A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Using Poetry in L2 English Young Learners' Classroom in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Nigerian teachers' perceptions of using poetry in teaching English as a Second Language (L2) to young learners, aiming to understand how to incorporate poetry into ESL classrooms effectively. The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 40 L2 English teachers from various Nigerian primary schools for the quantitative component, while six purposively selected teachers participated in the qualitative interviews. Data were collected using a Likert-type questionnaire and structured interviews to gather comprehensive insights into teachers' experiences and attitudes. The findings indicate that while teachers view poetry as a valuable tool for promoting language use, significant challenges hinder its implementation. Limited resources and time were identified as major barriers. Additionally, teachers perceived poetry as difficult and uninteresting for students, leading to low engagement. Despite these challenges, teachers acknowledged poetry's potential to engage students, foster creativity, and enhance vocabulary. The study recommends developing affordable materials, leveraging online resources, and incorporating culturally relevant poetry to improve ESL teaching practices. Future research should explore students' attitudes toward poetry and the development of cost-effective poetry resources for educational contexts. The study's implications suggest that proactive and creative strategies are essential for overcoming the identified barriers and maximizing poetry's benefits in L2 English classrooms.

Keywords: TESOL, poetry in L2 English, teachers' perception, teaching English as a second language

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1   INTRODUCTION

The integration of language through poetry has garnered attention for its potential to enhance learners' linguistic, cultural, and emotional development (Albright, 2017). Despite these recognized benefits, poetry teaching and learning are frequently overlooked in L2 English classes, particularly in Nigeria. This lack of emphasis underscores the need for studies to identify the reasons behind this neglect and explore effective methods for integrating poetry into language instruction. By investigating these aspects, researchers can contribute to a better understanding of how poetry can be utilized to enrich L2 English education in Nigerian classrooms, potentially leading to improved language acquisition and cultural awareness among students.

English plays a vital role in Nigeria's education system, serving as the primary medium of instruction and learning. It is also a crucial skill for academic and career success. However, the use of poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners remains uncommon, raising questions about potential missed opportunities for valuable language learning experiences. Khan (2020) findings suggest that poetry can enhance vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and develop overall language skills. Nevertheless, implementing poetry in Nigerian classrooms faces challenges such as teachers' perception, students' abilities, and limited teaching resources (Nwakaego & Agwu, 2023). Given these circumstances, it is essential to examine teachers' perceptions of using poetry in L2 English classrooms to address these challenges and improve language teaching practice.

As an educator passionate about the teaching profession and the challenges faced by teachers in Nigeria, the TESOL studies in the UK exposed this study to various teaching techniques beneficial for students. The experience with children in Nigeria and the teaching background have fuelled the interest in using poetry in L2 English for young learners. This study provides real-world examples of the theoretical advantages of incorporating poetry in language classrooms.

Poetry in L2 English classrooms offer a unique approach to exploring language and culture. The poetic structure and figurative language make learning enjoyable for children, potentially bridging cultural differences and facilitating English language understanding in countries like Nigeria. Research by Çetinavcı and Tütüniş (2012) and Clapsadle (2014) revealed that poetry can enhance phonemic awareness and pronunciation skills, which Benton (2000) identifies as crucial for young learners' language development. However, teachers' perceptions regarding the use of poetry in teaching significantly impact its success in the classroom (Amasa and Abdulkadir, 2016). Given the state of educational resources in Nigeria, understanding teachers' dispositions towards poetry is essential for developing policies that encourage its use. If teachers doubt its effectiveness or lack knowledge on how to incorporate poetry, they are unlikely to recommend it. Therefore, this study explores teachers' didactic values and concerns when using poetic texts in class. The research contributes to the ongoing discourse on L2 English education in Nigeria and demonstrates how poetry can enhance language comprehension. Findings from this study could assist policymakers, teachers, and curriculum developers in improving the practical application of poetry to enhance language acquisition for young learners in Nigeria.

