Mystical Representation of Death in the Poetry of John Donne and Abul-Alaa Al-Ma'arri: A Comparative Study

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Abstract. This paper is a comparative descriptive investigation of the mystical representation of death in the poetry of the English poet John Donne and the Arabic poet AbulAlaa Al-Ma'arri. Highlighting their life circumstances and the religious, intellectual, economic and psychological factors that shaped their specific perceptions of Death, the study reflects upon the mystic elements in both poets' approach towards Death and delves deeper into the language they adopted to express their insights. The death poetry of both poets has been previously studied from different individual perspectives, but none has approached it comparatively from a mystical stylistic viewpoint. Using the major echelons of mysticism implemented by both poets in the treatment of death in the selected death poems such as contemplation, escapism, compulsion, conscience, tranquility, submission and reunion, the study implements a comparative content and stylistic analysis methodology to analyze linguistic and literary representation of death in the selected poems. It identifies the similarities and differences between both poets and concludes that despite the cultural and religious, time and place differences, both poets share psychological and intellectual factors that lead them towards the identical mystical perception of Death as an agent for unity with the Ultimate Divinity. This perception has been gradually developing and masterfully represented with the use of linguistic techniques like imagery, apostrophe, metaphors, personification, symbolism, allusion. and logical construction. The study hopes to fill a vital gap in the body of knowledge related to the mystical perceptions of death and the language that capture the identity of the two poets in their timeless literary masterpieces.

Keywords: Mysticism; Death; Donne; Al-Ma'arri; Comparative.

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INTRODUCTION

Death is the greatest incident in human life, greater than birth and marriage for the ambiguities that surround it. It has been a riddle that could not be decoded despite the progress of civilization and technology. It is an inexplicable and unknown natural phenomenon which overtakes human body and there is no reliable answer for why how when and where and to whom it may occur. Literature has been participating in the endeavors to answer these questions and helping people to conceive this definite "ending".

Death has been present in human philosophies and thoughts since times immemorial. The philosopher Jack Shoron says that ancient humans considered death as a result of malevolent external factors. They did not realize that death is an inevitable necessity for every living organism on earth, but only after the development of their mental abilities and perception which helped them to come to terms with what they saw human dying even without obvious reasons. The French philosopher Voltaire says that the knowledge of the inevitability of death is acquired by humans through their own experiences or through messages from their creator. The Roman philosopher Epictetus said that there is no evil in the universe; until death eventually becomes a good service to nature.

 In Babylonian and Assyrian reflections, death was not seen as the absolute end of life or as a complete annihilation of conscious vitality; but it meant the separation of the body and the soul, the dissolution of the former, the transition of the latter from a pattern of life or existence to a pattern or another; the Spirit descends to the underworld to dwell there through eternity.

The Greek philosophers had also pondered upon the ambiguity of death and endeavored to give various explanations. Pythagoras believes in the reincarnation of spirits, he considers the soul to be the prisoner of the flesh which leaves it to purify it and return. At death, soul departs to begin the cleansing of sins, and then returns after this journey of purification to unite with Lord the Creator. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who believes in the continuity of life where the grandchild succeeds the father and grandfather, says: life follows death, and the process of creating life from rigid matter will last forever, and the newborn supplants the old. Empedicus also declared his faith in the reincarnation of spirits; he sees that a spirit does not die because its origin is from God and it is eternal. Democritus sees that the soul is destroyed; at death, it turns into minute atoms and then dissipates and ends. Souls were intended to remove the fear of death, the death from punishment, and to plant joy in the soul. Plato said: Death is the liberation of the soul from the body. The soul exists before the birth of man, and it has the character of immortality after death, and has the ability to control the body; it is similar to eternal gods. Aristotle typically argued that we should not fear death, because it is not bad for us. Socrates sees death as not a place of fear. On the other hand, he says that Death is the greatest evil and describes it as a "dreamless sleep" and a journey to another place. Epicurus said that death means the absence of sensation and sees the viability of the soul with the body.

All religions have widely and differently tackled the topic of death as a common denominator and joint inevitable destination and asserted its reality and inevitability. The earliest Egyptian religion believed on the reality of death and afterlife. According to it, the body dies, and parts of its soul known as *ka* (body double) and the *ba* (personality) go to the Kingdom of the Dead. While the soul resides in the Fields of Aaru. Statues were positioned in the tombs to serve as substitutes for the deceased. Egyptians also believed in mummifying as the best way to have a good life after death.

The Greeks religion believed that the Greek gods like Hermes, Charon the messenger of the gods, takes the dead soul of a person to the underworld Hades or the House of Hades). Hermes would leave the soul on the banks of the River Styx, the river between life and death. Once crossed, the soul would be judged by Aeacus, Rhadamanthus and King Minos. The pious souls would be sent to Elysium, and the evil ones will be sent to Tartarus. The Romans had a similar belief system about death and afterlife, god Pluto takes the soul high above the Earth, looking down at the small planet. To the fields of happiness or sorrow according to the deeds.

The Bahá'í Faith states the inability of the livings to understand the reality of death and life hereafter just as a fetus is unable to realize the world outside of the womb. It asserts that the soul is immortal and after death it will continue to progress until it attains God's company. Souls will be accounted for their deeds and will be rewarded according to them. Christianity teaches that death is inevitable and after the body dies, the soul is judged, the righteous and free of sin enter Heaven and those who die in unrepented mortal sin go to hell. Those who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but they have to undergo purgation after death to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

The Islamic belief confirms death, life in the grave and life in the hereafter either in Paradise *Jannah* or Hell *Jahannam* according to the deeds and degree of piety (*Iman*). Islam teaches that the objective of Man's whole creation is to worship Allah alone, and that the life we live on Earth is nothing but a probation for us and to determine each person's eventual domicile, be it Hell (*Jahannam)* or Heaven (*Jannah)* which will be eternal and everlasting. Last Day is a chief doctrine of the Quran , on which the entire world will be demolished, and Allah will resurrect all creatures from the dead to be judged. The Last Day is also called the Day of Standing Up, Day of Separation, Day of Reckoning, Day of Awakening, Day of Judgment, The Encompassing Day or The Hour (Al-Quran).

In Judaism, death theories manifest that men were intended to rule the world, but death comes as punishment to their deeds. The Talmud confirms death and teaches that souls die and brought into the Olam Haba or world to come where their deeds will be brought in front of them. Buddhism sustains that death occurs and rebirth takes place without an unchanging self or soul passing from one form to another. The kind of return will be conditioned by the ethical quality of the person's actions *kamma* or *karma*. In Hinduism, the Bhagavan Gita broadly explains death and life after death. The belief is that the body is a shell, the soul inside is

unassailable and imperishable that takes on different lives in a cycle of birth and death. The end of this cycle is called *mukti* which means remaining lastly with supreme God forever, referred to as moksha or salvation.

Jainism too has faith in death and the afterlife. It says that the soul takes on a body form based on former karmas or actions committed by that soul through eternity. Jains believe the soul is eternal and that the freedom from the cycle of reincarnation is the means to attain eternal bliss. Sikhism believes that the soul belongs to the spiritual universe which has its origins in God but there is no definite believe in the life hereafter. It is essential dogma is to experience the divine through humble living, meditation and contemplation while being alive. Soul is never born and never dies. It is a part of God and hence lives forever.

Traditional African religions agree on the inevitability of death and vary in their views about what happens after death. Some, like Hadza, believe that there is no life after death at all while others like Yombe, Beng, Yoruba and Ewe believe that the dead come back into life and are reborn into their children. The journey of life and death in mysticism is one of the most fertile journeys in our civilization. Mysticism is a unique creative experiment that represents soul, intuition and life in their most sublime levels. Mysticism denotes religious explanation to death and defines death as the suppression of self-identity. When the desires are suppressed, the soul moves to the holy world of divine love and oneness that does not accept death at all. Plato referred to this death by saying: "He died by will, he lived by nature." The Qur'an says: "He who created death and life" and death includes the previous death on life and the subsequent death. Life includes primary life and afterlife, all of which are created by God as determined in the verse that establishes this truth in human perception.

Mystics only want the face of God. Death is the elixir of life for them. True life is filled with the light of beauty and majesty. Death is the annihilation of existence into the House of Happiness and Immortality. They are a people whose hearts are filled with the love of God and their hearts are filled with burning and longing to meet God. Mysticism has linked love, knowledge and death in close bond, and this indicates that the problem of death has been associated with the general pattern of mysticism. Death has been linked to the world and the Hereafter in close bond and asserts that the wise is the one who repent purely before death. The mystics indorse the question of death in a time when material values dominate spiritual values and try to promote the human soul in the moral field and raising self-conscience and remembrance of death as a major ethical goal.

According to the mystic believe, the target of an accurately lived life, is to behold the truth, the eventual certainty, that releases humans from ignorance in this life and the life hereafter (Underhill, 1955). Salvation and the oneness with God are perpetual quest for mystics which they can attain through knowledge (*Ma'rifa*). This can be related to the term gnosis, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which denotes to a specific knowledge of the divine. The famous mystic Ibn Arabi says that achieving a peaceful heart through acts of nobility and generosity guarantees the mystic the peace of having become transferred into God's Ultimate Reality.

According to Ibn Arabi, a prosperous afterlife can only be achieved by strengthening the relationship with God by realizing His True nature.

Death in Mystical thought denotes three types of death. The first is the spiritual death; a veil from the illuminations of the revelation and the reflection when a person is detached from the mystic sub consciousness and returning to the world of confusions, perceptions of sensuality and loss of the divine benevolences. The other form of death indicates suppressing the whim of the soul as he whose follows his desires is dead, and that who overthrows his desires and lives piously is alive for true life means to have a purified guided soul. The third type denotes actual physical death and leaving the earthly world, and to move to the world hereafter where God's loved ones do not die but move from a temporary life to an eternal blessed life (Turki, 2003).

Generally, Death in mysticism is vanishing in divine love and seclusion from all what distracts from piety and virtue and that life is only in the absolute presence of God. Thus, death in mysticism is an attempt to discover the spiritual element within in order to better understand the meaning of life and death, which reveals that the real life is in the divine presence where souls are absorbed in God, with God and by God, and that true death is not a change imposed on the mind or the body, but the departure and separation of self from the realm of God.

Death is one of the universal mysteries that have been engaging human thoughts since decades and has been poignantly reflected upon in diverse literary genres. Death has a sturdy relation with literature. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1992) claims that although death is the most truthful experience in human life, still it remains incomprehensible, and thus, it requires to be encountered in other ways, such as seeing the death of others, in addition to the help of literature to envisage how it will feel (Bauman, 1992). Walter Benjamin, a German philosopher, and literary critic asserted that "what we seek in fiction is the knowledge of death that is denied to us in the real life" (Brooks, 1943). The theme of death is present with its heaviness and significance in all world literatures and attitudes towards it have been changing and varying according to life circumstances, believes ad social systems. A cross-cultural reading of world multilingual literatures can suggest how much death and related facts of life and existence, has been an obsessing idea, mesmerizing mystery, and alluring charm for writers around the globe.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Death has been a major theme in English poetry since the Anglo-Saxon period to current modern times. Death prompts anxiety and inquisitiveness since it advances suddenly without any preparations and expectations. It is an absolute yet ambiguous truth that no one likes and looks cruel yet inevitable as it strips from one's family and beloved ones. That's why, Death has been constantly interrogated not only in literature, but also in philosophy and religions. Frank and Judith McMahon stated that "we may have seen death, read about death, or even come close to death, but we may have never died. Thus, we face the ultimate unknown, and the fact that our society refuses to admit that death is a natural process" (Frank and McMahon, 1986). Poets addressed it, contemplated on its sneaky visit. While some have observed it physically, others view it in a spiritual Metaphysical way.

John Donne (1572-1631) is an eminent English poet who is regarded as the father of Metaphysical poetry. Death has been a constant preoccupation for him that he hardly wrote a poem without referring to it. Donne has gone through many tragedies in life. He lost four of his immediate family members in front of him including his father, brothers and uncles. He has seen the religious conflicts within the Church of England and the harassments and financial penalties on the Catholics during Queen Elizabeth's government. His marriage phase did not go well with his 12 children dying during birth and eventually the death of his wife Ann. He went through sever financial crises and health issues and remained ill and isolated very often. Sugg (2007) remarks: *"Throughout his writing [Donne] frequently seems to have not one but two feet firmly in the grave, and indeed digging himself into it with creative zeal"* (Sugg,2007, p. 187).

These circumstances had a key role in shaping his philosophy about life and death, so he started approaching death unconventionally and mystically. He started seeking the empirical and pragmatic truth about it and looked at it as an eliminator of fear and pain and an agent for soul's delivery and rest. The image of death and its derivative feelings in John Donne were entirely different from the other's attitude toward death. He believed in existence of life after death and was not afraid of death and seen the actual happy life in the glory of heaven, the promised land of Lord where there is no more death. This notion has been directly and indirectly reflected poignantly in his famous sermons, love songs, sonnets and elegies.

