Research article

Fear of poetry among preservice teachers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Literature-in-English is a prerequisite for admission into certain programmes in the university in Nigeria. Courses like English and Literary Studies, Linguistics, Law, Theatre and Media Studies require at least a Credit pass in Literature - in - English at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE). Unfortunately, students' performance over the years has been consistently poor, especially in poetry. Therefore, many students' career aspirations have been delayed or truncated. This poor performance is often attributed to teachers' poor attitude to the subject and the consequent poor pedagogy. This study, therefore, examined pre-service teachers' attitude to the teaching of poetry. Participants were sixty-seven (67) pre-service teachers of English in a federal university in South-Eastern Nigeria. Data collection was through a semi-structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview. The result revealed that only four participants (6%) expressed a preference for teaching poetry, while 63 (94%) said they would rather not teach poetry. An in-depth interview revealed that participants' developed the phobia for poetry (metrophobia) from their experiences of learning poetry at the secondary school level and beyond. The study suggests pathways to prevent metrophobia in pre-service teachers and students of Literature-in-English.

1. Introduction

1.1. Importance of literature

Literature - in - English is a prerequisite for admission into certain programmes in the university. Courses like English and Literary Studies, Linguistics, Law, Theatre and Media Studies require at least a Credit pass in Literature - in - English at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE). For students to gain admission, they need to perform well in all the genres of literature, as examinations are usually set to cover all the genres of literature. Therefore, students who are deficient in any genre of literature are likely to deprive themselves of admission and to truncate their career aspirations.

Apart from being a requisite for certain careers in the arts, literature can help develop basic reading skills in learners (Rasinski and Zimmerman, 2013), develop the language skills of ESL learners (Petriciuc, 2019; Zengin et al., 2019; Alkhaleefah, 2017), facilitate the learning of English as A Foreign Language (EFL) (Khan and Alasmari, 2018). This is not surprising since literature is language in action. As students read the novels and short stories, they not only increase their vocabulary (Scientific Learning Corporation, 2008; Pikulski and Templeton, 2004), they also learn how language is used for communicative and aesthetic

purposes. Deepa and Ilankumaran (2018) attest to the relevance of literature to the enhancement of communication skills. Also, literature could help learners develop critical and creative thinking skills. Moreover, poetry specifically facilitates the development of the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Gönen, 2018; Calafato and Paran, 2018; Adejimola and Ojuolape, 2013).

In addition, poetry can encourage creativity. For instance, Parr and Campbell (2006) opine, "if children can sing or recite poetry, they will soon be able to read it, and if they can read it, they will soon be able to write it" (p. 38). In other words, interaction with poetry can help develop creative writing skills. Poetry's power to stimulate creativity is perhaps because it is possible for a poem to convey multiple layers of meaning which unfurl as the reader probes deeper. Therefore, Sherry and Schouten (2002) consider that poetry has the "…paradoxical ability to communicate parsimoniously certain aspects of human experience and to condense the polyvocal nature of that experience in such a manner that it threatens to explode with additional meanings…." (p.219). The potential of poetry to foster creativity is further attested to by Januchowski-Hartley et al. (2018).

With reference to poetry, Hughes (2007) recognizes that, apart from its aesthetic appeal, poetry can awaken people's senses and connect them with their environment and community. Hughes adds that:

Poetry is more than a vehicle for expression; it is also a way of knowing. Poetry both requires and facilitates a concentration of mind or sustained attention to which our hectic lives have unaccustomed us. The linking of the strange with the familiar through the image or even through well-placed line breaks is perhaps what makes poetry so powerful. Poetry transforms the way we see the commonplace through a new perspective, (p.2).

