Another non-native experience with teaching poetry is presented by Mohammad Khatib (2011), who teaches at a University in Tehran, Iran. He states that his long experience of teaching poetry at college led him to conclude that students’ negative attitude to poetry was directly connected to the inappropriate selection of texts and to an ineffective teaching method. His study suggests a new approach to teaching English poetry to non-natives, which is necessary because poetry teaching is now dominated by the ‘extrinsic’ properties of the text itself. Teachers bombard students with biographical, historical, aesthetic and philosophical information. In contrast, the focus of Khatib’s approach is on reading the text, which he facilitates using multiple skills such as “vocabulary expansion, reconstruction, reduction, replacement, matching, reading loud by instructor, silent and oral reading by students, writing poetry and many other techniques” (2011, 165). These various approaches to the reading of the poem give the students a chance to react based on their personal emotions and feelings. Khatib believes that this self-development and exploration is far better for the student than waiting to be given the teachers’ own interpretation of the poem because “much of the pleasure of poetry lies in the creative reading” (2011, 168). This approach to teaching reinforces the need for students to be able to react, explore and develop their reading of poetry which is pertinent to my study.

Another significant experience is that of Zeyuan Hu (2010), a Chinese teacher and researcher who adopted a hypothesis for optimal understanding and learning through the acquisition skills in environments in which they do not feel any pressure to learn or gain information. Hu (2010) states that when a poetry class is not pressured to analyse a poem within a specific framework and instead students are allowed to discuss general topics like love, life and nature, which offer various possibilities of meaning, a foreign student can relate the poem to his own cultural ideas and appreciate its beauty. One vital point in this study is his method of discussion in the teaching of poetry between the teacher and the student which can be an excellent opportunity for learners to develop linguistic, metaphoric and cultural ideas in a non-stressful atmosphere.

Furthermore, Wisam Mansour’s (1995) work concerning the attempts of non-native speakers of English to study English poetry is highly relevant to this study because students may share the similar obstacles of language and culture. Mansour gives the example of using hermeneutics and deconstruction to teach English poetry to non-native students in an English Department in Jordan. This teaching method focuses on giving the reader a method which allows him to work independently in order to enhance his skills of literary appreciation skills.
and improve his linguistic competence. Mansour believes that the traditional factual historical approach confines students to absorbing historical information without emphasising the poem itself, and thus leads to the students becoming “mere containers of data” (1995, 33). Although he is not against teaching the historical context of a poem, he thinks that the handling of a poem should emphasise individual response. This could be done using different pedagogic techniques such as drawing up the ideas, colouring or imagining the images in the poem, or miming or debating its content. An important point in Mansour’s approach is that it requires more input from the students than the teachers, whose primary role becomes monitoring and inspiring the students, who thus become more involved participants and can express their “reactions, feelings, imagination, sense of right and wrong, moral values and judgments even their gender and political attitude” (1995, 34).

Such studies are important for the present work because it is necessary to consider works and approaches from situations similar to that of this study that deal with the differences and incompatibilities which ultimately make learning circumstances difficult. The individual pedagogic approaches discussed above all essentially focus on the need to improve the reading of non-native English speakers when they are faced with cultural or referential difficulties in their study of an English poetic text. The various innovative teaching techniques work in different specific classroom situations; in each instance the researcher and educator had specific goals that his approach sought to fulfil. Mansour’s (1995) technique encourages individual response. Hu (2010) emphasises discussions of general topics related to poetry, which offer non-native students various possibilities for meaning and allow them to relate poems to their own cultural ideas and thus to appreciate the poems’ beauty. Khatib (2011) concentrates his approach on reading the text. These approaches emphasise the idea of individual response in the poetry classroom and support the concept of tailored teaching methods.

The literature thus far reviewed has emphasised the need to recognise the role of culturally specific problems in non-native reading and interpretation of poetry in English. For the purpose of this study I will therefore review the literature that is relevant to culturally relevant pedagogy.
2.5 Culturally relevant teaching

Culturally relevant teaching is a term used by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994). It refers to teachers creating a bridge between students’ home and school lives in order to integrate the students’ culture with the syllabus while continuing to meet the expectations of the curricular requirements of the district and the state. There are many other terms used to denote this type of pedagogy including: culturally responsive, culturally respective, culture-sensitive, culturally rooted, culturally relevant, culturally appropriate and culturally congruent (Campbell 2004; Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings 1992, 1994; Yamauchi 2005).

Culturally relevant teaching uses the background, knowledge and experience of the students to formulate teachers’ lessons or teaching methods. Gloria Ladson-Billings first introduced this teaching approach as a way of making teachers aware of the reality that many of their students would come to their classrooms with different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial and social class backgrounds. One important example found in American classrooms is when African American and other ethnic children face difficulties in America’s public schools because of cultural reasons. The need for this form of education is based on a sense of care and responsibility from the educators themselves. Gay identifies the power of caring as one of the most important components of culturally relevant pedagogy: “The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective… It teaches to and through strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming." (2000, 29). The study provides insight into the individual nature of difficulties with different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial and social class backgrounds student and teachers experience in the context of pedagogy.

Beach defines social and cultural significance to highlight their role in the understanding of the text. He explains that a social perspective acknowledges that a “reader’s social role and perceptions of the social context” (1993, 8) may shape the literary transaction, while a cultural perspective recognises that the “reader’s cultural role, attitudes, contexts” may also shape transactions with text. Equally important is a textual perspective which brings to the fore the “reader’s knowledge of conventions” (1993, 8) – that is, the reader’s “knowledge of narrative conventions, literary elements, genre conventions, and other aspects of text” (cited in Temple et al. 2002, 61). This study recognises perspectives that shape the pedagogical transaction for improving the reader’s role involving a capacity for self directed development.
Eisenhart’s view of cultural pedagogy is that culture can empower people, but it can also hold them back because there are real “social, economic, and power differences that separate people and their experiences”, and each individuals’ “perception of the world can be constrained by culture and the enduring social structures that culture mediates” (2001, 215). Eisenharts’ point is relevant for this study because it shows that it is essential for researchers and educators to understand and work with culture and its needs if they are to improve teaching circumstances.

Many researchers have developed and supported theories of culture-centred pedagogy, which believe that “since how one thinks, writes, and speaks reflects culture and affects performance, aligning instruction to the cultural” concepts of different students “can improve student achievement” (Gay 2000, xv-xvi). These researchers include Au and Jordan (1981), Gay (2000), Howard (2001), Irvine (2003), Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2001), Lee (1995) and Villegas and Lucas (2007), who all support the potential of theories of culture centred education to decrease the educational gap due to distinctions between cultural forms. The call for culturally appropriate pedagogies has found supportive echoes in relation to the import of Western or European educational theories, practices and knowledge in other parts of the world. The present study draws on such research since it focuses on the particular issue of teaching poetry in English to Saudi students.

A culturally appropriate pedagogy is defined by Singh as a form of education that “melds instruction to better fit the expectations and cultural patterns of the group being served” (2011, 14). He also explains that the general concept of this pedagogy as it is seen by many scholars as a “group’s language, culture, and its worldview built into the routines, curriculum, and structure of the school” (2011, 14). Furthermore, the idea that the teaching of poetry and theory should be linked is best expressed by Zettelmann as “an approach to poetry grounded in theory does not foreclose discussion but opens up new and exciting vistas” (2005, 8). These vistas are important since they connect new techniques for teaching and reading of poetry with theoretical underpinnings introduced by researchers and educators.

Christensen (2000) states that it is necessary to acknowledge students’ lives, culture and language in the classroom and to provide them with techniques so that they can act on their own reading of poetry. In the field of poetry and pedagogy, many researchers have argued for the centrality of an appropriate pedagogy as a means of improving teaching methods,
although others refuse to change. In terms of the analysis of poetry, many have openly accepted the emergence of new theories about the differences in cultural knowledge. This is explained by John Lye (2008), who states that meaning requires competency in reading because meaning is connected to culture. This point is significant for this study which emphasises the role of reading in the teaching techniques. He also explains that different conventions and ways of reading and writing create a basis for understanding, because meaning requires a negotiation between cultural meanings across time, culture, gender and class. The findings here reveal Lye’s general point that ‘meaning’ is a phenomenon derived from the traditions of reading and thinking and from understanding the world in which the reader is educated and socialised.

Acheson and Huk, the editors of *The New Poetry*, make an important point about the differences between ideologies and philosophies relevant to culturally appropriate pedagogy and this study. They state that “Throughout the century, the hierarchies of values that once made stable poetics possible have been disappearing. In the absence of shared moral and religious ideals, common social or sexual mores or political ideologies, or any philosophy on the conduct of life, plurality has flourished” (1996, 3). They also make clear that not everyone accepts this new poetic “democracy” and its plurality of forms and voices, as many reviews in important poetry journals have highlighted. Yet major theorists like Terry Eagleton explain that we must remember that with the new poetic democracy “the marginal becomes somehow central” (1996, 3). Acheson and Huk also state that there is no “new pluralism” because they believe that “Theorists, critics, teachers, and in turn, their readers and students are now being trained to train a critical eye on literary history’s occlusions” (1996, 3). These studies are consistent with teaching methods which will allow for the recognition of new pedagogic theories of teaching.

Moody also argues for new pedagogic theories of teaching for literature. He explains “that both those who teach literature, and those who teach subjects, have a steady view of the potential of literature in the total curriculum, which is neither exaggerated nor undermined. Particularly important is it to ensure that teachers understand how to present literature (which may involve more than conventional teaching) so that it’s potential can be fully realized” (1983, 18). Moody further emphasises his point by recalling Alex Rodger, who he believes is
a good example for literary studies. Rogers states that the job of the teachers of literature is not to give students “predigested meanings” to accept as guaranteed critical opinions; rather, readers should be “reasonably skilled and sensitive readers, able to feel and judge for themselves, with fidelity to the textual facts, in response to any work of literature they may choose to read” (1969, 89). His comments are important for this study which shows the need for new pedagogic applications that allow for the independent analysis of the poetic works.

Geneva Gay also argues for a culturally appropriate pedagogy. She states that it is necessary in teaching because it can be liberating: it shows students that no single version of “truth” is total and permanent. Gay explains that “The validation, information, and pride” that culturally appropriate pedagogy “generates are both psychologically and intellectually liberating” (2010, 37). This liberation is necessary for the Saudi students. She also states that it can help students to better understand the necessity of cultural interconnections as ways of allowing continuous reading and renewed interpretation. These comments are central to this study, which places great emphasis on new techniques for teaching poetry based on enabling readers to gain skills that will allow them to read and analyse independently.

The literature discussed above shows the extent to which recognising the existence of diverse cultures and applying culturally appropriate pedagogy can liberate non-native students intellectually and psychologically (Gay 2010). These studies discuss whether applying culturally appropriate teaching method in the teaching of poetry in English makes for more effective and productive analysis of the poetic texts. Although students may prefer an easier method of ready-made interpretations of the poetic text, it is necessary to develop their competency in reading of poetry in English. Gilroym-Scot states that “students do not know how to approach literature, and teachers do not know how to present it” (cited in Mansour 1999, 28). The above studies are significant for this study which emphasise the need to attempt to intervene in the teaching method of poetry and to encourage teachers to formulate an appropriate pedagogy which targets students’ needs.

2.5.1 Opposing views on the use of a culturally appropriate pedagogy
Zettelmann and Rubik explain the reason it is difficult to apply untraditional approaches to poetry is the ‘archaic myth’ of divine inspiration and poetic frenzy which has caused an “irrational aura” (2005, 8) to be imbedded in the mind of readers and writers alike that poetry
is put on a pedestal and reserved for the emotion. They continue to explain that “modern poetry theory forms an enclave far from the influences of mainstream literary theory and still works with axioms derived basically from post-Romantic conceptions of genre and reception, though perhaps a more developed and differentiated form” (2005, 8). They continue to say that the “results are a failure to make use of findings of modern linguistic, literary and cultural theory, an impressionistic and evaluative procedure of analysis, and a terminological pluralism that defies constructive academic debate” (2005, 8).

Compaore (in Al Jumah 2007) supports the universal claim in learning and reveals the presence of a common class of metaphors in her survey of English, French and Moore, an African language. The author claims that there are only a small number of cultural linguistic specific idioms found. Hence, the author does not support culturally appropriate teaching since the relationship between universal and culture-specific needs more study.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), presents some exceptions and unsuccessful strategies with culturally relevant teaching in her book, *But that's just good teaching!: the case for culturally relevant pedagogy*. One example is a case where failure was shown in achievement strategies for African American students; *Culturally Relevant Teaching Ways With Words* (Heath, 1983).

The literature opposing the culturally appropriate pedagogy is scarce based on my knowledge and that is due to the positive results many researchers have experienced when taking diverse cultures into consideration in their teaching.

### 2.5.2 Applications of culturally appropriate pedagogy

This section describes some research in the area of appropriate cultural pedagogy and some successful applications of it that have resolved specific local educational needs. Jennifer Kang (2003) investigates a particular cultural need in a Korean context and applies this approach to cross cultural differences through the use of narrative structural features shared by first language written narratives produced by native speakers of American English and narratives written by Koreans. She shows that specifically Korean cultural strategies were more evident in the learners’ English narrative discourse. Another case is presented by Nguyen (2006), a researcher who attempted a culturally appropriate pedagogy for group learning in a Confucian Heritage culture. Nguyen believes that complex cultural conflicts
arise when a Western educational methodology is applied in other contexts without changing it to improve its compatibility with the ‘host culture’. These studies are relevant to my study, since the application of culturally appropriate pedagogy was constructed to allow students to be interactive with cross cultural texts.

The concept of culturally appropriate pedagogy is also examined by Claire Kramsch and Patricia Sullivan (1996). Their work centres on the way which the materials and concepts in ELT in Vietnam have moved from a concern for the authentic to an interest in the appropriate. This study is significant because it suggests that an appropriate pedagogy that takes in account of both the global and local needs of learners of English is likely to be more successful. They also recognise that a problem is caused for learners when English texts are used in contexts other than those of their original producers.

These works are relevant to my research to allow for a better understanding of the cultural context of poems in English. This is where this study places itself as an exploration of a teaching method with regard to the specific background of Saudi students in order to develop their reading of poetry in English. Calling attention to and confronting obstacles in learning will be necessary to address these social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences by finding ways of providing skills which empower the students with skills that assist and improve their reading of the poetic text

2.6 An exploration for culturally appropriate pedagogy
The previous literature illustrates that students must be engaged actively in the exploration and interpretation of texts, without merely being told what to see. Maley (1989) supports this view when he states that “students develop an understanding of how literature functions as a by-product of their interactive engagements with the texts” (11). Furthermore, Widdowson (1975) argues for developing the capacity of students to read and response independently. Engaging students is also of great importance in initially motivating students in this study. This will necessitate that I look at Systemic Functional Linguistics and explore its potential as a framework for teaching Saudi students since it combines ideological and cultural analysis through a linguistic activity.
2.6.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics

SFL is an important theory for the purposes of this thesis because it gives students a lens with which to conduct in-depth analysis of authors’ structures and words in context (Scott 2005). M.A.K Halliday was an important contributor to linguistic analysis. Halliday has contributed significantly to theories of language and is best known for developing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which “transformed views about language by making choice a core concept of his theory” (Fonataine 2012, 42), where the choice in the language system is between meanings rather than structures.

Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) within SFL described language as a “semiotic system” and thus for Halliday “the internal organization of language is not arbitrary but embodies a positive reflection of the functions that language has evolved to serve” (Halliday 1985). This is especially important because it means that language must be explained as a way of expressing meanings that are created within a social system. As a result, SFG is practical and useful for readers because it allows them to describe and explain how social reality is encoded in language. Halliday believes that “The value of a theory lies in the use that can be made of it, and I have always considered a theory of language to be essentially consumer oriented” (1985, 7). Therefore, Halliday introduced the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory, which was used in linguistics as a tool for textual analysis and for understanding the meaning of a text, he states that “this type of linguistics is central to the analysis of poems and it allows readers who lack the proper schemata to attempt analysis independently. This approach to literature can enable foreign students to see the way language is used to express situations unconventionally. It is believed that it makes learning poetry more accessible” (1985, 7).

Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) within SFL explains and describes the organisation of the ‘meaning-making resources’ of language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Every linguistic choice we make is systematic, and we say things in certain ways as the result of choices. Such choices are made from a set of systems which allow us unlimited ways of creating meaning (Bloor and Bloor 2004). Our experiences of the world, of text types and of socially and culturally bounded situations help to build up our schemata of these systems. Van Dijk’s (1977) assumed normality of the world could serve to explain how these experiences enable us to distinguish between different genres of text (spoken or written) by
their patterns of linguistic choices, and to notice when choices are inappropriate (cited in Brown and Yule 1983). SFG is thus a study of the construction of meaning through systems of lexico-grammatical choices that serve functions in social and cultural contexts.

Halliday (2004) describes the various benefits for SFL. He explains that a “text is a rich many-faceted phenomenon that ‘means ‘in many different way” (3). He further explains that this can be explored from different angles. One angle perceives the text as an object in its own right, asking “why does the text mean what it does (to me, or to anyone else) why is it valued as it is” (3). The second angle perceives the text as “an instrument for finding out about something else” and asks “what the text reveals about the system of the language” (3). Halliday says that these two perspectives complement each other because we cannot explain why a text means what it does and the various readings and values that may be given to it except by relating it to the “linguistic system as a whole”. A linguistic system allows students to understand a poetic text and how it generates meaning. SFL is used to provide tools that improve the teaching of poetry. Halliday (2004) supports this and states that SFL can be used by those who are interested in using their understanding of grammar to analyse and interpret the “educational, social, and literary” aspects of texts (5).

Ruqaiya Hasan and Peter Fries (1995) illustrate the value of SFL by highlighting three main points which they consider to be fundamental to it and are relevant to this study. First they state that language is the potential to creating meanings which bear a systemic relation to the conditions of human existence and that the “primary goal of linguistics is to explain not only how meanings are construed but also how they maintain a systematic relation to the already linguistically construed socially defined word” (xv). Second they state that since “language is seen as a powerhouse for the creation of these different sorts of meanings, the description of language logically demands attention to what a lexicogrammatical device does” (xvi). Their third point is that there is a need to focus on the formal properties of this lexicogrammatical category. From these points, I can derive some fundamental benefits to help students define and understand the structure of the English Language.

Thompson (2004) also shows the need for a “systemic method” for analysing the sentence (2). He explains that any complete analysis of the sentence needs to account for “meaning and the form (and of the links between them)” (2). According to Thompson, the form of the language can be explained by its function. Thompson also describes the value of SFL to
students who have learnt English as a foreign language and focus more on the traditional grammatical analysis. He states that SFL allows them to approach the text from a “different tack” (2). Hence, SFL can play a critical role in supporting the reading of poetic texts in English for the Saudi students.

J.R. Martin (2007) explains that SFL is a network of parameters with “several scales” (60). He explains the idea of a knowledge structure in the context of literacy development and in relation to academic discourse. He says it has become increasingly important to focus on the knowledge encoded in various genres as a “way of getting teachers focused on literacy across the curriculum”, since reading and writing are seen as a tool for learning (34). He explains that the informing theory for such work is SFL, drawing from functional grammar. Following Martin Brian (1991) argues that the slow build-up of meta-language gives teachers and students an in-depth and robust understanding of how language works. Therefore, he states, meta-language can be viewed as teaching that sticks. From these statements, I can establish a definition of SFL which can serve as an implicit theoretical approach in responding to reading problems for Saudi students.

Suzanne Eggins (2004) explains that SFL has moved from “marginal to main stream as an approach to language” (xiii). She asserts that SFL can be useful for literature students and states that exposure to this context has broadened her own experience with text and has also made her think about how SFL can be made accessible to students who lack training in linguistics training but are interested in analysing how texts work (xiii). Eggins’s own experience supports my research on using SFL to improve the reading and accessibility of poetic texts for poetry students in the English literature department at KSU.

Matthiessen, Teruya and Lam (2010) elaborate on the widespread use and recognition of Systemic Functional Linguistics. They describe the growth in the use of SFL in a wide range of other languages, including: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish and Vietnamese, which has become an important part of its development. This indicates that SFL has attracted the attention of much research in various subjects and languages, including the Arabic language, which is the native language of the students in this study.
Unsworth (2005) also supports the use of SFL for a wide range of research. He says that there are many traditions of linguistics research and “SFL is distinctive in that the theory has always been developed in response to questions about language in applied contexts”, the most important of which as far as this study is concerned are educational, sociological and literary (1). This statement is instrumental in defining the support of SFL in my research since it deals with differing linguistic structure when reading poetry in English.

Fawcett (2000) recognises the value of Systemic Functional Linguistics, which deserves to be “regarded as a major current theory” (xiii). He explains that the division between theory and application is artificial, since the influences work fruitfully in both directions. He goes on to explain that “SFL has its own sets of assumptions about the essential nature of language, about the goals of linguistics, about the methods through which they should be pursued, and about the relations between theory, description and application” (xiii). These points support the use of SFL for improving the teaching of poetry in English since they present a model of language that can be illustrated, explained and applied. This can be crucial for Saudi students who are not native English speakers and need this form of support to understand the context of English poems.

Caroline Coffin and James Donohue (2012) have focused on the approaches to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) research and teaching. These approaches draw from ethnographic and socio-cultural traditions and SFL as a theory of language has been used for linguistic analysis. This is done to establish the nature of disciplinary discourses and to encourage students to engage in them by concentrating on methods which identify practices, student identities and the conflicts that individual language user’s experience. Coffin and Donohue demonstrate the similarities and differences between epistemology and methodology and recognise the potential for collaboration across the research and teaching communities of SFL and Academic Literacy. For the purpose of this study, I will show some applications of SFL and teaching to determine their benefits. Few studies have been conducted in the area of pedagogy, poetry and SFL, yet some general applications will be presented to determine connections educators and researchers made between their pedagogical decisions and information they had learned.
2.6.1.1 Applications of SFL

For the purposes of looking at SFL as part of my teaching method, I will present some examples of how the use of SFL as a framework. Coffin (2010) argues that the “theoretical lens of SFL helps to see language as a tool for thinking with, a meaning-making resource (as opposed to, for example, a set of rules)” (3). She explains that this can be done by providing a set of labels for describing texts and clauses in functional terms, enabling teachers to make visible and explicit to students how texts produce meaning. This argument is essential for this study, since it shows that the use of tools for producing meaning in educational contexts can be valuable for teachers and students.

Mary Schleppegrell (2010) offers a good example of how a narrative text can be used by teachers through the lens of SFL to pinpoint how grammar functions to produce different kinds of meaning at different points in the text. Schleppegrell devises activities that help to show the relationship between grammar and meaning (e.g. reading for more active ‘doing’ processes in the main part of the story and for more reflective ‘being’ and ‘sensing’ processes in the final evaluative stage). Thus, Schleppegrell presents a method which can orient students towards seeing grammar as a resource for understanding and producing texts.

Sheena Gardner (2010) also supports the use of SFL in assessing students’ work to support their learning. She focuses on how students reporting the writing of story endings provide a chance for feedback. She suggests that an “SFL informed awareness of language would help teachers to check whether the questions they ask are designed to respond to what the learners say” and “move them forward linguistically by raising their awareness of the relationship between grammatical choice, meaning and context” (4). This shows that SFL can influence both student and teacher awareness of poetic texts in English.

John Polias (2010) presents an example of the use of SFL to improve learning by raising the issue of whether SFL can be applied to multimodal or multisemiotic texts. He describes the innovative concept of pedagogical resonance to illustrate how learning is likely to be more effective when different semiotic resources are working in unison. Some of the examples of this application look into “how visual and verbal meaning in a range of genres (such as reports and explanations) can be patterned such that each resonates with the other, to maximize pedagogic impact” (5). This research addresses a relevant issue for this study in the innovative influence of SFL and maximizing teaching methods.
Rachel Whittaker (2010) focuses on the use of SFL for language education. She explains that knowing disciplinary content includes knowing the “language of the discipline, and that knowledge is created in and through language” and argues that the “focus on content is what triggers the use of language and gives meaning to the need for and use of both receptive and productive skills in that language” (4). Furthermore, she indicates that in some cases teachers often teach their specialist subjects in a language in which students are not fully competent – she herself was put in this situation when she was teaching history in English to students who spoke Spanish as their native language. Whittaker shows how a model of language such as SFL can support teachers put in this position in their task of simultaneously teaching content and language by revealing the key features of their discipline’s discourse. She states that it can also support teachers to make interventions that allow them to construct the meanings they need in the subject, rather than just providing them with the subject’s technical vocabulary. This teaching outcome supports SFL as a form of teaching intervention for poetry in English since it shows the architecture of the English language.

In the previous literature on SFL, researchers recognize many of its areas to be valuable. It is a constructive learning tool for non-native students with experience of different linguistic and rhetorical structures and social, cultural and religious ideologies. SFL gives the lecturer a powerful tool with which to explain the language being used. This can be accomplished by focusing on the use of SFL as a language oriented study of the text and its context, which can help develop students’ reading and analysis of poetic texts in English. One of the primary reasons for using SFL is to allow students to interpret the ideological implications of an English poem by analysing its choice of wording. Thompson (2004) explains that SFL “sets out to investigate what the range of relevant choices are, both in the kinds of meanings that we might want to express (or functions that we might want to perform) and in the kinds of wordings that we can use to express these meanings” (8). The literature reviewed above also supports the use of SFL for expanding meaning making resources. It also indicates that SFL can be fundamental to developing students’ knowledge and sense of the nature of the English language, which can support them in different academic learning environments, especially those in which they are not native to the English language.
2.7 Conclusion

To sum up, we have seen that Arab scholars recognise the problems faced by Arab learners and the factors which stand in the way of their reading and interpretation, but barely discuss specific issues pertaining to defining tasks and selecting the appropriate tools with which to improve the pedagogy of poetry for the reading and interpretation of poetic texts.

Furthermore, in order to determine what connections researchers made for making pedagogical decisions researchers argue for the necessity of the recognition of cultural difference for implementing a teaching method for studying poetry in English.

Whereby an overview review of literature on linguistic and literary approaches to teaching poetry was discussed and these different approaches and critical views support the idea that the class environment should be examined so that pedagogical practices can be based on students’ specific needs to support the possibility that teaching techniques and learning skills in the poetry class can be improved.

Additionally, observations by teachers and researchers on specific problems in non-native reading and interpretation of poetry in English emphasise the idea of individual response in the poetry classroom and support the concept of tailored teaching methods. From the discussion on culturally appropriate pedagogy, we may conclude that it is significant to emphasise the need to attempt to intervene in the teaching method of poetry and to encourage teachers to formulate an appropriate pedagogy which targets students’ needs.

Hence, as we noticed above, each of these research areas have supported students being engaged actively in the exploration and interpretation of texts and argue for developing the capacity of students to read and response independently. Whereby, an overview on SFL for expanding meaning making resources was reviewed and indicated that SFL can be fundamental to developing students’ knowledge and sense of the nature of the English language, which can support them in different academic learning environments.
The previous studies and commentaries have encouraged me to develop an appropriate pedagogy for the poetry classroom, one that recognises the structure of the language and its primacy in understanding context. The teaching method I propose for improving Saudi students’ analysis of poetic texts depends on an understanding of the constructive nature of the English Language and of the mechanisms of the language of poetry. It also emphasises the need to study a decoding system based on linguistic applications which build their analytical ability towards more accessible interpretation, and hence improve students’ confidence in reading poetry in English. It is therefore necessary to apply the Systemic Functional Linguistic approach as the primary technique for my study. The aim of the new teaching method presented in this study is to stimulate students to read and analyse poems and to encourage their responses based on a decoding system. The main focus of attention in this approach is the text itself, not commentary or extensive background knowledge of the poet and his period.

My contribution will attempt to address a gap in the literature by dealing with an area which is rarely studied and has not been given enough attention. There is a need for research and new pedagogy regarding Saudi and other Arab students who face difficulties in reading and interpreting poetic texts in English due to differences in thought, ideology and language. The teaching method I have formulated responds to a particular problem within a specific context. This research attempts to describe a pedagogy I have come to identify as ‘culturally appropriate’ (Ladson-Billings 1992) and to argue for its centrality to the improvement of Saudi students’ learning of poetry. It also encourages their awareness of linguistic tools and a wider consideration and understanding of the interaction between reader and text. This teaching method presented in this study aims to persuade students to read and analyse poems and other texts with the support of analytical tools. Such a system is necessary because ultimately most Saudi students in the English department go into professions, particularly teaching and translation that stress the need for a strong grasp of the English language. There is also an interest in professions that are related to government administration, banking, the media and diplomatic work, all of which also necessitate knowledge of English. The central role of Systemic Functional Linguistics for improving the analysis of poetic texts in English for Educational purposes in Saudi Arabia has not to my knowledge been given any attention to this date.
It is relevant at this juncture to present the fundamental research questions that this study seeks to answer.

The primary research questions addressed in this study are the following:

1- What are the learning obstacles in the poetry classroom at King Saud University and what happens when poetry teachers at King Saud University incorporate a culturally appropriate pedagogy which recognises their different ideologies and linguistic and rhetorical structures?

2- What evidence is there that Systemic Functional Linguistics can help Saudi students to develop an independent approach to the analysis of poetry in English?

3- What are Saudi students’ perceptions on the SFL based teaching method to improve their critical reading and interpretation of poetic texts in English?

2.8 Summary of chapter

In this literature review I have attempted to present the literature that is relevant to teaching poetry in English to Saudi students who need a culturally appropriate pedagogy. I have reviewed studies which relate to teaching poetry in English in a Saudi and Arab context. These studies highlighted different problems in the learning of English poetry and commentaries on the teaching of poetry in English in the Arab region. The chapter concentrated on some scholarship which addressed the problems that are faced by the students in Saudi Arabia. It described Arab research on new pedagogic approaches to the teaching of poetry in English. It then focused on the culture-specificity of poetry and presented some teaching applications and commentaries. The last section of the chapter presented this study’s research questions, rationale for the study, and identified the gap in the current literature. The next chapter describes the methodology used for this research and the research design.
CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used for this research. It presents the rationale for using an SFL-based pedagogy to improve Saudi students’ reading and interpretation of poetry in English. It then describes the design of the research and discusses the selection and justification of the tools offered by Systemic Functional Grammar. Then present the setting, participants and data collection procedures: preliminary questions, case study, post-experience questions, class observation, and interviews from the students regarding the use of this methodology. Then it discusses how the introductory stage for the SFL based pedagogy was enacted. The chapter also covers issues of validity, ethical considerations and, lastly, the limitations of the study.

3.2 Why SFL is appropriate for this case study

The following section describes the grammar of English in its basic principles and categories, using Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics to introduce the theory to my students for this study. An SFL based approach which is rooted in Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004) theoretical description of language. Halliday and Matthiessen’s write:

A text is the product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems—a system network. Systemic theory gets its name from the fact that the grammar of a language is represented in the form of system networks, not as an inventory of structures. Of course, structure is an essential part of the description; but it is interpreted as the outward form taken by systemic choices, not as the defining characteristic of language. A language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice. (p. 23)
They also explain that, “the system of a language is instantiated in the form of text” (2004, p. 26). Systemic functional linguistics proposes the study of language in reference to the meanings produced through language in use (Halliday, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Thompson, 2004). SFL is important for my pedagogy since it gives students a chance to interpret texts by studying the language. Eggins explains that SFL theorists claim: “that language use is functional”; “that its function is to make meanings”; “that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged”; and “that the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meaning by choosing” (Eggins, 2004, p. 3). Hence, texts are instances of the systemic choices being made and we can discover what meaning choices have been made over other possible choices.

Key to the use of SFL for analysis is the notion of Metafunction, referring to three separate strands of meaning that in parallel contributes to the overall meaning in the text (Halliday, 1994). Thompson summarizes the three Metafunctions in a simple language as follows: "We use language to talk about our experience of the world, including the worlds in our own minds, to describe events and status and the entities involved in them; we also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relations with them, to influence their behavior, to express our own viewpoint on things in the world, and to elicit or change; finally, in using language, we organize our messages in ways which indicate how they fit in with the other messages around them and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing” (1996, p.28). The notion of a Metafunction is valuable for this pedagogic theory because the Metafunctions are not to be seen as functions in the sense of "uses of language", but as functional components of a semiotic system. Thus, it will be important to develop students understanding of the individual strands of meaning and their skill at being able to identify the functional components of the clause.