John Donne's death poetry has been the center of literary criticism and investigation. Among the critics is Oliver (1999) who demonstrates Donne's concerns about death as a well-documented and substantial quantity of his work offers references to the subject of death. Oliver focusses on the way Donne changes his opinion, leaving a perplexed reader to attempt to find his real belief on the subject. He assumes that Donne did not fear death in the conventional manner, for he believed in the concept of an afterlife. His faith in Christian theology soothed those fears and doubts, yet he very often searched for answers to questions about death, answers that had no explanation. Therefore, his poetry is extremely paradoxical, a quality that only adds to its magnificence and attractiveness, much to the delight of its readers.

Dickson (2007) examines John Donne's fascination with death as a literary, philosophical, and emotional subject, and explores its presence in his poetry and treatises. Highlighting Donne's key death works like 'A Serious Ailment', 'The Apparition', 'Death Be Not Proud', and 'The Play's Last Scene', Dickson demonstrates how John Donne's writings are 'death-obsessed' and haunted by the theme of mortality. Donne's poems and sermons, says Dickson, "grapple with that biggest question of all; what really happens to us when we die?". Death was Donne's personal obsession as once he wrote that he had a 'sickly inclination' and it was also an 'imaginative prompt' and a way of discovering intense and sometimes frantic feelings, of testing the nature of faith, of probing the boundaries of selfhood and existence.

Fomehshi (2013) investigates the concept of death in Donne's poetry in comparison with that of Sohrab Sepehri from a comparative perspective. The

studey's main finding is that Both John Donne and Sohrab Sepehri employ death as a subject for their artistic creation because of similar reasons such as the depression and cynicism of spirit; and regarding life as a cheap possession. Both poets witnessed turbulent period in the history of England and Iran. However, Donne is more influenced and obsessed with Death than Sepehri. Also, Donne is inconsistent in his treatment of death as he vacillated between two poles. As a religious preacher, he has a positive attitude toward death, but as soon as he loses a beloved, his attitude changes. While Sepehri is more consistent in his positive treatment of death based on his mystic and religious beliefs.

Patal (2015) investigates the theme of death in one of his most famous poems "Death Be Not Proud", appreciating how he explains his readers the real status of the death in human's life providing a kind of eternal knowledge to his readers like a reasoned philosopher. To Donne, asserts Patash, Death is not a conqueror so one should never get afraid of it. Life and death are in the hands of god so death will only come to those when it is summoned by god. Donne here adds one more thing that life after death is a glorious one which will be beyond the faintest influence of death. His declaration of the salvation and the immortality of the soul brings him final triumphant over death.

Behtash (2017) also compare Donne's views on Death with those of the Persian poet Jalaluddin Rumi to find common grounds in their life and writings. The study denotes that both poets' lives were affected by the period of theological and political turmoil their countries witnessed. For both Donne and Rumi, Death and love were the major concerns in their minds and hearts as well as the main themes of their poetry. Both utilized colloquial language and far-fetched imagery to illuminate their subject. Employing surprising comparisons required sharp intellect, which both possessed. Behtash concludes that Death for these two great figures of the East and the West was union with the Origin of Existence; death was not a punishment but an incident everyone will and must endure. It is the passage through which one acquires eternity.

In another study, Babynet (2020) investigates John Donne's poem "The Dampe" as a work where death does not only appear as a mere thematic concern, but also appears as a poetic device. Babynet appreciates the extraordinary dramatic force and the extra-linguistic references that represent death within the Occidental cultural legacy which turns the subjectivity of the poetic voice into the subjectivity of the readers and links empirical as well as imaginative aspects of the poetic discourse creating sensual vividness. The poem exhibits the associative richness and the ability of death to create links between opposing ideas revealing the rhetorical power of this grim concept in the poetry of Donne. These new connotations, that evolve from semantic irrelevance on the denominative level, establish ambiguity into the poetic discourse and offer plentiful interpretative possibilities intensifying the meaning of the poem and deepening the aesthetic experience of its readers.

On the other hand, Death *(Mawt)* is a pivotal premise in Arabic poetry. Arabic poets from the classic pre-Islamic up till the modern era has tremendously reflect upon life and death in their poetry. Uncountable heart-rending poems and elegies are found in Arabic poetic volumes that romanticized death and surrendered to its mighty occurrence. Arabs saw life in all aspects of life; in the hard desert life, in the

bloody tribal wars, in man's war with nature and in man's anguish while dying. Poet questioned the realty of life and death and the destiny of man after death. In the Islamic and the following ages, the concept of death started changing towards the spiritual side were death was treated as the end of the temporary painful life and the beginning of the promised joyful life in paradise.

Among such poets, Abul Alaa Al-Ma'arri (363-1058) stands prominently. Known as the "poet of philosophers and the philosopher of poets", he gains much popularity and esteem in Arabic literature. Abul Alaa lost his sight at a very young age, lost his parents at a young age, faced conspiracies and enmities from the literary circle around, faced financial issues, was isolated and expelled from society that he confined himself at home for more than forty years and was labeled as the "hostage of two prisons" referring to his blindness and alienation. This life of utter misery and deprivation played a causative role in forming his sights about life and death. After a long struggle with the hardships of life he died leaving behind priceless heritage of literature and philosophy such as *Saqt AlZand* "The Tinder Spark", *Risalat AlGufran* "The Epistle of Forgiveness" and the famous *Luzumyat* "Essences". His poetry rarely deviates the theme of death and mediations about life and existence. Life became gloomy and disappointing for Abul-Alaa that he preferred death to life, so all the sufferings may come to end. His poetry invites people to shun life and welcome death, so they can be delivered to the eternal life hereafter.

Al-Ma'arri's poetry has been attracting worldwide critics and reviewers with special focus on his philosophies about life and death. Ghazo'a (2016) scrutinizes Al-Ma'arri's views on Death both thematically and stylistically. She finds that his poetic experience about Death is unique in theme and style. She highlights the most famous extracts from his poetry where he questions life and death and ponders on the reality of Death presenting distinctive philosophies.

Ma'aroof (2018) similarly investigates the significance of the theory of life and death in the poetry of al-Ma'arri through the linguistic devices to reveal the semantic construction and its role in the production of semantic effectiveness and its creation in the text. After examining the relationship of signifier and meaning in the text of Al-Ma'ari, the study finds that we must start from the purely signifier, the term refers to the first meaning, which in turn may turn into a second dimension, which is then fragmented into infinite connotations governed by the status of the signifier in its textual relations with other functions - the context - producing the positive Sign of the text. The study finds that Al-Ma'arri's believe in the certainty of Death and his wonders about life after Death and even sometimes his awes and apprehensions which totally reflects the fluctuations of his belief and life circumstances.

Nabti (2019) tackles the theme of the dichotomy of life and death in Al-Ma'arri's poetry volume "Luzoomyat". Quoting examples from his death poems, Nabti explains his views about life as an imprisonment and seclusion of the human soul and Death as a relief and connection to the eternal life.

The aforementioned discussion shows a notable body of literature that is related to the thematic and stylistic features of Donne and Abul-Alaa Al-Ma'arri.

However, no study till now has explored the mystic aspect of death in the poetry of these poets in a comparative method with focus on the thematic as well as the stylistic features. The current study is a comparative study of two various literatures on one theme. It cuts across the national boundaries and compare the themes and literary forms of the authors to discover the underlying elements of unity and getting universal knowledge of their poetry. The potentials of the selected death poetry can be recognized effectively by comparing.

RESEARSCH METHOD

This study is a descriptive analytical study that compares both poets qualitatively underneath the standpoint of literary studies, in which the data are taken from the selected poems by both poets that share the same idea. The instrument is the researcher herself who collected data by separating death poem which are the focus of the study, segregating the shared views then putting them in comparison with each other. Data analysis process was implemented by data content analysis method of the selected verses using related mystic principals. Descriptive analysis explanation is used to demonstrate these images and create meaning, and comparative analysis was used to bring the thematic and stylistic similarities and differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The afore mentioned discussion brings out a huge resemblance in the life circumstances that lead both poets to the equivalent perception of Death that has a mystical tendency. A keen examination of the death related poems clearly shows that both poets have gone through logically sequential phases that lead them to a specific insight about death.

Contemplation and the use of Imagery

The first stage is contemplation which is, as Kugle states, the path that transforms heart by instilling spirituality and values in it deeply. To meditate and contemplate is the way to "draw God down to you and to allow yourself to be lifted up toward God".   Donne and Aul-Alaa meditated on life and the harsh circumstances that made it undesired and unwanted, consequently death is welcomed and not feared as it will be a relief from this throttling life. There meditative insights are presented through imagery that appeals to the human senses. In one of his sermons, Donne, describes the image of life as constant scenes of sufferings. He states while remembering his long painful life where he lost his beloved ones and faced challenging health and financial issues:

"I am the man that hath seen afflictions…"

Quite similarly, Al-Ma'arri declares the harshness of his merciless life that could not give him but sufferings and miseries. He says in one of his poems:

وقد بلونا العيش أطواره
فما وجدنا فيه غير الشقاء

> *We have tried all phases of life*
> *And couldn't find in it but afflictions.*

As stated before, both poets came into a world which was really stricken with anxieties and this urged them to seek an end to it. This has been expressed in a very simple colloquial language, direct imagery and a sober tone and pessimistic mood.

Escapism and the use of Apostrophe

The first stage of contemplation leads to escapism which offers refuge in a synthetic tranquility. It draws both poets to the fact that the pleasures and sins of this life have shut the doors of their hearts to God. They realized that such a life is not worth to be lived and death is preferred as it will put an end to these "sins". Donne is compromising with death and addresses Death with the use of apostrophe take over his "black soul":

> *Oh! my black soul, now thou art summoned,*
> *By sickness death harled, and champion.*

Al-Ma'arri names death as a "luck" for the person whose words and deeds are calculated, and he shall be accounted for them:

> الموت حظ لمن تأمله
> وليس في العيش أن تؤمل حظ
> لاسيما الذي يخطّ عليه
> الوزر ان قال او رنا او لحظ
> *Death is a luck for that who meditates it,*
> *While there is no luck in living*
> *Especially for that who commits,*
> *Sins in words, looks and deeds.*

In another place, Al-Ma'arri addresses the family and companions of the departing person to lay out his body in the graveyard and not to prolong keeping him in the coffin as that deprives him from the blessing of the affable companion, the soil:

> يا هؤلاء اتركوه والثرى فله
> أنسٌ وهو أولى صاحبٌ صُحبا
> *O' those, leave him with the soil for it,*
> *Has geniality, and best companion to be accompanied is it.*

Just like world's great mystic poets who lived and sung in times of turmoil and had the impulse to escape from the world in the search for otherworldliness, the ambience in Donne and Al-Ma'arri's lives paved the way to spiritual ecstasies

and self-inflicted withdrawal from worldly matters. This resulted into a silent rebellion against the milieu and a revolt which invited a change within, rather than a change without. Hence interest in life and the desire to live longer vanished and an understanding with the reality of death was developed. The apostrophe has helped greatly in conveying the poets' emotion and allowing them better expression view to their inner thoughts and feelings as well as strengthening the idea by bringing life to an element that is not a present part of the situation and dragging the attention to the subject of Death and the idea of seeking rid of the sinful life and the thirst to be purified and loved by God.

Compulsion and the use of Metaphor

The next stage is compulsion where the self seeks pleasure from fulfilling desires and committing sins, then get the conscience of discriminating between good and evil. Donne and Al-Ma'arri have both been quoted for living self-centered phase of life against religion. This lead both poets to turn to be regretful, inspired, and conscious to confess their sins, admit their shortcomings and implore to their Lord to forgive them, to purify their souls from sins and facilitate going back to him. Addressing his God, Donne pathetically says:

> *Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you*
> *As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;*
> *That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend*
> *Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.*
> *Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,*
> *Take me to you, imprison me, for I,*
> *Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,*
> *Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

Likewise, Abul-Alaa prays in a heart touching monologue:

> إِلَهَنا الحَقَّ خَفِّف وَاشفِ مِن وَصَبٍ
> فَإِنَّها دارُ أَثقالٍ وَآلامِ
> يَسِّر عَلَينا رَحيلاً لا يُلَبِّثُنا
> إِلى الحَفائِرِ مِن أَهلٍ وَأَخلامِ
> وَجازِنا عَن خَطايانا بِمَغفِرَةٍ
> فَكَم حَلُمتَ وَلَسنا أَهلَ أَحلامِ

> *Our true lord, relieve and remove our sickness*
> *Indeed, it's a life of burdens and pains*
> *Facilitate departure from here*
> *To graves, which won't spare any of family and fiends*
> *And reward our sins with forgiveness*
> *You've been easy-going with us, while we've been unwise.*

This reawakening has been spelt out beautifully by Schimmel (2003). She declares that the self is overwhelmed in the "all embracing ocean of the Divine", and there is a necessity for the desire "for bringing the heart closer to God, to bring

it, then, into communion with God, to lead it from the blind and fruitless acceptance of inherited truths to a participation in the life of the eternal" (Schimmel, 2003) Both poets have used a poignant metaphors and imploring words to reflect the inner distress, burdened hearts and upset minds. Donne uses an alchemic metaphor comparing his heart to a hard metal which needs to be battered hardly, exposed to heat, and modified properly to be able to take the shape of a refined gold. Al-Ma'arri compares his soul with a sick hampered person who cannot travel until he is relieved and treated. For both poets, souls are in a state of deterioration and both request their Lord to fix their souls and facilitate their departure to the life hereafter as they lost all interests in this deceitful temporary life. The use of metaphors fosters readers' imagination and enables the poets to convey their emotions and impressions about Death immemorably and effectively.