Poetry can be used as a tool for teaching other subjects. For instance, Januchowski-Hartley et al. (2018) report the use of poetry in teaching about conservation. It can also be used in teaching mathematics. The multiplication table and the number of days in a month are usually rendered in poetic form to make them memorable and increase retention. Almost all Nigerian schoolchildren have encountered this rhyme at the back of their exercise books:

Thirty days has September.
April, June and November
All the rest has thirty – one,
Excepting February alone
Which has twenty-eight days
And twenty-nine in each leap year

Thus, Glaz (2010), while discussing the use of poetry in teaching mathematics, extols its effectiveness thus:

But regardless of the specific reasons for the inclusion of a poem in a class, the power of poetry to engage attention and enhance memory is always an underlying presence. In addition to enrichment of pedagogy through engagement and enhancement of retention, poetry is often used in the mathematics classroom to shape course content, to facilitate integration of material, and to ease the transition from theory to applications.p.41).

The importance of poetry in fostering language skills, critical thinking and creativity justifies its inclusion in what is taught and tested the national examinations. Such benefits underlie the reason for Literature being a prerequisite for admission into Nigerian universities for students who intend to read some courses in the arts and humanities.

In view of the importance of poetry to students, it is worrisome that they continue to perform poorly in that genre. For instance, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) annual appraisal of students' performance in May/June examinations since 2009 consistently describes students' performance as "poor" and at best average. The worst performance in 2015, for instance, was in poetry. In Paper 2, which is Prose (African and non-African prose, of the eight questions, students' performance in three was described as "poor," performance in another three described as "fair", and in two, described as "good." But in Paper 3, which has four questions in Poetry, students' performance in two of the poems was "poor" and "fair" for the remaining two. Evidently, students' performance in poetry was worse than their performance in prose. In fact, from 2009 to 2015 students performance in poetry was never described as "good." (WAEC, 2015). Their performance often oscillated between poor and fair. Is it not possible that such tales of woe could be as a result of students' morbid fear of poetry or metrophobia?

1.2. Metrophobia

There are different types of phobias. The fear of poetry is one of such. It is referred to as Metrophobia (Fritscher, 2019). As Linaberger (2004) observes, "poetry can be daunting to some students (and some teachers, too). The concepts and complex language in poems may be difficult for students to grasp or it can be confusing, at best." (p.366). Tippings (2008) also notes students' resistance to poetry. Similarly, Parr and Campbell (2006) observe that irrespective of students' grade levels, they are invariably scared of and repulsed by poetry. Similarly, Akporobaro (2008) confesses that many teachers find the teaching of poetry an extremely difficult experience. Also, Khatib (2011) agrees, "Many English instructors along with many university students do not enjoy English poetry. Even a majority of them

express a negative attitude towards poetry." (p.164). Khatib adds that the metrophobia affects even native speakers of English. Often students react by "…groans of disapproval and cries of anguish" which indicate, "these students are, for the most part, unsure, lack confidence, and don't know where to start" (p. 36).

Research supports the assertions that students find poetry scary. For example, Fakeye (2012) investigated the genre of literature preferred by students to determine if such preference could determine their performance in Literature. The study revealed that the majority of the 500 randomly sampled students of Literature - in - English in secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria, preferred prose to either poetry or drama. In fact, the least preferred genre was poetry. The researcher attributed students' negative attitude to poetry to the preferences of teachers who often teach prose first before poetry and drama.

Similarly, Daniel (2013a,b) in a study located in Ibadan, Nigeria, involving 105 students of Literature - in - English, observed that in reading preference, students preferred prose to poetry and drama. On choices of genres, the students ranked drama first and poetry last. In a related study, Daniel (2013a,b) sought to find out the influence of parental background on literary appreciation. The researcher administered a questionnaire to 102 students of Literature – in – English in two senior secondary schools in Ibadan. The result showed, among others, that the genre of literature that the students preferred least was poetry. Vala, Doubalova, Stadova, and Berichova (2012) corroborate this view, noting that students regard poetry as insurmountable and incomprehensible.