The three “Metafunctions” in language are: the Experiential, the Interpersonal, and the Textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). We use language to enact our personal and social relationships (the Interpersonal Metafunction), to construe our experience of the world and our consciousness (the Experiential Metafunction), and to organize discourse and create continuity and flow in our texts (the Textual Metafunction) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). These three metafunctions characterize the “resources of the lexico-grammar of every language” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 29). In other words, these three lines of meaning are realized as instances in the lexicogrammatical patterns which we see in a text. Thus, the
analyst not only looks at the contextual factors behind a composition but they also must key in on the language features which realize the specific registers and genres under consideration, viewing language from the roles they play across and within Metafunctions (Martin & Rose’s 2007).

SFL offers tools for examining language and communication that are grounded in the cultural and situational context (Butts et. al. 1998). Schleppegrell (2004) explains how SFL demonstrates the power of language: “Systemic Functional Linguistics enables us to see the ways that language, as a semiotic tool, interacts with social contexts in making meaning” (2004, 18). SFL will be used as a tool with which to explain the language being used. This can be accomplished by using SFL to focus on the language-oriented study of the text and context as a means of helping students to develop their reading and analysis of poetic texts in English. The primary reason for using SFL is to allow students to approach the ideological implications of a poem in English by analysing its choice of wording. SFL “sets out to investigate what the range of relevant choices are, both in the kinds of meanings that we might want to express (or functions that we might want to perform) and in the kinds of wordings that we can use to express these meanings” (Thompson 2004, 8). For the purpose of this research, Saudi students will be taught to be aware and to determine the functions of lexicogrammatical choices, allowing them to unveil the ideological perspectives inherent in the poetic texts.

Unlike the traditional grammar the students are currently taught in the English department at KSU, which focuses on labelling different parts of the sentence to understand its form only, an SFL approach will be used to offer insight into how language is used in practice, allowing the student to “deduce a great deal about the context in which the language was produced, the purpose for which it was produced, and the reasons why it was expressed in the way it was” (Thompson 2004, 10).

The linguistic analysis of the poem is made possible by the application of Halliday’s model of Systemic Functional Grammar. The three Metafunctions, and how they offer insight into the three main functional components of language and how this information will be utilized to improve Saudi students’ interpretation of poetry in English, is described in the following section.
3.2.1 The Experiential Metafunction

The Experiential Metafunction is realized through Transitivity choices. Transitivity refers to the language characteristics of the clause which embody the speaker's or writer's experience, answering the question ‘Who does what to whom’ and “with the choice of process implicating associated participants roles and configurations" (Eggins, 2004, p.206). This semantic process comprises three components which function as the framework to interpret our experience about the goings-on (events). These components are the “process itself (verb), the participants in the process known as actor and goal which in different kinds of verbs or process types give different names such as the sensor in mental process (mental verb) or behaver in behavioural process (behavioural verb) and circumstances associated with the process (adverbs)”(Halliday&Matthiessen,2004,p.170-176). Processes are “the cores of the clause from the experiential perspective” (Thompson 87, 2004).

The concept of the Experiential Metafunction is used in this study to assist the Saudi students in locating the central participants and the role they are playing in the poem by observing word choices. The personas’ specific social and cultural contexts are also used for detecting the purposeful function of each language choice. Halliday explains that, when language is used, there is always something “going on” and “while construing, language is also enacting our personal and social relationships with other people around us” (2004, 29). The students are taught to analyse processes by differentiating between them in a poem so as to understand the types of action. Understanding the actions can help students to interpret the general tone of the poem. Ruddick (2015) also explains the usefulness of using process types as analytical tools: “it is possible to pin-point how the writer represents the dominant agents of the text and so uncovers the motivation and bias of the text producer” (15). He continues to explain that Halliday’s’ Systemic Functional Linguistics is a “potent tool for uncovering the stratagems that writers/speakers use to convince us of their view-points” and that “an emphasis on the material and verbal process types alone can uncover, among other things, how the audience is positioned to take a positive or negative view of the participants in a text” (15). The students are taught to find the speaker’s prevalent types of action and to get a sense of the predominate atmosphere of the poem. For example, if a text was dominated with a process related to thinking, imagining, liking or seeing, then the student can become aware that the poem centres on what “goes on in the in the internal world of the mind” (15). Similarly, if the text
is mainly dominated by action verbs like running, cleaning, and throwing, then the student can realise that it is a material process involving activity, which can be representative of a vibrant tone in the poem (Thompson 2004).

Furthermore, since this Transitivity structure is concerned with who (participant) does what (processes) under what conditions (circumstances). Participants form the subject of the text and can take on a variety of different roles. In poetry, the participant can be a speaker if the speaker does an act or an act is done on them. The participants can be involved in many processes. They are categorised according to the type of their process (kind of verb) as agent, sensor, beneficiary or goal (Neal 2012). White (2006) argues that text producers make grammatical choices with regard to participants. These are “choices as to which participants are represented as agentive and which as affected/acted upon” (cited in Ruddick 2015, 2).

Identifying the participant roles and observing the word choices of this identification can facilitate students’ interpretation of issues of authority and power in relation to the speaker or to others in a poem. For example, the students can identify whether the speaker is a participant who actively does something as an Actor in a Material process, a Goal whom the action is directed at or the recipient of action as a Sensor in a Mental Process. Furthermore, Circumstances give information about time, place and context and help the student to understand the situation in a text.

3.2.2 The Interpersonal Metafunction

The Interpersonal Metafunction views the clause as social interaction and reflects both social and personal meaning. It is referred to as interpersonal meaning. This tenet of SFL is based on the claim that a speaker not only talks about something, but is always talking to and with others. Language not only construes experience, but simultaneously acts out “the interpersonal encounters that are essential to our survival” (Halliday 1994). This Metafunction involves interactions where we initiate or respond to the act of giving or demanding for goods-and-services or information. There are three different uses of language, the first one is to exchange knowledge or information, the second one is to exchange actions, services or goods, and the last one is to establish and maintain relation.

The concept of the Interpersonal Metafunction will be taught in this research to help Saudi students’ to analyse the speaker or any other persona in a poem and to establish his or her
position in relationship to the subject or subjects of the poem “The interpersonal meaning expresses judgments, assessments, gives people, the relationship between texts and readers/viewers and the relationships within texts: “interpersonal [...] the grammar of personal participation; it expresses the speaker’s role in the speech situation, his interaction with others” (Halliday, 1973).

According to Halliday, the clause of the grammar is a “proposition or a proposal whereby we inform or question, give an order or make an offer, and express our appraisal of an attitude” (2004, 29). These choices are enacted through the systems of mood, modality and appraisal. The mood structure determines the communicative function of a clause: declarative, interrogative or exclamatory. An awareness of the function of each clause type in a poetic text can give Saudi students the opportunity to interpret the relationships in the poem. For example, if a poet predominantly uses a declarative mood for a particular persona then this can be used as a way to establish that the persona is taking a dominating active role in the poem. If the persona is in a position where he questions, this can suggest that the persona is inviting involvement of the reader.

Modality is realised through modal verbs and adjuncts and can be understood by analysing the degree of expression. According to Halliday, the modality system “construes the region of uncertainty” that lies between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and the space between the two has a “different significance for propositions and for proposals” (2004, 147). Modality can be expressed through modal verbs and adjuncts like ‘may’, ‘might’ or ‘certainly’. Based on the choice of words, the position of the persona can be determined by the student. For example, if the persona in a poem uses ‘might’ then he may be in a position of uncertainty. Thompson adds that “looking at language in use, the issue of modal responsibility is often fascinating to explore, because writers and speakers may resort to various methods of masking their responsibility and presenting their viewpoints” (2004, 72). Teaching Saudi students to analyse modality as a tool in their analysis of a poem can raise their awareness of the personal viewpoint discussed in the poem because “modality in a text has a source” and this “source is generally the speaker” (2004, 72).

Appraisal can be defined as the “indication of whether the speaker thinks that something (a person, thing, action, situation, and idea) is good or bad” (Thompson 2004, 75). This system shows attitudes, judgments, emotions and appreciation; “much of appraisal is expressed by lexical choices” (Thompson 2004, 75). Lexical choices in a poem can reveal the poets’
attitude. For example, if the poet chooses to label a female with specific lexical items like ‘nag’, ‘hag’ or ‘shrew’, this may be indicative of the poets’ belief (Neal 2012). Appraisal “reflects and reinforces the ideological values of the culture.

3.2.3 The Textual Metafunction

The Textual Metafunction is realized through Theme choices. Halliday argues that the Textual function is distinct from both the Experiential and Interpersonal because its object is language itself (2003). Language is used to organize Experiential and Interpersonal meanings into a coherent whole. “The textual meaning refers to the actual form of the text, the way it is organized; it deals with information management, resources and genres. Through the combination of resources at different textual levels it allows ideas and attitudes about thematics, actions and events to be expressed: “textual […] concerned with the creation of text; it expresses the structure of information and the relation of each part of the discourse to the whole and to the setting” (Halliday, 1973).

Mode is also important for students to encourage consideration of the general structure of a text, including of how ideas are linked together using cohesive devices. Cohesive devices are words or phrases that act as signals that make connections within a text, and they extend over the entirety of a poem. As Halliday explains (1976), cohesion is a syntactic and semantic idea. It is a “semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it” and there are five general categories of cohesive device: “(1) reference; (2) ellipsis; (3) substitution; (4) conjunction; and (5) lexical cohesion” (cited in Ruiyun, 2000, 8). The students are taught to analyse the poet’s choice of cohesive devices in order to improve their interpretation.

The concept of the Textual Metafunction will be taught in this research to help the Saudi students’ to analyse how poetic texts are structured, the role the structure plays in the interpretation of the poem, and whether the structure is fundamental or basic. According to Thompson, it is possible to make sense of the Theme by examining “how Theme choices work together through a text to signal its underlying coherence and to signal its method of
development” (2004, 165). For example, the student can improve their critical reading by understanding the structures that express thematic choices: signalling progression, specifying or changing the framework, signalling boundaries and signalling important starting points (2004, 165). Thompson explains that the Rheme has a different function: while “Themes build up the framework of the text”, the Rheme “provides content, the main information” the writer wants the reader to know” (2004, 165).

Theme, for Halliday, is the “point of departure; it is that with which the clause is concerned” (Halliday 1994, 37). The Saudi reader may be searching for the “point of departure” in the wrong place due to differences in linguistic structure. In English, Theme is realised by what is placed in the first position within the clause, from the beginning of the clause up to the first element that performs a function in Transitivity. How themes are structured is important for Saudi students’ interpretation for helping them to identify the architecture of the English language because Saudi students’ can find it difficult to identify a clause or message in an unfamiliar structure. It will be explored in this study if such difficulties can be mitigated by SFG, and thus the teaching of poetry can be a tool for improving Saudi students’ understanding of the structure of the English language.

The second major part in the clause is that which develops the remaining part of the message and this “is called … the Rheme” (Halliday 2004, 64). In English the clause, which is the basic linguistic structure, is formulated by two major parts, the Theme and the Rheme, which together form the message. The poet can choose where to place specific words in the poetic text, such as in the Theme or the Rheme. Recognising this point can be instrumental in helping Saudi students to understand the poets’ role in making choices about how and where to position certain words in a sentence to mark those words’ importance or lack thereof.

### 3.3 Research design

The aim of this study was to explore the potential of SFL-based pedagogy to improve Saudi students’ analytical abilities when reading poems in English and to explore the students’ perceptions about this new teaching approach. In this study, a mixed method approach will be used. The purpose for a qualitative method in this research is to hear and understand the points of view, stories and attitudes of Saudi students. It allows for a better understanding of the problems that the students encounter when they study poetry in English and of their feedback regarding the usefulness of the SFL-based teaching methodology. A quantitative
method can construct a comprehensive perspective of participants’ experiences and contexts based on statistics rather than stories.

The reason for using a mixed methods approach is that it is based on multiple procedures, allowing it to cover the full range of the problems Saudi students face when reading and interpreting poetic texts in English due to the differences between English and Arabic language and ideology. Cresswell (1995) reports that there are four different forms of mixed methods which may be presented simultaneously, and that this occurs in the use of quantitative and qualitative together. Rudeston illustrates that there are numerous ways of mixing models, “one is to use both quantitative and qualitative methods and data to study the same phenomena within the same study or complementary studies” (2001, 45). This is reinforced by Rudeston and Newton, who clearly state that “our position is that both quantitative and qualitative studies can be approached from myriad of philosophical perspectives” (2001, 47). Cresswell (2009, 2012) believes that mixed methods research is an emerging approach and will come to dominate future research because the core assumptions are that when an investigator combines both statistical trends and participants’ stories it does not restrict the researcher. There is a need for this combination in this study.

Qualitative and quantitative research combination involves and reflects two distinct traditions. The importance of each method for this research is shown so that the significance of their incorporation into this pedagogy can be understood. Rudestan explains the difference between the two approaches to research by stating that a qualitative approach implies that “the data are in the form of words as opposed to numbers” (2001, 36). Qualitative inquiry involves the attempt to interpret words or phrases and to make sense of ideas or concepts as they are expressed by people (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). I consider a qualitative approach to be appropriate for this study because the open questions in the questionnaire and the interviews will allow me to hear Saudi students’ views on the traditional teaching approach and on the SFL-based approach. This is particularly helpful in understanding the obstacles to the students’ interpretation of poems in English and in assessing the usefulness of the proposed pedagogy from the Saudi students’ point of view.

According to Polkinghorne (1991), qualitative methods are especially useful in the “generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience” (112). They are especially appropriate for my research, which applies diverse procedures to investigate the
Saudi students’ problems of reading poetry in English. They give me the freedom to study all the students’ problems in interpretation as I come across them from different sources such as interviews, open questions and observations. Denzин and Lincoln confirm this: “Qualitative research does not possess a distinct set of methods that are all their own” (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Kjell and Rudeston further reinforce this point by stating that qualitative methods allow the researchers to “make use of survey research, participant observation, even statistics” (2001, 36). My study necessitates the use of multiple procedures to assess the innovative SFL-based teaching approach and to determine the extent of its benefit. The use of open questions, class observations, interview questions and a class practice entails my own interpretation and analysis of this case study and is thus particularly relevant to the use of qualitative method.

This study investigates Saudi students’ Arabic linguistic and cultural background, how it can hinder their reading and interpretation of poetry in English and how it distances them from native speakers when it comes to reading and analysing independently. Rudeston and Newton (2001) state that “quantitative research designs are used to determine aggregate differences between groups or classes of subjects” (28). This study attempts to show the difference between teaching Saudi students poetry in English based on the traditional method and teaching an experimental group using tailored pedagogy that is sensitive to their linguistic and cultural differences.

Although describing the pedagogic experience of the application of an SFL-based approach to Saudi students to give a sufficient explanation of students’ interaction with this innovative teaching approach is pertinent to this study, I recognise that feedback from the students about their attitudes is generally measured statistically. It is therefore also important to gather quantitative data to supplement the qualitative portion of my project. A quantitative method is one that uses data that can be counted, which is often gathered from data sources like closed questions and exams. Kerlinger (1977) describes statistics as the “theory and method of analysing quantitative data obtained from samples of observations in order to study and compare sources of variance of phenomena, to help make decisions to accept or reject hypothesized relations between the phenomena, and to aid in making reliable inferences” (cited in Rudeston and Newton 2001, 27). Therefore, I distributed a questionnaire, open questions and a test to observe the influence of the SFL-based pedagogy on the interpretative competence using statistical data and to locate possible problems concerning the reading of
English poetic texts at King Saud University. Doing so, I aim to enhance the validity of my pedagogic approach.

3.3.1 Triangulation mixed method design
Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to enhance validity. Bryman (2004) explains that triangulation is one of the several principles for multi method research. In this research, a methodological triangulation, one based on the use of more than one method of gathering data, is used to establish the validity of the study. It involves the use of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a more complete set of findings. The study uses a questionnaire, class practice, open questions and interviews followed by class observation to assess the attitudes of students at King Saud University to learning English poetry, with a focus on any hindrances to reading and interpretation that result from their Arabic linguistic and cultural background. Methodological triangulation is then used to assess the value of the SFL-based pedagogy.

By “increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem”, triangulation generates several advantages which result from its diversity of data (Thurmond 2001, 254). This study adopts a concurrent form of analysis which is appropriate for the triangulation design. Creswell (2007) explains that the basic structure of a concurrent mixed methods analysis involves the separation of the qualitative and quantitative data. The research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the research questions.

The triangulation mixed method design used in this study ensures that data is obtained from different procedures to give a comprehensive picture of the SFL-based teaching methodology and of the Saudi students’ perceptions of the problems that this methodology seeks to address. The necessity of using mixed methods is supported by Tashakkori and Teddle (2003), who explain that it is important that the researcher maintains a fundamental principle for the mixed method and “according to this fundamental principle, methods should be mixed in a way that has complementary strengths and non-overlapping weakness” (299). Tashakkori and Teddle continue to explain the benefits of the use of mixed method design, especially when the research is exploring consistent data. They state that a fundamental principle means that data collection methods should be combined “so that the combination used by the
researcher may provide convergent and divergent evidence about the phenomenon being studied” (2003, 299).

There is a need to use a mixed method research design in teacher research to mitigate bias or inaccuracy that results from teachers’ closeness to their own classrooms. I use triangulation methods as one strategy to reduce obvious and unavoidable researcher bias issues in teacher research on their own practice. I employ a preliminary questionnaire, open questions, interviews and class observation. Stake 1987, (cited in Muijs 2004) suggests that using a triangulation mixed methods design, which collects different but complementary data on the same topic, can validate that data and the researcher’s interpretations.

In this research, a preliminary questionnaire is used to determine the students’ attitudes to the differences in language and to the SFL-based teaching methodology. The study employs a mixed questionnaire that directly addresses the Saudi students’ problems in the reading of poetic texts in English. A mixed questionnaire consists mostly of closed questions but includes some that are more open. The closed questions use a dichotomous scale which is clear and straightforward and since basic problems with the reading of poetry in English have already been identified and it is necessary for this research to obtain feedback that concentrates on particular problem or problems that have the strongest effect on students’ reading and interpretation of poems in English. The questionnaire is given to two classes to ensure a large number of respondents and comprises nineteen questions related to the problems in studying poetry in English due to differences in language and cultural ideologies. Questionnaires are commonly used in research; Guba and Lincoln believe this is because “they call for uniform responses (although items may often be subject to widely different interpretations) at the same time; they are impersonal and limit the respondent’s response range significantly” (1981, 64).

I argue that a tailored teaching methodology based on SFL has the potential, as a theory of language, to have positive outcomes for Saudi students by making poetry in English more accessible and improving their interpretative competence. Open questions, interviews and classroom observations are used to hear the voices of the participants and to determine their overall perceptions of the teaching experience. Knowledge of students’ views can be instrumental in identifying the problems that arise when studying poetry in English which could be improved by using the proposed pedagogy. The students’ insights and comments
may help to prove that there is a need for a new approach to teaching poetry and may prove the usefulness of SFL in particular.

Classroom observations are also used to explore and develop the teaching pedagogy. Using observation to investigate students’ behaviour during the application of the SFL-based pedagogy is considered an instrumental technique in this particular study because the gathering of the information is dependent on the researcher’s experience with the poetry class at KSU. Notes are taken to record any improvement in the students’ interpretation using the SFL tools. I then consider any changes in comparison to the previous traditional teaching technique. Borg (1987) indicates that educational researchers use direct observation in classroom as a method for collecting data. Class observation is used as one of the instruments for collecting data by observing students’ behaviour while they are taught using the new pedagogy. The combination of four data collection techniques – questionnaires, open questions, interviews and class observation – is intended to facilitate the use of a triangulated research methodology.

3.4 Setting and participants
This section discusses the setting and how the participants were selected, approached and recruited for an introductory stage for the SFL based pedagogy prior to the class practice. This study is conducted in the English Department at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. KSU is a public university established in 1957 and is one of the largest in Saudi Arabia. It is considered the leading higher education institution in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The students study at an all-female campus, so this study applies only to females, because I cannot teach male students. Two modern poetry classes, one with 60 students and one with 70, are studied. These classes are chosen because I have a strong working relationship with the lecturer and because of the course syllabus. The lecturer is open to new pedagogic methods and is interested in the idea of teaching poetry using a linguistic framework.

The participants in this research are from a particular target group that is selected for the purpose of this research. This is known as purposive sampling, which “involves selecting a sample based on the researchers experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled” (Irby and Lunenburg, 2008). In this study, purposive sampling allows me to study a particular population of students at King Saud University. The target group for this study were female
undergraduate students in the English department currently studying modern poetry at King Saud University. The students are all Muslims and their first language is Arabic. The students are from various social backgrounds and have a diverse knowledge of English social, cultural and religious ideologies. The poetry class with 60 students only participated in the questionnaire; the second class of 70 students participated in the introductory stage and from this group 20 students participated for the class practice. The students represent a wide range of English linguistic proficiency levels.

The students chosen for this study have taken one or more poetry classes and have experienced the traditional teaching techniques. They are chosen based on their college level because I need students who have taken some linguistics courses and have completed a stylistics course if the teaching methodology is to be applied in this research. Thus, for the purpose of this study, third year students are selected from the English Department. They are also students taking a poetry class, because the SFL-based teaching method is designed specifically for teaching poetry. The poetry class is an appropriate sample group which offers the opportunity to apply the Metafunctions as tools for analysing and interpreting poetry in English.

Participants are approached and recruited and a detailed explanation of the process will be presented in chapter five (class practice). Permission to disseminate the questionnaire and use the SFL-based teaching method has been established through communication with the teacher of the poetry class and the head of the English Department at King Saud University. Ethical consent has also been given from the head of department at Loughborough University.

3.5 Data collection procedures

3.5.1 Preliminary questionnaire
This section discusses the categorisation in the questionnaire, the coding used in the questionnaire and the categorisation of the responses.

The issues raised in the questionnaire deal with various factors that hinder Saudi students’ reading and interpretation of poetry in English, all of which are based on my teaching experience and my research for this study. The discussion of these issues in the questionnaire is divided into five sections, each of which focuses on one particular category: language differences between the Arabic and English, social and cultural and religious differences,
interventions that aim to improve students’ ability to analyse, students’ openness to a new teaching approach and students’ openness to analysing independently.

The first stage of the data collection is a mixed questionnaire (see Appendix 1) which explores the participants’ perceptions of the problems of reading poetry in English encountered by Saudi students. The mixed questionnaire uses a majority of closed questions followed by several open questions. The closed ended questions are answered on a dichotomous scale so that the research could obtain feedback and concentrate on the particular problem or problems that are perceived to be having the strongest effect on students’ reading of poems in English. Tashakkori and Teddle (2003, 304) explain that close-ended items indicate the participants’ views on the usefulness of a particular programme or study and that the use of the open-ended questions reveals their views on its benefits and limitations. The questionnaire is given to two classes to ensure a large number of respondents and it comprises nineteen questions, all specifically related to the problems of reading poetry in English due to differences in language and social and religious ideology. Questionnaires are commonly used in research; Guba and Lincoln believe that this is because “they call for uniform responses (although items may often be subject to widely different interpretations) at the same time; they are impersonal and limit the respondent’s response range significantly” (1981, 64).

The first category deals with the problem of finding a starting point when reading an English poem due to the differences in sentence structure and composition between Arabic and English. It also examines problems associated with the differences in the Arabic and English rhetoric. For example, Arabic is a Semitic language that is read from right to left and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, which makes it extremely complex, allegorical and structural (البلاغة). In contrast, English is a direct language and values simplicity and individuality compared to the more social topics that are common in Arabic discourse. The questionnaire addresses students’ failure to interpret a poem’s main idea as a result of the different word order in English and Arabic. For example, the usual word order in English is SVO (subject then verb then object), while the usual word order in Arabic is VSO and the Arabic sentence does not have to contain a verb, whereas the English sentence must.

The second category examines social and religious issues. Saudi students lack the appropriate background knowledge for reading and analysing English poetic texts and this category attempts to discover the students’ perceptions of these issues. It asks students whether the
differing English and American social and cultural references and ideologies, as they are constructed in the poetic text, cause problems with interpretation or identification that are not found when reading a poem in Arabic with Arabic references. It goes to inquire about the differing English and American religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text and whether they cause problems with reading and interpretation that are not experienced when reading a poem in Arabic with Islamic and Arabic references.

The third category addresses the problem of students’ inability to identify with English poems and poetic conventions and how this prevents them from understanding the thematic implication or main idea of the poem, due to the existence of:

1- A differing Arabic cultural background,

2- Differences in Arabic and English structure and composition,

3- Differences in Arabic and English social, cultural and religious ideologies.

These factors look at problems in the poetry class that prevent students from fulfilling their potential when they are reading and analysing English poems independently.

The fourth category in the questionnaire addresses students’ openness to a new teaching approach aimed at improving and guiding their reading of poems in English, and asks whether students are willing to use linguistic tools which could improve their interpretation. It also discusses the problems of traditional teaching techniques, and asks whether students believe that a new teaching technique or approach is necessary. In particular this category asks whether students would prefer an approach which allows them more freedom to interpret poem in English using interpretative tools for guidance to one that encourages them to accept exemplary criticism given to them by the teacher.

The last category in the questionnaire is an open question that gives participants space to express any problems or weakness in the traditional teaching techniques currently being applied in the poetry classroom. The open question is used to explore students’ opinions and beliefs about aspects of traditional teaching which were not mentioned in the questionnaire but may be valuable for this study. Data collected through the open questions enables the researcher to see which of the recognised factors that impede the reading of poems in English coincide with students’ own opinions and beliefs. It also shows whether students hold any other beliefs that can contribute to this research, adding further dimensions to the study.
In addition, because qualitative and quantitative methods are used as data sources, there are two different forms of data coding, which offer the opportunity for triangulation.

Coding is different for qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative coding assigns numerical values to a set of data to facilitate analysis. Qualitative coding involves breaking down the data into levels: concepts, themes, categories or subheadings (Cresswell, 1995). This research uses codes for the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the preliminary questionnaire, open questions, interviews and observation for analysis. In this study each method follows a different approach. The qualitative data is coded by dividing the text into “phrases, sentences, paragraphs” (Creswell 1995, 131) and then assigning a label to each unit or section. The labelling can match any concept chosen by the researcher. These codes are then grouped to “themes, in this process, the themes … are the findings or results that provide answers to the qualitative research questions” (Creswell 1995, 132). The coding into subthemes, subcategories, citing specific answers or quotes, makes it possible to locate major themes and represent them in a program or as figures, maps or tables. The qualitative data from the open questions and classroom observation is analysed using labelling and N Vivo, qualitative data analysis software for researchers working on Windows and Mac operating systems, together to ensure that the major themes and concepts are identified.

The data from the closed questions is studied to examine Saudi students’ attitudes towards linguistic and ideological factors that hinder their reading and interpretation of poetry in English. The quantitative data is analysed using the appropriate corpus or program to measure the extent of the problems the students encounter and their awareness of these problems. This will be presented using percentages and charts. The two methods are conducted concurrently on the same group and campus, yet the results are independent of each other. They work together to validate a theory or perspective from different angles.

The categorisation of the responses was necessary for the data analysis. The questions in the questionnaire are divided into different categories based on the students’ answers as follows:

1- Positive responses mean that students agree with or are aware of the obstacles and difficulties in reading English poetry and recognise the need for a change in teaching technique.
2- Negative responses mean that the respondents do not agree with or are not aware of the existence of any obstacles and difficulties in reading English poetry and therefore do not recognise the need for a change in teaching technique.

3- The open questions in and after the questionnaire allow students to comment on the practices of teaching and learning poetry in English and to give their personal input. The answers to the open questions are coded on the basis of dominant themes and on how they are connected to the research questions.

3.5.2 Case study (practice of the SFL-based pedagogy)
The second stage of the data collection is the application of the SFL-based pedagogy in the poetry classroom at KSU. I give a comprehensive explanation of the class practice and refer to a sample poem, methods for interacting with it and some of the students’ interpretations in chapter five. Before explaining the application of the SFL-based pedagogy, I discuss the introductory stage for the case study at King Saud University.

3.5.2.1 Introductory stage for case study
To conduct the case study, a poetry class in which to apply the theory is chosen based on meetings with the lecturer. These meetings give me the chance to explain several key elements of SFL theory and how they can be used to teach students. Then, with the lecturer, there is an introductory phase in which I explain how SFL will be used to explore an SFL-based approach to the analysis of English poetic texts, with a special reference to Halliday’s (2004) model of Systemic Functional Grammar. Afterwards, the introductory stage for the proposed pedagogic application begins in different stages, starting with an overview of SFL, then a sample poem with an application of the Metafunctions.

3.5.2.2 SFL: Introduction and overview
The first part of the case study of the KSU poetry classroom is spent in an introductory discussion, exploring and defining Systemic Functional Linguistics before presenting examples and applications of the theory to the Saudi students. This ensures that the students understood SFL, that the major terms are defined, and that their role in decoding a text is clear. During this introductory period, I encourage students to ask questions or raise issues
related to SFL so that they understand the value of the use of these analytic tools for analysis of the poem.

After highlighting some of the benefits of SFL, there is a more detailed discussion of Halliday’s SFL, showing the linguistic patterns of the poem by looking at the relationships between actions and characters. I explain to the students that SFL offers them tools for facilitating their interpretation of English poems. Such explanations are necessary to prove SFL’s role in the reading of poetic texts in English by making students aware of the different meaning potentials that are realised in word choices and their significance. They are able to observe that language use is crucial in shaping different types of context. This may allow them to understand specific cultural ideologies and situations embedded and exhibited in the varied language constructions and meaning potentials of the poetic texts. SFL as a framework for analysing poetic texts in English is used to help Saudi students to understand the structure of English texts and comprehend their meaning based on the context in which they are written. Forey (2002) reinforces this and states that Metafunctions:

although fundamental organising principles of language, may also be thought of as ‘tools’ which enable the linguist to analyse, understand and talk about the linguistic choices made in a given text. The analyst may employ them as tools to ‘deconstruct’ any message encoded within text in relation to the linguistic realisations in each Metafunction. (48)

It is also necessary to show the students the interconnection of the Metafunctions and the necessity of analysing them simultaneously. Halliday (1985, 1994) specifies that Systemic Functional Grammar looks at how language works, how it is organised and what social functions are represented. The meaning of a text needs to be defined in terms of the three different types of meanings – the Metafunctions: experiential meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning – which he suggests all languages are organised around. The students are given a brief explanation of the language resources that are used by each Metafunction, because this knowledge is essential to the tailored pedagogy used in this study. Halliday (2004) states that language is structured to make the three types of meanings inseparably, and thus its Metafunctions should not be viewed as individual categories. To demonstrate the overlap of the Metafunctions, I show a detailed diagram. The students have never been exposed to the connections in an SFL approach and need to see a layout of the connections to grasp the verbal description (see Figure 1).
These Metafunctions and their associated linguistic features are explored to explain their role in my pedagogy. How linguistic analysis of the poem is made possible by the application of Halliday’s model of Systemic Functional Grammar is also explained. The organisation of the linguistic components in a clause carries meaning potential and supplements the overall effect the poet wants to communicate, and this can be understood by analysing the layers of meanings in the text. Each Metafunction in this research plays an instructive role in Saudi students’ language-oriented study of the text and context, as an attempt to improve their reading and interpretation of English poetry.

After the introduction and overview, some students are intrigued by the use of a linguistic framework for analysing poetic texts, while others are reluctant to adopt it because it was the first time they had heard of SFL. When most of the participants assure me that they understand the basics of the Metafunctions, I move on from theory to presenting them with a poem and begin the sample classroom experiment.
3.5.2.3 The selection of the sample poem

To observe the validity of the SFL-based approach for improving the reading and interpretation of poetry in English, examples of poems which are part of their syllabus are used as models for the application of the theory. Since this SFL-based approach to the analysis of poetic texts is new to the students, care is taken to choose poems with themes that are simple and direct so that the method itself can be concentrated on. Long or difficult poems are not included because the students need to focus on the new teaching technique and the time allowed for the sample and class practice application of the teaching methodology is not sufficient to cover more than one poem for each. Two short poems by poets they have studied previously are used. The poem for the sample application is Langston Hughes’ ‘Cross’, analysed by my own SFL application. The poem for the class practice had been previously analysed by a different researcher because this allows the students to see another application of the theory from different analysts, with similarly valuable findings. This poem is Sylvia Plath’s ‘Daddy’, analysed by Forough Hassanpour and Ruzy Suliza Hashim. The poems are analysed using Halliday’s Metafunctions.

