

Investigating Linguistic Challenges in English Poetry Analysis: A Quantitative Study of EFL Students at Seiyun University

Yahya Ameen Tayeb^{1*} ²Ahmed Mubrook Al-Hawtali²
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Ahmed Abdullah Al-Sakkaf

Abstract

This study attempts to explore various linguistic, cultural, literary, motivational, and instructional challenges that EFL students face at Seiyun University. When teaching some poems in English classrooms, students encounter these challenges and find it difficult to analyzing them. In spite of using certain techniques in poetry classroom, students often complain of deep engagement with the poetic texts. The study surveyed 135 students using a validated, five-dimension questionnaire and analyzed responses using SPSS. Based on the study, the statistical results indicated that instructional and pedagogical challenges come foremost, closely followed by cultural and contextual barriers and language-related difficulties. Besides, literary analyses of poetic devices were prominent, whereas personal motivation was the least significant factor. The most cognitive obstacles were related to figurative language, cultural contexts, and unfamiliar structures in poetic texts. Gender differences were not statistically significant, suggesting that challenges affected the individuals regardless of demographic group. The study recommends the urgent need for updating instructional approaches, incorporating culturally responsive support to develop poetry literacy through more engaging, student-centered techniques. Significantly, the study provides new insights in curriculum developers, language instructors, and policymakers to boost a superior responsibility of literature in EFL settings.

Keywords: EFL Students, English Poetry, Literary Analysis, Linguistic Challenges, Seiyun University

¹College of Education, Zabid, Hodeidah University, Yemen; ¹College of Women, Seiyun University, Seiyun, Yemen

²Seiyun Community College, Seiyun, Yemen; ²College of Arts, Seiyun University, Seiyun, Yemen

³English Language Department, College of Arts and Languages, Seiyun University, Yemen

Introduction

In the constantly changing world of English language education, there has been a vibrant interchange from grammar-based teaching toward more communicative, literature-based methods that encourage critical thinking and cultural awareness. Among all literature genres in language learning courses, poetry stands apart. It carries rich linguistic texture, multi-layered meaning, and cultural meaning that offers students opportunities for literary and linguistic development. However, poetry is one of the most challenging genres for EFL students to read meaningfully and interpretively. Its reliance on metaphorical expression, abbreviated language, and culturally specific allusions often creates major barriers to comprehension and analysis, especially for non-native students.

The challenge is most notably prevailing in Arab EFL contexts (for instance, Yemen) where the primary purpose for teaching EFL is either for academic or professional advancement (Tayeb et al., 2018; Tayeb, 2019). When considering institutions such as Seiyun University, it is important to note that students who are majoring in English literature must take some theory of literature classes, and both faculty and students agree that they do not feel they can engage deeply with poetic texts. Despite being in their advanced years of study and having reached intermediate or higher levels of English proficiency, many students demonstrate only surface-level understanding of poems, often limited to literal interpretation. This raises a pivotal pedagogical question about why students, who otherwise demonstrate competency in the English language, struggle so much to meet the interpretive demands of the poems.

Through the analysis of previous research, the researchers determined multiple interrelated factors that may explain the concern raised in this study. In a number of EFL contexts, pedagogical practices remain teacher-centered; there is little to no opportunities for the students to interact or interpret with guidance (Zainuddin et al., 2020). Additionally, students often lack the cultural schema required to decode the poetic reference that stems from Western history or literature (Alamri & Alghamdi, 2021). On top of this, linguistics challenges emerge, such as ambiguity in unfamiliar vocabulary, archaic vocabulary choices, and complex grammatical writing. Collectively, these pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic areas are placed on the cognitive and affective burden which is not easy to be lifted even by the most motivated students.

Keeping these problems in mind, this study tries to empirically study EFL students' problems in studying English poetry, at the context of Seiyun University. Through a systematic, quantitative study of five outstanding domains namely: language problems, cultural problems, literary analysis difficulties, individual motivation, and teaching performance, a deeply contextualized understanding of the students' experience has been attained. By identifying which topics are most difficult and how these vary across demographic variables, the research sets forward realistic suggestions for curriculum developers, language policy makers, and teachers interested in improving literary instruction in EFL contexts.

While EFL instruction has conventionally focused on grammar, reading comprehension, and communicative fluency, poetry has remained an abandoned genre in language education, often considered as too abstract, culturally loaded, or linguistically dense for non-native students. Unlike prose, English poetry requires not only a grasp of vocabulary and grammar but also an ability to decode cultural references, interpret figurative language, and analyze literary forms. For many EFL students, these demands exceed what their cultural familiarity and linguistic competence can support.