The teacher seems to play a key role in students' dread of poetry. Muthusamy et al. (2017, p.19) comment "for secondary schools, the role of teachers in the classroom has a significant influence on students' attitude and achievement in literature…." This aligns with Atoyebi's (2011) view that teachers themselves dread poetry. The author, therefore, concludes that the negative attitude of students could be from teachers who transfer their fear of poetry to the students. In addition, Ogunnaike and Akinbode (2011) investigated the effectiveness of the teaching of poetry in Nigerian Junior Secondary Schools. They administered a 10-item questionnaire to find out teachers' interest and difficulties in teaching poetry. They found that 50% of the teachers found teaching poetry difficult and boring. Similarly, Creely (2018) cited earlier research that showed that many teachers are reluctant to teach poetry. Also, Sigvardsson (2019, p.1) acknowledges, "…poetry teaching is something with which many teachers struggle".

Zelenáková (2011) also blames students' dread of poetry on teachers' use of "inappropriate teaching methods" and insensitivity in their approaches to poetry pedagogy. Zelenáková, further, attributes the negative attitude of students to poetry to teachers who foist their own meanings of the poems on the students. According to Viana and Zyngier (2019), teachers usually approach the teaching of literature "… in a reductionist way in which students are expected to extract information from texts rather than experience them".

This view is supported by Vala et al. (2012, p.1259), who, as a result of their study in the Czech Republic, found out that "Teachers themselves are often afraid of dealing with poetry; they lack confidence and avoid teaching." Thus, teachers fear and discomfort with poetry teaching could exacerbate students' phobia of the genre.

Poor teacher training has also been implicated in students' metrophobia. Daniel (2013a,b) cites Vincent (1999) as suggesting that teachers of poetry in Nigerian schools were themselves poorly trained in school. Therefore, teachers who lack facility in poetic appreciation will be handicapped in choosing and employing appropriate instructional strategies in teaching poetry in an interesting way.

2. Theoretical framework

This study is foregrounded by the schema theory as developed by David Rumelhart (1980). Rumelhart (1980, P.34), as cited by An (2013) defined the schema as "a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory ". However, Barlett pioneered the concept

"schema" in psychology as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences" (1932, p.201). The basic assumption of the theory is that newer knowledge is built on previous knowledge and experiences, which constitute the schemata. In other words, the comprehension of a text or a poem is facilitated by the relationship between the poem and the learners' background knowledge. Therefore, treating a poem without contextualising it with the previous or background knowledge of the students could render the poem incomprehensible, thereby inducing disaffection for the poem and, perhaps, subsequent fear of it. This disconnect between students previous experiences or background knowledge and studied poems may have accounted in part to the dread students and preservice teachers have of poetry learning for the former, and poetry teaching for the latter.

3. Purpose and significance of the study

The purpose of the study was to find out the attitude of pre-service teachers to the teaching of poetry and to identify factors that contribute to their attitude. The findings should provide teachers of Literature-in-English with information on causes of metrophobia and how the phenomenon could be addressed through classroom practices that demystify poetry. It might also help change pre-service teachers' negative attitude towards poetry. It is expected that this study would motivate teacher trainers to expose pre-service teachers of Literature-in-English to instructional strategies that would make the learning of poetry a delight.

4. Methodology

This section will discuss the research design. The data collection procedure will be described as well as the analysis and presentation of results.

The study adopted a mixed methodology. The quantitative study was triangulated with a qualitative component. Triangulation is described as the use of multiple perspectives or sources of evidence in order to confirm and corroborate research results. It provides "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). In order to validate and strengthen the results of the quantitative investigation, a qualitative research procedure was also adopted to gather data on the same phenomenon. This is because, "triangulation is ensured by using multiple sources of evidence…." (Louw, 2013, p.13). The choice of the mixed methodology was to have more insight into pre-service teachers' reasons for their preference for or aversion to the teaching of poetry.

4.1. Ethical consideration

Respondents signed informed consent forms which stated the purpose of the study, solicited their participation and assured them of anonymity and accountability. They were informed that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences. The phone contact of the first author was given to the participants in case they wanted to make further enquiries about the work.