Following the introduction to SFL, the example of analysis of a poetic text using SFL is demonstrated to the students. The selected poem is discussed in detail to show that SFL tools are a feasible way of exploring poetic texts more deeply without depending on teachers’ critical analyses. The procedures for this introductory stage demands activities that varied greatly in length: some took two or three minutes and others took half an hour. In the classroom, I want to show the effectiveness of the use of linguistic tools for analysing poetic texts. In the following section, an example of an application of one of the poems is presented.

3.5.2.4 Example of class application

The poem chosen as an example of the data collection procedures is the researchers’ attempt at a Systemic Functional Analysis based on the three Metafunctions of Halliday’s systemic-functional linguistics by Halliday of the poem ‘Cross’ by Langston Hughes. This analysis aims to appreciate the deep meaning of Langston Hughes’ poem from a linguistic angle.
Cross

My old man’s a white old man
And my old mother’s black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.

If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I’m sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well.

My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I’m gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

3.5.2.5 Systemic Functional Analysis of the Poem

Table 3: Stanza 1, line 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My old man</th>
<th>’s</th>
<th>White old man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Process-Relational Identifying</td>
<td>Identifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Finite</td>
<td>Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>Residue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Rheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second stage is to show the Saudi students how the language of the African American poet in this poem ‘Cross’ reveals its socio-cultural attributes using SFL analysis. Since the first part of this study involves the analysis of texts, care is taken to emphasise the role of each Metafunction in the poetic texts to help the students to comprehend the overall message. I then elaborate on the value of the linguistic tools’ application to this poem by showing them that the poem’s linguistic structure enhances the transitivity choices, revealing a black man’s restrictive situation. I begin with the opening lines of the first stanza, which introduce the speaker, the father and the mother. The transitivity role ascribed to the father and mother occupies the role of “carrier” of an attribute which is evident in the following analysis in the box diagram:
### Table 4: Stanza 1, line 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And my old Mother</th>
<th>‘s</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Process relational-Identifying</td>
<td>Identifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Finite</td>
<td>Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td></td>
<td>Residue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5: Stanza 1, line 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If ever I Cursed (simple past)</th>
<th>My white old Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Finite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>Residue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Rheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6: Stanza 1, line 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take</th>
<th>My curses back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finite</td>
<td>Predicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Rheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Participant, Processes and Circumstances, which together create what is known as a Transitivity system (Halliday 2004) are used to analyse the poem. I focus on the Participants in the poem and the different roles they are involved in to show students that identifying participant roles and observing the word choices associated with this identification can facilitate an interpretation of issues of authority and power in relation to any persona in a poem. For example, the father is a carrier of the attribute ‘white’ and the mother is a carrier of the attribute ‘black’. They did not choose to be of any particular race and is passed on to the speaker which identifies him. This position is defined further when the poet represents a material process of the act of cursing. The aim here is to demonstrate to the students the possibility of discovering meaning using the SFL tools and thereby allowing them to realise through the transitivity choices of the first and second process that the speaker is a cross of two races and curses this situation.

This idea is reinforced further through the use of a material process in the past tense; when a speaker participates in an active process using the present tense it demonstrates control over the text. Yet, the third process is in the past and is achieved through the use of the mood adjunct: the poet takes this action back when he says “If ever I cursed my white old man”. Thus a student can be made to realise that the speaker is not able to control his mixed origin and that this is reflected in the process he has chosen for the particular text that focuses on this idea. Also in this poem, the students are shown how the participant role connected with the poet relates predominantly to the category of mental processes. The main character of the poem is established through the poem in terms of his involvement in mental and emotional processes: “wished” (lines 6 and 8), “I’m sorry” (line 7) and “I wonder” (line 11). The poet narrates the events through recollection – “If ever I cursed” – because he seems compelled to remember them from the past. He is also expected to predict his future through the category of mental process: using the verb “wonder”, he plays the role of a ‘sensor’ and is unable to determine his future because it is controlled by ‘circumstances’. This linguistic information gives the student insight into the restrictive situation of blacks and those with mixed heritage. A black man is committed and restricted to an unknown future due to ‘circumstances of time’; SFL seems to reveal a sense of mental and emotional freedom which is exercised by the poet as a form of expression and release from the social restrictions. To make certain that the students understand the analysis, there is constant communication with the class, allowing them to ask questions at any stage.
On the interpersonal level and by analysing the expression of Modal verbs and based on the lexical-grammar, the persona can be represented. For example, the students are shown in this poem that the theme of racial discrimination is reinforced through the usage of spatial adjuncts: “in hell” (line 6), “in a fine big house” (line 9) and “in a shack” (line 10), which enable the poet to communicate his awareness of limitations and obstacles which control his situation. Hughes also uses adjuncts to assert his fondness of opposites. The poet characterises the speaker as a man of “black” and “white” origin, an idea which permeates the whole poem. The adjuncts “white” and “black” are used in almost every line and are important to the thematic structure and message of the poem because they underline the poet’s dilemma: that he is controlled by his lineage.

Appraisal is also used in the analysis of the poem. It is explained that appraisal is a system which shows attitudes, judgments, emotions and appreciation and that the choice of a particular word to describe a persona in a poem can reveal the poets’ attitude to that persona (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). For example, the poet chooses to use the terms “man” and “mother” in opposition. This demonstrates the poets’ interplay of lexical items. The term “man” has been defined to carry a more general representation; “mother” carries a closer emotional bond. The poet chooses to use different terms for his father and mother to represent them as metaphorically different. The repetition of the opposites “black” and “white” emphasises predominance of the discourse of the race in the poem. This opposites also applies to Hughes’s use of spatial adjuncts: a white father is “in a fine big house” (line 9) and a black mother is “in a shack” (line 10), suggesting the segregation of blacks and whites. There is one way of life for the white people and another for the black people. But the speaker must find a different way, into an unknown future, “Being neither white nor black?” At this point the students are shown the third part of the methodology with the use of the SFL tools to comprehend the poem. There is interplay of opposites through the use of specific adjuncts which represent an inner and a social turmoil. The presence of repeated pronouns shows a speaker searching for a sense of dominance. These techniques work together to formulate a literary message. Throughout the analysis the students are asked to share their own interpretation as I explain the key elements of this poetic text to allow them to participate as much as possible.

The theme choices in the poem are described to the students. It is explained that theme choices play an important role in building coherence in a poem and are a starting point which catches the reader’s attention and tells him where to begin. In English, the theme is the first
communicative tool. The pattern of themes in this poem is particularly significant because it is occupied by personal reference. It is shown in Table 7:

Table 7: Pattern of themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause Complex</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Rheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My old man</td>
<td>‘s a white old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>And my old mother</td>
<td>‘s black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>If ever I</td>
<td>cursed my white old ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>take my curses back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>If ever I</td>
<td>cursed my black old mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>And</td>
<td>wished she were in hell,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>’m sorry for that evil wish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>And now I</td>
<td>wish her well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>My old man</td>
<td>died in a fine big house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>My ma</td>
<td>died in a shack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>wonder where I’m gonna die,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being</td>
<td>neither white nor black?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the most striking features of ‘Cross’ is the repetitive use of personal pronouns. Choices in the interpersonal function provide information as to who the major speaker or persona in the poem is. In ‘Cross’, Hughes uses “I” or “my” in nearly every line of the poem, and, since personal pronouns refer to the participants in any speech, the poet’s repeated use of personal pronouns in this poem indicates an emphasis on the speaker, suggesting that the speaker occupies the dominant role in the poem. This linguistic prevalence is used as an example of my own attempt and interpretation using SFL and how it helped me in questioning and reflecting on the poet’s usage of personal pronouns. The personal pronouns
are the first thing that attracts the reader’s attention because they appear in the beginning of
the line. The mother and father, when mentioned, are placed after the pronouns. Recognising
this can help the students to hypothesise about the poet’s need to dominate the poem, perhaps
by questioning whether it reflects his status in a society that is not accepting of those with
mixed heritage. Again, I explained that this is my own interpretation and the emphasis here is
on illustrating how SFL tools can be used to improve analytical powers.

A further reading into the Mood analysis reveals that all the clauses in the poem, except for
one, are declarative. This establishes a non-negotiable situation. On a thematic level, the
speaker is discussing his present situation as a man of mixed heritage with great emotion.
KSU students are able to acknowledge the seriousness of the speaker’s situation and interpret
the use of declarative clauses as a definite message about the harsh facts of a man suffering
due to racial discrimination. This sums up the conflict and theme in the form of a question
concerning his unclear future when he states “where I’m gonna die”. The speaker’s future is
uncertain due to his mixed racial origins. This leads the reader to speculate about why the
speaker questions, not his place in society while he is alive, but his place of death. These
signals help to understand the seriousness of the theme of racism even though a reader may
not have previous knowledge of racial discrimination and its impact in the United States. To
complete the analysis for the students at KSU, I explain that I examine patterns of lexical
choices and their stylistic value in the poem based on Halliday’s SFL approach. This
application reveals that the construction of a poetical text is a linguistically conscious
activity, as the author carefully chooses words from the vast range of options to present his
desired ideas and achieve cohesion in his poem. Afterwards I present the students with the
following commentary on the analysis as a suggestion of my own views on ‘Cross’. I
explained that ‘Cross’ is a lyric poem expressing in first-person point of view the feelings of
a person with a white father and black mother. Langston Hughes’s parents were both black
yet his father was light skinned and he well understood the confusion and conflict that a
person of mixed heritage experienced. The poem contains several linguistic signals which
help to discover, the main themes: the inner turmoil the speaker feels because of his (or her)
mixed racial heritage. The anger the speaker feels because he is unable to end his suffering
although he did not commit any wrong, and a state of inner turmoil caused by his present
situation. It is necessary to show the students that a complete analysis of ‘Cross’ based on
SFL would have been much longer, but I have tried to work on specific tools which I believe
are effective in presenting a sample analysis of the poem for the KSU students in particular.
3.5.3 Post-experience questions

The post-experience open questions are the next stage of the data collection procedures for this study. These questions are administered to all the students in the poetry class who are involved in the class practice. The questions comprised two open questions related to the three stages of the methodology. The first question aims to discern the students’ perceptions of their experience of the SFL-based pedagogy. The second question aims to discover general problems regarding their overall experience with studying poetry. The subjects are asked to answer as best they can. This stage seeks to allow the students to write freely about matters concerning the researchers’ pedagogy or other learning obstacles which hinder their reading and analysis of poetic texts in English.

3.5.4 Class observation

Alongside the post-experience open questions, I collect qualitative data through classroom observation to see how students behave towards the SFL-based teaching methodology. The main aim of observing participants is to allow the researcher “to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2006, 306). This is done by closely examining the lessons that include discussions of poetic texts based on the researchers’ pedagogy. The students are made aware of the purpose of the observation and its procedure. To reduce the effect of observation on the students, they are told that their answers would only be used for the purposes of the study. The students are observed by the researcher to determine their understanding of and reaction to the SFL-based lessons. I adopt a semi-structured classroom observation since it allows me to focus on the data I intend to collect. This form of observation also allows the researcher to include new points which may arise during the application of the SFL-based pedagogy. The students’ understanding of the content of the lessons is assessed through two procedures. The first involves targeted general classroom questions for each stage of the methodology and as part of the explanation of each Metafunction. The second depends on observing student participation and reaction, including activities that were verbal or nonverbal, such as nodding or shaking a head, or smiling.

The observations of the ongoing activities and the students’ responses are recorded before and throughout the lesson itself, in order to determine how much they understand and whether their reaction to this new methodology is positive. I exercise my own judgement
based on my own experience in teaching poetry at KSU when selecting what data to include; I only include relatively valuable data obtained through classroom observation.

3.5.5 Interviews

Classroom questions are administered in the form of interviews. The rationale for using interviews is that “interviews can reach the parts which other methods cannot reach … allowing a researcher to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe like interviewee’s thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives” (Wellington 2000, 71). The classroom questions and discussions focus on finding results based on targeted issues which the researcher knew were a problem associated with analysing English poetic texts. This session involves a selected group of students who are tested on their ability to interpret a poem’s meaning and analyse it using the SFL-based pedagogy. I emphasise that content matters most and that there will be no grading or evaluation. The test is administered to students who volunteer and shows their ability to grasp the main ideas of the Metafunctions. The test is given to 20 students, divided into four groups. It comprises seven questions related to the different stages of the methodology. The questions are drawn from the examples of the methodology that are administered to the class, and contain questions relevant to each stage of the analysis of the poem. The subjects are asked to answer as best they can. These questions are as open question to decrease students’ trepidation in answering. I begin by stating the answers to the first question and then asked the second and so on in order to encourage answers until the students give their answers openly. The following is the list of the questions:

1- How do the theme choices in SFL play an important role for finding the starting point?

2- How do the theme choices in SFL play an important role in building coherence?

3- Does SFL help in showing the architecture of the English sentence?

4- Based on the transitivity choices in the analysis of the poems, were you able to find the general theme of the poem?

5- How does the process help in finding the patterns of the experience in the poem for Example: Mental-material –what is the relevance of such information?

6- How does the participant role help in giving meaning, for example: “wished” (line 6 and 8), “I’m sorry” (line 7) and “I wonder” (line 11)?
7- Where can you find repetition and parallel in the poem after an SFL-based analysis and how does it help in understanding the poem?

In this research, I use pupil group interviews because they allow me to observe the students’ discussion and discern their thoughts regarding the SFL-based pedagogy. In pupil focus group interviews, respondents are encouraged to express ideas and opinions and are more likely to do so in a group setting than they are individually (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). In addition, group interviews can create an appropriate classroom atmosphere which can encourage for shy students to participate and develop their ideas. The group setting allows all participants can interact in a stimulating atmosphere while a researcher observes and compares their opinions (Brodbeck 2002 cited in Avery 2004).

This phase of the research focuses on the students’ perceptions and thoughts about the proposed teaching method, which the interviews give the participants a chance to express. These interviews are semi-structured. They ask the students questions about the SFL-based pedagogy to focus the discussion on the main issues, but the students are allowed to address any new and unexpected points that arise during the interview. These interviews consist of four focus groups of poetry students from King Saud University. Each focus group includes five students, which is considered large enough to encourage participation and small enough to not lose focus (Morgan 1988). The interviews seek to find results which allow me to see which obstacle or obstacles resulting from differences in language and rhetoric are mitigated by the new pedagogy. The interviews also show me, based on the students’ reactions and answers, whether the SFL-based pedagogy improves their interpretation. I am not looking for many knowledgeable answers because, as I stated before, it is unfair to question the students in detail when they are not taught a complete course on SFL. The main goal is to find evidence of improvement.

3.6 Research issues
This section discusses confidentiality, anonymity, ethical considerations and the validity and limitations of the research’s methods of data collection.
3.6.1 Confidentiality and anonymity
Borg and Gall (1983) state that: “the researcher should make certain that no one has access to data except himself and possibly a few co-investigators” (112). As such, the participants will not be named or identified in any future publications and the obtained data will only be accessible to my supervisor and me.

3.6.2 Validity
The questionnaire administered to the students was shown to several lecturers in the English and Drama department at Loughborough University, who reviewed it at the annual meeting. The SFL-based tools for teaching poetry to the Saudi students were also reviewed by my supervisor and the annual reviewers, who were also invited to give their opinions, notes and suggestions, which were very informative and beneficial.

3.6.3 Ethical consent
According to Thomas et al. (2004), all areas of research must follow ethical procedural principles to ensure that participants have all the necessary information before they decide to take part in a study. Oppenheim (1992) suggests some important issues concerning research’s ethical responsibilities. The main principle is ensuring that the study does not harm any of the respondents as a result of their participation. An ethical consent form was presented to the heads of department at Loughborough and at King Saud University before the teaching approach was applied on the poetry class at KSU. Thus the researcher has sought formal approval for the application of the pedagogical approach. Complete explanations of the SFL-based theory and its implications for future teaching techniques were explained. Comments on this pedagogic approach were invited, especially those that relate to students’ disposition to studying English poetry using traditional techniques or that suggested new techniques which would allow the students to have more independence. The participants were assured that the application of the new teaching approach and any poetic texts included in it were not part of their syllabus and that they would not be examined on any of its content. This information was given to them to encourage participants to open up and state their opinions about any aspect of the study. It was also explicitly explained that they were asked to give their student numbers for research purposes and for comparing data only, and that they would not be taken personally by the researcher, the class teacher or the department.
3.6.4 Limitations of the study
There are a number of limitations of this research. First, this study was limited by institutional constraints. I had an appropriate number of female students for the study, but it would have been valuable to include male students from the English department. This was not possible because male and female students are separated and study on different campuses. I would have found support from the male English department for the application of the questionnaire, but a comprehensive explanation of SFL and its tools would be necessary to have a valuable result, and since I could not ensure that an adequate introduction would be given to the male students, I decided not to include them in this study. This study took place within a limited time period of four weeks. It was prearranged with the poetry class teacher to allow her to cover her syllabus and to give the researcher the only possible and workable duration under the circumstances. Hence, this study did not allow for a full exploration of the potentials and shortcomings of SFL as a decoding tool. Nevertheless, this limitation was made up for by my teaching experience and knowledge of Saudi students, and thus it was possible to focus on the problems in comprehension already described, of which I was aware because of my years of experience teaching poetry. Furthermore, while the SFL-based pedagogy offers examples of analysing poetic texts using Halliday’s Metafunctions, it was not possible to give the participants a chance to analyse the texts due to time constraints and the fact that it would have taken an entire semester at least to teach an SFL course that would allow the students to analyse poems independently.

3.7 Summary of the chapter
In this chapter, I have explained why the new teaching methodology that informs my pedagogy for Saudi students studying poetry in English is currently needed. I discussed the research design to explain the need for adopting mixed methods approach. I also discussed the participants and the setting of this study. I explained the procedures for data collection and analysis and the introductory stage of the SFL-based pedagogy in the poetry classroom at KSU. Lastly, I discussed issues of confidentiality, validity, ethics and limitations in the context of this research. The next chapter deals with the findings that resulted from the closed and open questions in the questionnaire.
CHAPTER FOUR:

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE

4.1 Overview of this chapter

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are divided into two sections, one for the closed questions and the second for the open questions. This research involves the use of multiple methods and I present the results according to the research method; the findings of the questionnaire are presented first. The remaining results from the interviews, classroom observations and post teaching open-questions are presented in chapter six.

This research investigates the various factors that can impede Saudi students’ reading and interpretations of poetry in English. Therefore, the questionnaire addresses these various factors, and in particular social, cultural, religious and linguistic issues. The discussion of these issues is divided into five sections, with each section focusing on one category: differences between Arabic and English; social, cultural and religious differences; interventions in students’ analytic ability; students’ openness to the new teaching approach; and students’ openness to independent analysis. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first reports the results of the closed questions as numbers and percentages. The second presents the responses to the open questions thematically according to the most recurrent themes.

4.2 Age of the respondents

The questionnaire begins by investigating the age group of the participants and their experience of studying poetry. Bradburn et al.(2004) state that when writing questionnaires, it is important to consider the particular people for whom the questions are being designed. I include the age group of the participants as a control variable. It also shows the specific age
group that are targeted by this particular study, who, in this case, are Saudi undergraduate students at KSU. Figure 2 shows the percentages of different age groups.

**Figure 2: Ages of students**

![Age distribution chart]

The chart shows that the age group of the students is 20 to 23+. 45% of the students are aged 23 or older, 32% are aged 22 and 22% are aged 21, thus the dominant age group in this class is the older college students. This is important for the study because I can be assured that their responses are based on knowledge and experience.

### 4.3 Experience of studying poetry in English

The purpose of the second question is to measure the students’ experience of studying English poetry and to establish the validity of their opinions. Hence, I had to ensure that they had taken more than one poetry course. The content for each course syllabus are displayed in the appendices (2). Figure 3 summarises the poetry courses that the students had attended.
The two poetry classes who participated in the questionnaire consist of one hundred and three students, all of whom had studied at least two or three courses before enrolling in the poetry course they were taking at the time of the study. All the students have taken the Introduction to Literature and the Introduction to Poetry courses, which focus on introducing students to the necessary techniques for reading a large range of poems, focusing on poetic devices such as figures of speech, metre and rhyme. Additionally, the majority of the students have studied at least one of the more advanced poetry courses. These are the Victorian, Romantic and Modern poetry courses, which cover the major characteristics and techniques that define these periods of poetry. Approximately 30% of the students had taken each course and each student has taken more than one. These figures show that the participants are appropriate for this study since they have a good basis in studying poetry in English at KSU.

4.4 Perceptions of the students

This part of the chapter describes the findings about the Saudi students’ perceptions, based on a dichotomous scale. In this section, responses to the questions explore issues which affect Saudi students’ performance when reading and analysing poetry in English. They also aim to
discern whether the students are open to a new teaching approach which can empower them with new analytical tools. These issues are of major concern for this study because they can provide a greater understanding of the challenges facing Saudi students. The discussion of these issues is divided into five sections: differences between Arabic and English; social, cultural and religious differences; interventions in students’ analytic ability; students’ openness to the new teaching approach; and students’ openness to independent analysis. The findings are presented in tables that show the total number of students who responded to the question and the category, which is based on the coding of the closed questions: Yes-1 and No-2.

4.4.1 Language differences

The first category includes the students’ responses to three questions pertaining to one issue. Table 8 shows the participants’ responses to questions 4-6, which investigate problems concerning language differences in the questionnaire.
The first question shown here (question four) is “Do you find a Problem finding a place to begin with in reading the English poem due to the different sentence structure and composition between the Arabic and English languages?” The results show that almost half the students (47%) had problems finding a place to begin when they tried to read a poem. 53% of the participants said that they had no problems finding a place to begin when reading a poem. These numbers represent that nearly half of the participants had a problem in the reading of the English sentence. Furthermore, it seems that certain students were also uncertain with their approach to their reading of English poetic texts. However, when we look at the other group who state they are confident with their approach to the English sentence, it does not signify that other forms of problems regarding the reading of poetry in English are to be eliminated.

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<td>67</td>
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<td>103</td>
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</table>
The second question in this section (question five) is “Do you find a problem reading and understanding the English poem due to differences in the Arabic and English rhetoric?” This question is asked because Arabic is a Semitic language that reads from right to left, and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, making it extremely complex, allegorical and structural; in contrast, English is direct and values simplicity and individualism rather than Arabic’s more social topics. The figures reveal that 37% of the students have problems reading the poem due to the differences in Arabic and English rhetoric, while 63% indicate that this was not an obstacle to their reading. The figures for this question are important and representative of the social background of the students because, as discussed above, the students come from different social backgrounds: some have been educated in private schools and have been exposed to English poetry, so may have some basic knowledge of the differences in rhetoric, while other students may not be aware of these differences.

The third question in this section (question six) is “Does the different word order between the English and Arabic languages cause a problem for finding or understanding the main ideas of the English poem?” This question is asked due to the existing differences between Arabic and English. The usual word order in English is SVO (subject then verb then object), while the usual word order in Arabic is VSO; furthermore, the Arabic sentence may not contain a verb at all, while the English sentence must have one. 35% of the students feel that this hinders their interpretation, while 65% do not believe it to be a problem in their reading of English poems. The results for this section on language differences as a whole show that 122 of the 309 answers concede some form of a language problem when reading poems in English. However, the total of 122 here seems to be a comparatively large number in overview form for a poetry class. This, at first, looks like a low ratio compared to the participants who did not believe it to be problematic, yet when we are considering such numbers in a teaching situation even one participant having a problem is notable.

The students’ responses to the different Arabic and English structure demonstrates that problems in finding a place to begin when analysing or reading an English poem do exist, with 47% of the Saudi students recognising this problem with their reading. Although the percentage of the students who experience problems is lower for differences in rhetoric (37%) and word order (35%), the findings still reveals that a large number of students face
these obstacles. In total 122 of 309 answers recognise some form of language problems when they read poetry in English.

This problem is observed by Scollon and Scollon (1995), who suggest that different cultures use different rhetorical structures. While some foreign students might use a “topic-comment order of presentation” when speaking or writing, a native English speaker would use a “comment-topic” order of presentation (1-2). This can actually confuse or mislead a reader who is searching for the most important part of the message. The results in this questionnaire of 122 of 309 who recognise some form of language problem corresponds with Scollon and Scollons’ statement.

This problem is also recognised by a number of researchers, who hypothesise that cultural differences, in particular with respect to poetry, may lead to problems of understanding. It is well-documented that native language reading comprehension involves knowledge of the world and of native text structure (Langer and Smith-Burke 1982; Spiro, Bruce and Brewer 1980). This study is relevant to the figures of this section since the total number of participants in this questionnaire facing problems in reading offers support for the possibility that English being a non-native language leads to their problem in reading difficulties.

Obeidat discusses this issue in the context of Arab and foreign literature in “Departments of English in the Arab World”. He questions the basic approaches taken to teaching non-native literary texts, arguing that they in themselves create problems. He asks why teaching focuses on history and background and not simply on the literary text itself. He then suggests Arab students’ should be taught English literature by focusing on teaching them how to read closely and critically and on giving them the proper analytical skills to do so. This, Obeidat believes, opens the door to a deeper appreciation and understanding of literature, not only as an object of ideological and cultural analysis, but as a linguistic activity of reading and writing about ‘the other’. These points narrate and emphasize a focus on actively working on teaching students how to read critically in English to understand literature. This seems to endorse the numbers in this questionnaire of participants conceding that there was a problem with reading English being non-native and not having the significant reading skills.
4.4.2 Social, cultural and religious differences

The second category includes the students’ responses to three questions concerning social, cultural and religious differences. Table 9 summarises the participants’ responses to questions 7-8.
Table 9: Social, cultural and religious differences

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<td>QUESTION 8</td>
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<td>QUESTION 9</td>
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The first question in this section (question seven) is “Do the differing English and American social and cultural references and ideologies as they are constructed in the text cause a problem with the identification of the English poem compared to reading a poem in Arabic with Arabic references?” This question is based on the researcher’s previous teaching experience: students’ lack of background knowledge had negative effects on their interpretation of poetic texts in English. The results reveal that the majority of the students find that differing social and cultural ideologies and references a hindrance to interpretation: 67% answered ‘Yes’ to the question, and only 33% do not believe that this was a problematic factor in their interpretation of poems in English. The results above suggest that the lack of background knowledge is essentially problematic. A further note on the participants’
relatively high response to this question is implied here, participants’ interpretation of a poem in English will become problematic or flawed when this obstacle in reading is not addressed.

The second question (question eight) is “Do the differing English and American religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text cause a problem with the interpretation of the poem in English compared to reading a poem in Arabic with Islamic and Arabic references?” The results show 62% of the students answered ‘Yes’ and only 38% do not believe this to be a challenge for their interpretation. The above percentages clearly show a majority of the participants’ acknowledgment of differing religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text to be problematic. The participants are all Saudi Muslim students and most of them do not study other religions. The percentages can imply a lack of familiarity with background knowledge of other religions. Thus, it was not surprising to find that the majority of the students’ responses agreed that different religious ideologies and references impede their interpretation of poems in English.

The third question (question nine) is connected to the previous two questions and asks “Do you have a problem identifying with the English poem due to problems mentioned in the previous questions?” This question investigates students’ ability to identify with poems in English that have different social, cultural and religious ideologies and references. 49% of the students agree that this is an obstacle to their ability to identify with the poems, while 51% do not agree that it negatively affects their ability to identify with poems in English. This question concentrates on the participants’ responses to poems in English. Surprisingly, the responses were almost equal. These responses seem to rest more on the individual background knowledge and skill in reading of each participant and which impacts on their ability and confidence in relating to the poems.

This second section aims at discerning students’ opinions concerning differences in background ideologies and whether these differences hinder their ability to interpret poetic texts in English. Overall percentage for the three questions in this section 183 of the 309 responses indicate that they face problems in this area, whereas 126 of 309 do not consider differences in ideology or reference to be problematic for their interpretation or identification with the poem. In the findings concerning the different religious ideologies and references presented in poems it shows that a high proportion of Saudi students (62%) acknowledge difficulties interpreting poetry with non-Islamic and non-Arabic references.
Social and cultural ideologies and references seem to have more of an influence on interpretation. The students’ beliefs appear to be based on the extent of their exposure to English and American ideologies. Only 33% of respondents do not find social and cultural ideologies and references to be problematic in their reading of poetry in English.

Furthermore, 49% of the respondents feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems. This percentage, although lower, suggests that a large number of students face problems as a result of difference in cultural context and are at a disadvantage compared to students who have appropriate social, cultural and religious background for poems in English.

The results of this section are concerned with the different social, cultural and religious ideologies and this problem is also acknowledged by Obeidat (1996). He questions whether it was “risky to teach Arab students literature that poses a major problem for English departments morally, culturally, and socially; whether teaching a foreign literature has advantages” (19). He is concerned about students’ inability to interact with ideologies different than their own. His concern is proven right in the results of this section which show high percentages of participants acknowledging that different social, cultural and religious ideologies and references can be a hindrance to the interpretation of poems in English.

Asfour and Dahiyat (1983) also note the existence of this problem in Arab universities, showing a similar concern for cultural bias and prejudice when Arab students study English literature. They state that there is a constant problem with the cultural and moral issues displayed in the students’ perceptions and experiences while they read any non-native literary text. This reflects the 49% of the respondents who feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems in English.

John Lye (2008) also affirms the presence of problems for non-natives reading English poetry. He explains that, if we share the same conventions, our analyses and interpretations will be similar, but if the cultural settings differ, then so will our understanding and thus our reading and interpretation. He explains that, on the one hand, a text is a historical document, and on the other hand meaning is derived from cultural and contextual components. Therefore it is difficult to state whether a text has the same meaning for an individual reader as for a group. This statement explains the varied percentages regarding the problematic nature of reading poetic texts with differing cultural and religious knowledge. In some
categories of this section participants acknowledged differing cultural knowledge causing problems in their interpretation of poems and others did not determine this to be problematic.

Compaore (2004) also supports the findings of this section. He states that a language is not detached from the socio-cultural milieu in which it evolved, and that it is imperative for non-native speakers to have some degree of immersion or exposure in that milieu. This statement explains that the participants who observed that differing cultural and religious background to be problematic seem to be showing a level of readiness for exposure to target any problematic issues in their reading of poetry in English.

4.4.3 Factors which interfere with the ability to analyse

The third section investigated whether social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences interfered with students’ ability to analyse poetry in English. Table 4.6 summarises the participants’ responses to the three issues investigated in this section of the questionnaire.
Table 10: Intervention with ability to analyse

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The first question in this section (question ten) is “Do the differences in Arabic and English architecture or structure and composition prevent you from interpreting the thematic implication or main idea of the poem?” This question seeks to discern the number of students who struggle to interpret the themes of poems due to differences in sentence structure. 30% of the students say they have problems interpreting thematic implications due to the differences in Arabic and English sentence structure, while 70% say that they do not. In the participants’ responses to this question, it became apparent that the majority are confident when reading sentences in English. The 30% who have difficulty with the differences in sentence structure need to be observed and are the focus of this study.
The second question in this section (question eleven) is “Do the differences in Arabic and English social, cultural and religious ideologies prevent you from interpreting the general idea or the thematic implication?” The results show 33% of the students agree that different social, cultural and religious ideologies hinder their interpretation of thematic implications of English and American poems, while 67% do not view these differences as problematic. The results reinforce the situation in my poetry class and based on my teaching experience, students struggle with thematic implications due to differences in social and religious ideology. Some students even become frustrated with references for which they did not have the appropriate background knowledge and thus fail to interpret the general idea of a poem.

The third question in this section (question twelve) asks “Does the existence of a contrasting Arabic cultural background, such as ways of life, beliefs and religious practices negatively interfere with your interpretation of poems in English and poetic conventions and does it keep you at distance from achieving your greatest potential in your performance of reading and analyzing independently poems in English?” This question seeks to understand how far these differences hold the student back, especially when there are so many factors influencing their reading and analysis. 43% of the students agree that differences in cultural background hinder their interpretation of poems in English, while 57% do not agree and do not perceive these factors to be influencing their performance. As noted, this question provides information in understanding how far these differences hold the student back and the results are almost equal and 43% of the participants acknowledge it holds them back in the poetry class; this presents a situation that needs to be addressed to improve the teaching and learning of poetry in English.