The primary aim of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of using poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners in Nigeria. It seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of this teaching approach, using the following research questions: what are teachers' perceptions of the benefits of using poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners in Nigeria? What challenges do teachers face when incorporating poetry into their teaching practices in Nigerian schools?

Addressing this research gap is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, the study can inform the design of targeted professional development programs that focus on teachers' beliefs about poetry in the L2 context with young learners. Identifying gaps in teachers' preparedness due to inadequate education or lack of resources can lead to more effective training strategies, thereby improving language instruction quality and learners' overall achievement. By focusing on these questions, this research aims to contribute to the limited knowledge regarding poetry instruction in Nigerian primary schools, potentially

informing more effective pedagogical practices and policy decisions. This approach could lead to a more nuanced understanding of poetry's role in language education and its potential to enhance learning outcomes in diverse educational settings.

Secondly, the study contributes to curriculum development by highlighting the unique challenges Nigerian teachers face when teaching poetry in L2 classrooms.

Incorporating poetry into young learners' education can aid language acquisition and foster critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness. These skills are particularly relevant in a globalized world where effective communication and cultural sensitivity are highly valued.

Moreover, the study's findings have significant implications for policymaking. Policymakers need such information to design and implement interventions that address the real needs of teachers and students. By providing these insights, the study can inform policies that support poetry teaching in Nigerian primary schools, ultimately enhancing the quality of language education. This research can lead to a more nuanced understanding of poetry's role in language education, offering practical solutions to improve educational outcomes in diverse settings.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1   Empirical Review

Learning through poetry is an effective method for language acquisition and creative writing, utilizing language, rhythm, and imagery to enhance skills in L2 English classrooms, particularly in Nigeria. Khan (2020) emphasized the need for poetry integration, while Kilag et al. (2023) noted its benefits in vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall language ability.

However, challenges exist, including teachers' attitudes and resource availability (Nwakaego & Agwu, 2023). Amasa and Abdulkadir (2016) highlighted the significance of examining poetry's use in these classrooms to identify effective teaching strategies. Their research employed a stylistics approach, revealing that interactive exercises and carefully chosen poems significantly improve language proficiency. By fostering engagement and creativity, poetry can create a rich language environment for young learners (Albright, 2017).

Many researchers (Kumar, 2017; Khansir, 2012; Alkhaleefah, 2017) have explored the integration of poetry in ELT, suggesting that it could benefit language learning. According to Khansir (2012), poetry enhances students' interest and enthusiasm in the classroom and reduces the tedious nature of language learning resources. This aligns with Kilag et al. (2023), who pointed out that poetry can improve language skills by placing them in real-life scenarios.

Khansir (2012) further noted that one of the critical benefits of employing poetry in ELT is that it can elicit emotional reactions and interest, even among the least enthusiastic students. Hall (2016) pointed out that poetry triggers interest and active student participation, which may not be achieved when other text types are used. Kumar (2017) pointed out that poetry creates personal investment because it enables learners to relate to everyday human experiences, thus leading to spontaneity and active participation. From a cultural point of view, Férez et al. (2019) opined that learners are exposed to different cultural practices and norms through poetry. Hlabisa (2020) noted that poetry brings cross-cultural understanding, which can help learn a second language.

According to Almaktary (2022), the educational value of poetry includes changing the way students peruse language, forcing reluctant readers to express themselves, and acquainting students with literary devices. He also appreciated the function of poetry in enhancing creativity and the joy of learning. According to Arindora et al. (2021), poetry can be a source of exciting ideas for a creative writing model, improving the learning process in ELT classrooms. Alkhaleefah (2017) stressed that poetry results in a natural "creative written expression", which can enhance the learning process and classroom atmosphere.