Submission and the use of Personification

The fourth stage is submission, accepting the reality and surrendering to its inevitability. Death is one of the horrible realities that has always been escaped, denied, questioned, and belied. Donne and Abul Alaa went against the stream and admitted that death is a reality, a destined end and a fated truth that shall face every single creature on earth. In Holy Sonnet XII Donne addresses death as a "slave for fat" that indicates that it is strongly associated with destiny which has been fated to all living beings:

> *Thou art slave for fate, chance...*

Every creature comes to life for a specific span of time, but no matter how long they live, the ultimate end is death. Both death and life are controlled by fate, which is pre-decided, hence none has the choice to choose when, where and how much to live. This is what Al-Ma'arri tries to convey when he says:

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ولا إقامة الا عن يدي قدر

ولا مسير إذا لم يقض تيسير
</div>

> *There is no life but as per destined*
> *Nor death if it is not fated*

Donne compares death to a slave to fate and chance and Al-Ma'arri asserts that death is a fate that will come as per destined. There is an underneath tone of sarcasm in associating death with fate and bounding its control with fate that causes it. No doubt, there is an element of awe in admitting the reality that Death is a merciless secret visitor who can visit anyone anytime and anywhere yet, and unlike other poets who romanticized and fascinated death, Donne and Al-Ma'arri realistically approached it. They compare it to a wild strong animal who insatiably attacks human to put an end to their lives. In one of his poems Donne says:

> *And gluttonous Death will instantly unjoin*
> *My body, and soul...*

With the same figurative tone, Al-Ma'arri also declares his unshakeable faith that death is certain and universal:

والمنايا كالأسد تفرس
الأحياء جمعا .....

And deaths are like lions that devour
Living beings together…

Both poets compared death to a voracious animal and people as helpless preys. The choice of this specific comparison has aptly conveyed the meaning of dreadfulness and inexorability of death.

In front of the destructive power of a harsh reality like death, life loses all charms and all pleasures vanish. Donne imagined the scene of death approaching him to make all his life enjoyments a story of the past when he says:

…………Death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday.

Al-Ma'arri is also aware of the fact that no matter how long and joyful life is, death will surely eliminate these enjoyments in a blink of an eye:

ألا فانعموا واحذروا في الحياة
مُلمّاً يسمى مُزيل النعم

So, enjoy and fear in this life,
A calamity that is called the demolisher of pleasures.

There is a deep sense of melancholy and vulnerability under these submissive words, a very true wave of heartfelt emotions in a very simple language that penetrates the heart of the reader every time these lines are read. The use of personification has aided a lot in describing the non-human entity of Death in the most vivid and comprehensible way that contributes effectively in creating the meaning and fostering the imagination.

Reception and the use of Symbolism

The next stage is the tranquility and reception. Death is now a compromised reality, it is welcomed and not feared. Quite opposite to other poets who run and shun from death fearing its mighty strike which may overtake a person anytime anywhere regardless of his age, Donne now finds no terror in coming face to face with Death, rather he himself would like to run to it:

I run to death and death meets me as fast.
Parallel to Donne, Al-Ma'arri also announces his fearless and feelings towards Death saying:

اِن يقرب الموت مني فلست أكره قربه

If death comes near to me, I don't hate its nearness.

These revolutionary bold declarations of welcoming death and confronting it face to face instead of fearing and avoiding it clearly show the maturity of rationale and strength of faith which is a result of going through the previous sieving stages of intellectual elevation. To have a close perception of Death and to minimize its magnitude in human mind, Death is compared to natural human phenomena like sleep and drowsiness. In sleep, the body gets a chance to relax from the worldly fatigues and concerns and wake up later with freshness and vigor. Death is nothing but a sleep too which relieves the body from the anxieties and destitutions of this life and serves as a transformational stage from this temporary life to the eternal life hereafter where paradise will be waiting, and death will be no more then. In Donne's sonnet to death:

Rest and sleep, which but thy picture bee
Short sleep past, we wake eternally.

Al-Ma'arri reflects the same idea with more focus on the favor that Death will serve when it will help getting rid of a miserable like the one he had:

ضجعة الموت رقدة يستريح الجسم
فيها من ارق السهاد

Death is a short sleep where body is
Eased from the tedious sleeplessness

For both Donne and Al-Ma'arri, Death and sleep are alike; they are inevitable, they are essential, they are comforters, they are continuation of being, and they are pathways to awakening which is better and eternal. The symbolic reference to Death by sleep adds significance and clarity to the notion and endows multiple layers of meanings to it.

Union and the use of Allusion

The last stage is the state of soul's entrenched urge for union of God, so death is considered as the best unifier with God and a path that leads to eternity in the life hereafter. Life with all its ups and downs was nothing but a distractor from God's path and separation from His blissful company. Death will serve as mediator between soul and God. Humans when born and come to life are separated from God, but when they die, they are reunited with Him again. Death is nothing to be mourned and lamented upon, it is a virtuous incident that should be welcomed as it connects the soul with its lord. As birth is welcomed, Death should be welcomed too. They are alike. Donne says:

Death and conception in mankind is one
Al-Ma'arri states in the beginning of his famous elegy:
وشبيهٌ صوت النعي إذا قيس بصوت البشير في كل نادي
And if measured, voices of obituary of the dead and tidings of the new-born are
similar.

Coming to life with the burden of the body and soul is not less than suffering. When death comes, and the soul leaves the body to the realms of dimity and eternity, soul is relieved. Donne reflects this saying:

I am a little world made cunningly
Of elements and angelic sprite
My worlds both parts and both parts must die

Al-Ma'arri considers Death as a blessing which comforts the soul and the body as they get separated:

يدلّ على فضل الممات وكونه
إراحة جسم أن مسلكه صعب
إذا افترقت أجزاؤنا حطّ ثقلنا
ونحمل عبئا حين يلتئم الشعب

An indicator of the virtue of death
As a relief for the body that its path is hard
If our parts are segregated our burden is less,
And we bear burden when our parts are collected.

God's slaves and best men don't die. Death is just a passage for them to infinity, to the life of paradise and endless blessings in God's company. This is the strongest mystic thought that has been reflected in Donne's poetry when he said:

"Rest of their bones, and soul's deliveries...."

Al-Ma'arri also emphasizes this aspect of death which makes it pleasant and welcomed:

إنما ينقلون من دار أعمال إلى دار شقوة أو رشاد
They moved from a temporary life of work to an eternal life of happiness or misery

The belief in resurrection and the life hereafter is fundamental behind this perception of death. Both Christianity and Islam assure the inevitability of death and the certainty of the life hereafter where there will be Paradise for pious good men and Hell for evil sinful ones. The use of theological allusion from Bible and Quran about the life Hereafter helps in demonstrating meaning and deepening meaning by giving extra context to the idea and developing a relationship between the poets' creation and its association with something else that they want the reader to recognize about Death.

The extracts discussed in the section above evidently manifest that Death has been redefined and philosophized in the poetry of John Donne and Abul Alaa Al-Ma'arri. Their views of death have gone through specific stages towards a distinct insight of death which is mystical in its core. Both poets pondered upon life, recognized death, experienced it around them, accepted it, submitted to it and embraced its spiritual perspective considering it as a passageway to the everlasting

joyful life in heaven in the company of the Almighty. The major stylistic features of the poetry related to death are imagery, apostrophe, metaphors, personification, symbolism, and allusion. Thus, both poets masterfully triggered death as a theme for their artistic manufacture.

CONCLUSION

Abul Alaa Al-Ma'arri, the hostage of two prisons, and John Donne, the death poet, both experienced lives full of turmoil, deprivation, and religious, economic, and psychological instability. Life and death were major themes in their poetry. Their approach to death was not the archetypal approach based on magnifying and fearing death. They delved profounder in the philosophic and spiritual aspects of death and declared it as an agent that draws creatures back to God, and that is exactly the perception of death in mysticism. Both representatives of Arabic and English poetry considered death as the union with the origin of being, a reality that everyone shall face and go through to reach infinity. Both poets' death verses are not mere emotional flow or inadvertent sentimental expressions, but they are full-fledged verses in which words have been proficiently selected and the language has been beautifully controlled to generate mystical meaning with profundity of feeling, energy of ideas, immensity of knowledge, majesty of portrayal and splendor of the expression. The thematic and stylistic features that the study has explored where the logical construction of thought aided using figures like imagery, apostrophe, metaphors, personification, symbolism, and allusion which has evidently aided in bringing out the meaning, motivating the imagination and fostering critical thinking and grasping of the mystical perception. These stylistic devices are inventively used to accentuate the effect of the mystical perception about Death that both poets aimed to convey.

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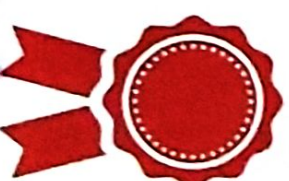## MULTIFARIOUS FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE IN COMMUNICATION

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The Effects of Morphological Awareness on EFL Secondary School Students' Reading Comprehension Skills

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This exploratory study examines the impacts of morphological awareness on Saudi female secondary school students' reading comprehension skills. In particular, it examines the effects of increasing students' morphological awareness on their reading comprehension skills. Participants included 58 Saudi female secondary school students, who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using a morphemic analysis strategy during their reading classes, whereas the control group attended their usual reading comprehension classes. Pretests and post-tests were prepared to determine the effect of raising students' awareness of morphological knowledge on their reading comprehension skills. The results indicated a strong positive correlation between the students' morphological awareness and the improvement of their reading comprehension skills in the post-test. The study, therefore, confirms that the direct instruction of prefixes, suffixes and base words is useful and should be emphasised when teaching because it significantly increases students' morphological awareness. **Key words:** Reading Comprehension Skills, Morphological Awareness, Morphemic Analysis Strategy, Derivational Awareness

INTRODUCTION

One cogent reason for students' academic success in school is their ability to understand what they read (Ronzano, 2010). Reading plays an essential role in education and life. It is "a very complex process involving many physical, intellectual and emotional reactions" (Abu-Ghararah, 2005, p. 53). It is the main gate through which students enter the world of knowledge and engage mentally and emotionally with all aspects of life. English, as a foreign language (EFL) instruction, has conventionally focused on reading. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education has tended to focus on students' ability to read fluently and comprehend adequately at all levels, especially at the secondary level. Accordingly, teachers implement various methods to improve students' reading comprehension, such as alphabetic, linguistic, phonics-based, analytic and other balanced approaches (Al-Jarf, 2007). However, Alsamadani (2009) found that many Saudi EFL teachers in schools spent most of the class time practicing silent reading.

Improving students' reading comprehension is among the fundamental aims of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia. For learners, reading is an essential information acquisition skill. Understanding is a necessary process for students because it enables them to comprehend the meaning of any text, whether it is a scientific journal, a textbook, a piece of literature or a course syllabus. Enhancing students'

reading ability, therefore, is a basic element of education. As students advance to the secondary level, they face increased reading expectations, as they tend to read a wide range of texts that increase in difficulty. At this level, students must be proficient and fluent to meet such demands. Lacking this ability is a serious problem for EFL first-grade secondary students because they fail to comprehend their textbooks, which affects their English acquisition. Based on her experience and daily observations, the researcher noticed that miscomprehending complex words in written material led students to waste time and effort during the reading process. In addition, many students may lack the ability to divide words into their meaningful parts due to their inadequate knowledge of morphology.