This third section investigates students’ opinions concerning the existence of a contrasting Arabic cultural background that negatively interferes with their interpretation when analysing poems in English. Overall 109 of the 309 responses indicate that they face problems as a result of these differences, whereas 200 of 309 do not consider these differences to be problematic. This section shows that the students’ background knowledge has some effect on their ability to interpret and respond to poems.

The findings for this section are in agreement with John Lye (2008), who explains that meaning exists only insofar as it means to someone, and that art is composed in order to evoke sets of responses in the reader. Meaning is thus ‘social’: language and conventions work only as shared meaning and the reader of a text is participating in producing social or
cultural meaning. Lye believes that a “response” is individual, but is part of culture and history; if a reader’s history and background are different, then his comprehension will also be different. The results reinforce Lye’s statement regarding differing background impeding interpretation. The results for the three questions of an overall 109 of the 309 responses indicate the presence of a problem for the participants far beyond what I had originally anticipated.

This is also recognised by Kaplan (1966), who reinforces the need for similar language style and principles of composition if poetry is to be understood: language varies “from culture to culture…” (2), and the Arabic language carries with it cultural implications which can hinder Arabic speakers’ understanding of English poetic texts. It is important here to pause and add a note on the complex nature of the Arabic language and structure and reading poetry in English can further complicate their reading. This section essentially shows that there are more potential sources for the participants’ confusion and problem with interpretation. I believe that this plays a role in the present study because every attempt needs to be made to provide reasons and explanations for any obstacles the respondents had problems with in reading poetry in English.

4.4.4 Students’ openness to a new teaching approach

The fourth section is dedicated to investigating students’ openness to a new teaching technique. Table 11 summarises the participants’ responses to the three investigated issues concerning students’ openness to a new teaching approach.
The first question in this section (question thirteen) is “Would you want a new teaching approach to help improve and guide your reading of the English poem?” The result show that the majority of the students (83%) approve of the application of a new teaching methodology, and only 17% do not want a new pedagogy. This question is essential to this study because it is necessary to investigate the students’ perception of the present teaching approach and to see whether their opinion supports the researchers’ perspective that there is a need for the implementation of a teaching pedagogy tailored to their needs. The above 83% shows a very high percentage of the participants showing a need for new teaching approaches. Thus, it can
be inferred that the participants are having problems with their traditional teaching techniques.

The second question (question fourteen) investigates students’ perception of new teaching techniques: “Do you believe a new reading tool can be of benefit for improving your interpretation, one which shows you the patterns of the English language and gives you clues for understanding the structure of the English language?” This question is also significant to this study because one of the problems with the traditional teaching technique is its lack of new approaches to analysing poetic texts in English. The responses show almost complete agreement with the idea that students should have a new reading tool to improve their reading and interpretation: 95% favour the idea, and only 5% disagree. The percentages here are important because it can indicate students’ need for analytical tools to improve their interpretation.

The third question in this section (question fifteen) is “Would you want the history part in the poetry class to be more focused by providing you with information which fills in your lack of social, cultural and religious knowledge necessary for understanding the English poem being studied compared to giving you all the historical information of the age and the writers life?” This issue is in the questionnaire because one of the problems during my teaching at King Saud University was the overwhelming amount of information that students had to absorb in poetry class. 64% of the students agree that a change in the teaching of historical information would be beneficial, while 36% disagree. This response points to an additional problem when studying poetry in English and it reveals students’ openness to a new approach to the teaching of the historical part of the poem.

This fourth section investigates students’ opinions about the need to move away from a traditional pedagogy based on the memorisation of historical information towards one that focuses on more innovative teaching techniques. A large majority believe that there is a need for such a change in pedagogy, with 249 of the 309 responses indicating that they find the traditional teaching approaches problematic, and only 60 of 309 finding them useful. This indicates that Saudi students believe that the traditional teaching techniques used in poetry lessons are hindering their learning, which also suggests an impact on students’ willingness to study poetry and to interpret the poems being studied. The high percentage of who believe there is a need for a new teaching methodology shows their concern with current teaching styles. It also suggests that a desire to advance the approach to teaching poetry is widely held.
This is recognised by Ghazi Alqasabi (cited in Halprin, 2005), who states it is essential that the teaching process step away from the traditional “word-by-word concentration on meaning, inflection and figure of speech” (16). Layla Al-Maleh agrees, recognising that teaching English literature to Arab students is highly challenging for the teachers and that there is a need to move towards the use of a technique that depends more on independent interpretation. Al-Maleh recommends teaching literature amorally to avoid alienating Arab Muslim students. The response of 95% of Saudi students believing that they need a new reading technique reinforces these researchers and educators statements and seems to indicate participants’ belief that they can benefit from interpreting poems themselves.

This problem is also observed by Wisam Mansour (1995), who states that teaching English poetry to non-native students in an English Department in Jordan requires a teaching methodology that focuses on giving the reader a method with which to work independently. Mansour believes that the traditional factual historical approach confines students and fails to emphasise the poem itself; the poems thus become “mere containers of data” (33). The results of this section are in line with Mansours’ point and that there seem to be problems with the traditional teaching techniques used in poetry lessons at King Saud University which may stem from the participants preference for a more independent approach.

### 4.4.5 Do students want to be independent when analysing poetry in English?

The fifth section investigates students’ openness to being independent when analysing poems. Table 12 summarises the participants’ responses to the two questions in the section.

**Table 12: Do students want to be independent when analysing poems in English?**

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<td>No</td>
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The first question (question sixteen) in this last section is “Would you like to be able to have the freedom of choice to select poems to work on in your poetry class and to give your own individual interpretation for it?” The majority of the participants state (84%) that they would like to give their own interpretations. Only 16% report that they prefer the traditional teaching technique. These responses determine students’ willingness to give their own voices and opinions when studying poems in English. The traditional teaching technique does not allow much space for students to give their own interpretation of the poems they study; usually they are asked to learn interpretations that are given to them by their teachers.

Table 13: New or traditional teaching technique?

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The second question in this section (question seventeen) asked students whether they would prefer when they were analysing a poem

1- A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret a poem in English using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

2. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

This question is placed at the end of the questionnaire to ensure that the students can give an informed answer after they have replied to all the questions relating to the obstacles which can play a role in their inability to interpret poems. The majority of the students’ responses (84%) indicate their support for this new teaching technique. Only 16% say that they would prefer not to have an active role when analysing poems. The responses show that the students
recognise the problems discussed are relevant to their own experience and they were able to choose a new teaching pedagogy over a traditional one.

The last section of the questionnaire attempts to get students’ preferences regarding the teaching approach taken in their classes and regarding taking an active role in analysis. Overall 170 of the 206 responses indicate a preference for a new teaching technique which allows them more freedom to interpret poems in English independently using interpretive tools to guide them; 36 of 206 responses indicate that they do not want a change in their teaching approaches. This section shows Saudi students’ awareness of the need to play a more active role in the analysis of poems and desire to learn new tools for reading poetry. The majority of the responses agree that a teaching approach that allows for more independent analysis for poetry is desirable, and this concurs with opinions of some Arab researchers and educators such as Habeeb (1994) and Maleh (2005).

Habeeb recognises this need for poetry students to make independent interpretation in his teaching at a Palestinian University. He states that students are not given the chance to participate in any interactive teaching techniques and that this limits their motivation and confidence. He therefore supports the idea of equipping Arab students with the appropriate tools for interpretation so as to improve their interpretation of poetry in English. This point is shown in the responses of this questionnaire and the students who wanted to be independent when studying poetry reached 85%. This high percentage implies the need for the Saudi students’ voices to be heard so that they can present their individual opinions about the works being studied.

Maleh again reinforces the problems caused by a lack of independent analysis in the teaching of English poetry. She explains that one of the biggest obstacles facing Arab educators who propose the implementation of new teaching techniques for individual interpretation is fear that associated with the exploration of some Western literary themes (for example, sexual liberation or gender equality), which are viewed negatively by authority figures as well as by some professors and students. She believes that these attitudes have caused scholars to propose restrictive strategies for the teaching of literature. This section of the questionnaire reveals the unquestionable dominance of an overall 170 of the 206 responses preferring a new teaching technique which indicates the presence of the participants’ need to play a significant active role in the reading and interpretation of poems in English. Hence, I believe Arab
scholars need to reconsider and yield to such dominant responses for new strategies in teaching.

This section has presented an analysis and discussion of the findings of the closed questions on the questionnaire used in this study. The next section presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of the open questions on the questionnaire.

4.5 Analysis and discussion of the responses to the open questions in the questionnaire
The second part of this chapter focuses on the open questions in the questionnaire. This section is intended to portray students’ beliefs about issues concerning the differences between the Arabic and English languages and how they affect the students’ reading and interpretation of poems in English. The students’ opinions are discussed separately to view and identify which factors seem most problematic, which is necessary if my pedagogy is to avoid any obstacles associated with teaching poetry in English to the students at King Saud University and introduce new and beneficial teaching techniques.

4.6 Responses to open questions
The first question asks about Saudi students’ beliefs about the problems related to the differences between Arabic and English language and culture that they experience when reading or studying poems in English. The purpose of this question is to explore the Saudi students’ beliefs about differences between linguistic structure and social, cultural and religious ideology and the role they play in hindering the interpretation of poems in English. The second question asks the students to describe any problems they may have in learning poetry. This allows the researcher to hear Saudi students’ voices and lets them suggest any problems I did not take into consideration. The answers to the open questions are dominated by particular issues that hinder their leaning. The results are presented according to the main themes identified in the students’ answers that represent particular issues discussed in the research. The following are the themes from the open questions:

1. Problems with background (Historical/Religious/Social)

2 Problems with different rhetoric

3. Problems with different linguistic structure
4. Problems with teaching techniques

5. Problems with tools of interpretation

The question encourages Saudi students to describe their beliefs about the problems they face in interpreting poems in English and to think of them in terms of differences in language and thought. The students were aware that this study is an attempt to address these problems. 103 students answered the questionnaire, but not all gave their opinion in response to the open question. It seems that some have problems which are evident in their answers to the closed questions but cannot be specified in the open questions. Of the 103 students, 87 state their opinions regarding problems in the poetry class. This number is considered more than sufficient to allow me to gather data for this section of the study. As I have indicated above, the findings on Saudi students’ beliefs fall into groups and a selected number of answers are shown to represent each issue. Some additional samples of students’ original answers are placed in appendix 5. To facilitate the presentation of the beliefs of the students, five answers that are representative of each particular problem are shown, although some of these answers address more than one issue. This is due to the fact that many of the students face more than one problem in reading and interpreting poetry; the most relevant are shown in each case. Figure 4 shows the proportion of the students who face each problem.
The chart indicates the proportion of students who face problems with background, rhetoric, teaching techniques, linguistic structure and interpretive tools. Figure 4 illustrates the division of each variable in this research. This graph also indicates that there is sufficient evidence of students suffering from each problem to support each one’s existence. It shows that the greatest proportion of students (30%) face a problem with their interpretive tools and lack appropriate decoding tools. The next most common problem is rhetoric, with 22% of the students identifying this as an impeding factor. The third most common problem is the different linguistic structures of Arabic and English, which 19% identify as their biggest difficulty. The fourth most common problem is a lack of appropriate background knowledge, especially for the cultural and religious information, which 16% indicate is their biggest difficulty. Finally, 13% report that teaching techniques are the biggest problem they face, suggesting the failings of the traditional teaching method. These issues are analysed further by studying each problem separately and displaying the students’ opinions about it.

Saudi students’ beliefs regarding the learning of poetry suggest that it is a hindering factor which needs attention. Their beliefs about teaching techniques suggest that it plays a major role in their hindrance for learning poetry in English. The students’ beliefs also seem to show that they themselves need motivation to improve their reading and thus 30% state they have problems due to the lack of interpretive tool. This is important for this study since these percentages for the open questions show that the students recognized the problematic issues
for learning poetry. Below are some extracts about Saudi students’ beliefs about reading and interpreting poetry in English:

4.6.1 Problems with background
The first theme supports the belief that differences in historical, religious and social background can hinder the reading and interpretation of poetry in English. Their beliefs also suggest that differing background knowledge plays a major role in their inability to relate to the poem. The students believe that different background knowledge disrupts the natural flow of reading and relating to the experience presented in the poem because they lack the appropriate background knowledge. Sometimes they need to research for the meaning of ideas in a poem. This can be time consuming and distracting for the student. Below are some extracts showing some of the Saudi students’ beliefs on the effect of difference of background on their reading and interpretation of poems. In the following extract student one shows her belief in the necessity of understanding the poets’ culture and ideology to understand the thought in a poem:

The culture sometimes can be a big problem because it is not only different from our culture but also American and British culture is completely opposite. Sometimes it takes time to acknowledge all the cultural differences. Also some of the references relate to the Bible and that can make it difficult to understand unless you dig and look for explanations of the verse or the word (January 2014).

Student two also believes that she needs to have the same background knowledge to understand the main idea of a poem because she lacks the appropriate background knowledge to understand the references in the poems:

As a student, I find a problem in understanding the references of some words or ideas that are back to certain myths and cultures in the English or American past. I also find a problem in understanding the theme of the poem without knowing the poets belief and religion (January 2014).

Student three clearly states that cultural differences are a hindrance to the interpretation of poems in English:
Sometimes the cultural differences between Arabic and English prevent me from getting the correct meaning of the poem (January 2014).

Student four also supports the idea that different cultural and historical backgrounds cause the students to be unable to relate to the poem:

The usual problem that I face when I read a poem is that I can’t relate to the historical background because we don’t know their historical background. Another problem is the teachers’ choice of poems that include old English and very different ideology which they expect us to know (January 2014).

Student five also shows an awareness of religious differences hindering her interpretation:

Also religious and mythical references or stories in the English and American poems create conflict for us Muslim students (January 2014).

The above findings suggest that Saudi students have similar beliefs about different background knowledge disrupting their reading and interpretation of poems in English. Yet, the main core belief that obstructs students reading is their inability to relate to the poem. This is an important element in learning poetry and it is essential to find ways to increase the students’ fundamental skills in the reading of poetry to allow them to relate to the poetry they are studying.

4.6.2 Problems with different rhetoric

This second theme supports the belief that different rhetoric causes hindrances in the reading and interpretation of poetry in English. Some Saudi students believe that the differences in rhetoric between Arabic and English can be problematic for their reading of poems in English. In the first extract, student one relates her confusion with the English poetry’s different rhetoric:

The difference between cultural and intellectual ideas causes confusion in the representation of some symbolic words or phrases, for example colours may mean one thing in Arabic and something entirely different in English. This means that we need to understand their intellectual background (January 2014).
Student two in the second extract states that the process of the linking and arranging of the words and ideas in poems in English causes problems for Saudi students:

The problem that I face when I read an English or American poem is that the arrangement of the ideas which are different than the Arabic can make me confused. Also since the English rhetoric affects the linking of the ideas, it is connected to the poetic devices in the poem (January 2014).

Student three in the third extract shows that Saudi students are at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding poetry in English when compared to English and American students who can relate to the language and have appropriate lexical knowledge:

The problem that I think a lot of girls face is the understanding the meaning of the poem which depends on our knowledge of the English language; if your first language is English and you will have a larger vocabulary store than the Arabic students, They will have the advantage to understand the poem better (January 2014).

Student four in the fourth extract touches upon an important issue related to the differences in rhetoric and the internal struggle Saudi students’ face when studying poems in English. The student says that she is predisposed to compare English poems and their rhetoric to that of the Arabic poetry:

There is some difficult English vocabulary in the poems which I can’t understand even when I check it in the dictionary because the meaning is related to their background. Also, there can be complex poems which need a lot of explanation in order to get the meaning. I guess that is because we are studying English poems and trying to apply this knowledge to our knowledge of Arabic poetry (January 2014).

Student five in the fifth extract clearly states that the basic problems related to the reading and interpretation of poems in English are the differences in rhetoric:

I have difficulty with understanding the poem because of the difficult meaning of the language, its comparison and its implications (January 2014).

The above findings show that students stress the importance of sharing the same rhetoric so that they can understand symbolism and references. Most of them believe that the difference in rhetoric causes hindrances in the reading and interpretation of poetry in English. Some students realised that some native learners for poetry in English are at an advantage and this
can be de-motivating to their reading and interpretation. This point is especially important for this study since it indicates one of the obstructive issues in the poetry classroom. Therefore, students need support in their reading to create a more positive atmosphere in the poetry classroom to support their reading and interpretation.

4.6.3 Problems with different linguistic structure

The next theme supports the belief that different linguistic structure hinders the reading and interpretation of poetry in English. In the first extract, student one acknowledges that different linguistic structure causes problems with interpretation:

I have problems with the different Arabic and English structures and style format. For example, the English becomes complicated when it’s long and each stanza has a separate idea (January 2014).

Student two in the second extract identifies different linguistic structures as the source of misunderstanding a poets’ message:

The difficulty and complication of some of the words and sentences in English poems sometimes bothers me. The poets use different words and sentence structure to deliver their message (January 2014).

Student three in the third extract clearly states that differences in linguistic structure cause difficulties in the interpretation of poetry in English:

I faced some difficulties in the beginning because of the difference in Arabic and English poetic and linguistic structure (January 2014).

Student four in the fourth extract also states that different poetic devices based on different linguistic structures are the cause of confusion in reading poems in English:

Usually in Arabic poetry the lines of the poems end in poetic devices which Arabs are accustomed to. Yet, in English the poetic form and the devices they use are different and this can be confusing (January 2014).

Student five in the fifth extract demonstrates a problem with reading poems in English that is caused by differences in linguistic structure between Arabic and English. Saudi students
come to an English poem with expectations based on their linguistic knowledge of the Arabic language:

In Arabic the structure of the poem is different. The ideas and language are arranged differently. In the Arabic poem, the writer divides the paragraphs in a way to express a different idea. This is not found in the English poem (January 2014).

The findings for this section suggest that differences in linguistic structure can be problematic when the students’ native language contains different rules and structure to that of the poetic texts. The students emphasise the need to have knowledge of the linguistic structure for the reading and interpretation of poems in English. The Saudi students seem to show interest in learning the structure for the English language, as they believe the lack of it is causes problems in their reading. This point contributes to this study since it can be perceived that their need to develop their reading indicates the emergence of their awareness of a role they need to play in the poetry classroom.

4.6.4 Problems with teaching techniques

This theme addresses the belief that teaching techniques can hinder students’ reading and interpretation of poetry in English. From the participants’ responses, there is a consistent call for the university tutors’ own critical analyses to be less influential and for there to be a shift towards independent learning, analysis and opinion. For example, in the first extract, student one believes that in the poetry class students need encouragement from tutors to develop their critical powers:

They focus on giving us an analysis of the poem rather than helping us to find and understand the main idea of it [the poem] (January 2014).

Student two in the second extract reinforces the need for independent analysis and also requests a tool to understand aspects in the poem for which students do not have the appropriate background knowledge:

My main issue lies on our teacher not giving us the freedom to give our critical analysis. Also, the religious and mythical references in the poems create conflict for us Muslim students and we need to learn how to understand them (January 2014).
Student three in the third extract relates the problem of their inability to interpret to the tutors’ inappropriate selection of materials which are incomprehensible to Arabic and Muslim students:

The problem for me is that I do not understand the intention of the poet. The poet has a different religion and background. The ideas are not clear for me and that can bother me a lot. I think the way the teachers of poetry at KSU don’t help us overcome this problem, if the way of teaching changes it will be easier for us (January 2014).

Student four in the fourth extract shows that the student is not comfortable with the teaching technique because of the inconsistency of its approach for analysing the poem:

Sometimes the explanation that is presented from the teacher is not clear because she will want more emphasis on the historical part and other time she will focus on methods relevant to analysing the main idea of the poem (January 2014).

Student five in the fifth extract is similar to the fourth and describes the inconsistent teaching methods used by the tutors:

Some teachers will ask us to only memorise all the critical analysis for the poems and other teachers will want us to learn the main idea and concentrate on the structure of the poem. Therefore, we don’t know what they want us to do (January 2014).

The findings suggest that many of the Saudi students believe that there is a need for new teaching techniques for poetry in English and that the teaching techniques at King Saud University are not suitable for their specific Arabic and Islamic background. They believe that the university’s tutors could give them more freedom to express themselves by allowing them to analyse poems independently. Students believe that an appropriate teaching atmosphere can improve their learning. This call stems from students discomfort with the teaching techniques because of the inconsistency of their approach for teaching poetry in English.
4.6.5 Problems with interpretive tools

The last theme addressed in this section supports the belief that there are problems with the lack of interpretative tools which hinder their reading and interpretation. To guide the discussion of this point, it is helpful to describe two points. First, many of the students were not aware that linguistic tools can be used to help with the interpretation of poems in English. This was only discovered later during the interviews with the students and potentially explains the low number of opinions focusing on this point. Second, those who do mention the need for interpretive tools do not have a comprehensive idea of the SFL’s interpretive tools yet nonetheless support the idea of having a method to help them interpret poems in English independently. In the first extract student one believes she is having problems with poetry because she is not given the freedom to analyse and interpret on her own:

The only problem I find myself facing with studying and reading poems is the opposition between my own ideas and interpretations of the poem (provided by the tutor) and what we have studied so far in class. It feels like I’m forcing myself to believe the idea that we studied instead of just learning to express our own interpretation. This also causes problem when it comes to exams (January 2014).

Student two and three in the second and third extracts represent students who believe that they do not have problems due to a lack of background knowledge but are in a need of teaching method which can help them analyse on their own:

I find difficulty in understanding the meaning of a poem because of the complicated use of language. As for cultural, social and religious differences, they don’t make any obstacle in understanding the text. I really need tools of interpretation to guide me (January 2014).

Ages ago, we might have had a problem in understanding an English poem, but now with the media, social media and the internet, we are finally aware of other cultures, including English culture with all of its aspects: religion, society, ideology and so on. We have no problem studying and understanding any English poem regardless of when it was constructed; we just wish to share our inner interpretation with the teacher regarding our analysis of poem themes, characters and so on (January 2014).
Student four in the fourth extract continues the call for freedom to interpret:

I want freedom to choose the poem. I want to be given a guide to help me interpret poems (January 2014).

Student five in the fifth extract presents a problem which I found in my own teaching experience with many of my students when I allowed them to interpret some of the poems on their own. The students needed a plan or guideline to follow because they were not accustomed to independent analysis:

I find problems in writing the analysis for a certain poem. We need a guideline for the ideal answer. The difficulties that I find in fully comprehending the meaning of the poem are not having tools for interpretation not because of the Arabic structure (January 2014).

The students’ beliefs for this section suggest that they feel trapped by the traditional teaching methods and desire the knowledge they need to explore and experience new teaching methods. Some openly express this clear need for interpretive tools to improve the teaching of poetry. Others believe that they are being held back because they have no problems understanding the cultural and social backgrounds represented in the poems but cannot voice their own interpretations and lack the tutors’ support to do so.

4.7 Discussion of findings

The findings of this chapter are unexpected: they represent the problems as much more severe than I had anticipated. The findings of the closed questions present Saudi students’ beliefs about the factors that hinder their interpretation of poems in English and suggest that there are fundamental problems in this area. These include not only the lack of appropriate background knowledge and the differences in linguistic structure, but also the practice of teaching poetry itself. There are a number of important conclusions to draw from these findings. The first is that students’ responses to the different Arabic and English structures demonstrate the existence of a problem with finding a place to begin when analysing or reading a poem in English, with 47% of the Saudi students recognising this problem. 67% indicate that the different social, cultural and religious ideologies and references presented in the poems are a hindrance to their interpretation of poetry in English compared to that of poetry with Islamic and Arabic ideologies and references. Another factor which negatively
influences their reading and interpretation is their different Arabic cultural background and practices.

Furthermore, a very high percentage of the Saudi students (85%) believe that the traditional teaching techniques for the poetry lessons are the main reason for their difficulties with interpreting poetry in English. This finding may also suggest an impact on their willingness to study poetry. The high percentage of students who agree that there is a need for a new teaching methodology shows their concern about the current teaching styles and their belief that students must be able to voice their opinions about the works being studied.

In addition, an overwhelming 95% of the participants believe that there is a need for a new reading technique for poetry, which seems to stem from their preference for a more independent approach and their belief that students can benefit more when they are allowed to interpret poems themselves. This call for the independent analysis of poetry concurs with the views of some Arab researchers and educators opinions such as Habeeb (1994), Hazmi (cited in Halprin, 2005) and Maleh (2005).

The responses to the open questions reinforce the findings of the closed questions. They suggest that students consider the teaching methods and practices in the poetry classroom to be more significant hindrances to their learning than the lack of the appropriate background knowledge. The students believe that good teaching of poetry in English involves giving students a more active role in the analysis of the poem. This suggests that tutors should be aware of students’ needs and should give them the chance to express their own ideas about the poems to be studied.

Saudi students’ beliefs about the problems with independent analysis due to a lack of interpretive tools suggest the need for new techniques for reading and interpreting poems in English and the students’ openness to such new techniques. The students feel there is a conflict between their own ideas and the interpretations of the poem (provided by the tutor). They are currently expected to follow established literary criticism and reach the same “conclusion” as their tutor. A similar disposition is described by Widdowson (1975):

> What tends to be taught is some critical orthodoxy, a set of ready-made judgements for rote-learning rather than strategies of understanding which can be transferred to other and unknown literary works. Instead of being guided towards techniques of individual interpretation students are often provided with other people’s
interpretations so that the study of literature becomes identified with the study of literary criticism and commentary (74-75).

This represents students' beliefs regarding feeling constricted by the traditional teaching method and that they find that it limits their learning. The students' opinions suggest the need for more freedom to interpret the poems they are studying.

The findings from the open questions concerning the problems with different rhetoric suggest that Saudi students believe that the difference between their own cultural ideas and those represented in the poems can be problematic. The students report that the different basic structure of the English language can confuse them since it is directly connected to the meaning. They believe that they are at a disadvantage compared to English and American students because they come to poems in English with an Arabic background and rhetoric and cannot relate to the poem as a native reader can. This indicates that different rhetoric can have a negative influence on Saudi students studying poetry in English. Acknowledging the difference in rhetoric is therefore a fundamental step towards improving the teaching of poetry, as Vickers (1988) recognises:

> It is essential to know the major texts [of rhetoric], but also to realise that they are very diverse compositions (13).

Thus, it seems that non-native Saudi student reader require some knowledge of the background of rhetoric in advance of doing their analysis.

The findings related to the theme of teaching techniques support the need for more independent analysis and interpretation and for a new approach to teaching poetry, as these were opinions that the participants predominately shared. The responses suggest that the students are willing to adopt new teaching methods to encourage and develop their reading and of poems in English. The findings suggest that Saudi students are not content with the traditional teaching approach and want to develop their analytical abilities and be able to articulate their own interpretations of the poems they are studying.

The reason for this need for a change in the teaching methodologies relates to one of the themes which many of the students touched on concerning Saudi students' lack of appropriate historical, social and religious background knowledge for poems in English as they are presented in poetry. Some of the Saudi students feel that one of the reasons for their willingness to attempt to interpret independently is their exposure to English and American
ideologies through the media. This belief seems to be a source of confidence. The students’
statements support the idea of them taking an active role in the study of poetry in English.
Teachers should motivate them and encourage them to share their ideas.

These findings suggest that tutors need to be aware of problems that are hindering students’
reading and interpretation. It seems that a new approach to the teaching of poetry will be
helpful to expand the teaching techniques in the poetry classrooms in the English department
at King Saud University. This can develop their strengths and let them recognise their own
voice and style. This approach is described by McRae (1991): “what it is necessary to stress
is the flexibility and openness of the reading experience, the possibility of individual reaction
and response” (21). This reflects students’ strong belief that a more balanced strategy for the
teaching of poetry would be desirable and that tutors should support their independent
interpretations of poetry by teaching them interpretative tools that build on their foundational
knowledge and allow them to analyse poems.

4.8 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, issues relating to problems with the reading and interpretation of poems in
English for Saudi students were raised. The questionnaire deals with various factors that
hinder their interpretation of poems in English, such as social, cultural, religious and
linguistic issues. I have displayed and analysed the results of the questionnaire. The results
were divided into two sections: the results of the closed questions and those of the open
questions. In the following are points which summarise the findings of this chapter:

1. The results of the questionnaire section concerning the different social, cultural and
religious ideologies prove that this problem exists and hinders students’ interpretation of
poetry in English.

2. The questionnaire reveals the unquestionable dominance of an overall 170 of the 206
responses preferring a new teaching technique which indicates the presence of the
participants’ need for new teaching approaches.
4. The students find that studying poetry using a variety of techniques is liberating. In particular, they feel that this pedagogy enables them to look at texts from multiple perspectives and to think more critically.

5. The students also think that the pedagogy contributes to the development of their skills and recognises their opinions, experiences and cultural backgrounds.

4. Many students support the development of alternative teaching techniques and would like to be made aware of such possibilities for reading and analysing poetry and other texts.

5. This study found that Saudi students consider traditional teaching techniques a hindrance to their understanding and believe that the new pedagogy allows them to engage with the poems.

6. The questionnaire and the open questions demonstrate the students’ desire for teaching pedagogy which recognizes their specific needs to be able to react, explore and develop their reading of poetry. 85% of students report that they want to be more independent when they study poetry, implying they feel a need to express their opinions about the works being studied.

The next chapter presents the class practice.
CHAPTER FIVE:

CLASS PRACTICE

5.1 Introduction
Through a teaching methodology based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), this class practice explores how Saudi students engage in the reading of a poetic text. It also examines how SFL tools can play a crucial role in helping students develop an awareness of how an author’s linguistic choices construct the point of view of the poem, the person, a character taken on by a poet to speak in a first-person poem, or the poet. This class practice aims to explore how the SFL-based teaching methodology raises students’ awareness of language structures. In addition, it attempts to make the Transitivity system accessible for students when interpreting English poetry. Finally, it aims to show the connection between linguistics and literature using an alternative teaching framework within the context of a poetry class.

5.2 Purpose of Transitivity analysis
This section explains the concepts that informed the methodological procedure for the students’ interpretation. This class practice focuses on Transitivity analysis of a poetic text. The experiential meanings are realised through the Transitivity system and the organisation of clauses is realised by Textual meanings (Egginis 2004; 206, Halliday and Webster 2009, 236). The Experiential meanings are realised through specific linguistic structures i.e. the
Transitivity structure; thus, authors don’t merely interpret ‘reality’ into words; instead speakers and writers explain their experience of reality as ‘discourse’ (Martin and Rose 2003, 66). One can understand the Experiential meaning of texts through the analysis and study of lexicogrammatical structures and choices. These choices, in turn, reflect our interpretation in relation to our experiences in the world and therefore reveal our ideological stance in relation to a particular topic in a poetic text. In other words, the Experiential meaning encodes a text’s construal of the world.

The main focus in Transitivity analysis is to determine the level of Transitivity and agency in a clause through an exploration of the process types and participants (Eggins 2004, 110). Transitivity analysis also specifies the different types of processes that are recognised in language and the structures by which they are expressed (Halliday 1994, 106–362). Process is the main element of Transitivity, which can be related with one or more participants and circumstances. The main verb in a process determines the process type. Depending on the different types of verbs, there are six process types according to SFL: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural and existential. The participants involved in the process can be human, animate or inanimate and are realised by nominal groups (Halliday 1994, 110). Material processes are processes of ‘doing’ and ‘happening’. The main participant roles in material processes are those of actor, goal, range and beneficiary (143). Mental are processes of ‘sensing’: feeling, thinking and perceiving/seeing (118). The main participant roles in mental processes are those of senser and phenomenon (143). Relational processes are processes of being (119) and the main participant roles in the relational processes are carrier and attribute, of identified and identifier, and of token and value (143). Behavioural processes are processes of physiological and psychological behaviour. They main participant role in behavioural processes is behaver (143). Verbal processes are constructed in the form of language and the main participant roles in verbal processes are those of sayer, receiver and target (143-144). Existential processes are the ones to ‘be’, to exist, or to happen (107). The participant role in existential processes is that of existent (143).