At Seiyun University, students enrolled in English literature courses often report frustration and confusion when tasked with analyzing poetry. Instructors also observe lower student performance on poetry units compared to narrative or expository texts. Although most students reach intermediate or advanced proficiency levels in English by their third or fourth year, their skills do not seem to render analytical success with poetic texts (Al-Jaro, et.al., 2024; Taleb, et al., 2025; Tayeb, 2023). This inconsistency points to a wide gap between literary competence and linguistic development, especially in genres where meaning is embedded in historical context, structure, and symbolism.

Consequently, the underlying problem is not merely a lack of language proficiency, but a multi-dimensional set of challenges including unfamiliarity with Western poetic conventions, ineffective instructional methods, weak critical reading skills, and insufficient exposure to poetry outside the classroom. These challenges prevent students from engaging with poetry as a meaningful form of expression and language. Addressing these barriers is indispensable for aligning English literature curriculum with comprehensive standards and cultivating more literate and more culturally informed graduates at Seiyun University.

To explore and respond to the complex nature of poetry-related difficulties among EFL students, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the primary pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic challenges EFL students at Seiyun University encounter in analyzing English poetry?
2. What instructional or textual features contribute most to students' difficulty in understanding and interpreting poetry?
3. To what extent do these challenges vary according to gender, year of study, college affiliation, or self-rated English proficiency?

Based on these questions, the current study aims to determine the severity of challenges related to the dimensions of language, culture, literary analysis, motivation, and instruction. It further compares challenge patterns across demographic subgroups to identify whether curricular or personal background influences difficulty levels to propose practical interventions for teachers, curriculum designers, and administrators that can minimize cognitive and affective barriers.

Literature Review

Poetry is often seen as out-of-the-way by both students and instructors in EFL contexts due to its symbolic density, compressed form and culturally bound references (Lazar, 1993; Khalil, 2022). Yet, poetry introduces powerful opportunities for cultural immersion and language development when taught through reader-centered approaches. Unfortunately, in many EFL classrooms, including those in Arab universities, poetry instruction is limited to surface-level translation or theme identification without fostering interpretive autonomy (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Research has shown that one of the greatest obstacles in reading poetry stems from a lack of cultural schema. As Alamri and Alghamdi (2021) argue, students unfamiliar with British or American social norms, history, or literary movements are unable to connect poetic imagery to its cultural context. Schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 2018) explains that readers interpret texts based on prior knowledge frameworks. When such frameworks are absent, meaning breaks down. This is particularly evident in poems rich in political, religious or mythological allusions, features that abound in canonical English poetry (Al-Sakkaf & Tayeb, 2022).

Unlike prose, syntactic rules are often broken in poetry, where it uses archaic or stylized diction, and relies heavily on symbolism, metaphor, and ambiguity (Rashid et al., 2019). These features place high demands on EFL students' inferencing skills. In particular, figurative language is cognitively demanding because it requires readers to construct abstract associations and go beyond literal meanings (Li & Wang, 2024). Students often report confusion with irony, metaphors, tone shifts, and enjambment, elements rarely covered in traditional EFL grammar-focused instruction.

The personal interest and motivation effect on poetry analysis seems to be secondary although they are widely considered as important in language learning (Dörnyei, 2020). In several studies, levels of motivation rise when instruction is interactive, engaging, and relevant (Nguyen & Pham, 2023). This suggests that motivational discrepancies are a byproduct of instructional weaknesses, not the root cause. Consequently, the solution lies more in pedagogy and curriculum than in student disposition.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive, cross-sectional quantitative design to scrutinize the apparent challenges faced by EFL students in poetry analysis. This method allowed the researchers to capture statistically significant relationships across various variables at a single point in time. The design was suitable for conducting subgroup comparisons, investigating large-scale patterns, and testing the internal consistency of the assessment tool.

Research Setting

The study has been conducted at Seiyun University, Hadhramaut province, Yemen. The university comprises multiple colleges including College of Arts and Languages, College of Women and College of Law and Social Sciences. Data were collected during the second semester of the academic year 2024-2025, a time when most students were enrolled in their advanced English literature modules.

Sampling

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across three colleges and different academic years. The final sample included a number of 135 students, with a majority from third (57%) and fourth (42%) years. Female students comprised 77.8% of the sample, reflecting the general enrollment pattern in language and literature programs. Students self-reported their English proficiency as beginner, intermediate, or advanced, with 75.6% identifying as intermediate.