In addition, some EFL teachers neglect the importance of raising students' awareness of morphological knowledge. Badawi (2019) pointed out that many EFL teachers believe that students can acquire morphological awareness automatically. In other words, teachers prefer not to explain morphological structure explicitly. Badawi also mentioned that morphemic analysis instruction receives no attention because it is not integrated into EFL students' textbooks. Christophe (2011) noted that after secondary school, students suffered from a lack of preparedness for life, especially in reading Moreover, Schmidt (1985) believed that most questions in reading comprehension texts taught in many EFL classrooms

are literal, and students can identify the answers in the text without even understanding the questions or the passages' meaning. This study explores the effects of enhancing students' awareness of the meaning and the structure of derived words as a type of morphology on their reading comprehension skills. It highlights a useful resource to help Saudi EFL students become good readers and attempts to test the effectiveness of raising students' morphological awareness on their reading comprehension skills.

Providing students with explicit knowledge of morphological structure is essential for two reasons. Firstly, it helps learners read and spell any kind of text. Secondly, it plays a primary role in students' vocabulary growth. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance students' explicit knowledge of morphemes through systematic instruction and improve their reading accuracy. This clarifies the necessity of suggesting a method, such as morphemic analysis, for teaching reading that enhances students' ability to comprehend a text's meaning. Antonacci and O'Callaghan (2011) defined morphemic analysis as "a valuable word-learning approach that fluent readers use to determine the meaning of unknown words while they are reading" (p.75). This approach helps students divide words into meaningful parts (e.g. prefixes, suffixes, roots) and examine them. By applying this strategy, students can determine the meaning of unknown words while reading. Fluent readers use this strategy to understand unknown words while they practice reading. Morphemic analysis instruction improves learners' ability to acquire new vocabulary and comprehend texts' meaning. This strategy enables students to determine or infer words' meanings and pronunciation by examining and analysing their constituents (i.e., prefixes, suffixes, and roots). Accordingly, this strategy helps students understand unknown words while reading, which, in turn, improves their reading comprehension skills (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2011).

Objectives

This study's objective is to investigate the extent to which explicit instruction in morphological rules increases students' awareness and how their morphological awareness affects their reading comprehension skills. In addition, it is aimed at exploring whether increasing EFL secondary students' morphological awareness impacts their reading comprehension skills.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives specified above, the following three research questions were formulated:
1. To what extent does awareness of morphological knowledge affect Saudi female secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?
2. To what extent does using direct teaching of morphological knowledge enhance the experimental group's weekly reading comprehension skills rate?
3. To what extent does using direct teaching of prefixes, roots and suffix words raise Saudi female secondary school students' morphological awareness?

Null Hypotheses

Based on the three questions above, the following null hypotheses were derived:

$H0_1$ There is no statistically significant difference between the mean pretest and post-test scores in terms of the experimental group's derivational (suffix) morphological awareness.

$H0_2$ There is no statistically significant difference between the mean pretest and post-test scores in terms of the experimental group's decomposition (root) morphological awareness.

$H0_3$ There is no statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores in terms of the experimental group's prefix morphological awareness.

$H0_4$ There is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group in a derivational (suffix) morphological awareness post-test.

$H0_5$ There is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group in a decomposition (root) morphological awareness post-test.

$H0_6$ There is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group in a prefix morphological awareness post-test.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section focuses on two important dimensions: reading comprehension skills and morphological awareness. Many EFL teachers seek to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Accordingly, they employ various approaches and techniques to enhance reading skills, such as the alphabetic approach, whole language approach, and word method. Consequently, researchers have performed empirical and theoretical studies to understand reading comprehension skills. Al-Mutawa and Kailani (1994) explained that "reading can be described as the process of extracting meaning from printed or written materials (p. 114)," and Orasanue (1986) highlighted that readers must understand the higher mental process that controls their comprehension of written texts. Moreover, he added that any reading comprehension difficulties can be treated with more practice in decoding.

Furthermore, it is important to match texts to students' reading comprehension levels (Guthrie & Klauda, 2010). Lesaux, Lipka and Siegel (2006) described reading comprehension as a multi-dimensional process that can be affected by a number of factors at various stages. This process involves the reader, the text and reading activities. The factors at the reader level consist of reading and accuracy, speed, background knowledge and vocabulary. In addition, Lesaux, Lipka and Siegel (2006) indicate that reading comprehension difficulties can be attributed to difficulties at the passage level, difficulties at the sentence level and difficulties in forming relationships at the syntactic and semantic levels (p. 1). Yee (2010) asserted that the main purpose of reading is comprehension. Understanding is defined as the growth

and the improvement of ideas that occurs as a person reads. Moreover, the ultimate goal of reading instruction consists of decoding and comprehending passages. Similarly, Cromley (2005) stated that many young adolescent students face reading comprehension difficulties.

Shermila (2006) defined reading as a decoding process and insisted that reading's main aim is the understanding of meaning. In addition, Shermila suggested that silent reading improved comprehension more than oral reading did because the former focuses on comprehension that requires background information, some visual data and predicting strategy, whereas the latter focuses on the pronunciation rather than comprehension (p. 28). Shermila described a comprehension lesson as having two interrelated aspects: thematic (i.e. the lesson's linguistic fabric of ideas) and linguistic (i.e. lexical items and structure). Antonacci and O'Callaghan (2011) claimed that "students need direct and explicit instruction for comprehension" (p. 83). Moreover, they argued that any effective strategy for improving the comprehension process requires teachers to apply the following steps: selecting an appropriate text to model the strategy, showing students how to apply the strategy to the text, ensuring that the text is not too difficult for students and providing them with guided practice and discussion about the use of the selected strategy.

Reading Comprehension Skills

Blachowicz and Ogle (2008) stated that "comprehension is an interest-driven process where the purpose of reading can change over time" (p. 27). Furthermore, they viewed comprehension as a multistep process. They also referred to unique strategies of reading comprehension and suggested that, before reading any text, a reader should preview the text, make predictions about it, set the purpose for reading by asking questions and choose appropriate comprehension strategies. They also outlined some strategies for comprehending text while reading: paraphrasing, integrating new knowledge with the prior knowledge, monitoring and continuing to predict or question. Finally, after reading, the reader must summarise what has been read, form connections between text and knowledge types and check for the fulfilment of the reading's purpose. Dechant (1991) believed that "literal comprehension is the basis of all other higher-level comprehension skills" (p. 430). However, students sometimes find literal comprehension difficult because they lack the vocabulary or terminology necessary to understand the text. Dechant noted that good readers can comprehend a text's organisation, as well as classify, organise, summarise and synthesise what they read.

Higher-Level Comprehension skills

Dechant (1991) stated that good readers must be able to reach the higher levels of comprehension skills. These levels are stated as follows:
1. Literal level: the reader can recognize and recall the basic facts of what he reads.

2. Organisational level: the reader can infer the writer's organization or coherence within the materials.
3. Inferential level: the reader can make predictions and draw conclusions from the text.
4. Evaluation level (critical level): can evaluate the relevancy, reliability, truthfulness, accuracy, validity and logic of what he reads.
5. Appreciative level: the reader can identify the mood, tone, or theme of the text. He can identify the elements of setting, mood, plot, characterization, style and theme.
6. Integrative level: the reader can demonstrate, apply, construct, find solutions, or solve problems in what he reads. (p. 429)

Evaluation and judgment are considered the highest level of critical reading skills, whereas integration and interpretation are regarded as a slightly higher level of processing in which critical readers can draw on background knowledge, predict, infer and make conclusions about what they read (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2011; Al Akkawi, 2007). Critical skills for the 21st century include the ability to analyse, evaluate and synthesise information. However, critical reading skills are difficult for struggling readers who lack basic skills such as word identification and fluency.

A Strategic Approach to Comprehension

Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004) claimed that reading comprehension is a useful way to improve general English skills. Moreover, they summarised the following basic strategies readers might use in understanding a text:
1. Previewing what is to be read
2. Using the skimming and scanning technique
3. Using vocabulary knowledge for effective reading
4. Making inferences
5. Identifying paragraphs' topic sentences
6. Identifying organisation patterns
7. Summarising main ideas
8. Thinking critically about the text

Thus, reading can be described as a window through which the reader gains more knowledge and makes contact with other cultures and civilisations. Reading comprehension skills are, therefore, essential to a unique process that helps readers acquire information easily. Thus, to acquire information or meaning from various written texts, good readers should be able to read effectively and rapidly without sacrificing comprehension.

Morphological Awareness

Morphological awareness is an essential venue for comprehension (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). "Having more developed morphological awareness and being better able to identify allomorphs would enable readers to read morphological words more accurately and fluently" (p. 163). Moreover, children acquire inflectional rules at early elementary stages, whereas their attention of derivational and compound rules developed at the elementary level and beyond. Morphological awareness is defined as the consciousness of any morphological process, such as derivation, inflection,

and transparency, which can be independent or incorporated with context (Lee, 2011).

Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2007) indicated that morphological knowledge is divided into two components: free morphemes and bound morphemes. A free morpheme is a single morpheme that constitutes a word, such as a *dog*. In contrast, bound morphemes, such as prefixes and suffixes, cannot stand alone. These morphemes must be attached to the base of the word (e.g., un- and -ed in the word *unstressed*). A derivational morpheme is used to create a new word by changing the word's part of speech or meaning. It is "a morpheme added to a stem or root to form a new stem or word, possibly, but not necessarily, resulting in a change in syntactic category, e.g., the suffix form '-er' can be added to a verb like 'kick' to give the noun 'kicker' (p. 543)." Moreover, adding the morpheme un- to the word *happy* changes its meaning to "not happy". Fromkin et al. (2007) stated that morphological knowledge should consist of knowledge of individual morphemes, their pronunciations, and their meanings. In addition, morphological knowledge requires knowledge of the rules for combining morphemes into complex words. For instance, native speakers of English know that the suffix "-*fy*" can be added to an adjective such as "*ugly*" to form a verb, "*uglify*", or it can also be added to the base "g*lory*" to form the verb "*glorify*".

Abu-Ghararah (2005) mentioned that structural clues such as root (stem) words, compounds, contractions, ending affixes, and syllables permit a reader to read and comprehend any text rapidly because the reader can break the word into smaller elements by recognising the morphemic structures. Furthermore, any structural element should consist of a corresponding sound and meaning. For example, the word "*boys*" consist of the suffix -s, which indicates the plural form, and the root word "boy". Antonacci and O'Callaghan (2011) believed that readers must be able to divide words and recognise their meaningful parts (e.g. prefixes, roots, suffixes) to use them to determine an unknown word's meaning. Moreover, teachers must know how to use the morphemic analysis strategy. In other words, they must explicitly present word parts to students. Thus, teaching instruction should direct students' attention to roots, prefixes, and suffixes, as well as their meanings and functions. However, teachers must consider the students' level and begin with a limited vocabulary.

Explicit Morphological Awareness

Many linguists have investigated the importance of direct instruction in morphology and have learned that it has a strong effect on learners' reading abilities. Shoeib (2017) found that EFL Saudi university students performed better when using inflectional affixes. He mentioned that there was a significant relationship between students' morphological awareness scores and their reading comprehension performance. Thus, the correlation indicates that the students' awareness of word-formation rules affects their reading comprehension success. Alsaeedi (2017) clarified that Saudi EFL learners at Taif city received morphological instruction for six weeks. She proved that explicit morphological instruction

helped students improve their vocabulary knowledge and recommended using morphological instruction as an explicit teaching method in EFL classrooms. Badawi (2019) proved that using morphological awareness instruction was affected by participants' morphological awareness, rather their reading comprehension. He recommended incorporating a section about morphological rules in EFL secondary school textbooks to raise student's morphological awareness.

Duo (2009) explained that morphological processing comprises two areas: explicit morphological awareness and implicit morphological processing. He argued that these areas are learned separately and that most researchers have not paid sufficient attention to children's sensitivity to implicit morphological processing. Children develop implicit morphological sensitivity before developing explicit morphological awareness. In addition, Duo (2009) asserted that morphological awareness is more essential than morphological sensitivity for Chinese children learning to read or to acquire vocabulary. Carlisle (2010) recognised that it is important to distinguish between children's use of morphemically complex words and their awareness of words' morphemic structure. He explained that explicit awareness presents unique manipulations of words and sentences in any task, whereas implicit awareness shows an intuitive consciousness of words' morphemic structure in relation to reading comprehension. Therefore, it is essential to understand children's transition from implicit to explicit awareness. Based on a longitudinal study of morphological awareness, "kindergartners had more limited explicit awareness of morphology than first graders" (p. 469). The study highlighted the fact that morphological awareness was a stronger predicator of second-grade reading comprehension than was phonological awareness, whereas phonological awareness had a significant effect on word analysis performance.

Nunes and Bryant (2006) argued that young students of the English language tend to produce inflectional morphemes (suffixes) for possessive words (e.g. *Adam's ball*), present progressive verbs (e.g. *I am walking*), plurals, past-tense verbs, and third-person singular present-tense verbs. They noticed that children learned derivational morphemes somewhat later and continued to learn about them during childhood. Therefore, explicit instruction in morphemes is a useful method for improving students' reading and spelling. Likewise, Craven (2010) investigated the importance of raising adult ESL students' morphological awareness and found that increasing learners' morphological awareness requires enhancing their understanding of how morphemes combine and are distinct from one another. Therefore, ESL students must receive explicit morphological instruction.