In SFL, the clause is the basic unit of analysis, the components of the Transitivity structure can be divided into three parts: process, participants in the process and circumstances associated with the process. These parts construct the frame of reference for interpreting our experience of happening, doing, sensing, meaning, being and becoming (Halliday 1994, 106–362). An analysis of this pattern of Transitivity (Eggins 2004, 110) reveals how a text
constructs characters and a particular spatio-temporal point of view that may be consistent or may shift throughout a narrative.

For the purpose of the SFL-based teaching methodology proposed for this class practice, the students were informed that the purpose of SFL analysis is to highlight how characters and settings are construed through the selection of specific processes, participants and circumstances. Hence, the focus in this class practice is on the Transitivity patterns of the text, using a close analysis of the lexicogrammar to interpret the poem. Hasan and Fries (1995, xvi) stated that since “language is seen as a powerhouse for the creation of these different sorts of meanings, the description of language logically demands attention to what a lexicogrammatical device does”. Thus, students will be able to interpret poems independently by analysing the lexicogrammatical structures of poems.

Halliday (1994, 106) stated that language is used to represent patterns of experience that enable the reader “to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them”. Therefore, an author is representing experience in his or her text, which consists of “goings-on”; happening, doing, sensing, meaning, being and becoming in the grammar of the clause. Transitivity interprets the world of “goings-on” or experience in a set of process types. To analyse Transitivity in the selected poetic text, the students were asked to adopt the categories used by Eggins (2004), Halliday and Matthiesen (2004) and Thompson (1996). The analysis highlights what processes, participants and circumstances are used and how they are organised. The constructs of Transitivity analysis explained here support the SFL-based teaching methodology proposed to improve Saudi students’ critical reading and ability to realise the poets’ lexicogrammar so that they can understand the social dimension of the poem being analysed.

5.3 Methodological procedure
In the class practice, guidelines were established on the students’ reading of the poem and on how to use the SFL tools. The students analysed the processes, participants and circumstances to illustrate the mind frame or world view in a poem. Students were expected to analyse Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004) six process types, namely material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioural and existential. They were asked to describe the processes in the poem to understand the ideas embedded in the poems.
Furthermore, the students were expected to identify the roles and positions attributed to each participant in the poem. The roles were to be analysed and organised to prompt interpretations. Students were also asked to locate and identify the circumstances for the analysis of the poetic text. Hence, they worked with the process types, participants and circumstances and synthesised their findings to refine their interpretation. According to Coulthard (2005, 9), “Ultimately a text is a string of words and a writer has to encode the ideational meaning into, and the reader to decode that meaning from, words … word meanings are not fully fixed; rather, words derive some of their meaning from the context in which they appear.” Thus, students need to understand this string of words to interpret who is more active in the poem, particularly who acts on whom, to understand the prevailing social ideology in the poem.

The analysis of the systemic choices made in the poem was composed of the steps in Figure 5:
1. To guide the students in this methodology and clarify the steps in reading the poem, they were given the diagram shown in Figure 5.

![Transitivity Analysis Diagram](image)

- **Transitivity Analysis**
  - Locate the central Participants
  - Identify Participant roles to facilitate issues of authority in relation to the speaker or others in a poem
  - Locate the Processes
  - Analyse Processes and participant roles to interpret the image of men when using the participant roles and processes in the reading of the poem.
  - Locate and Identify the Circumstances associated with the processes by being attentive to the lexicogrammar in the poem
  - Analyse similarities, differences and repetitive functions in the Transitivity analysis
  - Study the patterns that occur in the poem and combine all the information regarding the process, participant role and circumstances for their interpretation

*Figure1. Steps in Transitivity analysis*
These steps were used to help the students organise their reading to enable them to interpret a poem and in this particular class practice they were asked to focus on interpreting a precise portrayal of the personas in the poem to determine the relationship of the male and female personas in the poem. The rationale for this procedure is that the identification of the main participants in the poem and the processes related to them will allow students to picture more precisely the image of the main personas throughout the poem. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, 86–87), a possible approach to analyse the experience represented in any text is to look at the roles of participants of processes as a text unfolds; this can lead a reader to the realisation of the most dependent, active and interesting characters in discourse.

5.4 Limitations of the class practice

Although an exploration of students’ interpretation was focused on Transitivity patterns of the poetic text to provide a lens on how students responded to the SFL tools, ideally a wider exploration of SFL tools would have expanded my perception of the value of SFL as a framework for improving students’ critical reading in poetry. Due to the limited research period, this exploration of students’ interpretation focused only on Transitivity patterns in the poetic text to show how students responded to the SFL tools. However, a wider exploration of SFL tools would have expanded the understanding of the value of SFL as a framework for improving students’ critical reading of poetry.

5.5 Class practice participants

The students who participated in the class practice were third-year female English majors. Data were collected from students who had studied at least two poetry courses. All of the students in this class practice had studied two or more poetry courses including Introduction to Poetry, Neo-Classical Poetry, Romantic Poetry and Victorian Poetry. They had also studied two or more linguistics courses including Linguistics 1, Linguistics 2 and Phonetics. These inclusion criteria ensured that students had experienced the traditional teaching approach and had some background in linguistics to validate their answers and opinions.

The participants were divided into two groups: the primary group and the supplementary group. The students in the primary group applied the SFL tools in their reading and analysis of the selected poem. The data from this group included answers from their analysis. This group was composed of 20 third-year students taking Romantic Poetry. This course was chosen because it met the research criteria and the lecturer for this class was a colleague of
mine who gave me permission to work with her students for four weeks. All third year students taking Romantic poetry were invited to participate in this class practice after completing the two-week introductory period for the SFL tools, as described in more detail in Chapter 3. The class practice for the primary and supplementary group was conducted over two weeks. I worked with the students for two hours twice a week.

Twenty students were chosen based on their openness to participate for the supplementary group so that both groups would be equal in number. This group was from a poetry class that participated without any knowledge of SFL. These students were taught using the traditional teaching approach, which is based on memorisation and does not use linguistic tools for the critical reading of English poems, as explained in Chapters 1 and 3. They are used to studying poetry without being expected to analyse poems independently. This contradicts the poetry course specifications and the aims of the English department, which state that the critical and independent analysis of poems is important. Thus, for this class practice, students’ critical reading of English poems with and without SFL analytical tools was observed. Data from the supplementary group were compared with data from the primary group to explore the usefulness of SFL tools in improving the students’ independent critical reading.

5.6 Selected poem
The poem “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath was chosen due to the possibilities that its lexicogrammar offered for experimentation with the students. Some of these possibilities are the development of the students’ analytic powers and their interpretation of poems in English through the realisation of the “meaning making potential” (Martin 1991, 116). In addition, Sylvia Plath is one of the poets included in the Saudi students’ Introduction to Poetry course.
Daddy
You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time--
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene

An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of you,
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat mustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You--

Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I’m finally through.
The black telephone’s off at the root,
The voices just can’t worm through.

If I’ve killed one man, I’ve killed two--
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There’s a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through.
By Sylvia Plath1932–1963
5.7 Classroom procedure
An SFL-based teaching methodology was used in the class practice. In the subsequent sections, the classroom procedures for the primary group and the supplementary group will be explained separately. All students were asked to critically read the poem “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath and provide their interpretations. The instructions for this class practice were as follows:

1. Describe the image of men in the poem using the patterns of transitivity to support you in developing an interpretation.
2. Determine the relationship of the male and female personas in the poem.

5.7.1 Primary group
In preparation for the class practice for the primary group, the methodology was explained to the students. They were told that it would be informed by SFL and a functional view of language to support them in understanding how authors make language choices to create meaningful texts. They were asked to interpret the image of men in this poem and show their distinctive ideas using the participant roles and processes and circumstances as explained in diagram 1 for steps for the methodology. They were told to use these SFL tools as support in connecting words and their functions to interpret the male image in the poem. They needed to use these tools as a guide to understanding how an author constructs a character or persona and for their interpretation of the process types and participant roles to understand the mind frame of the personas. According to Halliday (1994, 107), “when we come to interpret the grammar of the clause, we need to recognize functions which are more specific and which may differ according to the type of process being represented and the particular kinds of participant role that are systematically associated with each.” This supports the choice of the methodology that the students were expected to follow for their interpretation of the selected poem. This was the students’ first attempt at a poetry lesson informed by SFL theory and using the SFL analysis.

The class practice was based on five activities. I worked with the students for two hours twice a week. The preparatory stage was designated four hours and the remainder of the activities were allocated one hour each. The first activity was the initial preparatory stage to determine what the students knew about Transitivity analysis prior to the reading, as it is important to assess the students’ prior knowledge. This was also an important stage for gathering
observation notes. I created table (1) presented beforehand to help the students understand each part of the analysis and identify the major steps for their reading and interpretation. They seemed nervous. I repeated the ideas for the class practice several times.

The second activity was the reading of the selected poem. The poem included the Transitivity analysis by Forough Hassanpour and Ruzy Suliza Hashim to avoid giving the students any of my interpretations and to provide the students with an objective lexico-grammatical analysis of the Transitivity structures realised in the poem. This was shown to the class via the overhead projector. The students were informed that the Transitivity analysis was presented in a format that would highlight important points for their analysis: process, participant and circumstance. The elements of each clause were written in bold format, while the participants and processes and circumstances appeared in square brackets. Additional factors that could help the student in reading the Transitivity analysis were shown in round brackets. This information was provided to support the reading and analysis of the poem. The poem was presented to the students in the following form:

**SFL analysis of poem “Daddy”**

**PART ONE:**

You do not do, you do not do.
Any more black shoe, in which I have lived like a foot,
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breath or Achoo.
“You do not do, you do not do.
Any more black shoe”

*lived [material process, (action)] like [circumstance; comparison] a foot [attribute, metaphor]*

**For thirty years** [circumstance; duration, adverbial phrase], **poor and white** [attribute, subjective and objective, negative implication]

*Barely [circumstance; temporal, negative, adjunct] daring [mental process] to breath or Achoo [finite, behavioural process].* [Repetition, “you” refer to father, “do not do” material process (action) and negative. “Black shoe” is “addressee” and is a metaphor for father.]

*You [actor] do not do [material process (action)], you*
Daddy, I have had to kill you,
You died before I had time-
Marble heavy, the bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one grey toe
Big as Frisco seal.
“Daddy, I have had to kill you”
[“Daddy”: addressee, “I”: doer, “kill”: material process(action).]
“You died before I had time”
[“You”: addressee refers to father, “I” :doer, “had time”: relational process: possessive.]
“Marble heavy, the bag full of god”
[“Marble heavy”: attribute, “a bag full of god”; attribute, “ghastly statue with one grey toe”: attribute, “big as Frisco seal” all of attribute refer to “daddy” (carrier).]
Daddy [addressee], I [doer, actor] have had to [strong modal auxiliary of necessity and certainty], kill [material process, action and negative load] you [goal, refer to daddy].

PART THREE

The tongue stuck in my jaw.
“I never could talk to you.”
[“I”: sayer, “never could talk”: verbal process, negative.]
“The tongue stuck in my jaw.”
[“The tongue”: behaver, “stuck”; behavioural process, “my jaw”: circumstance: spatial: place.]

An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew
“An engine, an engine”
[Refers to “daddy”, repetition]
“Chuffi ng me off like a Jew”
[“Chuffi ng”: Material process, action, “Jew:” attribute]
An engine [addressee], an engine [addressee; repetitive for emphasis], Chuffi ng [material process] me [goal] like [circumstance; comparison] a Jew [attribute, simile].

Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute,
Brute heart of a brute like you.

Every woman [senser] adore [mental process, affection] a Fascist [phenomenon],
The boot [phenomenon, descriptive metaphor and image] in the face [phenomenon][circumstance; location],
the brute [attribute, noun as metaphor]
Brute heart [metonymy; noun phrase; adjective + noun] of a brute [phenomenon; prepositional phrase] like [circumstance; comparison] you [addressee, simile].

Any less the black man who,
Bit my pretty red heart in two.
“Any less the black man who”
[“Black man” refers to Plath’s husband]
“Bit my pretty red heart in two”
[“Bit”: material process; action, “red heart” and “black” contrast.]

Any less [circumstance; degree] the black man [doer, actor] who
Bit [material process; negative] my pretty red heart [goal+ possessive pronoun+ noun phrase(degree+adj+noun] in two [circumstance; manner; quality].

made model of you
A man in black with a Minicamp look
“I made model of you”
[“I”: doer, “model of you”: goal]
“A man in black with a Minicamp look”
[“A man in black”: goal, prepositional phrase, “with a Minicamp look”: prepositional phrase, circumstance of manner: accompaniment]
“And love of the rack and the screw”
[“Love of rack and screw”: circumstance of manner; accompaniment.] I [doer] made [mental process; cognition] model of you [goal]
A man in black with a Minicamp look [prepositional phrase, goal]
And love of the rack and the screw [prepositional phrase, attribute].
If I kill one man, I will kill two-
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year…,
“If I kill one man, I will kill two”
[“I”: actor, ‘one man”: goal, “I”: actor, “kill”:]
“The vampire who said he was you”
[“Vampire”: refer to husband(two)]
“And drank my blood for a year…”
[“Drank”: material, “my blood”: goal process: action, for a year”: circumstance; temporal: duration]
If I [ doer] kill [material process] one man[ goal], I
have killed [material process] two (man) [goal],
The vampire [sayer] who said [verbal process] he
was you [verbiage]
And drank [material process] my blood [goal (referred to female persona)] for years [circumstance; duration].

Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute,
Brute heart of a brute like you.
Every woman [senser] adore [mental process, affection] a Fascist [phenomenon],
The boot [phenomenon, descriptive metaphor and image] in the face (phenomenon)[circumstance; location], the brute [attribute, noun as metaphor]
Brute heart [metonymy; noun phrase; adjective + noun] of a brute [phenomenon; prepositional phrase] like [circumstance; comparison] you [addressee, simile].

Any less the black man who,
Bit my pretty red heart in two.
“Any less the black man who”
[“Black man” refers to Plath’s husband]
“Bit my pretty red heart in two”
[“Bit”: material process; action, “red heart” and “black” contrast.]
Any less [circumstance; degree] the black man [doer, actor] who
Bit[material process; negative] my pretty red heart[goal+ possessive pronoun+ noun phrase(degree+adj+noun) in two [circumstance; manner; quality].

made model of you
A man in black with a Minicamp look
“I made model of you”
[“I”: doer, “model of you”: goal]
“A man in black with a Minicamp look”
“A man in black”: goal, prepositional phrase, “with a Minicamp look”: prepositional phrase, circumstance of manner: accompaniment]
“And love of the rack and the screw”
[“Love of rack and screw”: circumstance of manner; accompaniment.]
I [doer] made [mental process; cognition] model of you [goal]
A man in black with a Minicamp look [prepositional phrase, goal]
And love of the rack and the screw [prepositional phrase, attribute].

If I kill one man, I will kill two-
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year…,
“If I kill one man, I will kill two”
[“I”: actor, ‘one man”: goal, “I”: actor, “kill”:]
“The vampire who said he was you”
[“Vampire”: refer to husband(two)]
“And drank my blood for a year…”
[“Drank”: material, “my blood”: goal process: action, for a year”: circumstance; temporal: duration]
If I [doer] kill [material process] one man [goal], I have killed [material process] two (man) [goal].
The vampire [sayer] who said [verbal process] he was you [verbiage]
And drank [material process] my blood [goal (referred to female persona)] for years [circumstance; duration].

Figure 3 SFL analysis of poem “Daddy”

The students were asked to read the poem for the first time without specifically concentrating on answering the questions which they were given for this class practice. This allowed them to have a general reading of the poem. This activity focused on establishing a relaxed classroom atmosphere for the students, as it was important to create the appropriate learning environment for this new class practice.

In the third activity, the students read the questions and procedures. They were given several instructions for this activity. They were told to read the poem while giving in-depth attention to the framework offered by SFL, with a special focus on Transitivity analysis. They were told to apply the following steps: (1) isolate the processes and determine which participant (who or what) is doing each process, (2) determine what types of processes they are and which participant is engaged in which type of process and (3) verify who or what is affected
by each of these processes. This procedure is done because the identification of the main participants in the poem and the processes related to them will enable students to picture more precisely the image of the main personas throughout the poem. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, 76), the processes of being “ascribe qualities to people and things, to classify them as one thing or another, to name their parts, or to identify them.” this form of identification is needed for the class practice because it offers more specific instructions on the particular functions of language; these functions are necessary for the Saudi students to understand the processes of creation of personas in the poem.

In the fourth activity of the class practice, the students were given an entire session to write their notes and answers in class. After reading each section, they were asked to write notes on the identification of the main participants in the poem and the processes related to them. The students were also encouraged to draw on their ideas, make their interpretations and write in bullet points, short sentences, keywords or any other form that would show their analysis and final interpretation, which would be shared in the class discussion. The students’ answers reflected their knowledge of Transitivity analysis and established their interaction with the poem. The students’ answers were also the subject of additional observation notes.

The fifth activity for this class practice was mainly for collecting data. In preparing to write my observation notes on students’ answers for the SFL-based class practice, I took on a more active role in the classroom. I collected data on students’ answers and classroom interactions with the SFL tools over two weeks in the application stage of the class practice. I examined how they managed with the system of Transitivity and whether they understood how clauses are organised to express experiential meaning (Egginis 2004; Halliday and Matthiesen 2014). That is, I assessed whether they understood the distribution of processes, participants and circumstances in the poetic text. I also evaluated whether the SFL analysis of these patterns of transitivity allowed them to interpret the construction of characters and setting in the poem. This data revealed how the SFL tools served as intertextual resources for the students’ reading of the poem.
5.7.2 Supplementary group

In preparation for the class practice for the supplementary group, the students were told that the class practice would be based on the traditional teaching approach, which meant that they would not be supported with commentary informed by SFL to understand the selected poem. The students were asked to read and explore the images of men in “Daddy”. They were given the freedom to work on any reading techniques they had learned in previous poetry courses.

The poem was displayed via an overhead projector, and the class read it together. The students were told to analyse the poem on their own and provide their interpretations of the image of men and the relationship of the male and female personas in the poem. They were not given any analytical tools to support their reading; this was similar to their previous experiences of reading and analysing English poems in poetry classes, where functional aspects of the text were not applied. This approach contrasts with that of the previous group, allowing a comparison of the students’ interpretations when taught using the new method and when taught using the traditional approach.

5.8 Classroom discussion and observation

Data on the class practice was collected from the classroom discussion, student answers and observation notes for the two groups. The observation of the class practice allowed me to gain insight into the students’ responses, which I may not have been able to do without being with them in the class. After completing the notes for the discussion and observation, I organised the data into two sections: one for the primary group and the other for the supplementary group. Samples of student answers will be placed in (Appendix 6).

5.8.1 Findings for the supplementary group

The students were highly reluctant to share their answers. They explained that they found the poem confusing and complicated. Student 1 said that she was faced with multiple problems and could not continue on her own: “I began to read and found problems with difficult words, images and implications. This made me unable to work out my own interpretation and analysis” (January 2014). Student 2 shared the same fear when asked to interpret an English poem independently. She said that the traditional teaching techniques have made her dependent on the teachers’ interpretations: “I tried to interpret the poem independently and
rely on my own analysis, but the poem was too long and the words in the poem were too difficult. I usually don’t need to analyse and interpret the poems because it is given to us” (January 2014).

Student 3 explained that her main problem was that she did not understand what was expected of her when analysing the poem: “I read the poem fully and understood some of the ideas about the image of men. I found a problem with the interpretation itself. I did not know what is expected of me when making an interpretation” (January 2014). This student’s confusion regarding independent interpretation was expected because the students were not accustomed to analysing English poems independently in the traditional teaching approach.

Student 4 explained that she believed the image of men had a negative connotation, but she was unable to provide more information in that particular context: “I could interpret the image of men as being negative but I could not determine the men’s role in the poem. The main reason for this was the frequent use of negative vocabulary throughout the poem” (January 2014). This answer was interesting because the student was using repetition as an analytical tool. All of these students have attended at least two linguistics courses; this could be why Student 4 was able to answer the question and observe a linguistic phenomenon.

Student 5 interpreted the image of men in a similar way as Student 4. She also stated that the men in this poem were evil. She explained, “I was able to interpret the image of men from the uses of words like ‘kill’ and ‘vampire’, which lead to the idea that they are being represented as something evil” (January 2014). This answer shows that the student was analysing word choice to reach a specific conclusion. This example illustrates that some students were searching for tools to support individual analysis because the traditional teaching approach lacked such tools.

These answers from Students 4 and 5 underscore the need for a new teaching method, since students intuitively used some of their linguistic knowledge to interpret the poem. These two answers from the group without SFL knowledge show that the group could improve their analytical reading if given the appropriate tools for interpretation. However, they were unable to depict the main persona’s characteristics and relate it to the general setting of the poem. The majority of this group could not provide interpretations on the image of men or determine the relationship of the male and female personas in the poem.
5.8.2 Findings for the primary group

The primary data for this group was collected in the class discussion. I also made notes on the students’ individual participation to provide detailed feedback on this class practice and to better understand their knowledge and interaction with the SFL tools in the Transitivity analysis. I aimed to identify what types of processes and participant roles the students drew on in answering the questions and formulating an interpretation.

The first positive feedback for this new teaching method was the active participation shown by the students in the classroom. Data on the two readings of the poem, one based on students’ independent reading without the support of SFL tools and the other using the new SFL-based teaching method, revealed which classroom activities elicited the most active responses from students. For example, in the first group, only five out of 20 students said they had answers to the questions they were given, and only two were able to share their answers with the rest of the class. In contrast, in the second group, the majority of students were more active verbally in discussions about the depiction of the personas in this poem.

To begin the discussion, the students were asked to interpret the role of men in this poem. Then, they were asked to determine the relationship of the male and female personas in the poem. I received many responses from the students. To avoid repetition, only the most common responses that emerged in the classroom discussion are presented here. Some of the students had similar responses; in other cases, some students would give answers and others would agree with their answers. I compiled the answers to the first question, followed by the answers to the second question.

The students were asked to explain how they reached an answer regarding the image of men in the Transitivity analysis and how it assisted their interpretation. During the open discussion, the students explained that SFL had a supportive role in their reading because it helped them analyse the poem by focusing on the role of men in the poem. Student 1 stated, “I was able to interpret the image of men as evil and domineering using the SFL knowledge and techniques. I read the poem and could work with it because I had an idea where to look” (January 2014).

Fontaine (2013, 32) explained that the picture becomes more balanced when we see language for what it is and “not as the expression of meaning but as the source, the meaning creating
source.” This statement is evidence of the students’ responses regarding the role of SFL tools in helping them focus on the source of the analysis, which is the role of men in the poem.

The class discussion with the primary group then proceeded to processes and participant roles. The students found the processes and participant roles instrumental in forming their interpretations. Most of the students agreed that identifying the processes and participant roles helped them pinpoint issues of authority and power in relation to the men’s role in the poem. They also agreed on the usefulness of these processes and participant roles in determining the main persona’s role in the poem through the action in the SFL analysis. Student 2 said that the notion of participant roles helped her identify the image of men as “domineering” because all the action related to the men was negative: “The participant roles in this teaching method helped me understand the characteristics of the persona by tracing the action and negative and positive connotations and connecting them together. It also helps in highlighting important markers when reading a poem to allow for a wider scope of ideas to develop” (January 2014).

The students also explained that they were able to interpret the persona’s character by determining the direction of the acts, or who did what to whom. White (2006) argued that text producers make grammatical choices with regard to participants. These are “choices as to which participants are represented as agentive and which as affected/acted upon” (Ruddick 2015, 2). This supports the answer of Student 2, who traced the poets’ choices of action and seemed to understand the negative and positive markers, which in turn helped her understand the poets’ representation of the image of men in the poem.

The discussion progressed to a more specific direction to discover the students’ interpretation of the image of men when using the participant roles and processes in the reading of the poem. The students had various answers that supported the benefits of using Transitivity analysis in the interpretation of the image of men. Student 3 concluded that the image of men in the poem was “controlling”. She realised this by analysing the processes and participant roles, which signalled most of the action coming from the daughter as weak and negative: “I came to the conclusion that the image of the father was a ‘controlling’ persona because the father figure was always the target for the processes of negative action. This means he had control over her in the poem” (January 2014).
The student’s answer suggests that her interpretation based on Transitivity analysis helped her discover the authority figure. The student focused on the processes related to the image of the male personas in the poem to understand the author’s representation of them. Ruddick (2015, 15) explained the usefulness of process types as analytical tools: “It is possible to pinpoint how the writer represents the dominant agents of the text and so uncovers the motivation and bias of the text producer.” The answer of Student 3 reveals a focused and critical reading of the processes in the poem, which allowed her to follow up on the actions to interpret the dominant personas and their roles in the poem.

Student 4 described the image of men as “tyrannical”. She explained that the word choices in the poem suggested that the participant role for the men was active in a negative sense: “I was able to identify the participant role for the image of men by the words ‘rape’ and ‘bit’. This identifies the men as being the actors in the poem in a negative way” (January 2014).

This answer shows that the student was able to interpret the negative image of men in this poem by understanding the link between the participant role and the negative processes. She also understood the circumstances by focusing on the lexicogrammar in the poem, which helped her combine all this information to interpret the image of men. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, 175) described the lexicogrammar as the interrelation between the lexicon and grammar associated with the process; it describes elements of time, frequency, place and manner and can occur in any type of process. Student 4 seemed to understand the circumstances by being attentive to the lexicogrammar in the poem, which helped her combine all the information regarding the process, participant role and circumstance for her interpretation of the image of the men.

Student 5 added some similar points during this discussion. She explained that she was able to identify the role of men in the poem through the participant roles, which all seemed to suggest “inactive” women due to the presence of “overpowering” men: “The participant roles acted as symbols and signs for me as I read the poem. I was able to identify the identity of the men as ‘overpowering’ through the use of the word ‘kill’. The daughter says she will kill but there is no action. This leads to the idea that she doesn’t have the power to do anything” (January 2014).
This student’s answer also signals her knowledge of the participant roles and processes and how she invested as a critical reader in the Transitivity analysis to identify the image of men as “overpowering”. The student’s critical interpretation reveals a literary reader interacting with the main personas of the poem. Her voice as an independent reader is shown in this statement because her ideas are reinforced and asserted through the analytical tools used in this class practice.

Student 6 had a similar answer, which shows how Transitivity analysis as an interpretative tool supported her interpretation using the processes and participant roles. The student explained the benefit she received from this tool as follows: “This theory and its tools help me in understanding some difficult words through the description of the language in the poem. For example, I couldn’t understand the word ‘Achoo’ in Sylvia Plath’s poem until I discovered the function of the word. This allowed me to identify the word as a behavioural process, which leads me to understand the word is related to a sense” (January 2014).

Student 7 said that the tools support their reading by displaying the word’s function, thus making it possible to understand a complicated text: “The reading of Sylvia Plath’s poem was not as confusing because I was able to understand the participant roles for the female and male personas and identify their position in the poem. The male had a more active process and the female had a more mental process” (January 2014).

These answers are significant in that they present students’ ability to interpret the image of men in this poem and show their distinctive ideas using the participant roles and processes. These answers demonstrate the students’ openness to apply and interact with linguistic analytical tools for interpreting poetry in English. In addition, the students recognised the support of the SFL tools in connecting words and their functions, which enabled them to interpret the male image in the poem. The students seemed to gain a deeper understanding of how an author constructs a character or persona through the processes. The students used the SFL tools as a guide for their interpretation of the process types to understand the mind frame of the personas. According to Halliday (1976, 159), the processes expressed through language represent our conception of the world. The answers of Students 6 and 7 suggest that they are aware of the connection between the participant roles and the processes represented through the lexicogrammar in the poem, which form an image of the main personas.
After discussing the image of men in the poem, the class proceeded to discuss how the Transitivity analysis helped them uncover the relationship between the speaker and the male personas. This was done to assess whether the students were able to find the speaker’s prevalent types of action and to get a sense of the main idea of the poem. Student 8 answered that she was able to use the participant roles and the processes to identify the general relationship of the daughter with the male personas in the poem: “I took into consideration the word choices of hatred and anger and was able to connect this with senser and beaher participant roles to interpret the position of the speaker. I could interpret the speaker as being weak and mentally abused by the male personas in the poem” (January 2014).

The students’ interaction with the SFL tools demonstrates their search for an interpretation and an authorial voice through the processes and participant roles. Student 8 developed her reflections on the main personas to show a more advanced form of critical reading through the Transitivity analysis. According to Fowler (cited in Haratyan 2011, 138), Transitivity can be used to analyse representations of reality in a linguistic text and create the same experience through various lexicogrammatical options influenced by different mind styles or authorial ideology. The Transitivity analysis manifests how certain choices encode the author’s ideological stance. Student 8’s answer is evidence of the validity of Fowler’s findings, who was able to interpret the ideological stance in the poem through the lexicogrammatical options that created the participant roles and processes.

Two of the students answered that they were able to read the poetic text with the aim of finding the dominant processes and participant roles related to the speaker and male persona to interpret the central idea or theme of the poem. Student 9 stated, “Fear is the basis of the relationship of the speaker and the males in the poem. I was able to predict this through the process and participant roles and choice of words, which work together to show that fear dominated the poem. I think the speaker is still afraid and uses only mental processes, which create a dark setting for the poem” (January 2014).

This student’s critical reading of the poem shows that she was aware of the lexical relations between participants and processes, which led her to highlight what type of relationship was constructed by the author for the male and female personas in the poem. For example, the student interpreted fear as the dominating agent in the poem by connecting this idea with mental processes to create a dark setting for the poem. In her answer, functions are used as an
analytical tool. Fowler (cited in Haratyan 2011, 138) explained that functions are a rich analytical tool used in critical discourse analysis.

Meanwhile, Student 10 stated, “The repetition of the ‘I’ and the fact that there was no active verb connected to the speaker helped me establish that the speaker was creating an imaginary image for herself in the poem. The speaker had no recognition or rights amongst the male personas in the poem, and that is why she is still creating action in her mind due to her inability to express it” (January 2014).

This student’s interpretation using SFL tools revealed her application of Transitivity patterns to assess the relationship of the male and female personas in the poem. By describing the female persona as unrecognised and unable to express herself, the student connects this interpretation with the processes and participants to construct the main idea of the poem. Similarly, Student 11 used Transitivity analysis to interpret the main idea of the poem by focusing on the processes that dominated the action in the poem: “I found that many of the processes for the speaker were negative processes for words like ‘kill’. This led my interpretation for the general atmosphere of the poem to be one of hatred” (January 2014).

The student’s interpretation underlines the benefit of the processes in the Transitivity analysis. She seemed to focus on the lexicogrammar relevant to the processes to reflect on the relationship between the male and female personas in the poem. She used the processes to develop an image of hatred between the male and female personas. According to Thompson (2004, 87), processes are “the cores of the clause from the experiential perspective”. This student’s answer shows that she was able to interpret the main idea of the poem by focusing on the processes in the Transitivity analysis.

However, a few students could not identify the image of men through the participant roles. Student 12 explained why she was unable to do so: “The poem was long, the transitivity analysis was very detailed and the participant roles were not always clear. I could not differentiate if this was an action by the daughter or husband or father” (January 2014). This small number of students who could not apply the SFL tools for this class practice was to be expected, since this form of teaching based on a linguistic framework was new to them. Some of the students needed more time to fully understand SFL to be able to attempt an
interpretation. Also some of the students’ failure is useful feedback for my work and I thought of addressing this problem in future work.

5.9 Conclusion
The second research question that guided this class practice focused on how the SFL-based teaching methodology can improve students’ interpretative competence for poetry in English. To answer this question, I present findings on Saudi students’ use of Transitivity analysis on a poetic text to reveal their understanding of how to use SFL analytical tools. In this conclusion, I will elaborate on the benefits and insights from this class practice.

The benefits of SFL as a teaching methodology are manifold. I chose a linguistic-based approach primarily to improve the Saudi students’ critical reading. The analysis of students’ answers in the class practice reflects the strengths and challenges of using linguistic analytical tools for teaching poetry in English. The methodological approach for the class practice is directly influenced by research on SFL and culturally appropriate pedagogy. Specifically, this class practice investigates how students draw on Transitivity analysis to accomplish independent critical reading and interpretation. The Saudi students used Transitivity analysis as part of the theoretical framework for the interpretation of the main idea of the poem “Daddy”, which enabled them to be independent and resourceful with the SFL tools in this class practice. They organised their interpretations of personas and experiences in the poetic text based on the processes, participants and circumstances. The use of Transitivity in their answers attests to the benefit of SFL tools in improving their critical reading and interpretation of English poems.