Instrumentation and Validation

The data collection instrument was a 30-item questionnaire divided into five categories: Language Challenges, Cultural Barriers, Literary Analysis Difficulties, Personal Motivation, and Instructional Issues. Items were rated on a Likert scale of agreement. The tool was adapted from validated instruments used in prior studies (e.g., Rashid et al., 2019; Alamri & Alghamdi, 2021) and was reviewed by a panel of EFL specialists. A pilot study (n=20) yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .82, and the full study reported $\alpha = .836$, indicating excellent internal reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the current study, data were collected during scheduled lecture sessions at Seiyun University, following formal consent procedures involving both instructors and student participants. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researchers provided a clear explanation of the study's objectives and ethical issues. Students were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. These measures were crucial in ensuring both ethical compliance and the authenticity of the responses, as students were likely to respond more openly when assured of privacy and non-evaluative use of their data.

The data collection instrument, a 30-item structured questionnaire, was administered in paper format. Students completed the survey in approximately 15 to 20 minutes during regular class time. After the collection phase, all responses were coded and entered into SPSS version 24 for analysis. Data entry included double-checking for accuracy, handling of missing values, and preparation of variables for statistical testing. The dataset consisted of 135 valid responses from students across different academic disciplines, years of study, and self-reported proficiency levels.

For the initial stage of analysis, descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations) were used to summarize students' perceived challenges across the five dimensions: Language-Related Challenges, Cultural and Contextual Barriers, Literary Analysis Difficulties, Personal Motivation and Interest, and Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges. These measures provided a baseline understanding of the average intensity of difficulty perceived in each area.

To assess the statistical significance of the perceived challenges, one-sample t-tests were performed to determine whether the mean scores for each dimension were significantly higher than the neutral midpoint of the Likert scale. This step helped confirm whether the reported challenges were not only present but also substantial enough to warrant academic and pedagogical attention. Further inferential testing included Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and independent-samples t-tests, which were used to explore group differences based on gender, year of study, and college affiliation. These tests allowed the researchers to assess whether demographic factors played a significant role in how challenges were perceived and experienced. Finally, item-total correlation analysis was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of individual questionnaire items in relation to their respective scales. This step was essential in identifying which items were most representative of the constructs being measured and which might require revision or removal in future iterations of the instrument.

All inferential statistical tests adhered to a conventional significance threshold of $p < 0.05$, ensuring that the findings were robust and statistically meaningful. In sum, these analytical procedures provided both a macro-and-micro-level understanding of the challenges EFL students encounter in analyzing English poetry, presenting a comprehensive data-driven foundation for discussion and educational recommendations.

Data Analysis

This section provides a detailed analysis of the study data. The participants' demographic profile offers crucial context for interpreting the challenges they face in analyzing English poetry. As could be seen in Table 1, the gender distribution is heavily skewed toward females (77.8%), which may reflect either the gender composition of the academic departments surveyed or the broader gender makeup of English-related programs. While our earlier gender-

based statistical test showed no significant differences in perceived challenges, the dominance of female responses should still be considered in interpreting overall trends.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Groups	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	30	22.2
	Female	105	77.8
	Total	135	100

Regarding college affiliation, over half the students (50.4%) belong to the College of Arts and Languages, which is to be expected in a study focused on English poetry. As could be shown in Table 2, nearly one-third of participants are from Law and Social Sciences, and another 17.8% are from the College of Women. This distribution indicates that exposure to English poetry is not limited to English majors alone and that students from diverse academic backgrounds are engaging with poetic texts. This academic diversity may partly explain why certain challenges (e.g., cultural and literary analysis) vary significantly across groups, as shown in the ANOVA results.

Table 2: Participants and College Affiliation

Category	College	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
College Affiliation	Arts and Languages	68	50.4
	College of Women	24	17.8
	Law and Social Sciences	43	31.9
	Total	135	100

The study year adds another layer of insight where 99% of the respondents are in either their third or fourth year, meaning they are likely to have had multiple encounters with English poetry through coursework. This makes their responses particularly relevant and credible, as these students have enough academic maturity to reflect on and assess their problems with the genre. Yet, despite their senior status, they still report significant challenges suggesting persistent issues in the curriculum or instructional approach. This is represented in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants' year of Study

Category	Groups	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Year of Study	Second Year	1	0.7
	Third Year	77	57.0
	Fourth Year	57	42.2
	Total	135	100

Based on the study results, the majority of participants (75.6%) rated themselves as having intermediate-level English proficiency, with a smaller percentage (18.5%) of students who

rated themselves as advanced, and only 5.9% who are identified as beginners. This distribution suggests that most students in the study are not complete novices in English but also do not consider themselves fluent or highly proficient. The dominance of the intermediate group is critical because it implies that although students may have functional language abilities, they may still lack the linguistic sophistication required to interpret poetic texts, especially those rich in archaic diction, metaphor or idioms.