Morphemic Analysis Instruction

Talerico (2007) compared the impact of using morphemic analysis and whole-word meaning methods on students' ability to learn the meanings of prefixes, the meanings of taught prefixed words, and the ability to transfer this knowledge to untaught prefixed words. The study included 75 sixth-grade students divided into two groups: morphemic analysis and whole-word meaning. The morphemic analysis group

performed better than the whole-word meaning group on the prefix measure. This clarifies that explicit instruction on prefixes, which was a component of the morphemic analysis method, affected the outcome of the prefix measure. Thus, the findings proved that using morphemic analysis-based instructions significantly improved students' prefixed-word knowledge level. The morphemic analysis group received direct instruction on prefixes, which enabled them to outperform their peers considerably on prefixed words. Similarly, Ferguson (2006) stated that morphemic analysis instruction positively affected students' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. He emphasised the importance of applying the morphemic analysis strategy and stated that being able to divide words into their morphemes and identify their meanings directly affects comprehension because knowing the vocabulary items can improve comprehension.

Derivational Morphological Awareness

Over the past decades, many researchershave investigated English derivational morphology in depth. Tyler and Nagy (1987), for example, indicated that there are two distinctive classes of English derivational suffixes: neutral classes that do not change stress or vowel in the attachment word, such as "-*er*", and non-neutral suffixes that change stresses and vowel qualities, such as"-*ity*". Furthermore, a neutral suffix is always attached to an independent word, such as in the word *owner*. Non-neutral suffixes are attached to bound morphemes, such as in the word *quantify*. Thus, neutral suffixes can be easier for children to acquire than non-neutral suffixes, which appear to be more easily acquired in high school. According to Tyler and Nagy, derivational morphology also involves three aspects: lexical semantics knowledge, syntactic knowledge, and distributional knowledge. The researchers concluded that suffixed items were more difficult to learn than non-suffixed items. In addition, students between Grades Four and Eight showed no development in their lexical-semantic suffix knowledge. There was, however, unique growth in the students' syntactic suffix knowledge. Thus, the students were able to distinguish well-formed from ill-formed derivations. Abu-Ghararah (2005) stated that most elementary school reading tasks presented the following common suffixes and prefixes: "*dis-*," "*in-*," "*pre-*," "*re-*," and "*un-*," and "*-ion*," "*-tion*," "*-ance*," "*-ent*," "*-al*" and "*-ly*."

Morphological Awareness and Reading Comprehension

One of the recent studies explaining the effect of morphological awareness on reading comprehension in Turkey was done by Akulut (2019) who found that morphological instruction had positive effects on students reading comprehension. In another investigation, Memiş (2019) pointed out that the student's morphological awareness has increased significantly from the 5th grade to the 8th grade. In her study, she indicated that EFL learners should use the morphemic-analysis strategy to help students comprehend any text effectively. Moreover, Indonesian linguists from State Islamic Institute of Curup, Bengkulu, recommended that English language teachers should teach morphology inductively and deductively which will contribute to the students' reading and vocabulary level.(Noviyenty, Astuti, Fakhruddin &Morganna, 2019).

Geier (2010) investigated how the features of morphologically complex words affect children's ability to read particular words. Participants who had significant morphological awareness performed better on the complex morphemic word reading task than those with low morphological awareness. In addition, students with higher reading abilities read complex morphemic words more quickly than students with low reading abilities. In the same vein, Goodwin (2010) emphasised that morphological awareness contributed to reading comprehension. Goodwin's study revealed that morphological awareness and phonological recoding affected the reading achievement component. He argued that it is difficult to separate morphological awareness from other areas of linguistic awareness and asserted that morphological tasks should involve phonological and orthographic demands. His research also revealed that morphological awareness played a prominent role in the prediction of reading comprehension for fifth-grade Spanish-speaking English learners, as it helped learners who had oral vocabulary knowledge by supporting reading comprehension and reading vocabulary, which increased learners' oral vocabulary knowledge. Lam (2011) tested the effects of morphological awareness on reading among children who were learning the two languages simultaneously. His results indicated that Chinese EFL learners improved in their derivational and compound awareness in the early school years. He also found that all children's performance on morphological tasks during their school years was enhanced. Moreover, the older children performed better than the younger ones on the morphological measure. Consequently, the effects of morphological awareness on reading comprehension significantly increased with age.

Moreover, the awareness of morphemes seems to play a prominent factor in children's text comprehension. According to Logan (2010), a conscious understanding of morphological rules contributes to the comprehension of syntactically complex academic English sentences. He explained the importance of recognising the morphological structure of word-building for English language learners (ELLs). Furthermore, morphemes have a variety of uses, such as inflection, derivation and compound processes. In his three-year longitudinal study, which included 292 native and non-native English-speaking children, Logan found significant differences between the two groups in terms of comprehension, vocabulary, and word reorganisation measures. His study revealed that native speakers of English outperformed their peers in all cases. Thus, morphological awareness, word reading, and vocabulary had comparable relationships with each other and with reading comprehension for English-only and ELLs. Lee (2011) also indicated a notable relationship between elementary children's morphological awareness and their performance on the literacy components such as word reading, reading comprehension, and spelling. Gomez (2009) stated that the morphological

awareness of ELLs who spoke Chinese or Spanish was influenced by the characteristics of their first language. Although Chinese learners performed better on compound awareness, Spanish learners outperformed them on derivational awareness. Gómez recommended that students be provided with explicit and systematic training on morphological rules, derivational and inflectional roots, and suffixes. Likewise, Wilson-Fowler (2011) administered a study among 214 undergraduate college students and concluded that the morphological awareness factor's structure includes a unidimensional construct for college students. The results indicated that morphological awareness has a stronger effect on spelling only than for word reading and sentence comprehension, but it had an indirect negative effect on reading comprehension.

Farran (2010) revealed that morphological awareness of Arabic was not related to morphological awareness of English in EFL children. He asserted that unique factors led to reading comprehension, such as linguistic, orthographic, cultural, and experiential factors. Farran noted that the prominent morphological factor that affects the structure of words in Arabic is the absence or presence of inflectional morphemes. However, Arabic's inflectional morphemes differ from those of English. Such differences may weaken EFL children's reading comprehension. The study concluded that neither morphological awareness nor phonological predicated reading comprehension in Arabic significantly contributed to English reading comprehension. Similarly, Saiegh-Huddad and Geva (2007) reported no correlation of morphological awareness between Arabic and English.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and Participants

To accomplish this study's main objectives, a quasi-experimental design was employed. The study included 58 Saudi female secondary school students distributed equally into two groups: the control group, members of which were taught traditionally, and the experimental group, members of which were provided with explicit instructions on morphological knowledge and taught using the morphemic analysis strategy.

Instruments

The researcher employed four tools to achieve the study's objectives, including 45-minute pretest and post-test on the morphological structure and reading passages. In addition, an attitudinal questionnaire was used to collect the students' opinions about what was taught concerning morphemic analysis and to determine whether the students were motivated to learn morphological rules. The questionnaire consisted of seven statements ranked on a five-point Likert scale and was administered to 29 students in the experimental group at the end of the experiment. Weekly reading comprehension quizzes, were adapted from Sorbi (2010), were administered along with a teacher's guide, which provided the teacher with a detailed description of the students'

awareness of reading comprehension and its techniques, such as skimming, scanning, and inferences, as well as the students' awareness of elements of English morphology such as prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the questionnaire and tests were evaluated by a group of experts in the field of English language teaching. Pretest and post-test reliability were computed by using the test-retest method. The researcher applied the pretest and post-test with a sample of forty students. The same tests were administered again after two weeks. Thereafter, the correlation between the scores of students at the two applications was computed. For the morphological awareness test, the correlation coefficient (reliability coefficient) r was 0.87, which indicated acceptable reliability. For the reading comprehension test, the correlation coefficient (reliability coefficient) r was 0.92, which indicated acceptable reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were obtained from the pretest and post-test of morphological awareness and reading comprehension skills, weekly quizzes, and questionnaires. The study applied many statistical procedures to examine the effects of morphological awareness on students' reading comprehension skills in Saudi female secondary school. Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software was used to analyse the collected data. An independent sample t-test and a paired sample t-test showed the differences between the experimental and control groups and compared the mean of difference in scores between the means from the two tests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the study, two groups were compared to ensure they were homogeneous regarding their reading skills.

This study emphasised the effectiveness of enhancing morphological awareness on Saudi female secondary school students' reading comprehension skills. The experimental group was exposed to morphological knowledge training in their reading comprehension classes, but the control group was taught in the traditional way. The findings are discussed below.

Effect of Morphological Awareness on Reading Comprehension

The first research question addressed the effects of the students' morphological awareness on their reading comprehension skills. This question was answered based on the students' performance on the reading comprehension skills test. The data obtained from the experimental group's post-test revealed that the students' morphological awareness positively affected their reading comprehension skills. In addition, the experimental group scored higher on the reading

comprehension skills post-test than the control group did. The students who were taught the basic elements of word parts during reading classes (i.e. prefixes, roots and suffixes) demonstrated a significant difference in their reading skills post-test compared to students who attended traditional reading comprehension classes. These results indicated that the experimental group surpassed the control group in the post-test. The experimental group's students achieved significantly better performances in the reading comprehension post-test than the pretest. Thus, the experimental group outperformed their peers of the control group in reading comprehension skills after the training. This finding is in line with Shoeib (2017), who stated that students' awareness of word-formation rules affects their reading comprehension.

Table 2 indicates that the mean score of the experimental group is higher ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.5$) than that of the control group ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.22$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p = .000$), this difference is statistically significant. The data obtained from the post-test of the experimental group revealed that the students' morphological awareness positively affected their reading comprehension skills. Thus, the experimental group outperformed their peers of the control group in reading comprehension skills after the training.

Table 3 shows that the mean score of the experimental group is ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.5$) whereas the mean score of the control group is ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.97$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p = .000$)]

Results indicates that there was a significant progress from pretest to post-test in the reading comprehension skills of the experimental group after raising students' morphological awareness. The students who were taught the basic elements of word parts during reading classes (i.e., prefixes, roots, and suffixes) demonstrated a significant difference in their reading skills post-test when compared to students who attended traditional reading comprehension classes. The results proved that the experimental group surpassed the control group in the post-test. The experimental group's students achieved significantly better performances in the reading comprehension post-test than the pretest. Thus, the experimental group outperformed their peers of the control group in reading comprehension skills after the training. Ferguson (2006) investigated whether morphemic analysis instruction improved learners' ability to acquire new vocabulary and comprehend the meaning of texts. He noted that instruction in morphemic analysis positively affected students' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, and he emphasised the importance of applying the morphemic analysis strategy. He argued that being able to divide words into their morphemes and identify their meanings is a useful strategy that helps struggling readers understand words' meanings. Because vocabulary affects comprehension directly, improving vocabulary can improve comprehension (p. 25).

Explicit Morphological Knowledge

The aim of the second research question is to determine whether providing students with direct teaching of morphological knowledge enhances their weekly reading comprehension skills rate.

Table 1. Results of homogeneity test

Group	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df	*p*
Control	29	3.04	0.78	0.96	56	> .05
Experimental	29	2.79	0.99			

Significant when $p < .05$. As Table 1 shows, even though the mean score of the control group is slightly higher ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.78$) than that of the experimental group ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.99$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p > .05$), this difference is not statistically significant. Thus, there was homogeneity between the experimental and control groups in the pre-measure of reading comprehension before the morphemic structure treatment.

Table 2. Independent sample *t*-test for the significance of the difference between the average reading comprehension post-test scores in the experimental and control groups

Group	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df	*p*
Control	29	2.45	1.22	7.59	56	.000
Experimental.	29	5.54	1.5			

Significant when $p < .05$

Table 3. Paired-sample *t*-test for the significance of the difference between average (mean) pre- and post-measure reading comprehension scores in the experimental group

Measure	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df	*p*
Pretest	29	2.79	0.97	8.5	56	.000
Post-test	29	5.54	1.5			

Significant when $p < .05$

Table 4 shows that the mean score of the control group on quiz 1 is ($M = 5.9$, $SD = 2.33$), and on quiz 2 is ($M = 5.4$, $SD = 3.53$), whereas the mean score of the experimental group on quiz 1 is ($M = 7.4$, $SD = 1.64$), and on quiz 2 is ($M = 6.8$, $SD = 2.34$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p > .05$], this differences are not statistically significant. The results proved that providing students with direct instruction of morphological aspects did not affect the experimental group at the beginning of the treatment. After five weeks of teaching morphological knowledge, the experimental group's mean scores on quiz 4 is *($M = 7$, $SD = 1.6$) whereas the mean score of the control group on the same quiz is ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.8$)* according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p < 0.05$]. This data analysis revealed that the experimental group did better in the last weekly quizzes than the control group did. Providing students with direct teaching of morphological knowledge enhances their weekly reading comprehension skills rate. Therefore, using direct teaching of morphological knowledge positively affected the experimental group's EFL reading comprehension skills rate.