Toolan (1988, 115) stated that SFL analysis of literary narratives helps readers obtain a “preliminary picture of who is agentive, who is affected, whether characters are doers or thinkers, whether instruments and forces in the world dominate in the representation. This supports the finding that Saudi students, in their use of Transitivity analysis to interpret a poetic text, developed an active understanding of how to interpret the image of men in this poem by linking the participant roles and processes and being attentive to the lexicogrammar in the poem. This helped them synthesise all the information for a more independent critical interpretation. For example, some students described the image of men as “overpowering” and “tyrannical” using the participant roles and the processes in the poem.
Using Transitivity also helped the students’ probe what goes through the mind of the persona and the relationships established in the poem. Through Transitivity analysis, specifically by linking processes and participant roles and reinforcing them with the circumstances, the students gained an understanding of the thoughts of the female persona in the poem. Hasan and Fries (1995, xv) illustrated the value of SFL by explaining that the “primary goal of linguistics is to explain not only how meanings are construed but also how they maintain a systematic relation to the already linguistically construed socially defined world.” For example, one student explained that she took into consideration the word choices of “hatred” and “anger” and was able to connect this with senser and behaver participant roles to interpret the position of the speaker as weak and mentally abused. She was also able to connect the male personas with an authorial voice through the processes and participant roles. These findings are evidence of the validity of Eggins’s theory (2004), who explained that the writer’s pattern of Transitivity and system of building taxonomic lexical relations can help construct characters and create a particular perspective.

My SFL-based teaching methodology constructed for Saudi students to enhance their reading and interpretation of poems in English and target their specific problem in the poetry class establishes pedagogical trends in favour of English poetry teaching that is grounded on students’ analytical abilities and knowledge, on the students as the focus of the teaching and learning process, and on the students’ participation in interpreting poems. Coffin (2010, 3) argued that the “theoretical lens of SFL helps to see language as a tool for thinking with, a meaning-making resource (as opposed to, for example, a set of rules)”. She explained that this can be done by providing a set of labels for describing texts and clauses in functional terms, enabling teachers to make visible and explicit to students how texts produce meaning.

In this teaching methodology, it was important to ensure that the students were able to create their own perspective by understanding how the text was produced, since the focus of the teaching and learning was for the students to become independent in reading and learning. Additionally, in the course description, students are expected to analyse poems through in-class reading, participate in the class discussions and think critically. In the class practice, students were able to connect the information gained through the Transitivity analysis to improve their interpretation of the poem. They were asked to explain their interpretation of the relationship between the speaker and the male personas of the poem. The students’
answers showed their ability to produce independent insights using SFL tools to tie everything together.

These findings illustrate the importance of the explicit use of analytical tools to facilitate the students’ understanding of a poetic text, especially when the teaching methodology is embedded within a linguistic framework that provides students with the ability to critically read various poetic texts. In this class practice, the findings show the possibilities for the students who have gained and developed an awareness of how to use linguistic analytical tools for their own reading purposes. This critical understanding is described by Harman (2008) as one that provides students with an understanding of how to play with texture in texts in the same way that a painter plays with colour and paint texture on a canvas.

Eggins 2004; Halliday and Hasan 1989; Halliday and Matthiesen 2004; Martin and Rose 2003; Schleppegrell 2004 are researchers and educators who have turned to SFL as a way to teach and research in educational settings. The findings in this class practice confirm those of several other studies in the field of teaching methodologies and SFL. For instance, scholars have explored how SFL connects to the teaching of literature in schools (Harman 2008) and (Hodgson-Drysdale 2013). These studies are consistent with my study regarding the importance of the use of SFL in heightening students’ awareness of language for developing an understanding of literature; although the support of SFL in these studies focus on teaching writing about literature. Using an SFL perspective, Kurdali (2012) examined the variations across disciplines in the writing of EFL university students and this research is compatible to my study since its shows pedagogical benefits in raising students’ awareness to the important function of different linguistic choices in achieving the purpose of the text. Abunowara (1996) explored the difficulties encountered by Arabic learners using SFL. This study is consistent with the aim of the my study to investigate and describe the sources of the difficulties encountered by Arabic-speaking learners of English and this study achieved this aim by applying the concepts of Systemic Functional Linguistics to the description of the English and Arabic 'modal' systems. My methodology is a response to a particular problem in the critical reading and interpretation of poetry in English faced by Saudi university students. It addressed the need for a tailored teaching approach for Saudi students as an attempt to change and develop the position of students from that of traditional passive learners of critical commentaries to that of more independent critical analysts and thinkers who are capable of elaborating on poetry and its content.
Despite these various studies on SFL, an explicit focus on using SFL tools as analytical tools for improving Saudi students’ critical reading of poetry in English is not yet a common pedagogical practice. The findings in this class practice can be used by teachers to demonstrate and explain how the use of SFL can improve the teaching methodologies for reading poetic text.

5.10 Summary of the chapter
In this chapter, the purpose of transitivity for this class practice is explained. The methodological procedure and classroom procedure is presented. I have displayed and discussed the results of the class practice. The next chapter presents the results for the post-teaching open questions, the interviews and the classroom observations.
CHAPTER SIX:

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE CLASS PRACTICE

6.1 Introduction

After describing and applying the SFL-based pedagogy at KSU, the aim of chapter six is to present, analyse and discuss the findings of the three research methods. The first method is the post-teaching open questions and explores Saudi students’ beliefs about the effectiveness of an SFL based teaching methodology which attends to their specific cultural and linguistic problems in the reading and interpretation of poetry in English after they have been taught an alternative teaching approach for poetry and been given tools for interpretation. It also examines their general perception of the overall experience.

The second method is the focus group interviews and explores the extent to which the SFL tools used in this pedagogy improved interpretation. It also explores the origins of the students’ problems when reading poetry in English and changes that might improve the teaching methodology. The third method is my own class observation notes, which are used to evaluate the students’ reaction during the process of the teaching. These multiple methods are used to collect data during and after the SFL-based pedagogy to determine the appropriateness of this teaching approach in comparison to the traditional teaching methodology.

This chapter is divided into three sections, and the findings are discussed at the end of each section in relation to that section’s components. The first is for the post-teaching open questions, the second for the focus group interviews and the third for teacher class observation. These multiple methods determine the appropriateness of the culturally specific teaching methodology applied to Saudi students.
6.2 Post-teaching questions

This part presents the findings related to the Saudi students’ beliefs about their experience with the application of the SFL-based teaching methodology. The students are here encouraged to evaluate their learning experience and compare it to the traditional teaching methodology. To organise the findings, this section is divided into five sub-sections: SFL and freedom when analysing and criticising, SFL and its benefit for other subjects, SFL and helping to find hidden meaning or messages in the poem, SFL and helping to understand poetry better in general, and SFL and help overcome with cultural and religious differences. After presenting the findings, I discuss the relevance of the students’ perceptions to this study.

The open questions are given to students in the Romantic poetry class after the completion of all the stages of the application of the SFL-based pedagogy and after they attended the lessons which demonstrated models of an SFL-based analysis. The questions, comprising two open questions related to the SFL based teaching methodology, are given to 50 students. The first question is the main focus for this research method because it gives feedback on the students’ perceptions of their experience with the SFL-based pedagogy. In addition to the examples in this section I have selected some of the students’ original answers and placed them in Appendix 6. The students are asked to describe their perceptions of the usefulness of this new teaching methodology based on their experience of it. The second question aims to discover general problems with their overall experience of studying poetry after experiencing an alternative teaching technique. These themes emerge from the findings:

1- Students who think that an SFL-based pedagogy would give them more freedom when analysing and criticising.

2- Students who think that the SFL-based pedagogy tools have additional learning benefits beyond improving their interpretation of poetry.

3- Students who think that SFL-based pedagogy helps to find hidden meanings or messages in the poem.

4- Students who think that SFL-based pedagogy helps overcome cultural and religious differences.
5- Students who think that SFL-based pedagogy can be liberating.

6.2.1 Students who think that the SFL-based pedagogy gives more freedom when analysing and criticising

In the following extracts the Saudi students gradually develop and change their beliefs about techniques for teaching poetry in English. They begin to think of more liberating techniques aimed at developing their analytical powers. In the following extract, student one believes that teaching English poetry should not only involve memorisation, but also should involve giving the students the chance to express their own beliefs and interpretations. She stresses that she needs to be given a chance to “shine”:

Student one:

First, I think it’s a really nice way to teach us students. This gives us a good chance to improve our ways and show our ability that we can do something. We can be creative and think independently because we get bored from the normal ways of teaching here. Even the way they look at our own interpretation and analysis and keep telling us it’s wrong and we will miss marks because of it; it’s like I want to scream and say that’s enough, let us shine for once King Saud University. I think we can improve teaching poetry by being taught the tools and tricks and giving us space to think and write and depend on ourselves (January 2014).

Student one finds it essential to try different tools for reading and her belief seems to validate this SFL based pedagogy and stimulate teachers to create new teaching material to suit the academic demands for these students.

The second example confirms that the traditional teaching techniques need to be changed:

Student two:

I think using SFL tools in a poetry class will be useful because we get to understand fully without referring to any books or online article. We get to control our ideas and not be fooled with the subliminal messages others try to imply on us, being second language learners. I would rather improve learning poetry by not memorising it, but understanding it (January 2014).
In this extract the student believes that teaching poetry should not only be a memorisation task but also involves giving students an opportunity for interpreting the poem. This supports the need for the teaching methodology proposed here because students want to learn skills that would allow them to analyse poems independently and control their analyses themselves, rather than rely on the opinions and criticism of others.

The third example shows that a new approach to reading poetry could encourage KSU students to become critical readers and interpret on their own instead of accepting what they are told is the correct interpretation.

Student three:

I think that when we study SFL, it will be a lot easier to analyse the poem. Also, it will be less difficult to understand what they actually mean not what they want us to know. Poetry will be open and encouraging for us students. I enjoy analytical work, but SFL will help open things I won’t normally enjoy. We should choose the poet appropriate to our culture and not be afraid to critique what we see (January 2014).

The student touches upon a very important matter for this study. She stresses a need to be encouraged to develop her interpretive skills and having the SFL tools seems to do that. She believes that being encouraged to state opinions about the interpretation of a particular poem would give students the confidence to state what they ‘see’ in the poem.

The fourth extract shows the struggle between writing to please the teacher and writing to please oneself:

Student four:

Sometimes I try to write my idea and thoughts about any poem we study. But my teacher gives me a zero on my test because it’s my opinion not hers. I have no problem with the writer’s background but the poem sometimes may have a hidden message and when I try to write about it the teacher rejects it (January 2014).

In this extract the student also believes that the teachers’ dominant role in the classroom is a problematic issue. This is relevant because her belief suggests that controlling the class through a traditional teaching approach does not give students opportunity to interpret individually and this can result in lowering the learning quality for these students. One of the
reasons I proposed this SFL based teaching methodology is to allow the students more control in their reading of poetry.

The fifth example continues this argument and displays a belief about the importance of believing in one’s own analytical capabilities:

Student five:

It is very important to have a mind of our own and not follow people on their own ideas and a certain text. I think this theory is very helpful for a student to depend on themselves and not look or search for others perspectives. We should see things differently than others, especially western critics. Furthermore, I think others would respect us and our analysis on literary texts (January 2014).

The student explains that, to develop their learning experiences, teachers must stop de-valuing students’ individual perspectives on poems in English. If students were able to openly express their thoughts, they would feel more respected. This can suggest that the teaching approach should give students the appropriate atmosphere and support which can have a positive influence on their confidence towards their interpretation of poetry.

The findings of this section suggest that the Saudi students support the SFL-based pedagogy within the limitations of this study and the limited samples attained from the students. They believe that it allows them to analyse poems in English independently, enabling them to address a range of individual needs. First, it gives the chance to break away from the traditional teaching tradition, which focuses mainly on memorisation. Second it allows the students to gain confidence as they progress as literary students and to express their own interpretations of poems based on their own perspectives. Khatib (2011) has similar findings and concentrates his approach on reading the text. These approaches emphasise the idea of individual response in the poetry classroom and support the concept of tailored teaching methods.
6.2.2 Students who think that SFL tools have additional learning benefits beyond improving their comprehension of poetry

Some of the Saudi students recognise additional benefits to the SFL-based teaching methodology: they think that it can improve their reading abilities by giving them tools that can support their interpretation of materials in different fields. They suggest that once they have a strong foundation in reading poetry, they could use their reading skills whenever they have difficulties with reading. In the following extract, student one believes that being empowered with reading skills will help students to become independent, critical thinkers:

Student one:

If SFL tools were used in our college we would have our own analysis to the poems from the ones we learn from western critics. We would also improve our critical thinking and mental abilities. Hence, some of the academic fields in our society will improve as a result and we will be a powerful and independent society. I would really like to analyse a poem from my own point of view as a Yamani Arabic Muslim girl. I am very upset to know what I was doing while studying is copying what other individuals from other societies believe in relation to English and American poetry. I believe that even literature can include science, a little bit (January 2014).

From the above extract the students’ belief suggests that a new approach to the reading of poetry can develop the students’ identity by expressing herself through poetry. This seems to support SFL tools which can allow them to read independently and express their individual perspectives when studying poetry.

In the second extract, student two supports the need for a new teaching technique which allows the development of reading skills as a means of encouraging students and giving them the opportunity to experiment and interpret any reading material on their own:
Student two:

If I knew SFL, I would know the unnecessary from the important parts in essays in newspapers, because some of the writers use difficult organised words while the topic is meaningless. Also it will know the real meaning beyond the poem. I don’t want to be ignorant and just believe all the information written about poems. Because there are hidden meanings beyond any art. Moreover, I want to know the truth; because writing is an important weapon that is used by everyone (January 2014).

The above extract is also influenced by a need to expand her knowledge; the extract suggests that this student supports a teaching for poetry that can develop her reading skills. She believes that the skills she gains in the poetry course should provide opportunities to put into practice for various purposes.

In the following extract, student three supports the need for liberation from critical opinion and endorses the use of a linguistic framework for analysing poetry.

Student three:

I really like the SFL theory, because it will give me the freedom to say my opinion and be independent because I think it’s very important to see poetry from my perspective as a Muslim. Also, I like the way it is possible to combine linguistic and literature (January 2014).

In the above extract the student seems to show preference for a teaching methodology that allows independent expression in the poetry class. I think a lot of the students feel open to an SFL based pedagogy because they have the spirit to experience innovative approaches. The traditional approach limits their potential as independent readers and I believe that can be intimidating for them.

In the following extract, student four discusses the difficulties of the traditional teaching technique and the limitations it imposes. She also supports the need for decoding tools to facilitate the interpretation not only of poetry but also of journalism and media.

Student four:

I think this will be good to improve the students’ abilities in analysing not only in poetry but journalism. Since it is important in our time and since we use social Medias
such as twitter. For example, this will be helpful to understand the people around you and what they really want to say. As for our studies, I think we need to renew our ways in teaching because we are given everything and we don’t have the chance to think and that’s what kills the creativity (January 2014).

In the following extract, student five believes that improving reading and analysis with the SFL-based teaching methodology can support and develop English learning and reading in general.

Student five:

    SFL is going to help us improve our learning and help us understand poetry especially to improve our language and become more able to learn English quickly because we are still taught by the traditional way and that doesn’t help us improve our language (January 2014).

The above extracts for students four and five are important for this study since they suggest that this new teaching approach to poetry does not only influence their reading of poetry but develops their reading skills for various objectives in different fields.

The findings of this section develop the responses of the first section: the students here not only support the role of decoding tools in supporting independent interpretation – they also highlight the wider benefits of the SFL-based teaching methodology. They suggest that learning decoding tools for interpreting and reading poems can also improve their reading in other fields and supports their learning experience in general. John Lye (2008) has comparable findings, which supports their beliefs, he states that “texts constructed as literature, or ‘art’, have their own codes and practices” and that the more knowledge we can infer from them, the better we are at decoding and thus ultimately at comprehension. If the Saudi students improve their interpretation of English texts, they will also improve their reading abilities in general which could be beneficial in various fields and in their future jobs. Hence, SFL can play a critical role in supporting the reading of poetic texts in English for
Saudi students, who found in the experimental lesson and in-class practice a freedom to express their own interpretations.

6.2.3 Students who think that the SFL-based pedagogy helps to find hidden meanings or messages in poems
The students all agree that there is a need for them to become independent readers of poetry so they can discover and experience the underlying meanings of poems. In this section, the students suggest that the SFL-based teaching methodology can give them the interpretative tools they need to find the hidden messages of the poems they study. For example, in the first extract, the student is frustrated by the idea that she does not have the ability to give her own interpretation of the poem. She believes that the SFL tools can give her the freedom to criticise the poem and state her opinion on it, even if she disagrees with popular interpretations.

Student one:

Our analysis of the poem would change; we would be free to criticise any poem from our own perspective. We would be able to agree and disagree with it and say our opinions about it. I took Victorian poetry and there were a lot of poems that I really disagree with like ‘The Boy and the Angel’ and ‘The Blessed Damozel’. They contain ideas that really bothered me and I couldn’t accept it at all. Yet, we are just supposed to study it and be graded on it (January 2014).

The above extract displays a comment that suggest that the traditional approach is quite structured and rigid and supports the SFL based approach since it can provide her with interpretive tools to share her critical opinion on the poem she studies.

In the following extract, student two describes her need to be independent in interpreting poems so that she can focus on the poem itself and not just on its historical background.

Student two:

It will help me to understand poetry better than following others criticism. Also, it will help me analyse the poem without knowing the background about the poet and
the period that the poet writes about. Moreover, we will understand what the poet wants behind the lines (January 2014).

The extract above is particularly important since the student encourages new teaching approaches to avoid memorisation of historical information which is a problematic issue in the poetry class. The student stresses the support of analytic tools to develop her reading of poetry and to allow her to make her own interpretation.

In the third extract, student three realises that linguistics can help to locate the true meaning of the poem from a student’s point of view. Student three:

Yes, I agree that the poem reflects its own history but I still believe we only need brief historical background because it is somehow relevant. In analysing a poem we should depend on the linguistic context (the language, structure, word order) and also the social context (social values, religion, customs...). However, applying the SFL method to poetry will help combine them to have a better understanding of the poem and to realise the underlying message (January 2014).

This opinion validates the appropriateness of the SFL-based teaching methodology. Yet she suggests that the social and historical context should be looked at so that the full meaning can be interpreted.

In the fourth extract, student four states that the SFL-based teaching methodology is eye opening and encourages her to read poems to find their underlying meaning.

Student four:

After what teacher Haifa had taught us how to analyse a poem with SFL, I believe that it is very important to know what the hidden meaning for a poem could be. This is the first time that I know this can be done like this. I thought it’s only important to see the history of either the poet or the poem and didn’t know about SFL (January 2014).

The comment above is essential to this study and validates the necessity of a new teaching approach and new ideas in the poetry class. The student is amazed at the prospect that poetry can be taught differently from the traditional approach. This suggests that some students need to be informed and stimulated through creative new teaching materials. It also suggests that
teachers need to gradually develop students reading and start to think of more innovative
goals towards developing their learning in a poetry class.

The next extract demonstrates one student’s belief that there is a lack of freedom and
encouragement in the study of poetry in English due to the traditional teaching techniques,
which limit students’ resources for attempting to interpret English poems independently.

Student five:

There’s no doubt that there’s always an ideology coded behind every discourse. A
sentence can tell you a lot about who said it. However, through poetry there are plenty
of ideologies being imposed on the readers subconsciously? I believe in being
passionate about learning and not just collecting grades. I believe in showing students
how to learn and not what to learn. What we’re doing now is being given a poem and
being forced to study it in a particular way (January 2014).

The above extract seems to be one of the strongest opinions against the restrictive feature of
the traditional teaching approach. This student seems to have targets in developing her
reading and has the passion to strive to achieve them, yet she is not given the opportunity to
do so. This suggests that some intelligent and creative students are being kept back due to the
traditional teaching approach.

The findings of this section are important since they represent beliefs which touch on the idea
that there is a lack of freedom and encouragement in the poetry classroom as a result of
traditional teaching techniques which do not allow students to interpret poems’ hidden
meaning and messages on their own. The students believe that they are being controlled by
being forced to learn interpretations of poems. The extracts in this section suggest that new
teaching techniques and interpretative tools would help students to read poetry and to
progress and develop their learning experience in general. Bartolome (cited in Tyler, 2006) in
his work on teaching reading skills, describes similar benefits of new teaching approaches.
He emphasises and encourages new teaching approaches that use techniques that concentrate
on classroom needs and problems and states that such techniques are of great importance in
cross-cultural situations. He also denounces the search for the “right” teaching strategies and
argues for a “humanizing pedagogy, one that respects and uses the reality, history, and
perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice” (1994, 173). He explains
that educators need to be able to work within their own circumstances and should make their
students self-learners and teacher-independent. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) also have comparable findings. Hence, this section shows that teaching poetry should encourage students to read on their own due to their improved ability to access the underlying meanings and messages of poems. This element of freedom, missing in traditional teaching techniques, was created by the interpretive tools and allowed the students to participate, criticise and express their independent opinions. Retallack and Spahr (2006) explain this point when they comment regarding the new pedagogy that the real question facing teachers and researchers is ‘how to invent a living poetry classroom, one that invites students to experience and make meaning of the forms of their era.

6.2.4 Students who think that SFL-based pedagogy helps overcome cultural and religious differences

The following extracts suggest that Saudi students find the SFL-based teaching methodology to be an empowering tool which is sensitive to their social and religious background. They reflect on its benefits in terms of helping them to develop their analytical powers. They seem to be interested in analysing poems in English from their Islamic and Arabic perspective. The students seem more enthusiastic about studying poetry after being exposed to this teaching experience since it has given them interpretative tools that facilitate independent analysis, thereby motivating them to experience poetry in English.

In the first extract, student one seems to be particularly interested in this teaching methodology due to its similarity to the process of reading and analysing Arabic poetry.

Student one:

I think SFL is going to be very useful for us as Muslim students. This is because it will represent my opinion about the poem and I can prove my thoughts using this great theory. Also we as Arab students, I think, after this theory, will be able to understand the English poetry. I find this method or theory is similar to the way Arabs analyse their poems in which the focus is on the poem itself by trying to figure what the writer wants to deliver although he did not say it directly (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that new analytic tools for reading poetry can have a positive influence on her interpretation of the poems. It seems that the knowledge of SFL has opened up new prospects to search beyond the approach in this study. This supports the importance
of an SFL-based teaching methodology to give them confidence which can be an incentive for encouraging students to search for their own approaches to develop their reading. This particular student used her knowledge of the Arabic reading of poetry for improving her interpretation of poetry in English.

The second extract shows an interest in analysing independently using the SFL-based methodology regardless of the different background knowledge portrayed in the poem.

Student two:

SFL will make a difference in understanding poetry and helps us separate our culture and the writer’s culture. It also helps us improve reading poetry and with our ability to collect information and to share information. The main problems I faced dealt with poetry and religion and culture (January 2014).

The extract above supports the use of SFL since it gives them analytic tools which help the student to engage with the poem in spite of the cultural and religious difference between the student and the ideologies portrayed in the poem.

In the following extract, the student values the idea of participating in the analysis of poetry in English without the limitations of only studying particular topics. The traditional teaching methodology does not allow the students to choose the poems that are studied: the teacher chooses those she regards as appropriate.

Student three:

I think using SFL and applying it in the process of learning/teaching poetry will remove much stress since it gives us the opportunity to apply our knowledge of the world and our Arabic/Islam background to our process of learning. Removing the stress gives us a chance to analyse and criticise without just accepting and saying it comes from a different culture (January 2014).

The following extract also supports the idea that students should have an active role in reading poems regardless of the religious and social differences between the students and the ideologies presented in English and American texts. This is important because it allows the students to show their individuality in the process of selecting, reading and analysing the poems.
Student four:

I think if this approach is used in poetry classes, the poem will be analysed differently. It will be analysed according to the student’s religion, culture and educational level. The result is different interpretations for one poem. This will improve the student’s critical and analytical analysis (January 2014).

The following student focuses on the usefulness of the SFL interpretive tools as a means of presenting her own perceptions of poems in English from her Muslim point of view.

Student five:

If we use SFL it may help with understanding the ideas. It also may help to show our Muslim thought. This is the first time I realised that my religious background may change the meaning of a poem. After I knew that I can use SFL to analyse on my own, I realised how much it might help me (January 2014).

The extracts above for students three, four and five seem to support this study since they assert the need for a teaching approach that recognizes their identity and personal perspective. They believe that this way is better for students and teaching. This suggests that an approach which develops their interpretation can be strategic for a poetry class since it allows personal interaction with the poem and decreases the stress of the traditional teaching approach.

In the findings of this section, the students observe the need for an active role in reading and analysing poems despite differences in religious ideology. The students are mostly interested in this teaching methodology because it allows them to participate, criticise and express their own opinions. This seems to be important: the traditional teaching methodology does not require any input from the students, thus undermining the purpose of studying poetry by not challenging the students intellectually. This relates to John Lye’s (2008) argument about the complexities inherent in reading poetry which is culturally different than your own. Totten (1998) using reader-response theory to study poetry has similar findings. He recognises the dynamism of the role of the reader and asserts: “Each reader comes to a piece of literature with a rich background of worldly experience and a broad knowledge base in different subjects. That simply means that most, if not all, readers will likely have unique insights into a piece of literature. That goes counter, of course, to those who perceive literary works as
having a single, ‘correct’ meaning or that the only ‘true’ way to understand a literary work is by studying its symbolic structure, motifs, and language” (30). The students’ perceptions are reinforced by these studies, which acknowledge the necessity of decoding tools for improving students’ individual interpretation of poetry in English. The findings here highlight their awareness and understanding of the interpretive tools and their importance in exposing them to new learning concepts that empower them to access new perspectives as a stimulus to thinking and developing new techniques for reading.

6.2.5 Students who think that SFL-based pedagogy can be liberating

The last section about the Saudi students’ perceptions of the SFL-based teaching methodology groups the opinions that support the idea that it can be liberating together. In the following extracts, the Saudi students present their perception that there is a need for more developed teaching techniques for poetry in English. They seem to be calling for liberating techniques which work towards developing their analytical powers. In the first extract, the student is interested in the SFL-based pedagogy as a liberating form of teaching which does not limit her approach to studying poems in English.

Student one:

> Our perception of the poem will change. We will not only understand the poem and the hidden message, we will be able to study the mentality of the writer. We will also be able to understand if the writer is manipulating our thinking or not. Being able to separate between our identities and the poet’s identity will help us understand what other poets want to say (January 2014).

The extract above presents a belief that supports SFL tools for reading poetry to allow them to develop their interpretation of poems in English. This student believes that interpretive tools can also provide an opportunity to discern the writers’ or speakers’ opinion on a subject or issue in the poem.

The second extract suggests that having SFL tools for interpretation can build her confidence in her ability to read independently.

Student two:
If we study this way, it will give us more freedom in analysing and criticising poems of our choice. It will also give us confidence in our own ideas. I prefer to choose poems by myself. It lets us analyse it with our thoughts and according to our life style even if we have different culture and religion (January 2014).

This student presents a viewpoint which shows interest in SFL for the freedom it gives the student in choosing works to study.

The next extract focuses on the fact that SFL tools can liberate students from routine studying and memorisation, which could reduce exam anxiety.

Student three:

It will help us become more independent and make it easier for students to study. There won’t be so much anxiety about exams like we have now. It will help us in understanding the culture of the poet (January 2014).

This student also believes that development of her analytic skills can influence how she can progress in her reading and interpretation. She seems to emphasis independent reading to avoid the stress of memorisation for the poetry class. This point is relevant for this study since it shows that students are more comfortable working with analytic tools to develop their reading rather than choosing an easier option of memorizing, a main aspect of the traditional teaching method.

The fourth extract shows that having the tools to interpret independently can liberate students from their dependency on their teachers.

Student four:

It will make us more confident of our ideas because sometimes in poetry class we are shy and we don’t express our own interpretation to our teachers because they may refuse it. We are also afraid to compare the thoughts of the English poems with poets that show Islamic believes and I believe it is very important to compare and learn the different identities (January 2014).

The last extract shows an interest in SFL for its ability to articulate their opinion on poems and vocalize them in class.
Student five:

If SFL is used in our poetry classes it will be different. It will also present a whole different concept towards poetry. We can improve poetry from different sides. I can read about a poem that isn’t related to our culture and religion.

The extracts above for students four and five suggest that developing their interpretive skills with SFL tools can advance their leaning to another stage. They believe that it will give them choices for approaching the poem and make them independent readers. This seems to be important since it reflects on their learning and confidence. I think this call for independence in studying poetry can be instrumental for developing students not only for reading poetry but also for their professional career.

This section shows clearly that the students desire a teaching technique which liberates them and gives them space to assert their opinions. This need to assert their own identity through their own interpretation of the poems comes from the fact that the SFL tools give them confidence in their reading abilities. Wisam Mansour (1995) has similar findings in his approaches to teaching non-native speakers poetry in English. He focuses on giving his students methods to work independently so as to enhance their literary appreciation skills and improve their language competence. Mansour believes that the traditional factual historical approach confines students to the study of historical information and fails to emphasise the poems themselves, which become “mere containers of data” (33).The perceptions here indicate a similar situation. Students state that having SFL tools for interpretation can build their confidence and their ability to read independently. The majority of the students’ perceptions centre on the lack of freedom and encouragement in the poetry classroom as a result of traditional teaching techniques. Not requiring any input from the students undermines the purpose of studying poetry by not challenging the students intellectually.

6.3 Conclusion

The findings for the five sections above suggest that Saudi students hold positive beliefs about the application of the SFL-based pedagogy after attending lessons which demonstrated SFL-based analysis. The most prominent point is the belief that the application of the SFL-based pedagogy can motivate them in reading English poetry. Another element which seems
to be missing in the traditional teaching technique which they found in this experimental lesson is the freedom to express their own interpretations. This freedom is given by the interpretive tools used and allows the students to participate, criticise, and express their independent opinions. In contrast, the traditional poetry classroom limit students to memorising as a technique for teaching poetry and forces students to learn interpretations of poems, undermining the purpose of studying poetry by not challenging the students intellectually. Retallack and Spahr (2006) explain this point when they comment on new pedagogy: they believe that the real question facing teachers and researchers is “how to invent a living poetry classroom, one that invites students to experience and make meaning of the forms of their era. This at the very least requires cognizance of the plurality of poetries that come out of our blatantly ‘multi’ world – multicultural, ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic” (3).

The findings also suggest that the application of SFL-based pedagogy a valuable experience. The Saudi students became more confident in analysing English poems. The support of SFL-based pedagogy encouraged them to express their critical opinions of the poems. Bloor and Bloor (2004) explain the basic idea behind the success of the Saudi students’ ability to do so with SFL tools when they state that every linguistic choice we make is systematic and we say things in certain ways as the result of choices. Such choices are made from a set of systems which allow us unlimited ways of creating meaning. Some of the students are sufficiently encouraged to apply these methods to other courses or literary texts. The students show a willingness to be independent when reading poetry in English. The findings about the in-class practice show that students have gained and developed an awareness of how to use the linguistic analytical tools which make this possible. This critical understanding is described by Harman (2008) as providing students with an understanding of how to play with texture in texts in the same way that a painter plays with colour and paint texture on a canvas. The use of SFL and decoding tools to bolster their reading and analysing strategies is considered the greatest achievement of this study, and the students are enthusiastic about these techniques.
6.4 Interview questions

The second section of this chapter discusses findings of the focus group interviews, which provide additional detailed feedback that helps to evaluate the students’ views of the SFL tools of interpretation as they were presented in the introductory stage and class practice. The lesson used specific tools which targeted particular weaknesses of Saudi students reading. They were implemented to expand the teaching opportunities and techniques and facilitate independent analysis and interpretation. This is supported by Clarke (1999) who suggests that the “only way to change people is to create the conditions for them to change themselves” (cited in Aljehani 2010, 169). This method is unlike the others, which focus on the perceptions of the students based on the traditional teaching techniques or the general SFL pedagogy; instead, it concentrates on the extent of the benefits of the SFL-based pedagogy.