The Directorate of Research and Quality Assurance, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria vetted the data collection instruments for ethical compliance. The directorate expressed convictions that the research design and the data collection procedure would not violate the rights of the participants. The directorate gave a signed letter to the research team.

4.2. The participants

The participants for the quantitative study were a purposive sample of 67 final year undergraduates of the Faculty of Education in a federal university in South-Eastern Nigeria. There were 37 female and 30 male students. They were teacher trainees whose teaching subject was English and Literary Studies. They were drawn from a population of 84 students of Education English in four departments. It was assumed that these students would be the future teachers of Literature - in - English in Nigerian secondary schools. Simple percentages were used to quantify the responses. For the qualitative component, only 22 participants, who had also responded to the questionnaire volunteered to be interviewed. They comprised 13 females and 7 males.

4.3. Data collection procedure

Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire titled "Poetry Teaching Confidence Survey" had two sections. Section A elicited demographic information such as sex, age, year of study and course of specialisation. Section B required the respondents to rate from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) their level of confidence in teaching poetry. The questionnaire was trial-tested on 20 purposively sampled undergraduates with characteristics similar to the intended sample but from a different university. The Cronbach Alpha reliability formula was used in determining the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability index was 0.71. This was adjudged adequate. The authors administered the questionnaire to each of the respondents individually and personally. The retrieval rate was 100 percent.

For the qualitative component, the authors prepared an interview protocol to guide the interviews. However, the interviews proceeded naturally depending on the responses of each interviewee. With the permission and consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded, using mobile phones. The audio files were uploaded to the researchers' personal laptops.

For the qualitative data, the authors transcribed the audio files, labelled the folders and numbered each line of the transcribed material. Each of the authors had a printed copy.

4.4. Research questions

Two research questions were posed:

1. How confident are pre-service teachers to teach poetry?
2. What factors determine pre-service teachers' confidence to teach poetry?

5. Results

1. How confident are pre-service teachers to teach poetry?

Participants were to rate themselves on a scale of one (least confident) to 5 (most confident) on their level of confidence to teach poetry. A mean rating of 1–2 was considered low, 3 was considered moderate, while 4–5 was considered high. Data retrieved through a semi-structured questionnaire revealed that 4 participants (5.97%) expressed high confidence to teach poetry, 4 participants (5.97%) expressed moderate confidence to teach poetry. The majority, that is, 59 participants (88.06%), however, had low confidence to teach poetry. The detail is presented in Figure 1.

2. What factors determine pre-service teachers' confidence to teach poetry?

To address the research question, an interview protocol was prepared. Twenty-two of the participants who had responded to the questionnaire also volunteered to be interviewed. The volunteers were interviewed separately at their convenience. Each interview lasted for about 10 min.

Participants' were, first, told that the interview was to find out their experiences of learning literature. Then each was asked when s/he started to study literature. This was followed by questions about the genre of literature they liked most. Then each was asked about the genre disliked. Each of the respondents was asked why s/he did or did not like a particular genre.