The aim of the third research question is to determine whether providing students with direct teaching of prefixes, roots, and suffixes raised their morphological awareness.

Table 5 shows that the mean score of the experimental group is ($M = 22.2$, $SD = 2.8$), whereas the mean score of the control group is ($M = 8.7$, $SD = 3.1$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p = .000$]. the result obtained from the morphological awareness post-test indicates that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of

Table 4. Independent sample *t*-test of the experimental and control groups' weekly quizzes

Weekly quizzes	Group	n	M (out of 10)	SD	t	p
Quiz 1	Control	29	5.9	2.33	56	0.11
	Experimental	29	7.4	1.64		
Quiz 2	Control	29	5.4	3.53	56	0.31
	Experimental	29	6.8	2.34		
Quiz 3	Control	29	5.93	1.92	56	0.05
	Experimental	29	7.17	1.64		
Quiz 4	Control	29	5.68	1.8	56	.000
	Experimental	29	7	1.6		
Quiz 5	Control	29	5.89	1.9	56	0.05
	Experimental	29	7.93	1.8		

Significant when $p < .05$

Table 5. Independent samples *t*-test of morphological awareness post-test

Measure	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Control	29	8.7	3.1	15.33	56	.000
experimental	29	22.2	2.8			

Significant when $p < .05$

the experimental group and their peers of the control group. Therefore, using direct instruction of basic elements of words (i.e., prefixes, roots, and suffixes) significantly raised students' morphological awareness in the experimental group. The following null hypothesis are derived from the previous questions.

Effect of Morphological Awareness on Reading Comprehension

The first null hypothesis compared the pretest and the post-test for the experimental group to determine whether using the morphemic analysis strategy had a significant effect.

Table 6 shows that the experimental groups' pretest mean score is ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.04$) whereas their post-test score is ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 0.86$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p =.000$)]. This means that there is a significant difference between the pre- and post-measures. The result of testing the first null hypothesis indicated that the experimental group performed significantly better on the derivational post-test measure than the pretest measure after eight weeks of treatment. However, the experimental group's greater performance on the derivational morphological structure post-test indicated that derivational morphological awareness led to better learning outcomes, as it is related to reading comprehension. The second null hypothesis compared the mean scores of the experimental group's decomposition morphological awareness on the pretest and post-test.

Table 7 reveals that the experimental groups' pretest mean score is ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 2.2$), whereas the post-test score is ($M = 8.5$, $SD = 1.41$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p =.000$)].the results depict a significant difference between the pre- and post- decomposition

tests. The result of testing the second null hypothesis indicated that the experimental group did better on the decomposition post-test than the pretest. The students' ability to decompose the roots of complex words proved that the experimental group was able to guess the meaning of complex words.

Prefix Morphological Awareness

The third null hypothesis evaluated whether students showed an improvement on the prefixed words post-test.

Table 8 indicates that the experimental groups' pretest mean score is ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.94$), whereas their mean score in the prefix post-test is ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.01$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p =.000$)]. The result of testing the third null hypothesis indicated that the students performed significantly better on the morphological post-test measure than the pretest measure. The experimental group's performance on the prefixed words post-test proved that teaching students how to analyse prefixed words improved their reading comprehension skills. In addition, the students in the experimental group did better with inflectional affixes than derivational ones, which is in line with the previous studies that clarify that using morphemic analysis-based instruction significantly improved students' prefixed-word knowledge level (Talerico, 2007).

Derivational Morphological Awareness

The fourth null hypothesis focused on the students' derivational morphological knowledge.

Table 9 indicates that the mean score of the experimental group's derivational post-test is ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 0.86$), whereas the mean score of the control group's derivational post-test is ($M = 1.09$, $SD = 0.29$), according to the results of t-test [$t(56)= 0.96$, $p =.000$)]. The result of testing the fourth null hypothesis indicated that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of both groups after the morphological structure treatment in favour of the experimental group. Based on the findings, the experimental group performed better when assessed on the derivational suffixes than the control group. However, this contrasts with Tyler and Nagy's

Table 6. Paired-samples *t*-test for significant differences the between average (mean) pre- and post-measure morphological awareness scores for the experimental group

Morphological awareness	Measure	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Part 4 (derivational pre and post)	Pre	29	2.33	1.04	17.8	56	.000
	Post	29	5.66	0.86			

Significant when *p* < .05

Table 7. Paired-samples *T*-test for the significant differences between pre- and post-measures in the averages (mean) of the scores of morphological awareness for the experimental group

Morphological awareness	Measure	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Part 5 (decomposition pre and post)	Pre	29	3.5	2.2	11.37	56	.000
	Post	29	8.5	1.41			

Significant when p < .05

Table 8. Paired-samples *T*-test for the significance in the difference between the pre- and post-measures in the averages (mean) of scores of morphological awareness for the experimental group

Morphological awareness	Measure	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Part 3 (prefix pre and post)	Pre	29	2.12	0.94	10.72	56	.001
	Post	29	4.41	1.01			

Significant when p < .05

Table 9. Independent sample *t*-test of the decomposition morphological awareness post-test in the experimental and control groups

Morphological awareness	Group	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Part 1 (derivational morphological awareness test)	cont.	29	1.09	0.29	23.4	56	.000
	exp.	29	5.66	0.86			

Significant when *p* < .05

Table 10. Independent sample *t*-test of the decomposition morphological awareness post-test in the experimental and control groups

Morphological awareness	Group	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Part 2 (decomposition morphological awareness test)	cont.	29	3.95	2.46	8.38	56	.000
	exp.	29	8.5	1.41			

Significant when *p* < .05.

(1987) claim that suffixed items were more difficult to learn than non-suffixed items. Furthermore, students between Grades Four and Eight showed no development in their lexical semantics suffix knowledge.

Decomposition Morphological Awareness

The fifth null hypothesis examined the students' awareness of decomposition morphological knowledge.

Table 10 indicates that the mean score of the experimental group is (*M* = 8.5, *SD* = 1.41) whereas the mean score of the control group is (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = 2.46), according to the results of t-test [*t*(56)= 0.96, *p* =.000].

The results of testing the fifth null hypothesis revealed that the students taught the basic elements of morphological knowledge performed better on the decomposition test than the control group, who were taught using the traditional methodsThe findings are in agreement with Talerico (2007), who proved the effective impact of using

morphemic analysis-based instruction on the morphemic analysis group compared to the whole word meaning group.

Prefix Morphological Awareness

The sixth null hypothesis was computed to calculate the differences between the scores of the experimental and control groups in the prefix morphological awareness post-test.

Table 11 indicates that the mean score of the experimental group is (*M* = 4.41, *SD* = 1.01), whereas the mean score of the control group is (*M* = 2.36, *SD* = 1.0), according to the results of t-test [*t*(56)= 0.96, *p* =.000]. The results showed that the experimental group achieved a higher mean score than the control group did. Thus, The results of testing the sixth null hypothesis depict significant difference in the experimental group's post-test This finding supports Talerico's (2007) claimed that using morphemic analysis based instruction significantly improves students' prefixed-word

Table 11. Independent sample *t*-test of the prefix morphological awareness post-test in the experimental and control groups

Morphological awareness	Group	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df	*p*
Part 3 (prefix morphological awareness test)	Cont.	29	2.36	1.0	6.88	56	.000
	Exp.	29	4.41	1.01			

Significant when *p* < .05

knowledge level compared the whole word meaning group by an advantage of two mean points (8%).

CONCLUSION

This study's main findings can be summarised as follows:
1. There was no statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on pretest measures of reading comprehension skills.
2. The experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test measure of reading comprehension skills.
3. Direct instruction in prefixes, suffixes and base words significantly increased students' morphological awareness.
4. Improved morphological knowledge leads to better reading comprehension skills.

This study's findings affirm the benefits of using the morphemic analysis strategy to improve morphological knowledge. Therefore, the morphemic analysis strategy should be included in Saudi EFL textbooks. Furthermore, teachers should increase students' awareness of morphological knowledge by using explicit instruction in morphological knowledge. Students should be encouraged to read extra materials and develop their reading skills, and they should and given more opportunities to explore and analyse unknown words during reading comprehension classes. Teachers should also focus students' attention on the meanings and functions of various word parts (e.g. suffixes, prefixes and root words).

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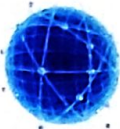
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LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

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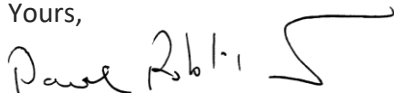Re: **Publication of Full Research Paper**

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We would like to officially inform you that your paper has been accepted for full publication in the
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P6.TIJ	Inquiry-based Instruction in Language Learning Classroom: Saudi EFL Learners' Learning Orientation	Shadma Iffat Rahmatullah	King Khalid University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
		Ratna Rintaningrum	Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Indonesia

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Text, Reader & Pedagogy: A Reflection Upon Teaching English Poetry to EFL Female Students at a Saudi Arabian University

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Abstract
This study is a descriptive-analytical investigation of the current approaches of teaching English poetry as a vital component of the English Department curriculum for English as a foreign language (EFL) female students at Faculty of Languages and Translation (FLT), King Khalid University (KKU). It aims at identifying teaching methodologies adopted to teach poetry and demonstrates learners' responses towards these practices. The study was conducted at the English Department of the female campus during the academic year 2018-2019 (1439-1440 H). Forty students who studied poetry (Eng-430) in first and second semester participated in the study. The study adopts a qualitative methodology with the questionnaire as the primary tool to collect data and descriptive analysis as a method to interpret data. The study finds out that most of the teaching methodologies practiced in teaching poetry are traditional teacher-centered. It view poetry subject as a type of "knowledge" where teachers are mediators to impart information about poets and poems, and the students are passive recipients for information without interactive, critical, creative and evaluative abilities. Resultantly, students' involvement in the class, interest in the subject, and comprehension of the genre are affected. The study finds the effectiveness of an interactive multimodal pedagogical model of interacting reader-centered educational tools and literary theories to promote language and literary competence, critical thinking, knowledge-cum-creativity in poetry classroom. The suggested methodology would help to provide a motivating medium for English language and literature learning as per the requirements of quality modern education.

Keywords: EFL, female students, King Khalid University, pedagogy, Saudi Arabia, teaching poetry

Introduction

There is a broad agreement on the fact that literature subjects in EFL classrooms play a significant role in fostering students' intellectual awareness and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) and developing essential skills needed for foreign language academic literacy. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) postulate the advantages of teaching literature. They advocate that literature can offer relevant linguistic models such as excellent writing and linguistic diversity, an extension of linguistic competence, mental training, authenticity, openness for interpretations, memorability, and cultural enrichment. Hence, including literature in universities and schools' curriculums is vital for the acquisition of linguistic and cultural knowledge of the foreign language.

Poetry is one of the significant literary genres and a vital segment of the EFL curriculum in all English departments around the world. Many controversies charge poetry to be lexically and grammatically complex structure that is personal and not easily understood, particularly in EFL scenarios. Nevertheless, English Departments include different poetic texts to their EFL curriculums believing in its advantages in language learning. Poetry is a bite-sized and digestible form that can be easily handled and memorized, unlike fiction and drama. It offers a feel for the sounds of its language, facilitating learning pronunciation, and promoting language vocabulary. Poetry also gives unique access to the culture behind the writing, and students can learn all about art and literature from different cultures through poems. Language learning is somehow "messy", but poetry, when read and memorized, helps to provide a secure anchor back to the language to come out again when it's needed. Poetry empowers language learners and gives them the confidence required to handle the target language by re-enacting the experiences of poets through the medium of writing and making of it something newly real. Thus, poetry provides an essential tool in language learning.

Poetry can often be scary or intimidating in any language, especially a foreign one. However, achieving the goals of poetry and other literary subjects depends mainly on the methods, strategies, and techniques adopted to deliver it in the classroom. Brandes (1986) states: "Learning what is meaningful and relevant depends partly on what is taught and partly on how it is taught". (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986. p12)

Furthermore, the modern digital age, with its advance in science and technology, has swapped people from reading to the world of digitalization. Hence, teaching methodologies should be research-guided and up-to-date to meet the requirement of quality modern education, which focuses on the development of student information processing skills (Dresang & McClelland, 1999). According to Wagner (2005), literature shouldn't be taught as mere knowledge, but as a tool of investigation skills and critical thinking. Other scholars like Knapp (2004), Rosslyn (2005), and Showalter (2004) assert the idea that teaching literary subjects should be in line with the needs of the 21st-century education, which demands the development of students' higher-order thinking abilities and suggest varied pertinent activities to invigorate them.