It is essential that some of the most evident aspects of weakness in the reading of English poetry and confusing linguistic structures be identified so that the functional benefits of the application of the SFL-based teaching pedagogy can be evaluated. This exploration is based on seven focused interview questions which cover as much of the class practice and the students’ interpretation of it as possible and ensure that students’ responses are credible. The questions are as follows:

1- How do the theme choices in SFL play an important role for finding the starting point?

2- How do the theme choices in SFL play an important role in building coherence?

3- Does SFL help in showing the architecture of the English sentence?

4- Based on the transitivity choices in the analysis of the poems, were you able to find the general theme of the poem?

5- How does the process help in finding the patterns of the experience in the poem for Example: Mental-material –what is the relevance of such information?

6- How does the participant role help in giving meaning, for example: “wished” (line 6 and 8), “I’m sorry” (line 7) and “I wonder” (line 11)?
7- Where can you find repetition and parallel in the poem after an SFL-based analysis and how does it help in understanding the poem.

The interview questions were asked to ten students who volunteered and who had showed a good understanding of the class practice, so could give sound feedback. The procedure was more time consuming than expected because each student was interviewed separately and each question was explained fully to ensure that the answers were valid and constructive. Considering the repetitive nature of the answers, five of the ten interviews are selected to be representative of the responses and to exemplify the students’ beliefs about the value of the SFL tools. The interview questions are used in this research to provided additional support and feedback; they are quoted and summarised below.

6.5 Analysis of the interviews

6.5.1 How do the theme choices in SFL play an important role for finding the starting point?

This question seeks to assess the need for linguistic tools that explain the structure of the English language when reading poetry in English. The students are given explanations during the introductory stage of the significance of the “Theme” and the “Rheme” (Halliday 2004, 64), and how the English clause is formulated to form a message. This shows them the different linguistic structure and the different structural division of English. The first student shows that there is a need for SFL tools.

Student one:

When I saw the division on the board I was really interested, I didn’t think it could be this easy. The Theme and Rheme showed me a plan to follow (January 2014).

The student suggests that having the SFL theory as a guide contributes to the development of their reading of the English language. Hence, it seems to be a helpful guide for reading poetry.

The second student feels that SFL gives her a simplified layout of the English sentence.

Student two:
It showed me that the English sentence is sometimes different and I know that, maybe when I saw it in front of me I realised it more. We need to learn how to find the main topic of the poem using methods like this SFL (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that SFL was a guiding factor in the reading of the poem. This students’ opinion is relevant to this study because it shows that SFL can be helpful to maximize the knowledge of the English language students already have and utilise it in their reading in the poetry class.

The third student is disappointed that she has not been made aware of the various forms of teaching techniques for reading that are available.

Student three:

I am surprised that there are ways of finding the main topic of the poem and the teachers are not teaching us. They should show us different ways and let us choose (January 2014).

This students’ belief shows the necessity of introducing innovative teaching approaches for these students. This discontent student explains that she had not been exposed to different theories or applications for reading poetry and thus feels restricted. The SFL based methodology seems to play a role in introducing her to alternative approaches for teaching.

The last two quotations show that using a linguistic framework for reading poetry could simplify the reading of English poems.

Student four:

I find it very interesting and it makes reading the lines less complicated. I like using linguistic rules for analysing the poems (January 2014).

Student five:

It is straightforward and it tells me where to find the main topic that is what we need. (January 2014).
The students above believe that their interpretation of poetry can be improved with a linguistic theory to support their reading of English. Thus, suggesting that SFL is beneficial in making the reading of poems in English more clear.

The findings for the second question show that Saudi students are open to new teaching techniques. This suggests that Saudi students can benefit from this kind of foundational support in understanding the structure of the English language and thus in interpreting poetry in English. Connor’s (2004) supports this finding: he explains that the existence of a contrasting L1 cultural background can negatively interfere with L2 learners, and differing linguistic and social conventions can keep L2 learners “at a distance from achieving a native-like performance” (17). This is suggested in students’ beliefs. They support the use of SFL tools for helping them to find a starting point. They also believe that SFL tools make reading English poems less complicated, clearer and more straightforward.

6.5.2 How do the theme choices in SFL play an important role in building coherence and does SFL help in showing the structure of the English sentence?
Initially, questions two and three aimed to investigate two different aspects of the class practice, but the students did not understand the difference. This was evident after analysing their comments which seem to treat the two topics as one and had similar responses for the two questions. Therefore, to avoid repetition, their answers to these two questions are combined here. These questions examine the students’ awareness of theme and rheme patterns, which can help them to recognise the importance of thematic progression patterns when analysing the poem. According to Thompson (2004), it is possible to make sense of the theme by examining “how Theme choices work together through a text to signal its underlying coherence and to signal its method of development” (165). For example, the students can identify the following functions based on certain structures that express thematic choices: signalling progression, specifying or changing framework, signalling boundaries, signalling important starting points. This is necessary to show the Saudi students the difference between the English and Arabic sentence structure. The first student feels that it helps her to identify the structure of the English language.

Student one:
I think the poem can be clear for us now when the sentence is divided in this way (referring to the Metafunctions), this SFL will help us follow the main theme throughout the poem. I really needed something like this to help me. (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that there was a sense of clarity afforded by seeing the sentences described according to their structure.

The next student compares the use of SFL for analysing poems in English to drawing out a map: it seems to direct the students to a destination.

Student two:

The Theme and Rheme helped me build in my mind a map for the thought of the poet. I think using linguistics like this really can improve my understanding for some of the difficult ideas in the English poems. (January 2014).

The third student presents a different idea for SFL tools, because she understands the explanations in the introductory stage but is reluctant in using it.

Student three:

The explanation for the poem was really nice. I like the simple way it divides the main ideas of the poem. I was able to scan and understand the whole idea of the poem. This looks easy, but will it be too difficult for me to do if I try? (January 2014).

This student is optimistic about the idea of using SFL to analyse the theme and rheme because doing so simplifies reading, but she is unsure that she would be capable of using SFL herself in the reading of poetry in English. Yet, her perception is relevant to this study because she has recognized the usefulness of this theoretical approach and has the option of developing her knowledge when it is appropriate for her.

The fourth student explains that using SFL to improve understanding of the coherence of a poem was practical since they had to study linguistic courses in the English department.

Student four:
When I saw the way SFL organised the main theme to help in understanding the poem, I said finally we can make use of our linguistic knowledge here! I really would like a course of SFL to allow me to use all the linguistic courses in my poetry class. (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that SFL is beneficial because she supports the idea of combining linguistics with literature in the reading of poetry.

The last student in this section suggests that different teaching techniques should be used more to help Saudi students learn in a non-native language.

Student five:

The use of SFL for understanding the theme and at the same time seeing the way it is tied together worked for me. I need these new teaching techniques because English is not our native language. The English poems also have ideas that we don’t know sometimes because our language and culture are different (January 2014).

The student above suggests that SFL makes linguistic difficulties less and it allows her to follow the main idea of poems that are not from the native language or culture.

The findings for the third and fourth questions show that Saudi students are willing to undertake new techniques to analyse poems in English. They find the use of the theme choices in SFL constructive ways of understanding coherence. They feel that this teaching technique, which analyses the poem by taking into account meaning and form, is a clearer way of studying the poem. Lirola (2015) comes to similar conclusions in her exploration of classroom practice for bilingual students in the USA. She explains that the use of SFL techniques which focus on the relationship between texts and on the context and offer tools for the analysis of texts can be productive. She states that this form of teaching in ESL and EFL classrooms is essential for making students aware of the different “cohesive devices, types of context and variables of the context of situation, the concepts of Theme and Rheme and information structure” (2015, 13). This research is relevant to this study since the students are non-native to the English poetry they are studying and tools for improving the relationship of the text and context was evident and supported by the students beliefs.
6.5.3 Based on the transitivity choices in the analysis of the poems, were you able to find the general theme of the poem?

This question is asked to perceive whether the students understood the idea behind the transitivity choices and how it can help them to understand the general theme by judging the “types of processes which determines the type of participant” (Thompson 2004, 89). According to Thompson (2004), this can be done by deciding what types of processes to recognise using common sense and the grammar. For the purpose of this research, the Saudi students are taught to be aware of and determine transitivity choices in the class practice to allow them to interpret the general theme of the poem. The first student supports the use of transitivity choices to determine the general theme.

Student one:

In this lesson, I could see the connection between the verbs and the participants. I could also understand the general theme that was developed from this connection. I believe a skill like this can work for my reading of the poems (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that the student was able to reflect on connections highlighted by SFL tools to reach an idea that can shed light for finding the theme of the poem.

The second student expresses enthusiasm at the prospect of using the SFL tools to analyse the details of the poem to formulate a general idea of the theme.

Student two:

We only study the traditional grammar and we were not able to connect ideas and form the main theme like the example that was given to us. The SFL shows the sentence in detail which could give us a chance to analyse in more detail (January 2014).

This student seems to see value in SFL tools since it shows links for the reader and this is needed for these students who are only working with traditional grammar.

The third and fourth students find SFL tools to be valuable for understanding the differences between the English and Arabic languages and providing them with a basis for locating and interpreting the main themes of English poems.
Student three:

In Arabic the way they represent or write poetry is based on Arabic grammar and the English poetry is based on the English grammar. These different languages need different ways of reading to understand their poetry and find the main theme. The SFL helps to understand where the differences are found (January 2014).

Student four:

We understand Arabic based on our traditions and SFL explains to us how English sentence are divided based on their English traditions (January 2014).

The extracts above show beliefs that suggest the necessity of interpretive tools to teach and guide the students towards a developed reading of the English language. In this they show a belief that improved teaching for the poetry class constitutes focus on the students language needs.

The fifth quotation suggests that the main reason students do not enjoy or appreciate poems in English is difficulty understanding poems with unfamiliar structures.

Student five:

Construction and format of the Arabic poetry is different based on certain rules that is why we enjoy the Arabic poem because we know its background and rules. I think SFL can give us this background for understanding their structure for poetry and then we can enjoy it (January 2014).

The findings about transitivity choices suggest that the students find them to be useful for their interpretation and appreciation of poems. They emphasis the role transitivity choices have in displaying the structure for the English sentence, which supports their analysis and general understanding of the themes of poems. Similarly, Cunanan (2011) explains that the value of SFG is that it makes transitivity framework accessible to ESL students and can be an important step in helping students to capture the “elusive and subjective mind style” (1) of the author or the persona.
6.5.4 How do the processes help in interpreting the general tone in the poem?

Question five evaluates whether the students understand how the processes help them to interpret the experience and general tone of the poem. The students are taught to analyse processes by differentiating between them in a poem to understand the types of actions. These actions can help them to interpret the general tone of the poem. They are taught to find the prevalent types of actions that the speaker uses and to get a sense of the predominate atmosphere of the poem. The first student shows an interest in using diverse techniques for analysing the tone of the poem.

Student one:

It was interesting to use different ways of reading and analysing. It was the first time I was able to understand a poem by differentiating between the actions (January 2014).

In the extract above the student believes that learning about SFL as an approach for analysis made her more conscious about alternative teaching techniques for poetry.

The second and third students are impressed by the use of SFL tools, which they found to be innovative for improving the interpretation of poems in English.

Student two:

I didn’t believe that this SFL tool for finding the different processes can be used to help in understanding the meaning of the poem (January 2014).

Student three:

It was a big difference using the processes in the poem for comprehending the general tone instead of the usual style of analysis we always follow (January 2014).

The extracts above suggest that the students were able to find the theme of the poem using the SFL tools to analyse the details of the poem.

The fourth and fifth students focus on how SFL provides constructive tools for the poetry class.
Student four:

The things we did with the verbs were useful for me, improving the teaching of poetry is something we need (January 2014).

Student five:

This new method was interesting because the analysis will be something we can do on our own (January 2014).

The findings from this question suggest that the students are interested in and amazed by the new tools for analysing English poems. They feel that the new techniques can support their ability to interpret poems independently. This is consistent with the findings of Aidinlou (2012), who shows that Iranian students learning English as a foreign language are able to improve their interpretation when given SFL tools such as cohesive devices and knowledge of functional grammar, including different process types, together with their participants and circumstances, thematic structure, mood and modality. This shows that my SFL based pedagogy can improve the reading and interpretation of texts in English in the case of students learning English as a foreign language.

6.5.5 How does the participant role help in understanding meaning?

Question six assesses the Saudi students’ understanding of the participant role and its significance in generating meaning in a poem. This question is more specific than any of the previous ones because I need to confirm the definiteness of the responses using more detailed questions. It is necessary to investigate whether the students could identify the participant roles and observe the word choices that encourage this identification, because doing so can facilitate the interpretation of issues of authority and power in relation to the speaker or any other persona in a poem. It is evident in the first students’ response that SFL supports her reading and interpretation of the poem.

Student one:

The participant role helps with finding the meaning of the poem because it shows what kind of person the poet is trying to portray which helps me to find the meaning because if I understand who or what the poem is based upon, it will direct me to the
meaning of the poem easier than finding the meaning or purpose directly with no visual support (January 2014).

The student above suggests that the participant role can support in the interpretation of the poem because it adds the important element of visual description. Observing the instructive role the participant role has for this student can suggest that it will help to overcome some of the difficulties in reading poetry in English.

The second student finds the tool useful because it helps her to focus on specific vocabulary and to attach meaning to it.

Student two:

The participant role is a key to finding the meaning of a poem since poems usually include hidden messages and sometimes the choice of vocabulary used give certain emotions, hinting at what the meaning of the poem may be (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that SFL can support their reading by learning to connect meaning with particular lexical items which develops their interpretive skills. This is important because developing their interpretive skills can give them confidence to overcome those problematic issues in the poetry class.

The quotations from students three and four assign similar benefit to the identification of participant roles. They believe that it makes reading and interpretation of the theme of the poem easier and more straightforward.

Student three:

It will help me find the meaning faster. It gives you a direct way to find and understand the meaning (January 2014).

Student four:

It helps to find the quote easier. It’s a simple way (January 2014).

In the extracts above students seem to be aware of the shift in the teaching of poetry from teacher dependent to independent readers. They believe it is simple and straightforward because it seems they have an active role in interpreting the poem.
The fifth student did not share the same perspective as the others on the use of this SFL tool. She believes that it complicated the reading of the poem:

Student five:

It doesn’t help me a lot it confuses me I prefer to look for the quote or the meaning alone (January 2014).

The student above does not support the usefulness of this tool and she believes it complicates her reading. It is expected that some students will not understand SFL and the degree of their learning of it will vary.

The findings for this question suggest that most of the Saudi students believe that the participant role can help to give meaning to the poem. Their beliefs emerge from a need for interpretive tools that assist in interpretation of poems in English. They appreciate tools which can help them to identify the participants’ roles and to observe the word choices that construct this identification as means of facilitating an improved and more direct interpretation of the speaker or any other persona in a poem. Neal (2012) in his study of Systemic Functional Linguistics as a literacy tool for promoting word consciousness has similar findings, although he uses the participant roles in a different manner to analyse historical texts. In his research, students are introduced to the participant roles of “agent” and “beneficiary” which he uses to analyse passages of history textbooks. He claims that he has had a positive experience with this technique: it seems to help the students to connect the new SFL concepts of agency and beneficiary and to transfer that knowledge to the history textbook. He also explains that it encourages the students to grasp aspects of historical discourse and of SFL. This supportive element was similarly observed in the students’ perception for this study and shows that it helps students to identify the participants’ roles as means of facilitating an improved interpretation in a poem.

6.5.6 On the mood level, how does it help you to establish the general theme?

This question evaluates the students’ understanding of the general theme. The students are taught in the introductory stage that the mood of a text is conveyed through clause type such as declarative, interrogative or exclamatory. The first student finds this tool useful for understanding the overall tone of the poem.
Student one:

Given the specifications of what kind of language a poet uses helps to establish the general theme easier. These tools helps find the main theme because showing what kind of language is used gives the poem a specific tone, which could help us, find the underlying theme (January 2014).

The extract above suggests that students found a benefit in using this tool by evaluating the clause type to discover the theme conveyed. This point is important because it is necessary for the students to understand the connections in SFL to evaluate whether they can use it for their reading and interpretation of the poem or not.

The second student appreciates that the mood level helps her to be more aware of word choice.

Student two:

The way a poet words his poem can give away specific messages. This tool helps us collect information from analysing the poem and using that to find the general theme (January 2014).

The third quotation explains how a poet’s choice of words to represent emotion in the poem complicates the understanding of the theme. Yet, when she is able to use this tool as a guide to determine and evaluate word choice and its implication, she finds it easier to understand the theme.

Student three:

Poets often use emotions in their poems and it is difficult to understand the purpose for it. This became helpful for finding the main theme because the way a poet uses his emotion and hides messages consistently throughout the poem emphasises the key points, making it easier and more direct to find the main theme (January 2014).

The extracts above are relevant for this study because their comments suggest that they can use SFL to support their reading and to formulate an idea of the theme conveyed.
The fourth student explains that the use of tools for interpreting the poem made the process of reading it easier.

Student four:

Honestly, this does make a difference. I find it a lot easier to analyse the poem by trying to look at the poets’ language (January 2014).

The extract above supports the use of linguistic analytical tools because it suggests that the student was able to interpret by understanding the connections in SFL.

The fifth quotation is interesting and enlightening. The student believes that this SFL tool is something that she naturally taught herself to improve her analysis of English poems. This point seems to confirm that Saudi students are searching for tools to aid their interpretation of English poems.

Student five:

I think I have been doing this for a long time but I didn’t know it was part of a theory (January 2014).

The findings from the responses to this question demonstrate a perception that the mood structure supports their interpretation. In supporting SFL in their reading, students included the development of their analytic skills, in terms of understanding the connections in a text and transferring this knowledge to the specific objectives for the reading of the poem.

6.6 Conclusion

Students’ awareness and understanding of the interpretive tools used in the introductory stage and class practice is assessed using student interviews which exemplify their belief and interest in and enthusiasm for the use of the tools in the poetry classroom. Many students consider the SFL-based pedagogy a chance to be exposed to new learning concepts that empower them to access new perspectives and as a stimulus to thinking and developing new techniques for reading. Similarly, Lirola (2015) comes to comparable conclusions in her exploration of classroom practice for bilingual students in the USA. She explains that using SFL techniques which focus on the relationship between texts and the context and which offer tools for the analysis of texts can be productive. This was perceived in students’ comments which support SFL in their reading and interpretation.
Although SFL is a new area for the students, there was little negative feedback about its complex content. The students’ openness to learning new interpretive tools is especially significant for the development of new teaching techniques for the poetry class at KSU, particularly because the students show a willingness to develop their ability to analyse poetry in English when given the opportunity.

6.7 Classroom observation of the SFL-based teaching experiment
The last section of this chapter presents and discusses my notes from the classroom of the introduction of SFL and the application of the SFL-based pedagogy in the KSU poetry classroom. The previous methods present data on the students’ perception, while the focus here is on my own perceptions and observation of the students’ experience. Then the findings of the multiple methods are combined to come to some final conclusions about the students’ perceptions of the problems of interpretation and their view of the SFL based pedagogy. This is needed to determine the level of understanding and willingness for a new teaching approach which can improve interpretation and facilitate independent analysis.

This observation documents the students’ participation in and general response to the new teaching approach and the new tools of interpretation presented as part of the SFL-based pedagogy. The observation is unstructured because I did not know what to expect. This was the first attempt to teach Saudi students to analyse poetry in English using the SFL-based pedagogy and I therefore did not want to formulate an observation guide and was generally keen on observing the students’ overall interaction with the topic and activities. I focus on observing the students’ attitudes towards and acceptance of this new approach in comparison to those for the traditional techniques. My observations are thus based on my previous teaching experience and the students’ manner and interaction during the use of traditional teaching techniques.

6.7.1 Observation of Introduction to SFL
Throughout the introduction phase and the application of the SFL-based pedagogy to the poem, I recorded activities which were directly related to my research, although the students commented on various issues which were only remotely connected to the pedagogy being applied. My basic experience with the introduction and application of the pedagogy was a
mixture of enthusiasm and fear. I was enthusiastic about having the opportunity to present a new teaching technique which could help the Saudi students in their reading of poems in English. However, I was afraid that the students would be given too much information in such a short period of time and that this might overwhelm them. To address this problem I attempted to concentrate on aspects of SFL which would serve the purpose of this study.

6.7.2 Observation of introduction
While defining the Metafunctions, I noted that students were confused and interested concurrently because the information they were given was not supported by the concepts they had worked with previously for reading poetry. Nevertheless, the class was attentive and followed the explanation. A small group, based on their perplexed looks on their faces, seemed to find the explanations confusing. The students answered simple question about the Metafunctions and how SFL sets out to explain how written texts construe meanings. I asked questions to establish that they understood how the resources of language are organized in open systems and functionally bound to meanings. Thompson (2004) also explains the need for a “systemic method” for analysing the sentence (2). He explains that any complete analysis of the sentence needs to account for “meaning and the form (and of the links between them)” (2). A group discussion of the Metafunctions and how they can aid in their interpretation followed, which allowed me to observe the students’ openness to this new approach. I asked students to express their perceptions on the SFL lessons openly. I noted that the majority of the students seemed to want to expand their knowledge of SFL and suggested that I teach them how SFL could be used for other literary courses. They seemed to want to experiment with it using various texts, although unfortunately this was not an option because I needed to focus on SFL and poetry at this stage. Some students wanted me to recommend books which they could read and asked if I was going to teach SFL because they wanted it to be added to the course. When I became aware of their positive attitude towards this pedagogy, I became even more motivated to apply the tools of interpretation to the poem.
A similar attempt by Charles Bernstein supports my research, a professor of poetry who has tried to implement a new strategy for teaching poetry believes that reading poetry is not aimed at deciphering a fixed attainable meaning, but rather encourages “performing and responding to overlapping meanings, then difficulty ceases to be an obstacle and is transformed into an opening” (2006, 279). Bernstein goes further in his defence of the
necessity of poetry, pedagogy and theory when he states that we need to think about the practical educative force of poetry and, from another angle

6.7.3 Observation of application of SFL-based pedagogy

6.7.3.1 SFL

The application stage of the pedagogy clearly defined how the students perceived and interacted with the linguistic framework. I noted in the lessons that this part proved to be the most challenging for them since it was their first attempt at analysing poems in English with SFL. Some parts of this application stage were easier for some students than others and could be grasped more quickly and this could account for specific differences in their linguistic knowledge prior to this research. For example, the lesson on identifying the starting point of the clause and understanding the general theme of the poem by analysing the author’s word choice seemed to be the most instructive and informative. It is possible that students found this part of the application clear and the purpose of it was easily attained. After the group discussion, I noted that the majority of the students were interested, while a small percentage found SFL to be too complex. The reason the majority were attracted to SFL was their desire to have an alternative method of analysing poems. They emphasised the fact that they wanted to learn new theories, to be empowered with interpretive tools and to work independently on analysing poems. They opposed the traditional technique of being forced to memorise critical commentary because they felt that it prevented them from thinking. A distinct shift in my perception of the pedagogy occurred after the application of the SFL-based pedagogy based on students’ results in the class practice and their perceptions on SFL afterwards. I had hoped that the students would be open to a new teaching technique but their enthusiasm and need to break away from the restrictive traditional techniques inspired me even more. Obeidat’s approach to teaching an Arab student to read independently and critically supports this research, he emphasises the active role of the student in improving the teaching situation in the poetry class. Obeidat also emphasises the need for an instructor to work closely with the non-native student to identify learning obstacles and take steps to overcome them. Yet, this method depends on the instructors’ selection of poetic texts which is limiting for the students reading of poetry in English
It should be noted that the group of students were intelligent and courageous and called for transformations. In the observation of this poetry class, I observed the interactions of the students, which mostly supported my pedagogy. Whittaker (2010) advocates how a model of language such as SFL can support teachers put in this position in their task of simultaneously teaching content and language by revealing the key features of their discipline’s discourse. She states that it can also support teachers to make interventions that allow them to construct the meanings they need in the subject, rather than just providing them with the subject’s technical vocabulary. This teaching outcome supports SFL as a form of teaching intervention for poetry in English since it shows the architecture of the English language.

There were minor negative points due to the complex nature of SFL and the limited time I had to explain it. In spite of these minor problems and the inevitable disappointments of time limitations, I consider my experiment with the SFL-based pedagogy at KSU a success.

6.8 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I display the findings from the post-teaching open questions, the focus group interviews and the class observation of the application of the SFL-based pedagogy to Saudi students. The next chapter concludes this thesis and discusses its implications and contributions.
CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview

This study applied SFL-based pedagogy to promote improved reading and analysis of English poetry among Saudi students at KSU. This research is significant in showing that students need a culturally appropriate pedagogy which addresses three challenges in the reading of English poetry: differing Arabic and English rhetoric, varying Arabic and English cultural values, and structural differences in the two languages. The work on a culturally appropriate pedagogy stems from the fact that students studying culturally and linguistically incompatible texts need activities and approaches that draw on their own needs, values and knowledge of the local culture. This pedagogy represents an attempt to give Saudi students a decoding tool for reading foreign poetry that allows them to read critically poetic texts in English independently. Such an attempt has not previously been made due to Arab educators’ concerns about the values presented in English and American literature, particularly the various moral, social, religious, national, political, historical and even geographical contexts of the foreign texts, and their effects on readers (Rababah 1983; Obeidat 1996; Zughoul 1987; Asfour and Dahiyat 1983). Yet a small number of researchers and educators support the need for more liberating teaching techniques which allow for greater independent response. This chapter provides conclusions for this study. The first aim is to highlight the research question and the contributions of this study. These insights into the use of SFL-based pedagogy, however, are based on the limited setting of the poetry classroom at KSU in Saudi Arabia.
7.2 Key findings from research questions

This section presents the key findings using the research questions as a guiding framework for summarising the study. The implications for educators and researchers are then discussed.

7.2.1 Question 1: What are the learning obstacles in the poetry classroom at King Saud University, and what happens when poetry teachers at King Saud University incorporate a culturally appropriate pedagogy which recognises their different ideologies and linguistic and rhetorical structures?

Based on the data from the preliminary questionnaire and the open questions which explore students’ perceptions of the application of an SFL-based, culturally appropriate pedagogy, the study revealed the presence of several problems in interpretation when different social, cultural and religious ideologies are presented in poetry in English. It was revealed that the existing differences between Arabic and English plays a significant role in reading poems in English with 122 of the 309 answers conceding some form of hindrance in their interpretation. This study recognises the racial, cultural and linguistic difficulties that non-native students face and they are in accordance with Smita Mujumdar’s findings, she states that non-native readers will have problems with different social ideologies and will not be ‘familiar with the history or social upheavals of that country’ (2010, 211), yet she believes new teaching skills can contribute to more effective learning.

The study also disclosed that differing English and American religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text cause a problem with the interpretation of the poem in English compared to reading a poem in Arabic with Islamic and Arabic references. The results show 62% of the students conceding that this difference presents a challenge for their interpretation. The findings are in agreement with John Lye (2008), who explains that meaning exists only insofar as it means to someone, and that art is composed in order to evoke sets of responses in the reader. Meaning is thus ‘social’: language and conventions work only as shared meaning and the reader of a text is participating in producing social or cultural meaning. Lye believes that a “response” is individual, but is part of culture and history; if a reader’s history and background are different, then his comprehension will also be different. The results reinforce Lye’s statement regarding differing background impeding interpretation.
Furthermore, the study revealed students’ opinions about the need to move away from a traditional pedagogy based on the memorisation of historical information towards one that focuses on more innovative teaching techniques was the highest number. This became clear with the majority believing that there is a need for such a change in pedagogy, with 249 of the 309 responses indicating that they find the traditional teaching approaches problematic. This response also indicates the presence of the participants’ need for new teaching approaches to play an active and significant role in the reading and interpretation of poems in English. Some students made the point that the pedagogy contributes to the development of their skills and recognises their opinions, experiences and cultural backgrounds, and they feel that such pedagogy is valuable. Other students supported the development of such teaching techniques and would like to be made aware of possible alternatives for reading and analysing poetry and other texts. The findings confirm the conclusions of other researchers who have examined the problem of reading poetry (Greene 2006; Lupton 2003; Dubro 2006; Haugen 2006) and found various strategies for resolving it. Greene suggests a new way of teaching poetry giving less attention to the author of a work because ‘new world studies is not a perspective but the possibility of many perspectives’ (2006, 100).

This study also found that Saudi students consider traditional teaching techniques a hindrance to their understanding and believe that a new pedagogy allows them to engage with the poems and present their own individual perspectives. Based on the questionnaire, a high percentage of students believe a new teaching methodology is needed; 85% of students report that they want to be more independent when they study poetry. The students acknowledge that studying poetry using a variety of techniques is liberating. In particular, they feel that this pedagogy enables them to look at texts from multiple perspectives and to think more critically. Similarly, Mohammad Khatib (2011), based on his long experience in teaching poetry at Tehran University, concludes that students’ negative attitude toward poetry is directly connected to ineffective teaching methods which focus on ‘extrinsic’ properties of the text such as biographical, historical, aesthetic and philosophical information. Furthermore, Khatib believes that this self-development and exploration are far better for the student than waiting to be given the teachers’ own interpretation of the poem because ‘much of the pleasure of poetry lies in the creative reading’ (2011, 168).
The questionnaire and the open questions in this study revealed the existence of various learning obstacles in the poetry classroom at King Saud University, and students show a desire for a teaching pedagogy which recognizes their specific needs to be able to react, explore and develop their reading of poetry. Scholars have explored how culturally appropriate pedagogy resolved specific local educational needs. Jennifer Kang (2006) and Nguyen (2006) support cultural needs in a particular context and apply teaching approaches to resolve cross-cultural differences and Nguyen (2006) believes that complex cultural conflicts arise when a Western educational methodology is applied in other contexts without changing it to improve its compatibility with the ‘host culture’. My study’s findings are in line with their findings and are reflected in Saudi students’ strong belief that a more balanced strategy for the teaching of poetry would be desirable. Hence, tutors should support their independent interpretations of poetry by teaching them interpretative tools that build on their particular foundational knowledge and allow them toanalyse poems.

7.2.2 Question 2: What evidence is there that Systemic Functional Linguistics can help Saudi students to develop an independent approach to the analysis of poetry in English?

The findings about in-class practice provide the answer to the second research question and illustrate the importance of using SFL-based pedagogy to improve students’ competence in interpreting poetry in English. Saudi students’ use of transitivity analysis to interpret a poetic text reveals their understanding of how to use SFL analytical tools. The methodological approach for in-class practice was directly influenced by research on SFL and culturally appropriate pedagogy.

The benefits of SFL as a teaching methodology are manifold. The linguistics-based approach produced improvement in the Saudi students’ critical reading ability. Similarly, research about approaches to reading and analysing poetry based on linguistic theory which show how students have developed greater skill are in accordance with findings in my study (Bernstein 2006; Jenkins 2006; Middlebrook 2003; Kenner 2006).

The analysis of students’ answers during in-class practice visibly attests to the strengths of using linguistic analytical tools for teaching poetry in English. The students’ use of transitivity analysis as part of the theoretical framework for the interpretation of the main idea of the poem ‘Daddy’ shows that they were able to be independent and resourceful with the
SFL as an analytical tool. Their use of transitivity attests to the benefit of SFL in improving their critical reading and interpretational ability. My findings are in keeping with Teo’s (2004) explanation of how transitivity can help to facilitate interpretation simply and directly. This is in agreement with the finding that Saudi students, by using transitivity analysis to interpret a poetic text, developed an active understanding of how to interpret the image of men in this poem by linking the participant roles and processes and being attentive to the lexicogrammatical aspects of the poem. The SFL tools helped them synthesise all the information in a poetic text for a more independent critical interpretation. As reported by some students, one stated that SFL had a supportive role in her reading because it helped her analyse the poem by focusing on the role of men in the poem. Another student explained that she was able to interpret the persona’s character by determining the direction of the acts, or who did what to whom. These findings in my study are in accordance with Ruddick (2015) who supports the idea of using process types as analytical tools: ‘It is possible to pinpoint how the writer represents the dominant agents of the text and so uncovers the motivation and bias of the text producer’ (15). He explains that Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics is a ‘potent tool for uncovering the stratagems that writers/speakers use to convince us of their viewpoints’ and that ‘an emphasis on the material and verbal process types alone can uncover, among other things, how the audience is positioned to take a positive or negative view of the participants in a text’ (15).