Moreover, the relatively low percentage of students who are identified as “advanced” (just under one-fifth) further explains why language-related and cultural-contextual challenges scored high in the later inferential tests. Poetry demands a high level of linguistic agility, understanding connotation, rhythm, form, tone, and layered meanings, all of which are more accessible to advanced users of the language. Intermediate students may grasp the surface meaning but struggle with deeper literary analysis, which aligns with the reported difficulties in interpreting literary devices and figurative expressions. The self-rated English proficiency has been summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Participants’ Self-rated English Proficiency

Category	Groups	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Self-rated English Proficiency	Beginner	8	5.9
	Intermediate	102	75.6
	Advanced	25	18.5
	Total	135	100

From Table 4, it is also notable that a small minority (5.9%) of students rate themselves as beginners. While this group is unlikely to influence overall averages significantly due to its size, their presence is still important. These students may experience heightened challenges but may also benefit the most from clear scaffolded instruction. Their inclusion in the study highlights the need for inclusive pedagogy, teaching that supports varying levels of language competence within the same classroom. This indicates that instructors should be especially mindful of their pace, the complexity of vocabulary, and the level of assumed background knowledge when introducing poetry to mixed-proficiency groups.

As could be noted in Table 5, 65.9% of the respondents have studied English poetry before, while 34.1% have not. This is a revealing statistic because it shows that while the majority have had prior exposure to poetic texts in English, a substantial portion, over one-third, have not. This prior exposure can shape students’ familiarity with poetic forms and conventions, but as shown in previous analyses, exposure alone may not guarantee analytical competence. Hence, earlier findings revealed that despite this majority exposure, challenges such as understanding poetic structure, interpreting cultural references, and analyzing tone and mood remain significant. This addresses potential shortcomings in how poetry is taught rather than whether it is taught.

Table 5: Participants’ Prior study of English Poetry

Category	Groups	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Studied English Poetry Before?	Yes	89	65.9
	No	46	34.1

Category	Groups	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
	Total	135	100

In summary, this demographic data reinforces the idea that prior exposure and language proficiency do not necessarily equate to readiness or ease in analysing poetry. Most students are moderately equipped in terms of language skills and prior experience, but the deeper, analytical tasks involved in interpreting poetry require more than basic familiarity. This suggests a need for more effective, student-centered instruction that bridges the gap between exposure and genuine analytical engagement. Instructors need to consider integrating differentiated learning strategies to support both intermediate and beginner learners while deepening the interpretive skills of more advanced students.

As has been mentioned earlier, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the perceived challenges between male and female students. As shown in Table 6, none of the *p*-values fell below the conventional significance threshold ($p < 0.05$), indicating that gender does not significantly influence how students perceive the challenges of analyzing English poetry. While minor variations in means exist, these differences are not meaningful from a statistical perspective. For example, females rated Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges slightly higher ($M = 3.86$) than males ($M = 3.66$), but this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -1.286$, $p = 0.201$). Similarly, female students scored marginally higher in Language-Related Challenges and Literary Analysis Difficulties, but again the gaps were not substantial enough to suggest a real gender influence. This consistency across genders indicates that male and female students encounter poetry-related challenges with similar intensity. Consequently, the lack of gender-based differences may also suggest that the challenges are systemic and instructional in nature rather than psychological or identity-based. Both male and female students are exposed to the same curricular materials, classroom practices, and teaching methods, so it is reasonable to expect similar perceptions of difficulty. This consistency supports the idea that educational interventions and reforms should be designed to benefit all students collectively, rather than targeted at gender-specific needs.

Furthermore, the consistency in personal motivation and interest scores across genders is particularly important. This reveals that motivation levels are stable regardless of gender, reinforcing earlier findings that point to external academic and contextual factors as the primary contributors to difficulty. Accordingly, improvements in instructional delivery and cultural contextualization are more likely to alleviate challenges for all students equally, without the need to differentiate by gender. These viewpoints could be elicited through the below Table 6.