The interviews were audiotaped using mobile phones. The audio recordings were saved later transcribed, typed and saved as Word document. Each typed transcript was printed and read for themes. Each of the authors read each transcript and identified similar themes. If either author identified a theme which the other had not noticed or both
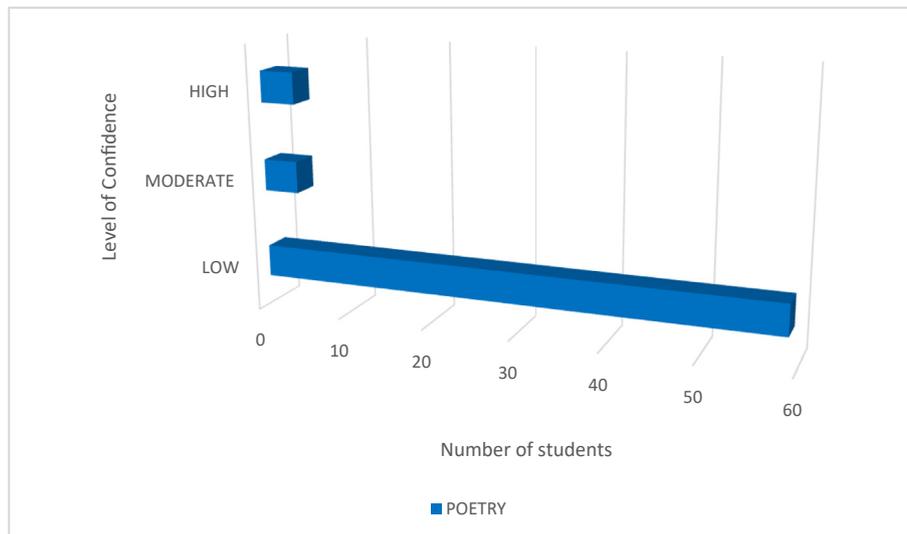
Figure 1. Pre-service teachers level of confidence to teach poetry.

authors could not agree about its emergent from the transcript, it was discarded. But, if both authors were convinced that the theme emerged from the transcript, then it was retained.

The responses were analysed for themes. The thematic analysis showed that most of the participants had had bad experiences learning poetry in secondary school because of the types of poems selected for study, the language of the poems, the instructional strategies and the disconnect between their earlier pleasant experience with poetry in primary school and their later experience in the secondary school. However, one of the interviewees said she loves poetry.

5.1. Reasons for aversion to poetry

Interviews were used to probe participants' reasons for their dread of poetry. The results are presented in the following sections.

5.1.1. Language of poetry

One of the frequently given reasons for the aversion to poetry was its language.

I don't like poems. I've never written a poem in my life. Oh, except, once as an assignment. Poetry is not easy. You need someone to explain it for you…someone to…to…interpret…like tell you the meaning because of the words they use and their expressions (Eskor, 17/07/15)

The fact that poetry is dense in its compression of several layers of meaning contributes to its dread. Therefore, it is hard to imagine the validity of Clark's (2003) assertion that "…the brevity of and compression of poetry are especially appealing to students." Nigerian pre-service students seem not to see it so.

Poetry is…is too complex. The structures are complex…everything about it is so complex that…. It is difficult; it is difficult to break it…to break it into such a way that you'll start…Poetry is ambiguous. There are some things that you say in poetry that don't really mean what you say. You know they have… they have different meanings and …you know, it's difficult, difficult, even when you are explaining it in terms of an exam or a test, you know, if you don't really get it, you fail it. So, (hisses) it's something I never really loved because of its duality. (Nana, 22/08/15)

Nearly all the participants used the words "difficult", "hard", "complex", etc to describe their experience of learning poetry in the secondary school. Some used exclamations.

5.1.2. Teachers' attitudes and strategies

Most of the participants implicated teachers in students' phobia for poetry.

I attended a government school. Our Lit teacher was not forthcoming. He will give us poems and ask us to analyse. And we won't know what to do and where to begin (Okoson, 25/08/2015).

Another was very blunt.

I studied in the village [rural area, often without basic amenities], where there was no competent teacher. (Gabriel, 21/08/2015). [Brackets, mine]

What could also be deduced from these respondents is the suggestion that government schools are not staffed with competent teachers. Nevertheless, the teacher factor and type of poems studied were prominent in students' reasons for the aversion for poetry.

But since senior secondary, I don't know, it was not personal, I don't know. I was not…. I don't know. Maybe the teachers didn't like it themselves. (Mercie, 23/08/15)

5.2. Types of poems selected

The types of poems selected by the examination bodies like the West African Examination Council (WAEC), and the National Examination Council (NECO) also contributed to students' misery. Students are usually required to study six African poems and six non-African poems for their senior school certificate examinations.