Some students have also shown an awareness of the role of Transitivity analysis and the effect of it on their interpretation. This was evident in the exercises; some students described the image of men as ‘overpowering’ and ‘tyrannical’ by using the participant roles and the processes in the poem. As stated by Toolan (1988, 115) who observes that SFL analysis of literary narratives helps readers obtain a ‘preliminary picture of who is agentive, who is affected, whether characters are doers or thinkers, whether instruments and forces in the world dominate in the representation’.

Transitivity analysis also helped the students to link processes and participant roles to the circumstances to establish relationships in the poem. Specifically the students gained an understanding of the thoughts of the female persona in the poem. For example, one student explained that she took into consideration the word choices of ‘hatred’ and ‘anger’ and was able to connect this with senser and behaver participant roles to interpret the position of the speaker as weak and mentally abused. She was also able to connect the male personae with an
authorial voice through the processes and participant roles. These findings are evidence of SFL helping Saudi students to develop an independent approach to the analysis of poetry in English which is in accordance with Eggins’s theory (2004), which posits that the writer’s pattern of transitivity and system of building taxonomic lexical relations can help construct characters and create a particular perspective.

Furthermore, it was revealed in this study that the application of SFL-based pedagogy was a valuable experience. The Saudi students became more confident in analysing English poems. The support of SFL-based pedagogy encouraged them to express their critical opinions of the poems. As reported in Bloor and Bloor (2004), they state that every linguistic choice we make is systematic and we say things in certain ways as the result of choices. Such choices are made from a set of systems which allow us unlimited ways of creating meaning. Some of the students are sufficiently encouraged to apply these methods to other courses or literary texts. The students show a willingness to be independent when reading poetry in English. The findings about the in-class practice show that students have gained and developed an awareness of how to use the linguistic analytical tools which make this possible. They became independent, encouraged to express their critical understanding with SFL tools. The use of SFL tools to bolster their reading and analysing strategies is considered the greatest achievement of this study, and the students are enthusiastic about these techniques.

7.2.3 Question 3: What are Saudi students’ perceptions of the SFL-based teaching method to improve their critical reading and interpretation of poetic texts in English?

Opinions expressed in the interviews and open questions suggest that Saudi students have varied perceptions about the ability of Systemic Functional Linguistics theory to make poetic texts in English more accessible. Six major points emerged from Saudi students’ beliefs about the role of the SFL-based teaching method in improving their critical reading and interpretation of poetic texts in English. In the following I will summarise the findings of each point.
Responses in most sections of the interview suggest that Saudi students hold positive beliefs about the use of this type of pedagogy after attending lessons demonstrating it. In the first and most prominent point, students revealed that the application of SFL-based pedagogy can motivate them and thus build their confidence in reading poetry in English. A large percentage of non-native Saudi students expressed that SFL-based pedagogy is useful because it presents them with analytical tools that improve their interpretation, particularly of poetic texts that portray non-native concepts. As reported by Thompson (2004) when he describes the value of SFL to students who have learnt English as a foreign language and focus more on the traditional grammatical analysis. He states that SFL allows them to approach the text from a ‘different tack’ (2). Hence, SFL can play a critical role in supporting the reading of poetic texts in English since Saudi students found in the experimental lesson and in-class practice a freedom to express their own interpretations. This element of freedom, missing in traditional teaching techniques, was created by the interpretive tools and allowed the students to participate, criticise and express their independent opinions. This finding is in line with Retallack and Spahr (2006), they explain this point when they comment regarding the new pedagogy that the real question facing teachers and researchers is ‘how to invent a living poetry classroom, one that invites students to experience and make meaning of the forms of their era. This at the very least requires cognizance of the plurality of poetries that come out of our blatantly “multi” world—multicultural, ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic’ (3).

The second point raised in this study relates to students support of the use of SFL in guiding them to find a suitable starting point. The students also believe that SFL makes reading English poems less complicated, clearer and more straightforward. These points suggest that Saudi students need this kind of foundational reading support to understand the structure of the English language and to interpret the meaning of poetry. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) also present comparable findings. They state that teaching poetry should encourage students to read on their own due to their improved ability to access the underlying messages of poems. This is consistent with the findings of Aidinlou (2012), who shows that Iranian students learning English as a foreign language are able to improve their interpretation when given SFL tools such as cohesive devices and knowledge of functional grammar.

The third point shows findings about students’ perceptions not only show that the Saudi students support the role of SFL tools in supporting independent interpretation, but they also
highlight the wider benefits of the SFL-based teaching methodology. The Saudi students expressed that improvement in their interpretation of poetic texts in English will also improve their reading abilities in general, which could be beneficial in various fields and in their future jobs. Furthermore, Saudi students feel that this SFL-based teaching technique can improve their reading in other fields and supports their learning experience in general since they can analyse the poem by taking into account its meaning and form, which they believe is a clearer way of studying a poem. Similarly, Lirola (2015) comes to comparable conclusions in her exploration of classroom practice for bilingual students in the USA. She explains that using SFL techniques which focus on the relationship between texts and the context and which offer tools for the analysis of texts can be productive.

The fourth point reveals findings which highlight students awareness and understanding of the interpretive tools and their importance in exposing them to new learning concepts that empower them to access new perspectives as a stimulus to thinking and developing new techniques for reading. Although SFL is a new area for the students, their openness to learning new teaching techniques for the poetry class at KSU shows a willingness to develop their ability to analyse poetry in English when given the opportunity. Suzanne Eggins (2004) adopts a similar perspective on SFL, explaining that it has moved from ‘marginal to mainstream as an approach to language’ (xiii). She asserts that SFL can be useful for literature students and states that exposure to this approach has broadened her own experience with texts and has also made her think about how SFL can be made accessible to students who lack linguistics training but are interested in analysing how texts work (xiii).

The fifth point emphasises the findings of the class practice. Students perceive transitivity choices to be useful in interpreting and appreciating poems. They emphasise the role transitivity choices have in displaying the structure of the English sentence, which supports their analysis and general understanding of the themes of poems. These findings are in accordance with Cunanan (2011), he explains that the value of SFL is that it makes the transitivity framework accessible to ESL students and can be an important step in helping students to capture the ‘elusive and subjective mind style’ (1) of the author or the persona.

The sixth point reveals that the majority of the students’ centre on the lack of freedom and encouragement in the poetry classroom as a result of traditional teaching techniques. Not requiring any input from the students undermines the purpose of studying poetry by not challenging the students intellectually. The students repeatedly emphasised their desire to
assert their opinions and their identity through their own interpretation of the poems. Rodgers similarly found that the job of the teachers of literature is not to give students ‘predigested meanings’ but rather to equip students with reading tools so that they can become ‘reasonably skilled and sensitive readers, able to feel and judge for themselves, with fidelity to the textual facts, in response to any work of literature they may choose to read’ (cited in Moody 1969, 89). Wisam Mansour (1995) also uses much the same approach to teaching non-native speakers poetry in English. He focuses on giving his students methods to work independently to enhance their literary appreciation skills and improve their language competence, believing that the traditional factual approach confines students to the study of historical information. Failing to emphasise the poems themselves allows them to become ‘mere containers of data’ (33).

However, some students are apprehensive about SFL, fearing that it is too complex for them to become fully proficient. This can be from the fact that the case study with SFL was limited to a short time and did not offer a complete course on SFL.

Overall, the study paints a clear positive picture of Saudi students’ perceptions of the SFL-based teaching method which demonstrates that Saudi students are willing to change their strategies for learning poetry in English and want to work independently with appropriate supportive tools, implying the need for encouragement by teachers. The findings about students’ perceptions are important and reinforce the findings regarding in-class practice to reinforce the necessity of culturally appropriate SFL-based pedagogy.

7.3 Implications for Teaching

The study shows that SFL tools are valuable for non-native students because they give them a means of interpreting texts. By using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), the lecturer has a powerful tool with which to explain the language being used. This can be accomplished by focusing on the use of SFG within SFL as part of a language-oriented study of the text and context. Coffin (2010, 3) argues that the ‘theoretical lens of SFL helps to see language as a tool for thinking with, a meaning-making resource (as opposed to, for example, a set of rules)’. She explains that this can be done by providing a set of labels for describing texts and clauses in functional terms, enabling teachers to make visible and explicit to students how
texts produce meaning. Likewise, other scholars have explored how SFL connects to the teaching of literature in schools (Harman 2008) and (Hodgson-Drysdale 2013). These studies are consistent with my findings in this study regarding the importance of the use of SFL in heightening students’ awareness of language and reading for learning literature.

A second implication of this study is that Saudi students, once given tools for improving their interpretation of English poetry, are willing to analyse independently. The students in this poetry class point to their need for an active role in the learning process. Thus, another important advantage of this pedagogy is that it gives students interpretive tools for studying English poetry, which promotes innovative teaching techniques which can support their reading and analysis of poetry in English. This positive attitude toward working independently arises from their desire to express their viewpoints and critical opinions about the works they are studying. This implies that the students reject the traditional approach with its focus on memorising recognised critical opinions. It also implies that once the focus is placed on the students themselves, they can read and analyse poems in English effectively when they are supported appropriately.

Another major implication of this study is that a culturally appropriate pedagogy that is supportive for Saudi students studying non-native practices and knowledge has been applied to English poetry. The class practice offers students the opportunity to experience a pedagogy that could be compatible with their identities. This finding is in line with Singh’s findings, she explains that culturally appropriate pedagogy ‘melds instruction to better fit the expectations and cultural patterns of the group being served’ (2011, 14). The students are able to adjust easily to a new teaching pedagogy and interact with its novel strategies. This implies that acknowledging students’ lives, culture and language and providing techniques that improve their reading and analysis of poetry can create a supportive pedagogy that recognises cultural differences and incorporates new thinking about teaching poetry.

This pedagogy, with its culturally appropriate perspective on teaching, appears to have transformed the students on an individual level. They are willing to approach and recognise problematic issues concerning their reading and are open to discussing problems and acknowledging strategies for improvement. Other researchers and educators (Eggins 2004; Halliday and Hasan 1989; Halliday and Matthiesen 2004; Martin and Rose 2003; Schleppegrell 2004) have turned to SFL as a way to teach and research in educational settings. The in-class practice findings confirm those of several other studies in the field of
teaching methodologies and SFL. Although the support for SFL in these studies focuses on teaching writing about literature, my methodology is a response to a particular problem in the critical reading and interpretation of poetry in English faced by Saudi university students. It addresses the need for a tailored teaching approach as an attempt to change the role of students from that of traditional passive learners of critical commentaries to that of more independent critical analysts and thinkers who are capable of elaborating on poetry and its content.

Furthermore, I am confident that my experience of using SFL pedagogy with these Saudi students was significant and that these students will continue to improve their reading and analytical abilities in the poetry class and beyond. This supports the idea that teachers must search for new pedagogies and explore possibilities in their own classes, implying that teachers should not be reluctant to change. They can challenge any limitations imposed by the traditional teaching techniques with new effective techniques that motivate the students.

7.4 Major contributions of the study

This study constructs an SFL-based pedagogy for Saudi students to improve their interpretation of poetry in English. This pedagogy is formulated to be culturally appropriate and recognises their specific background and language. The teaching of poetry in English at KSU is mostly based on traditional techniques, and this is to my knowledge the first attempt to formulate and apply a new pedagogy that aims to enhance Saudi students’ reading and interpretation of poetry in English. I do not assume that this approach provides the only alternative for improving the teaching of poetry in English at KSU. Nevertheless, it does suggest a teaching pedagogy which is specifically designed to support and develop Saudi students’ reading and interpretation.

Various stages of the study present significant findings. The first part of this study focuses on students’ beliefs about the differences between Arabic and English and how they affect the reading and interpretation of poems in English. Responding to closed and open questions, the students acknowledged the existence of social, religious and linguistic factors which hinder
their reading and interpretation of poems in English. This finding will be instrumental for teachers at KSU seeking to understand the source of problematic issues for Saudi students involved in the reading of poetry in English. It will also be beneficial for those looking to introduce new teaching techniques that deal with these issues in the poetry classroom.

The second part of the study investigates the application of SFL-based pedagogy at KSU. It explores which aspects of the pedagogy significantly improve students’ reading and interpretation. The findings show that SFL tools are highly effective at improving interpretation. The majority of the students are interested and engaged during the different stages of the class practice, although a small percentage finds some aspects of it challenging. The majority are attracted to SFL because of their interest in having an alternative method for analysing poems. They emphasise that they want to learn new theories and to be empowered with tools of interpretation so that they can work independently on analysing poems. These findings are in accordance with Rachel Whittaker (2010), she explains how a model of language such as SFL can support teachers who must simultaneously teach content and language by revealing the key features of their discipline’s discourse. She states that it can also help teachers construct the meanings they need to express, rather than just providing them with technical vocabulary.

7.5 Recommendations for further research

Since students in English departments in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries encounter problems when reading poetic texts, the traditional methods currently used to teach poetry in English need to be reformulated. The conclusions reported in this chapter are based on an investigative study carried out with a limited sample in two poetry classes in one university. Further research using an SFL-based pedagogy would show whether these conclusions can be generalised to other Arab universities. Similar studies should be also conducted in different literary courses, giving students SFL interpretive tools that can improve their abilities in various areas and measuring their effect on the students’ learning achievements and attitudes towards English literature.

Further research in culturally appropriate pedagogy would show whether this application of an SFL based approach for reading poetry in English could be used in other Arab universities
and discover whether other factors play a role in students’ lack of ability to read critically. Comparative studies should also be undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of different applications of culturally appropriate pedagogy. Such studies would allow educators to evaluate whether the proposed pedagogies suit the needs of other Arab learners who share similar ideologies and circumstances and to choose which would be best in their context.

Finally, this study serves to support teachers of English literature of all kinds. Since students are always looking for change, as is demonstrated by the questionnaire, traditional techniques for teaching poetry should be reevaluated, and the main responsibility for doing so lies with teachers. Educators must encourage participation by making knowledge accessible and interesting. This can be done by researching new theoretical frameworks for reading poetry. Students need extra assistance in the form of new teaching techniques, and educators must take on these challenges. The connection in this study between the theory of poetry and the teaching of poetry highlights the importance of innovation in research and in teaching. This perspective on SFL as a combined pedagogical and analytic tool should be researched in other academic disciplines. Kurdali (2012) used an SFL perspective to examine variations across disciplines in the writing of EFL university students, and Abunowara (1996) explored the difficulties encountered by Arabic learners using SFL to investigate and describe the sources of the difficulties encountered by Arabic-speaking learners of English. Despite these studies on SFL, an explicit focus on using SFL tools as analytical tools for improving Saudi students’ critical reading of poetry in English is not yet a common pedagogical practice. This encourages the idea of exploring innovative teaching approaches, not only to challenge previous traditional techniques but also to provide students with the opportunity to explore various teaching practices which develop and support independent learning. My methodology is a response to a particular problem in the critical reading and interpretation of poetry in English faced by Saudi university students. It addresses the need for a tailored teaching approach which can transform students from traditional passive learners of critical commentaries into more independent critical analysts and thinkers who are capable of elaborating on poetry and its content. It also supports teaching techniques which provide them with interpretive tools and skills for critical reading that will help them read on their own and thus continue reading even when the teacher is not present.
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Appendix 1: Definitions of Terms

In this study I use terms that are specifically relevant to Systemic Functional Linguistics and have given definitions of some of the key terms:

**Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**

It shows the code of language and how utterances and texts specify meaning potentials. SFL studies the functional and situational organisation of language in the social context (Halliday 1985, 11). It also refers to a meaning-based theory of language that offers a metalanguage and analytic tools for analysing and interpreting texts (Halliday 1994).

**Systemic Theory**

According to Halliday (2004), systemic theory originates from the idea that the “grammar of a language is represented in the form of system networks, not as an inventory of structures” and language thus becomes a “resource for making meaning and meaning resides in systematic patterns of choice” (23).

**Transitivity**

In Halliday’s SFL, transitivity functions as a major component which deals with the “transmission of ideas “representing ‘processes’ or ‘experiences’: actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations” (1985, 53). The transitivity system “construes the world of experience into a manageable set of processes” (2004, 170).

**Metafunctions**

In SFL, these are categories of context of situation; according to Halliday (2004) every message is construing experience about:

- Ideational – representation of the world
- Interpersonal – enacting personal experience
• Textual – construction of text

Ideational

In SFL, Halliday (2004) distinguishes this Metafunction into two components: the experiential and the logical. Experiential meaning is realised through field and offers information about who (participant) does what (process) under what circumstances (circumstance).

Interpersonal

In SFL, the interpersonal Metafunction is used to establish relationships. This is realised through tenor and a pattern of mood and modality as encoded through choice of finites, adjuncts and adjectives.

Textual

In SFL, the textual Metafunction is used to define the role that the text is playing in an interaction. This is realised through mode and a pattern of cohesion, as encoded through choices of theme sequencing and reference.

Register

According to Halliday (cited in Thomson 2004, 40), register is the “variation according to use” and this refers to using “certain recognizable configurations of linguistics resources in certain contexts”. The three main variations which are specific to any register” are field, tenor and mode.

Field

In SFL, field is the variable concerned with what is being talked about (Thompson, 2004), who (participant) does what (process) under what circumstances (circumstance).

Mode

In SFL, mode is concerned with how the text is organised and what role the text is playing in the interaction (Thompson, 2004).

Tenor
In SFL, tenor is concerned with how the speaker or writer is involved in the communication and how he or she positions himself in relation to the audience and the subject matter (Thompson, 2004).

Clause

In SFL, clause refers to an exchange between the speaker and the listener.

Theme

In SFL, this is the element that functions as the point of departure for the message. It is “that which locates and orients the clause within its context” (Halliday 2004, 64).

Rheme

In SFL, this is the remainder of the message, the “part in which the Theme is developed” (Halliday 2004, 64).

Choice

In SFL, this term refers to features and their selection. Halliday perceives choice to be important and he explains that “text is meaning and meaning is choice” (Halliday 1978, 137).

System

In SFL this term displays choice relations. Halliday explains that a “language is a resource for making meaning and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice” (2004, 23).
Appendix 2: Intended Aims for Poetry Courses

The following are two samples of poetry course descriptions from the English department at King Saud University with their aims and objectives. These two course descriptions are combined to explore some general academic aims and objectives for the poetry courses at the English department at King Saud University:

Modern Poetry
Course Syllabus

Course Description: The course addresses the major poets and poetic innovations of the modern period. It focuses on the socio-political background of the modern period, and on the poetic processes at work in the poetry assigned. In addition, the course places modern poetry in a continuum while illustrating new themes, motifs, imagery, and poetic forms that define the period as new and different.

Course Aims and Objectives: By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Define the characteristics of poetry as a literary genre.
2. Explain the reasons behind the emergence of modern poetry.
3. Discuss the major poets and the poetry of the modern period.
4. Analyze the important relevant poetic theory and forms,
5. Discuss the historical events and cultural issues that have influenced the poets and their work.

Course Identification and General Aims
**Romantic Poetry:**

Summary of the main learning outcomes for students enrolled in the course. Students should be able to: 1. Discuss the English Romantic literary movement and its main figures (canonized/sub-canonized) and literary characteristics. 2. Analyze the intellectual, historical, political and social background relevant to an understanding of English Romanticism. 3. Read and analyze a large selection of Romantic poems by both male and female poets.

A brief summary of the knowledge or skill the course is intended to develop; -A description of the teaching strategies to be used in the course to develop that knowledge or skill; -The methods of student assessment to be used in the course to evaluate learning outcomes in the domain concerned.

a. Knowledge (i) Description of the knowledge to be acquired. 1. Reasonable understanding of the English Romantic poetic tradition and its main figures (males, females, canonized, sub-canonized) and literary characteristics. 2. Good knowledge of the intellectual, historical, political and social background relevant to the making of English Romanticism. 3. Close understanding of Romantic poetry, its major forms, motifs, themes, techniques and imagery. 4. Familiarity with several critical approaches to poetry. 5. Acquaintance with methods of writing research papers. 6. In-class reading and analysis of poems. Students can participate in class discussions and think critically 7. The ability to analyze imagery, theme. 8. The ability to explain the Romantic tradition as distinct from other literary traditions. 9. The ability to identify motifs and ideas shared by the poets and to discern variations within the tradition. 10. The ability to apply several critical approaches to the study of poetry.

Methods of assessment of students’ cognitive skills:

1. Active class participation reflects the students’ ability to keep up with the reading schedule 2. Research papers will attest to the student’s ability to fulfil assignments and respect deadlines 3. Performance on midterms and final exams are evidence of the student’s ability to recollect and synthesize information.
Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Preliminary questionnaire- for problems in understanding English poetry due to the differences between Arabic and English language.

Dear Student,

This questionnaire aims at collecting information from King Saud University students from the English Department about their attitudes towards learning English poetry with a focus on the existence of a contrasting Arabic linguistic and cultural background and does it cause hindrances in comprehension and does it keep them at distance from achieving a native-like performance when reading and analyzing independently English poems. It also aims to see if they are open to a new teaching approach which can empower them with new analytical tools.

The researcher would be grateful if you complete this questionnaire and return it to your tutor.

Please, be sure that your answers will be dealt with very confidentially and used only for the purpose of the study.

I- Please, answer the following questions on the space given next to each one:

1. What is your name? ------------------------------

2. What is your age? --------------------------------

3. What is your gender? ---------------------------------

4. How many poetry courses have you attended-please list the courses or any course where poetry was taught? ------------------------------

II- Please, tick YES or NO to answer the following questions:
5. Do you find a Problem finding a place to begin with in reading the English poem due to the different sentence structure and composition between the Arabic and English languages-?

Yes------ No------

6. Do you find a problem reading and understanding the English poem due to differences in the Arabic and English rhetoric-? (For example-Arabic is a Semitic language read from right to left, and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, making it extremely complex and allegorical and highly structural — and English language is direct, values simplicity and individualism compared to the Arabic social topics).

Yes------ No------

7. Does the different word order between the English and Arabic languages cause a problem for finding or understanding the main ideas of the English poem? (For example- The usual word order in English is SVO (subject then verb then object), while the usual word order in Arabic is VSO and The Arabic sentence may not contain a verb but the English sentence must have one.)

Yes------ No------

8. Do the differing English and American social and cultural references and ideologies as they are constructed in the text cause a problem with the comprehension or identification of the English poem compared to reading a poem in Arabic with Arabic references?

Yes------ No------

9. Do the differing English and American religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text cause a problem with the comprehension of the English poem compared to reading a poem in Arabic with Islamic and Arabic references?

Yes------ No------

10. Do you have a problem identifying with the English poem due to problems mentioned in the previous questions?

Yes------ No------

11. Do the differences in Arabic and English architecture or structure and composition prevent you from understanding the thematic implication or main idea of the poem.
12. Do the differences in Arabic and English social, cultural and religious ideologies prevent you from understanding the general idea or the thematic implication.

Yes------ No------

13. Does the existence of a contrasting Arabic cultural background—specify what it is—negatively interfere with your comprehension of the English poems and poetic conventions and does it keep you at distance from achieving your greatest potential in your performance of reading and analyzing independently English poems.

Yes------ No------

14. Would you want a new teaching approach to help improve and guide your reading of the English poem?

Yes------ No------

15. Do you believe a new reading tool can be of benefit for improving your comprehension, one which shows you the patterns of the English language and gives you clues for understanding the structure of the English language?

Yes------ No------

16. Would you want the history part in the poetry class to be more focused by providing you with information which fills in your lack of social, cultural and religious knowledge necessary for understanding the English poem being studied compared to giving you all the historical information of the age and the writers life? (Focus on lack of appropriate schemata only)

Yes------ No------

17. Do you believe a new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you would be preferable over being allowed only to accept an ideal criticism for the poem given to you by the teacher?

Yes------ No------
18. Would you like to be able to have the freedom of choice to select poems to work on in your poetry class and to give your own individual interpretation for it?

Yes------ No------

19. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture,( feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

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Appendix 4: poems

TO MY DEAR AND LOVING HUSBAND

by: Anne Bradstreet (c.1612-1672)

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompetence.
Thy love is such I can no way repay.
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persever
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Richard Cory

Edwin Arlington Robinson, 1869 - 1935

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored and imperially slim.
And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked,
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich--yes, richer than a king--
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.
## Appendix 5: Course design

### BA Programme

#### Level 1

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<td>Eng. 113</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Eng. 118</td>
<td>Translation (E-A)</td>
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<td>Eng. 115</td>
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<td>Eng. 116</td>
<td>Remedial Grammar</td>
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<td>Eng. 122</td>
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APPENDIX: 6 SAMPLES OF STUDENT ANSWERS
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture. (Feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

The main problem I have myself found in studying reading poems is the difference between my own view and an interpretation of the poem when we have studied in class. In class, I feel like I’m placing myself in the poem to envision the idea that we have studied inside of just something having my own interpretation. This is also problematic when it comes to exams.

THANK YOU
17. To study and analyze a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture,( feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

Sometimes I understand every thing in the poem but I can't analyze it or even to explain it.

THANK YOU
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture. (feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

- The complex structure in some poems don't make me understand the meaning.

THANK YOU
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture,( feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

I had problems in writing the analysis for a certain poem so I need

a guideline for how to answer questions in comprehen

d the full meaning of the poem but not because of the Arabic structure


17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture. (feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

when we need to understand I have to re-read the poem for many time.
Translate new words to get the idea of the meaning of word then after that re-read it to get the idea and understand the poem itself.
we have to read or summary about the writer in his time to get the idea of the problem he have let him write the poem and the effect that show in his piece of work.
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture. (feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

One of the problems is not fully understanding every line which in English is sometimes difficult considering my native language is Arabic.
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture. (feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

\[ \text{I think that having different meanings for one word in English is a problem, also in Arabic the structure of the word can help telling the gender, speech, and meaning. But in English it depends on context.} \]
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture. (Feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

Sometimes the cultural differences between Arabic and English prevent me from getting the correct meaning of certain poems.

Good luck!
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)

A) A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

Or

B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture, (feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

Ages ago, we might have a problem in understanding an English poem, but now with the media, social media, and internet, we are falling aware of other cultures, including English culture, with all of its aspects: religion, society, ideology, and so on. We have no problem studying and understanding an English poem regardless of where it was constructed in, we just wish to share our inner interpretation with the teacher regarding our analysis of the poem’s theme, characters, and so on.

THANK YOU
17. To study and analyse a poem would you prefer: (circle one the following)
   A. A new teaching technique or approach which allows you freedom to interpret an English poem using tools of interpretation to guide you?

   Or

   B. The traditional teaching approach where the poem is given to you with an ideal criticism for the poem chosen by the teacher?

18. Please, write below other problems you have come across when reading or studying an English poem which are related to the differences between the Arabic and English language and culture, (feel free to use Arabic or English for this part):

   I faced difficulty in understanding the meaning of a poem because of the complicated use of language. As for the cultural, social and religious differences, they don’t make any obstacle in understanding the text. I really need tools of interpretation to guide me.
There's no doubt that there's always an ideology coded behind every discourse. An sentence can tell you a lot about who have said it. However, through poetry there are plenty of ideologies being imposed on the readers subconsciously. I believe in being passionate about learning and not just collect grades.

I believe in helping students not to know how to learn, not what to learn. What's happening now is giving the students some poems and force them to study a particular interpretation about them without giving any thought to their own opinion/interpretation.

P.S. I believe in being free what think or read something not as you said "We're Muslims, Arabs, and so on" because the only way to be an independent learner is by not being imposed to certain ideology.
- I was really impressed by what you said about poetry and the theory of a "Theme" and "Rheme". Honestly, I needed to memorize analysis; took them from "Sparknotes", "Cliffsnotes" and etc... and I know it is wrong and this is not me or what I think, but I want to get full marks and that's it.

I believe that in order to create an alternative method, we need to get rid of the "exams" and "marks" because they are the reasons behind what is happening. Moreover, Doctors usually deduct marks if we don't write what they said in class! Which I hate the most.

Good luck in your Phd and it is a good opportunity knowing you, I loved your passion and awareness. Good bless you.
Our perception of the poem will change. We will not only understand the poem and the hidden message, we will be able to get to the mentality of the writer. We will be able to understand whether the writer is manipulating us or not. Also, we will be able to protect our identity and will give us the power to explore different ideas without being afraid of the unknown.

Being able to separate between our identity and the poet's identity we will be able to accept and understand what other poets say.

Ghaida Al Balawi
By applying SFL it would make our opinions heard and would give us the ability to analyze literary works in our own perspective. I always hated the "herd mentality" when it comes to learning and I believe in giving students SFL tools it would help us break away from the herd and be able to say whatever we want to without being deemed wrong.

The problem with studying poetry as Arab students I think is that girls have a hard time grasping different concepts of different cultures and religions of the writers because they never had the opportunity to learn how to detach their thought from what they grew up with in order to grasp something new.
First, I think it’s really nice way for teaching by using SFL. It’s a good chance to improve our ways and shows our ability that we can do something we can be creative and think by our own because we get stick from the normal ways of teaching in here even the ways they look at our interpretation of analyzing it by our own and keep telling us it’s wrong and you will not’s marks because of it unlike when a teacher and say that’s enough, let us shine for once. KEEP.

I think by we can improve our teaching policy by teaching us the tools and the tricks and better gives us the space to think and write by your own.

At the end, I really wish to you all the best. Ms. Hui for something since we call you Dr. Hui for I really enjoyed the class and the way you talk and I wish to you stay and just talk with you for a long time because you really inspired me to do my best.

9 3/200620

NS51
Q1

Yes, I agree that the poem reflects its own history but I still believe we need brief historical background because it is somehow relevant. In analyzing a poem, we shouldn't depend only on the linguistic context (the language, structure, word order) but also the social context (social values, religion, customs...). However, applying the SFL method to poetry will help us to have a better understanding of the underlying message.

Q2

SFL is only one way to analyze a poem, therefore, we shouldn't completely rely on this theory ignoring other facts.

Yes
I think using SFL and apply it in the process of learning/teaching poetry will remove many stress since it gives us the opportunity to apply our tomato knowledge of the world and our #Arabic/Islamic background to our process of learning. Removing these stress give us more chance to analyze and criticize without being just accepting the poem and saying it becomes from different culture and analyze it upon this idea.
In my opinion, studying poetry depends on the student's interests and background knowledge. It has nothing to do with memorizing or learning how to analyze poetry. People fail in Poetry because they're not interested. For me I see Poetry not like other courses where you memorize a material and take the exam then pass the course. Studying poetry should be Optional.
I think if this approach is used in poetry classes, the poems will be analyzed differently. It will be analyzed according to the student's religion, culture, and educational level. The result is the different interpretation of the poem. This will improve the student's analytic and analytical analysis.

The teacher can improve the student's understanding by giving them a chance to analyze by themselves. The teacher should not force the students to believe exactly what has been said about a certain poem. The analysis should be open according to what each student thinks the poem is.
Our analysis to the poem would change if we were to agree to criticize any written poem, from our religious perspective.

We would be able to agree and disagree with it, saying our opinions openly about it.

Some I think ridiculous poetry and there were a lot of poems that I really disagree with. “The boy and the angel” or “The Blessed Damozel”.

They contain ideas that really do bother me as a Muslim. I couldn’t accept it at all.

I can’t. How could the poet dare to write such things, which are even when doesn’t even have any idea about what he is writing, while we as Muslim students are just suppose to study it and grade on it!
Arwa Ali Bin Khurayyif

I came to the conclusion that the image of the father was a controlling persona because the father figure was always the target for the processes of negative action. This means he had control over her in the poem.
The participant roles in this teaching method help me understand the characteristics of the persona by tracing the action and negative and positive connotations and connecting them together. It also helps in highlighting important markers when reading a poem to allow for a wider scope of idea to develop.
The repetition of I and the fact that there was no active verb connected to the speaker helped me establish that the speaker was creating action in her mind due to her inability to express it.
I was able to identify the participant role for the image of men by the words 'rape' and 'bit'.
The participant roles acted as symbols and signs for me as I read the poem. I was able to identify the use of men as overpowering through the use of the word “kill”. The daughter says she will kill but there is no act.
I could interpret the image of men as being negative but I could not determine the men’s role in the poem. The main reason for this was the frequent use of negative vocabulary throughout the poem.
The reading of the poem was not as confusing because I was able to understand the participant roles for the female and male personas and identify their position in the poem. The male had a more active process and the female had a more mental process.