Table 6: Gender-Based *t*-Test Summary

Challenge	Male Mean	Female Mean	<i>t</i> -value	<i>Sig.</i>	Interpretation
Language-Related Challenges	3.59	3.67	-0.530	0.601	No significant difference
Cultural & Contextual Barriers	3.74	3.75	-0.066	0.947	No significant difference
Literary Analysis Difficulties	3.45	3.49	-0.262	0.794	No significant difference
Personal Interest & Motivation	3.19	3.18	0.078	0.938	No significant difference
Instructional & Pedagogical Challenges	3.66	3.86	-1.286	0.201	No significant difference

The one-sample *t*-test was used to determine whether the mean scores for each challenge dimension significantly differed from the neutral point (zero in this test setup). The results revealed highly significant findings across all five categories ($p < .001$), with very high *t*-values that indicate a strong departure from the null hypothesis. These results clearly demonstrate that the students do perceive challenges in all the identified areas when analyzing English poetry. Among the dimensions, Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges stood out with the highest mean score (3.81) and the strongest *t*-value (60.23), making it the most pressing area of concern, Table 7. This result highlights a critical problem in the delivery of poetry instruction, where classroom activities and teaching methods may be inadequately supporting students' learning. This could be due to a lack of clarity in explaining poetic devices, insufficient use of engaging techniques, or limited scaffolding strategies. Such a result demands urgent attention from curriculum developers and instructors.

The second most significant challenge is Cultural and Contextual Barriers ($M = 3.75$), which underlines students' difficulties in interpreting references that are deeply rooted in sociocultural traditions, literature, and Western history. Several EFL students are unfamiliar with the symbolic meanings and cultural values embedded in English poetry, which limits their capacity to extract deeper interpretations. This obstacle reinforces the need to supplement poetry instruction with background lectures, context-building activities, and comparative cultural discussions.

Relatively, language-related challenges also emerged as significant ($M = 3.65$), revealing that students face consistent trouble with the figurative and often non-literal language used in poetry. The compact and stylized form of poetic expression, including unusual syntax, metaphors, and complex diction, presents a difficult obstacle for non-native speakers. However, it is important to note that Personal Interest and Motivation, although statistically significant, had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.18$), suggesting that students are not entirely unmotivated or disengaged, but their difficulties are more structural and linguistic than attitudinal, Table 7.

Table 7: One-Sample T-Test Results for Challenge Dimensions

Challenge Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev.	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Interpretation
Language-Related Challenges	3.65	0.744	57.02	0.000	Statistically significant
Cultural and Contextual Barriers	3.75	0.764	56.97	0.000	Statistically significant
Literary Analysis Difficulties	3.48	0.734	55.16	0.000	Statistically significant
Personal Interest and Motivation	3.18	0.702	52.59	0.000	Significant but less prominent
Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges	3.81	0.735	60.23	0.000	Highest significance level

In this study, the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was conducted to identify whether statistically significant differences existed between student subgroups (likely categorized by college, year of study, or proficiency) regarding the challenges they face. The analysis reveals highly significant *F*-values for four of the five challenge areas, with *p*-values all below 0.001. This suggests that certain groups of students are experiencing these challenges more acutely than others.

As could be seen in table 8, the highest *F*-value occurred in Cultural and Contextual Barriers ($F = 6.296$), indicating that the degree of difficulty students experience in interpreting cultural elements in poetry significantly varies between different subgroups. This might be explained by differences in academic background where students in humanities programs may be more

familiar with literary texts and Western culture than students in non-literary tracks. It might also reflect the variation in instructors' effectiveness or the amount of exposure students have had to English poetry over time.

Correspondingly, Language-Related Challenges and Literary Analysis Difficulties also showed notable variability across groups. Students with lower self-rated English proficiency or less experience with literary analysis are more likely to struggle with poetic diction, syntax, and structure. This finding supports the argument that more tailored, differentiated instruction may be necessary. Language and literary challenges are not uniformly experienced, so applying a "one size fits all" teaching approach could leave some students behind.

Remarkably, Personal Interest and Motivation did not show significant variation ($F = 0.906$, $p = 0.633$), implying that the level of interest or enthusiasm for poetry is quite consistent across all groups, Table 8. This result further strengthens the earlier conclusion that the core issues are not rooted in motivation but rather in structural, pedagogical, and contextual barriers. Addressing these external barriers might automatically lead to greater student engagement without directly targeting motivation.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA for Group Differences

Dimension	F-value	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Language-Related Challenges	5.010	0.000	Significant differences across groups
Cultural and Contextual Barriers	6.296	0.000	Highly significant group differences
Literary Analysis Difficulties	4.773	0.000	Significant variation across student groups
Personal Interest and Motivation	0.906	0.633	No significant differences
Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges	3.440	0.000	Significant differences detected

In is important to mention here that the data on poetry reading frequency paints a striking picture of limited voluntary engagement with English poetry among EFL students. A significant portion, 71.1% of respondents (those who selected "Never" or "Rarely") report minimal or no personal engagement with poetry outside the classroom, Table 9. This result is particularly important because it contextualizes the high levels of challenge observed in the rest of the data. In other words, students are expected to analyse and interpret poetic texts, yet the majority rarely, if ever, interact with poetry on their own initiative. This infrequent engagement suggests that students' exposure to poetry is almost entirely confined to academic requirements rather than personal exploration. The lack of familiarity may result in poor comprehension of poetic structure, diction, and cultural references, which are key to deep analysis. Additionally, this may explain why Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges emerged as the most significant barrier. For most students, classroom is their only portal to English poetry, making the instructor's role disproportionately influential in shaping their understanding.