Yes, some of the poems were just unbelievable. Some of the WAEC [West African Examination Council] stipulated poems, they are … they are…em… I don't know what they are supposed to achieve. I don't know. I don't know to what end they were supposed to…. I don't know (Paula, 22/08/15)

5.3. Rhymes, not poetry: disconnect between the present and earlier experiences with poetry

Interestingly, nearly all the interviewees did not find any association between the poems they studied at the secondary school levels and even in the university with the rhymes with which they cut their poetry teeth. In fact, none of them knew that the rhymes they learned in

nursery and primary/elementary schools were poems. To the question, "When did you first encounter poetry?" the answer was invariably, "in SS1" (equivalent to the 10th Grade).

Interviewer: Did you encounter poetry in any form in Nursery school?

Roda: In nursery school, no. In Junior secondary, yes. A little of poetry, just a little in my English classes. It was mentioned as an aside. But not taught. We faced it majorly in senior secondary.

Interviewer: Do you remember any nursery rhymes?

Roda: Nursery rhyme….

Interviewer: Old Roger is dead…

Roda: And gone to his grave (laughing) Oh, is that a poem? (Still laughing)

Interviewer: (Laughing)

Roda: It IS a poem. Oh, I remember that!

It was amazing how none of those interviewed associated popular music, nursery rhymes and folk songs with poetry.

6. Discussion of findings

6.1. Pre-service teachers' confidence to teach poetry

Both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses indicate that the majority of the pre-service teachers had low confidence in teaching poetry. The findings align with those of Ogunnaike and Akinbode (2011) who found that fifty percent of the teachers found teaching poetry boring, while 75 percent found it difficult to comprehend. It further corroborates Sigvardsson (2019), Creely (2018), Daniel (2013a,b), Khatib (2011) and, Akporobaro (2008) who also found that teachers of literature had a strong aversion to teaching poetry.

6.2. Reasons for low confidence to teach poetry

The qualitative data analysis delved into the reasons for pre-service teachers' low level of confidence to teach poetry. From the interview, it was evident that while the respondents claim to enjoy nursery rhymes, the majority of them hated poetry. Surprisingly, none of the respondents considered their nursery rhymes as poetry.

What made rhymes different from "poetry"? Why did students not develop fears when they recited or sang "twinkle, twinkle little star." Unfortunately, examination bodies often select poems that rarely lend themselves to the rhythm and music of "My Mother" or "I have a little shadow" or "Mr Nobody" with which many students were nursed. They were so radically different in terms of structure and language from the rhymes that the students were immersed in the elementary schools, in church and school hymnals. Little wonder, that students would not see the relationship between those early songs and their later miseries.

Moreover, the interviews revealed that pedagogical strategies adopted by teachers contributed to metrophobia. This view is supported by Viana and Zyngier (2019) who commented that teachers pedagogical approach was "reductionist" and prescriptive; thus, denying the learners opportunities to genuinely interact with the taught poems. Moreover, the study lends credence to Vala et al. (2012, p.1259), who admit, "Teachers … lack confidence and avoid teaching."

Teachers, consequently, approach the genre with apathy. One of the interviewees claimed her teacher used to give them the poem to analyse without guide or lead. Another respondent believed the teachers did not themselves like poetry; while others believed that the teachers were incompetent. The findings support Zelenáková's (2011) view that teachers employ "inappropriate teaching methods" and thereby strangulate students' interest and fuel their metrophobia.

Apparently, teachers of literature did not let the students see the connections between their early as well as out-of-school encounters in rhythm and blues, reggae, rock n roll, hip-hop, etc., and the poems recommended for examinations. Teachers did not tap into the rich oral tradition of the students to form a bridge between the known and the unknown. The tragedy is that teachers who are harassed by the examination syllabuses, teachers who teach for examinations and are, therefore, in a hurry to cover the syllabus would rush into the recommended poems, read it unenthusiastically to students, dictate notes on "appreciation" to the students, and "cover" the syllabus. Such initiations into "serious" poetry, sadly, often leave the students, angry and frustrated with poetry.