Approaches to teaching poetry and other literature subjects can be listed as follows:

The critical literary approach

According to Maley (1989), this approach focuses on the 'literariness of the texts' including features as the setting, themes, plot, characterization, motivation, value, psychology, background,

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etc. This approach can only be practical if students have already grasped the intermediate levels and are at a higher level with ample knowledge of literary conventions.

The stylistic approach
This approach concentrates on literature as 'text', and it is precisely what EFL/ESL teachers need for their language classes. In contrast to the first approach, this approach includes explanations and analysis of language preceding to interpretations.

Language-based Model
In this model, the decorative feature of literature is reached only through the linguistic and discoursal quality of literature (Lazar, 1993). However, care should be taken into account not to let the linguistic surface distort the pleasure of reading literature (Lazar, 1993). This approach to teaching literature is similar to what Maley (1989) calls the *stylistic approach.*

Literature as Content or Culture Model
In this model, literature is a perfect tool for presenting the cultural concepts language such as the history, literary theories, theory of genres, biography of the authors (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993), geography, custom, politics, art, etc.

Literature as Personal Growth or Enrichment
This approach considers personal experience as a method to engage the students in literary works (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993). Here, the students not only work out on the linguistic features but appreciate the *literary experience* which is i with the learners' own real-life experience.

The Story Grammar Approach (SGA)
This approach establishes an interaction between the reader and the text. The reader gets aware of the text structure. It is nearly associated with genre-awareness in textual analysis to better students' understanding. Recognizing the difference between two different text types will serve the learners to make better guesses about the text types and how ideas are developed in a certain text.

Reader Response Approach (RRA)
Reader Response Approach (RRA) has been having a significant influence in EFL literature teaching (Carlisle, 2000). It is the approach of teaching "literature for literature's sake" rather than for mere knowledge. (Ali,1994). Readers in this response are not passive learners but active having response to whatever they read. This reaction has been given four elements by Benton and Fox (1990), which are anticipating, picturing, interacting, and evaluating. RRA is grounded on constructivism that views reading as an interactive transactive process between the reader and the text to determine the meaning (Ali, 1994). The reader constructs a reflective and creative process where meaning is self-constructed. The meaning of the text is not innate in the text but invited by the writer and attributed to the text by the reader (Swaffer, 1988). Thus, readers are the meaning creators.

Integrated Approach

Timucin (2001) and Savvidou (2004) offer an integrated approach to teaching literature where two or more approaches are reconciled in a systematic way. This approach may be proved to be the best alternative approach for EFL/ESL classes. Timucin (2001) implements a combined approach containing language-based approach and stylistics in the Turkish EFL context. He explores the students' attitudes towards this mixed approach and its effectiveness. The results of his study show that there was a noteworthy association between the methodological approach the researcher adopted and the students' level of motivation, involvement, and appreciation of the literary texts. Savvidou (2004) put the following as the stages in her integrated model: (1) preparation and anticipation, (2) focusing, (3) preliminary response, (4) working at it – I, (5) working at it – II, (6) interpretation and Personal Response.

Moreover, literary theories that emphasize on the reader and assign the responsibility of meaning making on him like New Criticism, Stylistics, Poststructuralism, feminism, Marxism, Postcolonialsm, New historicism can help to achieve the aims of modern education and can also help to overcome the limitations of the traditional approaches towards the teaching of literature (Yaqoob, 2011). Reader- based poststructuralist approaches offer an operative cognitive learning framework. Cognitive learning theories assert that comprehensive and meaningful learning occurs when learners are dynamically involved in the learning process. Literary theory working on the principle of cognitive learning engages readers independently in the process of meaning making. Students reading literature with literary theory see literature as a part of larger society outside the text and classroom. They are skilled to read a text in construction with the social and cultural realities and institutions. This helps them take the reading of literature as a meaningful activity (Yaqoob, 2011).

All the above-mentioned methodologies can be overall divided to two categories: teacher-centered and reader-centered. Teacher centered approaches like the 'cultural model', linguistic model' and 'personal growth model' and other where practice tends to promote students' aesthetic and linguistic understanding and assist them to read history as discussed by the author and poets. Students "shut out the world from [their] classrooms and[their] minds" (Lindblom 2003). All these mechanistic teacher-centered approaches only succeed in conveying the language, the culture and ideologies behind the text. While reader centered approaches such as RRA, literary criticism, and literary theories are in line with the actual objective of teaching literature, which is to empower students with the required analytical skills to create meanings, evaluate information, and grow a critical understanding of the world outside the classroom. Whatever methodology is observed, it should aim at the development of students' higher-order thinking abilities and make the reader the center of learning, allowing them to actively engage in the text to help the process of meaning making.

Study Questions:

The study aims at answering the following questions:
1) What are the current teaching practices in poetry classrooms at FLT female campus, KKU?
(2) What are the students' responses towards the effectivity of these practices?
(3) What effective pedagogy can be suggested to promote language and literary competence, critical thinking, knowledge-cum-creativity in poetry classes?

Literature Review

Literature thrived as the key basis of input in teaching in language classes in the epoch of the Grammar Translation Method. After that, it went on declining with the advent of structuralism and audiolingual models (Collie & Slater, 1987). Moreover, and with CLT, literature was entirely ignored as focus was centered on practicality in the EFL classroom.

Literature in EFL\ESL has started getting its value back by the 1980s (Duff & Maley, 1991). Abundant publications have brought literature back in language classes such as Collie & Slater (1987); Duff & Maley (1991); Hill (1986); Lazar (1993); Maley & Duff (1989); McRae, (1991) and Belcher & Hirvela (2000). These and other scholars advocate the uncountable advantages of literature as a promising tool in EFL\ESL class rooms. They view literature as an integrally authentic source of knowledge that provides authentic input for language learning (Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008). Literary texts are identically motivating owing to its genuineness and the meaningful context it offers (Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009). Literature indorses cultural and intercultural consciousness (Van, 2009) especially in the era of globalization where there is a dire need for understanding of the whole world.

On the other hand, Literature is promoting extensive and intensive reading and the finest literary text for intensive reading purposes is poetry where students read verses meticulously to delve deeper into the text and dig out hidden meaning articulated through literary figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, allegory, etc. This can lead them to extract deep meanings embedded in texts. literature can advance sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, as demonstrated in communicative competence models (McKay, 2001). Additionally, vocabulary and grammar knowledge can be expanded through extensive contact with literary texts which present both formal and informal language. (Van, 2009). Literature is rich with innumerable authentic tokens of language for the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (Belcher & Hirvela (2000); Crain (1993); Erkaya (2005); Fitzgerald, (1993); Knight (1993); Latosi-Sawin (1993); Nasr (2001); Spack (1985); Stern (2001); Vandrick (1996). Reading literary texts also enhances emotional intelligence (Ghosn, 2002). It is a good medium for critical thinking development among language learners (Gajdusek & van Dommelen (1993); Ghosn (2002); Van (2009).

However, some scholars claim a few possible inconveniences Literature might cause in language classes. This includes syntactic and lexical difficulty of literary texts, deviation from normal phonetic, phonological and semantic structure, improper selection of texts, unfamiliarity with literary genres, conventional, religious and cultural barriers.

In the Arab world, teaching literature in EFL classrooms has been a vigorous topic of research and studies. Studies from different countries argued the effectiveness and validity of Literature as teaching instrument in classes. One of the fundamental issues considered by earlier studies since 1983 is the structure of the curriculum in English departments of Arab universities. Bader (1992) and Zughoul (1983, 1986 & 1987), for example, argue for increasing the number of language and linguistics courses at the expense of literature courses. Due to the moral, religious and social values embedded in foreign literature which often conflict with the students' Arab and

Muslim culture and values, Asfour (1983); Dahiyat (1983) & Zughoul (1983) stress that some English literature courses taught in universities do not meaningfully enhance students' competence because they primarily focus on content rather than on mode of expression (Bader 1992). Likewise, Zughoul (1983, 1986 & 1987) chiefly claims that the failure of English departments in the Arab world is due to the fact that the literature component of the curriculum is overrepresented at the expense of language and linguistics, which are the basic needs of needs of the communities.

Quite oppositely, Salih's (1986) survey on 118 Arab students majoring in English investigates their views on whether literature helped them improve their language skills. The study reveals students' general satisfaction with literature as it empowers their language competency. Obeidat (1997) agrees with Salih that the dominion of the language and linguistic subjects in the English curriculum hardly improves students' language competence. Literature benefits students in obtaining a native-like linguistic competence, practicing sound English, acquiring modern English linguistic features, speaking fluently and eloquently and becoming creative, critical, and analytical learners. Ben Zid (2015) also supports the same notion in a study at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman that determines students' positive views towards literature as a powerful tool for language competence enhancement. In Kuwait, Haggan (1999), surveying seventy-one of Kuwait University students, arrives at the conclusion that forcing unwilling students to study linguistics or literature courses could be counter-productive. Therefore, she proposes allowing students to choose either linguistics or literature as their area of specialization within the Department of English. Later, a similar study conducted at the Hashemite University in Jordan by Al-Kharabsheh, Al-Azzam, and Obeidat (2009) surveys seventy-five 4th year students of the English department to collect their views on different curriculum components. It reveals that students differently like subjects according to their interests and future planning.

In Saudi Arabia, literature subjects have always been put on the table as an apple of contention. Teaching literature has always been an unnerving mission due to many reasons such as Saudi religious and cultural restrictions, limitation of school texts books and the outdated teaching methodologies to teach them, views of western literature as a threat to identity, the focus on memorization as prevalent tool in learning, low language proficiency and learning outcomes.

The number of researches addressing teaching and learning English Literary subjects in Saudi Arabian universities is scarce in comparison with the hugeness of literature focusing on the topic of EFL. Among these studies, Mekheimer (2011) is prominent with his research that explores the perceptions and attitudes of faculty and students towards English literature at King Khalid University. The study concludes positive attitudes towards teaching/learning English literature by both instructors and students as they recognize the vital role of literature in learning language and culture. Mekheimer imparts the rigid socio-religious context, inappropriate selection of literary texts, and the inadequate employment of technology as main issues that negatively affect the teaching/learning of English literature. Similarly, Adam and Babiker (2015) support teaching of literature as it offers opportunities to improve student's language skills and enhances their creativity and critical thinking. Another study by Hussein and Al-Emami (2016) investigates the difficulties that face English instructors while teaching literature courses at the university of Hail. It concludes that student' low language proficiency, unfamiliarity with the cultural and social

background of the texts are main issues beside other issues related to the text selection and teaching practices.

All the above-mentioned studies, in general, conclude some sort of disappointment of both learners and educators and highlight issues that need to be studied and focused on more narrowly and precisely. They have tackled literature generally, but non-yet has tackled each literature subject individually to investigate further the situation of teaching and learning on the basis of the subject nature. Each literary genre stands differently from other genres: fiction is different from poetry, and drama is different from prose, and each requires separate focus. The present study aims at adding to the body of literature of teaching and learning literature courses in Saudi universities. It targets teaching poetry as the most challenging literary subject and emphasizes the role of teaching methodology in achieving the learning outcomes of the course. The study suggests significant practices that help the effective delivery of poetry lessons and engage the students in the process of meaning making, promoting their linguistic and literary capabilities.

Study Context

The study was conducted at King Khalid University, Faculty of Languages and Translation, Department of English (Female Campus) during the academic year 2018-2019 (1439-1440 H). King Khalid University is one of the Saudi government universities which is located in the city of Abha in the southern regain. KKU hosts more than 73000 students in more than 47 colleges and departments spread in the south region of Aseer.

Faculty of Languages and Translation (FLT) is one of the dynamic and significant faculties of KKU. So far, English is the only language being taught in the college. The college offers bachelor's degree (B.A) in English language and master's degree (M.A) in Applied Linguistics and Translation. Male and female campuses are set separately. The curriculum in the English department has been designed to cover Language skills, Linguistics, Literature, and Translation courses that are integral for EFL learning. Students study English skills for the first two years, then get introduced to core Linguistics, Literature, and Translation subjects in the second half of their academic tenure. All courses have course specifications which are approved by The National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment and are followed strictly by all instructors in both male and female campuses.

Literature courses constitute 10% of the total courses the students are required to complete to obtain the B.A degree.