At the other end of the spectrum, only 2.2% of students reported reading poetry "Very Often," and a mere 8.9% read it "Often." These low numbers reinforce the notion that poetry has not become a habitual or pleasurable part of students' linguistic experience. This finding supports the following observations regarding low personal motivation and weak item-total correlations

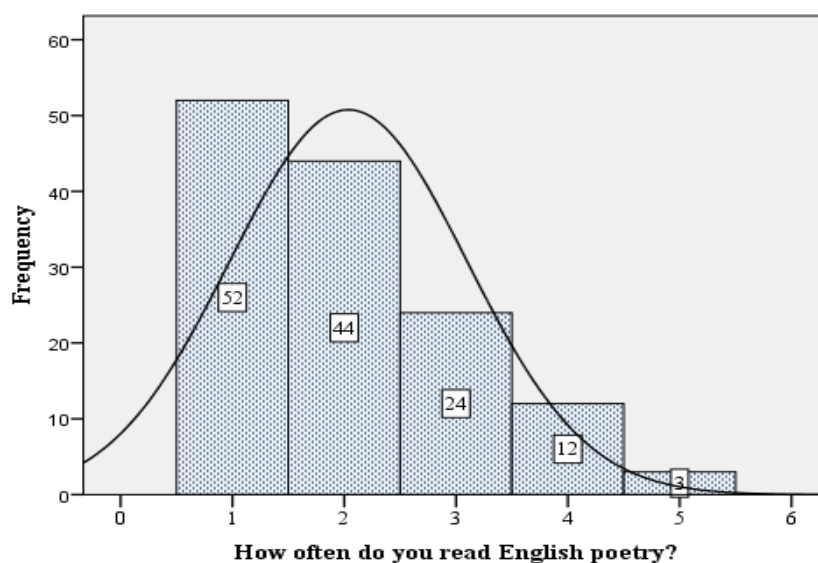
for attitudinal statements such as “*I find poetry interesting.*” It’s not necessarily that students dislike poetry, rather, it seems poetry has not been normalized or encouraged in their academic culture, see Table 9.

Table 5: Reading Frequency of English Poetry

No.	Reading Frequency	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Never	52	38.5
2.	Rarely	44	32.6
3.	Occasionally	24	17.8
4.	Often	12	8.9
5.	Very Often	3	2.2
	Total	135	100.0

These results indicate a critical pedagogical implication where instructors and program designers should consider integrating more relatable, interactive, and contemporary forms of poetry into the curriculum to increase voluntary engagement. Activities such as poetry competitions, audio-visual analyses, and creative writing exercises could help demystify poetry, shifting it from a classroom obligation to an expressive, enjoyable medium. Boosting informal reading habits may not only reduce perceived difficulty but also foster the cultural fluency and interpretive confidence needed to analyze poetry effectively. The students’ reading frequencies have been visualized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Reading Frequency of English Poetry



The reliability statistics for individual questionnaire items revealed several important distinctions between highly correlated and poorly correlated items. These correlations assess how well each item aligns with the overall scale, essentially, how well each question contributes to the measurement of the broader construct (i.e., poetry analysis challenges). Items with higher corrected item-total correlations (generally above 0.5) are considered strong contributors to the scale, while those with very low values (below 0.3) may be less useful or even problematic. For instance, the correlation of the item stated as “*The poetic diction in English poems makes interpretation difficult for me.*” is 0.529**. The item “*Without knowledge of the poet’s*

background, I struggle to interpret the meaning of a poem.” reached 0.495^{**}. In the same vein, the correlation of the item *“I struggle to interpret the deeper meaning of a poem beyond its literal words.”* is 0.483^{**}.

These items represent core analytical difficulties, such as interpreting poetic language, deciphering figurative meaning, and lacking cultural or biographical context. Their strong correlations indicate that they are essential to understanding the depth of student challenges. These are not just surface-level problems but rather point to the cognitive load involved in advanced literary interpretation. As such, these items are central to the diagnostic purpose of the scale and should be retained in any refined version of the instrument.