7. Conclusion

The study examined the extent and causes of metrophobia among pre-service teachers in a federal university in Southeastern Nigeria. The mixed methodology design revealed that pre-service teachers were least confident about teaching poetry because of its difficulty, types of poems selected by examination bodies, style of language, and pedagogical incompetence.

Therefore, metrophobia seems to have been induced and reinforced by the nature of selected poems, approaches to the teaching of poetry, and dissonance between classroom poetry and poetic experiences beyond the classroom.

8. Recommendations

Metrophobia is a serious threat to secondary school students' career aspirations in the arts. It becomes more ominous when even potential teachers of poetry are themselves metrophobic. This is because a vicious cycle of the dread of poetry and the subsequent poor performance shall have developed. Therefore, the following remedies are proposed:

Firstly, since, teachers play important roles in nurturing students' attitudes, teacher preparation is critical. It is incumbent on teacher trainers, especially those training teachers of English and Literature, to develop creative and innovative pedagogical strategies. Teachers must themselves develop interests in poetry lest they transfer their apathy to their students.

Secondly, poems are more diverse in type than either prose or drama. There are dramatic poems, narrative poems, lyrical poems, ballads, epic poems, sonnets, burlesque, haikus, etc. If students must engage poems critically and creatively, teachers need to introduce them to poetry gently, pleasurably and gradually (Timothy, 2018). Though there are prescribed poems by examination bodies or curriculum planners and policymakers, the teachers should exercise liberty in initiating students to poetry by moving from the simple to the complex, the familiar to the novel, and from the known to the unknown.

Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to discover the meaning in poems by letting them realise that there could be multiple, and yet valid, meanings in a single poem. Although there are published materials that have already dissected the recommended poems, offered stereotyped interpretations, those who interact with a poem have a right to construct their own meanings and arrive at their conclusions based on their experiences, maturity, culture and history. Teachers should not foist their interpretations of a poem on the students. Poems have no fixed meanings. Not even the poets have a monopoly of the meanings in their poems.

In addition, teachers should use a multimodal approach to the teaching of poetry. Poems can be studied meditatively and solemnly like a religious text. They can be sung like hymns in the cathedral; they can be read to the rhythm of rub a dub, hip-hop, blues, or reggae. Moreover, poems can be dramatized, choreographed, illustrated, converted to comics, and narrated as prose. Thus, Xerri (2012) advocates a multimodal approach to the teaching of poetry because it "… can act as a springboard for the development of students' language proficiency and creative engagement." (p.507). Moreover, Jusslin and Höglund (2019) demonstrated that dance could be used in interpreting poetry.

Although Xerri (2012) agrees that "Multimodality allows teachers to harness poetry's communicative potential," and acknowledges the advantages of deploying digital technology and other strategies in enlivening poetry, the author concedes that none of the media is "the panacea

for all the challenges that teachers face when attempting to engage students with poetry." (p.511). The key is in giving life to the poem by transforming it into other media (Snapper, 2009); for leaving poetry on the page might kill it (Dymoke and Hughes, 2009).

In addition, teacher-training institutions should deliberately introduce courses on how to teach literature. Merely taking courses from English and Literary Studies departments could familiarize the students with literary pieces and perhaps their appreciation. But it does not equip students with skills on the teaching of literature. Pre-service teachers need to be taught strategies for teaching literature for inclusive and lifelong learning.

Finally, serving teachers should be exposed to workshops on the teaching of poetry in order to equip them with evidence-based strategies for teaching poetry to reduce its dread. Many teachers may not have learnt how to teach poetry creatively and interactively. Consequently, many tend to teach by instinct rather than by knowledge. Therefore, literacy advocates, as well as ministries of education, have to prioritise in-service training for teachers of Literature. This could be integrated into a quasi-experimental study using a pretest-posttest design to assess the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards poetry both before and after a well-structured workshop in which evidence-based poetry teaching strategies are applied.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

A. E. Timothy: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

E. O. Obiekezie: Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data.

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Competing interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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