Table 1. *Literary Courses of in B.A Curriculum, English Department, FLT. KKU*

LEVEL	LITRARY SUBJECT	NO. HOURS	PREREQUSIT
1	-------		
2	-------		
3	-------		
4	-------		
5	**Introduction to Literary Forms**	3	

6	Short Story Drama	2 2	Introduction to Literary Forms
7	Poetry	2	
8	Novel Modern Literary Movements	2 2	

Poetry is taught in two courses: Introduction to Literary Forms (Eng-331) and Poetry (Eng-430). Introduction to Literary Forms is taught to level 5 students. students are briefly introduced to the definition, forms and characteristics of poetry along with a few poems, while Poetry (Eng-430) is taught in level 7 to reinforce the theory of poetry previously studies in the in Introduction to Literary Forms course and exposes the students to fourteen poems taken from the 19th and 20th century English poetry. The learning objectives of the course are stated in the course specification as following:

- To reinforce the students' knowledge of the literary genre of Poetry (including but not restricted to the definition of poetry, the characteristics of the language of poetry, figures of speech, musical devices, themes, symbolism, etc.)
- To provide students with the basic literary and critical terminology and skills necessary for appreciating poetry.
- To enable students to analyze a variety of poems.
- To reinforce students' skills of comparison, analysis and critical thinking.

The learning outcomes of the course are stated as below:
"By course-end, students will be able to understand and evaluate poems belonging to different literary movements, pointing out both the original contribution of the author and the elements that they share with other poems belonging to the same literary movement."

The course covers 14 different poems from different literary movements. The poems are: *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* (Dylan Thomas), *The Two Ravens*, *Ballad of Birmingham* (Dudley Randall), *The Man He Killed* (Thomas Hardy), *She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways* (William Wordsworth), *The Solitary Reaper* (William Wordsworth), *The Road Not Taken* (Robert Frost), *Fire and Ice* (Robert Frost), *Those Winter Sundays* (Robert Hayden), *Richard Cory* (Edwin Arlington Robinson), *Sailing to Byzantium* (W.B. Yeats), *There's no Frigate like a Book* (Emily Dickinson), Stopping by Woods (Robert Frost) and *The Tiger* (William Blake).

Methodology
The study aims at examining the teaching methods adopted to teach English Poetry to EFL students from students' perspective. For this purpose, qualitative method was adapted. The data collection instrument is the students' questionnaire. The chosen method is particularly suite for obtaining a specific type of data (Lawthom and Tindall, 1994). Questionnaire is an effective research instrument that consists of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire consists of forty questions divided into four parts: the first part is related to the students' responses to literary courses especially poetry, the second part asks

questions pertaining to course syllabus, the third part focuses on the text, and the fourth part targets the teaching practices and students' attitude towards these practices.

Findings

The data collected has shown significant indicators of certain aspects of teaching Poetry in the English department. In the part related to poetry as a subject as shown in *figure 1*, students were asked if they believe that poetry and other literary courses are as important as other subjects, more than 47% percent voted no. A similar percentage believed that poetry is a difficult and tedious subject while 70 percent claimed that reading poetry in their mother language is easily accessible and more appealing to hem than to read in English. This shows that students are not aware of the learning objectives and not convinced of the importance of poetry in polishing their English and refining their language skills.
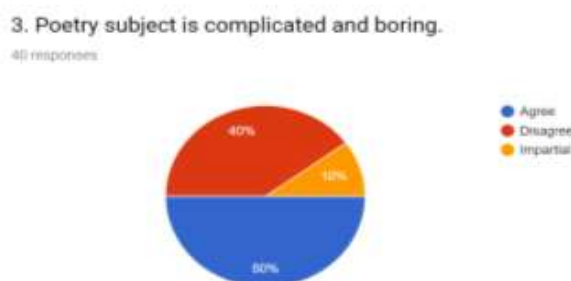

Figure 1. Students' response to poetry as a subject.

The second part dealt with the teaching methodology. As shown in *Figure 2*, 50% of the students believed that the teaching is "teacher-centered", 73% asserted that teachers typically focus on explaining the poem's general structural elements like setting, themes, glossary, figures of speech while students only listen and write notes. Only a few agreed that teachers make them participate in the interpretation and criticism of poems. This demonstrated the traditionality of teaching methodologies in poetry classes, which has been a vital role in lowering students' interest in the class and understanding of the genre, and that has been undoubtedly a huge hindrance in the learning process.
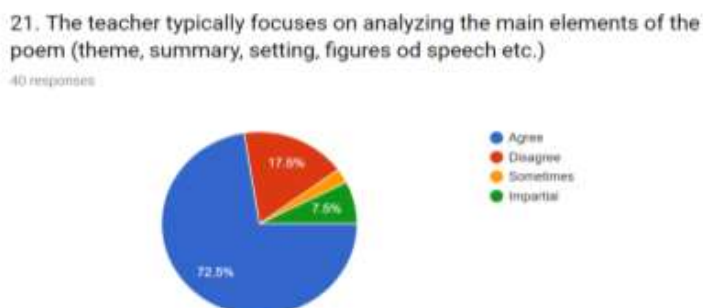

Figure 2. Students' response to the teaching methodology in poetry classes

In the section related to the extent of students involvement with the poems they study, more than half of the participants, as shown in *figure 3*, agreed that the only thing they get is information without the ability to work with the text. Studnets play the role of a passive listener in the class, storing superficial knowledge about the text they are reading with no chance to get involved in the text. Critical thinking, brain-storming discussions, cognitive development, and literary creativity looks quite ignored in such teacher-centered practices.

Figure 3. Students' response to involvement with poems

The data has also shown the lack of poetry related activities in the classroom, which engage students with poems and break the traditional shackles of "read and memorize" learning activity. This is evidently noticed in *figures 4,* where 50% of the students state that they have been deprived from any kind of activities that help relating the poems they read to their real life. Simultaneously, 65% reported that they were never encouraged to put themselves in the place of the author and were never fortified to try writing similar poetry to the poetry they study. This has created a gap between the students and the poems they read, stopping them from active indulgences with the poems, and instilling the sense of boredom, insignificance and impracticality of poetry course.
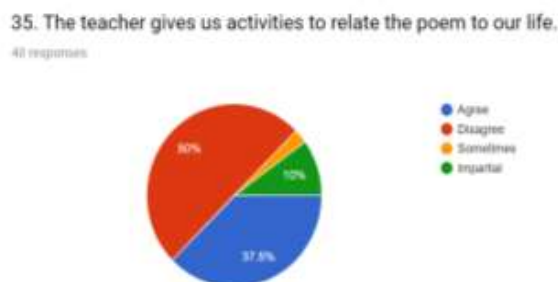

Figure 4. Students' response to activities in poetry classes.

Answers to the question of using literary theories in teaching poetry and other literary subjects show that students are rarely introduced to literary theory for criticism. The sole aim of students' attendance in poetry class is to comply with the requirement of course attendance and passing the courses at any case, even if with average or passing marks. Poetry as a vital literary genre is not

being taught using reader-based literary theories that would strengthen the student's bond with literary texts and boost their interest in the class. This is prominently noticed in *figures 5* as the majority of the students agree that they attend poetry class to pass exams and that they are being given notes and summaries to prepare for exams.
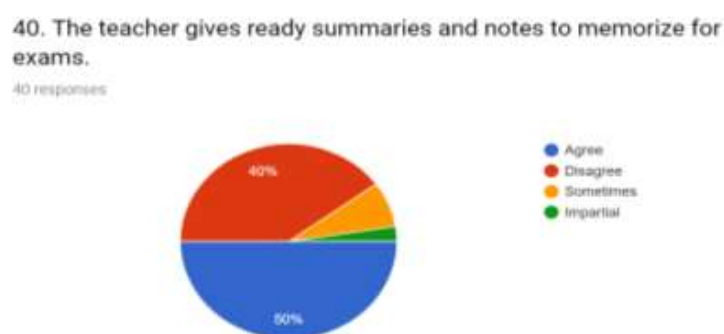

Figure 5. Students' response to attendance in poetry classes and poetry exams.

Discussion

From the afore mentioned results and finding of the study, we can summarize the findings of the study as following:

1. Students study poetry in level 7 where their language proficiency and knowledge of literary forms is considerably normal and above low.

2. Poetry curriculum has been recently revised, and selection of poems in the course took place considering diversity of poems and easiness of English language. Most of the poems are from the 19th and 20th century English poetry, which is substantially easier than classic poetry and old English.

3. The majority of students lack interest and motivation in literature classes, especially poetry, considering it difficult, boring, and unnecessary for language learning.

4. Teachers teach poetry in traditional teacher-centered models: language model, cultural model, and personal growth model, which are important but not enough as per the requirement of the modern digital era and quality 21st century education.

5. Modern reader-centered approaches like Readers Response Approach and Literary Theories are not used in the poetry classes due to which students' involvement in poems and their critical and creative abilities are low.

This study engages a specific focus on the subject of poetry. Poetry is not only a piece of writings, it is knowledge, culture, and personal development. The twenty-first century is the era of advancement and technology, globalization and multiculturalism. Education is regarded as a significant apparatus and operative resource for boosting creativity and impowering human

resources (Gould 1993). Modern educational theory and practice researches advocate evolving students' higher order thinking capacities. Stress is placed on enabling students to take decisions, create opportunities, evaluate available resources, work out multiple solutions for practicle problem solving and be flexible to manage the globalized and multicultural world of today (Geertsen, 2003; Ruggiero, 1988; Feden and Vogel, 2003; Halpern and Hakel, 2003). Literature subjects are vital components of educational syllabuses. Therefore, the teaching of literature should "make the most sense in the context of the twenty-first century needs to be student-centered and guided by the research on education in the twenty first century" (Yaqoob, 2011). The findings of the study significantly show that beside what previous studies has established about the role of socio-cultural, religious, linguistic, and curricular factors that are challenging teaching literature in English departments at Saudi universities, teaching methodologies play a vital role. Traditional teacher-based teaching methodologies give rise to students' disinterest in poetry subject, their passiveness in the classroom, their failure in critical analysis, and dependence on memorization rather than comprehension. This has resulted into low academic achievement in the course. It is very well suggested by Dymoke (2009) that:

"If you leave poetry on the page in your classroom you will be in danger of sounding its death knell: it is an organic, enriching communication tool, which taps into all our senses and is constantly renewing and reinventing itself to afford us new ways to express ourselves" (Dymoke, 2009, p.80)

Based on Dymoke's statement, the study recommends some suggestions for promoting the process of teaching and learning in poetry course:

1. Students must be introduced to the importance of poetry in language learning. Course objectives and learning outcome should be clearly explained at the commencement of the course, and interest and motivation should be developed from the very first class.

2. Poetry should be related to students' life and culture. Students should be encouraged to read poetry which is related to their circumstances. Emerging Arabic & Saudi poetry in English can be referred to in order to upgrade the interest and familiarity and develop the poetic taste of students. Student may be given the task to choose the poetry they like and read & discuss it in the class.

3. Multimodal teaching using technology-assisted pedagogical practices should be adopted to narrow the gap between literature and the generation of iPad and social media. Students' visual and digital literacy skills should be tapped to enable them to, for example, create audio and video poems, podcasts, hypertexts and Wikis and other new ways of using language and experiencing poetry.

4. Teaching should be modern and interactive with focus on the students. Reader-centered methodologies should be adopted in line with traditional methodologies.

5. Teaching should include wide variety of activities related to poetry. Students must be all the time involved in the poem. Relations between poems and other forms of art should be

established to create the poetic world in the minds of students. Different poetry reading assignments, poetry slams & writing contests, poetry reciting presentations, and poetry forums and debates can be included in the course evaluation plan. Such activities allow students "to gain a much greater understanding and appreciation of how language and structure create effects and convey meanings" (Dymoke, 2009, p 82).

6. Higher order critical skills of students, rational thinking, critical and analytical writing should be encouraged in poetry classes. Focus should be shifted from mere memorization of information to criticism and self-interpretation.

7. Reader-bases literary theories like poststructuralism, new historicism, postcolonialism, feminism, and other critical theories should be introduced and practiced in poetry classes as well as other literary courses to promote critical consciousness and instill the notion of reflexivity in the reader.

8. Action researches should be done from now and then to assess the effectiveness of teaching methodologies and students' attitudes towards them.

9. Reading and research in the field of English poetry by both teachers and students should be boosted.

Conclusion:
The current study was intended to examine teaching and learning Poetry to female EFL students at FLT, KKU from students' perspective. Data analysis reveals that the teaching methodologies are traditional teacher-centered which may give students the knowledge of literature but doesn't assist making them critics and creative writers. As a result, students lack interest and motivation which results in low understanding of the literary genre and consequently low academic achievement. The study emphasizes adopting new reader-centered strategies and other corresponding activities and multimodal designs to impart motivation and interest to poetry classes and cultivate students' interest in the subject, their critical thinking as well as creative writing. This study highlights some of the aspects of the teaching and learning process of English poetry at one of the Saudi public universities from the students' perspective. Further investigative studies are recommended for more understanding of the topics mentioned, beside other related matters, on the level of the selected university and other universities from different standpoints.

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