On the other hand, the low-correlation items suggest a disconnect between emotional response or personal enjoyment and actual analytical difficulty. While interesting and potentially important from a motivational or attitudinal perspective, these items do not appear to measure the same construct as the others. They likely mirror preference-based or affective dimensions, which may not correlate strongly with cognitive challenges like understanding poetic structure or deciphering figurative language. For instance, the correlation of the item *“I find English poetry interesting to read and analyze.”* is only (0.058), while the *“I feel motivated to analyze English poetry when it is assigned in class.”* is of less correlation value (0.016), and the item *“My previous experiences with English poetry have been enjoyable.”* is also of less correlation value (0.032).

Hence, the implication is that while motivation and interest may impact learning outcomes over time, they are not reliable indicators of analytical difficulty in the short term. These results can guide future instrument development by encouraging a two-pronged approach: separating items that assess emotional or motivational factors from those that assess cognitive and linguistic challenges. Such a distinction would enhance measurement precision and help target interventions more effectively.

Finally, the item-total analysis reinforces the finding that students’ biggest hurdles are interpretive and structural, involving language, form, and context, rather than emotional disengagement or lack of determination. This insight is crucial for instructors and curriculum designers. This indicates that efforts should focus less on motivation enhancement to improve performance (since interest is not the main issue) and more on clear instruction, contextual enrichment, and guided interpretation strategies.

Key Findings and Interpretation

In this study, the instrument used to assess students’ challenges demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.836), ensuring the internal consistency of the responses. Additionally, a one-sample *t*-test revealed that all five challenge dimensions were statistically significant, confirming that students perceive English poetry as an intricate domain. Most notably, Instructional and Pedagogical Challenges emerged as the most severe obstacle ($M = 3.81$), indicating that the ways in which poetry is taught, whether through outdated methods, limited scaffolding, or lack of interactivity, greatly hinder students’ enjoyment and comprehension. The findings come in line with recent literature (e.g., Zainuddin et al., 2020; Khalil, 2022) that highlights how traditional lecture-based poetry instruction often fails to meet the cognitive and cultural needs of EFL students.

Closely following were Cultural and Contextual Barriers ($M = 3.75$), which reflect the difficulty students have in understanding foreign cultural allusions, historical backgrounds, and

sociolinguistic nuances inherent in English poetry. These challenges are consistent with the findings of Alamri and Alghamdi (2021), who argue that EFL students often lack the necessary cultural schemas to decode literary texts written in a Western context. Without contextual grounding, students struggle to interpret meaning, detect themes, or understand symbolism indicating skills that are essential in poetry analysis.

Consequently, Language-Related Challenges ($M = 3.65$) were also substantial where the students identified poetic diction, grammatical complexity, and figurative language as particularly problematic. This finding is consistent with numerous studies, such as those by Rashid et al. (2019), which emphasize that the metaphorical density of poetry, combined with syntactic compression, can overwhelm EFL students who are still grappling with basic fluency. The difficulty in understanding these features is not merely lexical as it reflects a deeper issue of semantic and structural disorientation, which can hinder interpretive efforts even among more proficient learners.

Remarkably, Personal Interest and Motivation received the lowest mean ($M = 3.18$), though it was still statistically significant. This indicates that while students are not inherently resistant to poetry, their enthusiasm is undermined by the instructional and cognitive barriers they face. Furthermore, item-level analysis revealed that items related to enjoyment and interest had the lowest correlations with the overall scale. This suggests that lack of motivation is more of a consequence than a cause of the difficulties students experience. In other words, motivation does not appear to drive performance in this context; rather, it is shaped by the success or failure of instructional practices and support structures.

The results of ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences across groups for all dimensions except personal motivation. This suggests that factors such as academic background, year of study, and college affiliation influence the extent to which students experience specific challenges. For example, students from non-literary departments may find poetry more culturally and linguistically opaque than their counterparts in arts and language programs. This finding aligns with pedagogical studies that advocate for differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014), emphasizing that not all students require the same level or style of support.

On the contrary, gender did not play a statistically significant role in the perception of difficulty. Both male and female students reported similar levels of challenge across all dimensions. This is particularly noteworthy in light of some past literature suggesting gendered differences in literary preferences or classroom participation (e.g., Mullis et al., 2016). The absence of such differences in this study suggests that instructional and structural barriers affect students equitably, regardless of gender, and interventions should therefore be gender-neutral in design. Additionally, item-total statistics further clarified which specific areas deserve attention. The items with high-correlation pointed to essential cognitive struggles such as interpreting poetic diction, understanding context, and decoding figurative language. On the other hand, low-correlation items, were attitudinal in nature and did not reflect core analytical difficulties. These findings suggest that future versions of the questionnaire should differentiate between cognitive and affective factors, allowing for more targeted interventions and nuanced analysis.

A predominantly compelling finding emerged from the analysis of poetry reading frequency. An overwhelming 71.1% of students reported rarely or never engaging with English poetry voluntarily. Despite 65.9% having formally studied poetry, their reading habits outside class remain minimal. This disconnection between curricular exposure and personal engagement

may explain why challenges persist even among senior and supposedly proficient students. The poetry experience appears to be transactional rather than transformative where a classroom task to be completed, not a genre to be appreciated or explored.

Hence, the study findings suggest a deeper issue of limited literary immersion. The role of extensive reading and informal exposure in building literary competence is well documented (Krashen, 2004), and its absence may contribute to the limited ability of students to analyze poetry independently. Audio-visual poetry experiences, encouraging poetry clubs, or even integrating social media platforms like Instagram poetry and spoken word performances could help normalize poetry in students' daily lives and reduce the intimidation repeatedly associated with the genre.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The challenges that EFL students encounter in analyzing English poetry are multi-layered, with cultural unfamiliarity, pedagogical methods, and linguistic complexity standing out as the most critical areas. Contrary to assumptions that EFL students simply lack motivation toward poetry, this study reveals a more multifaceted reality where students are willing, but poorly equipped. The current instructional model, largely built around formal analysis and canonical texts, could be alienated rather than enlightened.

To address these findings, several recommendations are defensible. First, instructional reform is essential where instructors must be trained in learner-centered strategies that contextualize cultural references, scaffold poetry analysis, and promote discussion-based engagement. Second, curricula should embrace more accessible and diverse poetic forms, including multicultural and contemporary works that resonate with students' realities. Third, informal exposure to poetry and extra-curricular activities should be encouraged to cultivate a habit of literary appreciation beyond the classroom. Finally, instruments used for evaluation and assessment should obviously distinguish between affective attitudes and cognitive challenges, allowing for more precise pedagogical and diagnostic responses.

In conclusion, the current study not only confirms the existence of significant challenges in poetry analysis among EFL students but also provides a roadmap for transformation. Through evidence-based intervention and responsive pedagogy, the classroom can evolve into a space where poetry is not feared, but celebrated.

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التحديات اللغوية في تحليل الشعر الإنجليزي: دراسة كمية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة سيئون

³أحمد عبدالله أحمد السقاف

²أحمد مبروك الهوطلي

¹يحيى أمين طيب

الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل التحديات المتعددة التي تواجه دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة سيئون، وتركز الدراسة على الجوانب اللغوية والثقافية والأدبية. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يواجهون صعوبات بالغة في تحليل النصوص الشعرية على الرغم من استخدام أساليب تدريسية متخصصة، مع وجود ضعف واضح في تفاعلهم العميق مع النصوص الشعرية. وإثبات ذلك، اعتمدت الدراسة على منهجية علمية دقيقة تضمنت تطبيق استبيان خماسي الأبعاد على عينة عشوائية مكونة من 135 طالباً وطالبة، باستخدام التحليل الإحصائي المتقدم لبرنامج SPSS. وقد كشفت النتائج أن التحديات التعليمية والتربوية كانت الأكثر تأثيراً، تليها العوائق الثقافية والسياقية، ثم الصعوبات اللغوية، وذلك يعزى إلى ضعف التأثير النسبي للدافعية الذاتية. كما حددت الدراسة ثلاث صعوبات معرفية رئيسية تمثل الانحياز اللغوي واستيعاب المضامين الثقافية وتحليل التراكم النصية غير المألوفة لدى الطلبة. وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن نتائج الدراسة لم تسجل فروقاً دالة إحصائياً بين الجنسين، مما يشير إلى شمولية هذه التحديات لكافة الطلبة. واختتمت الدراسة بتوصيات هدفت إلى تبني نموذج تعليمي متكامل يشمل تحديث المناهج، والأخذ بالعوامل الثقافية والسياقية في الحساب عند توصيف مقررات الشعر الإنجليزي، وكذلك تبني استراتيجيات التعلم النشط، وتعزيز مهارات التحليل الأدبي، وتطوير آليات التقييم الحديثة. وعليه، تمثل هذه النتائج إضافة نوعية لمجال تعليم الأدب وتقدم إطاراً عملياً للمعلمين ومطوري المناهج في سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كما توفر إطاراً مرجعياً للباحثين والباحثات في هذا المجال

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¹كلية التربية - زيد - جامعة الحديدة - الحديدة - اليمن.

²كلية البنات - جامعة سيئون - حضرموت - اليمن.

²كلية المجتمع سيئون - حضرموت - اليمن.

³كلية الآداب واللغات - جامعة سيئون - حضرموت - اليمن.