2.1.1 Definition of Poetry

Early theorists like Aristotle considered poetry an essential human function, emphasizing its mimetic role (Ribeiro, 2007). Aristotle viewed poetry as a mirror imitating life through rhythm, language, and harmony. Dahami (2018) defined poetry as both an art form and educational tool, arguing it should simultaneously educate and entertain. This perspective highlights poetry's dual purpose of instruction and amusement.

Tiffany (2020) noted how scholars such as Dante Alighieri and Geoffrey Chaucer advanced poetry by blending classical influences with vernacular language, thus increasing its popularity. Dzhukelov (2014) demonstrated poetry's ability to combine lyricism with philosophical and theological meanings, while Tiffany (2020) illustrated its capacity to depict diverse lives and experiences.

These observations collectively portray poetry as a multifaceted phenomenon capable of mimicking life, conveying moral and philosophical messages, providing entertainment, and capturing human emotions through skilfully crafted language (Dahami, 2018). However, this view may oversimplify poetry's complex nature and evolving role in different cultural contexts. Future research could explore how contemporary poets challenge or expand upon these traditional conceptions of poetry's function and form.

2.1.2 Poetry in Language

Teaching the integration of poetry into language teaching offers substantial benefits, enriching learners' linguistic, cultural, and emotional education. Poetry's multifaceted nature makes it an invaluable tool in language classrooms, promoting not only language acquisition but also cultural appreciation and emotional development. This approach is supported by numerous studies and expert opinions, highlighting its diverse advantages.

Elster (2000) emphasized poetry's role in expanding vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and understanding both literal and figurative meanings. The unique use of language in poetry introduces learners to new words and phrases, enhancing their linguistic repertoire. The rhythmic and phonetic elements aid in correct pronunciation, making poetry an effective tool for language learners. Additionally, poetry's use of metaphor and symbolism helps students grasp figurative meanings, fostering deeper comprehension and encouraging critical thinking.

Mart (2019) conducted a study examining essays written by student-teachers and discovered that poetry enhances a deeper understanding of word forms and meanings. This finding underscore poetry's potential to deepen learners' linguistic understanding, enabling them to use language more effectively and creatively. Mart (2020) further acknowledge poetry's versatility as a teaching aid in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, where it can be adapted to suit various learning objectives and contexts.

Hadaway et al. (2001) noted poetry's contributions to language acquisition, emphasizing its role in emotional development and cultural appreciation. Poetry's emotive power allows learners to connect with the material on a personal level, fostering empathy and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, poetry often reflects cultural themes and values, providing learners with insights into different cultures and perspectives. This cultural dimension is particularly important in diverse classrooms, where understanding and appreciation of various backgrounds can enhance social cohesion.

Kubokawa (2023) demonstrated that poetic elements like rhythm and rhyme aid language acquisition by helping learners grasp natural speech patterns. The rhythmic nature of poetry mirrors the cadence of natural speech, assisting learners in understanding when to speak and when to pause, which is crucial for developing fluency. Iida and Chamcharatsri (2022) emphasized rhyme's role in enhancing phonemic awareness, enabling learners to distinguish and pronounce sounds in the target language.

Schultz (1996) advocated using metaphors, similes, and personification as effective teaching practices that help students expand their language knowledge through creative and abstract word use.

These literary devices encourage learners to think critically and creatively, enhancing their ability to express complex ideas and emotions.

Jusslin and Höglund (2021) noted that rhythmic patterns in poetry aid pronunciation and memorization. The repetitive, musical quality of poetry provides learners with a memorable framework for internalizing new words and phrases. This memorization is further enhanced by poetry's emotional and imaginative content, which engages learners and makes the material more relatable.

Khan (2020) argued that poetry's emotional depth enhances language retention more effectively than rote memorization. By engaging learners' emotions and imagination, poetry creates a rich, interactive learning experience that enhances recall and comprehension. This is particularly significant in Nigerian classrooms, where poetry's advantages are noteworthy.

Umar and Maria (2021) highlighted poetry's role in fostering language development, noting that it organizes language in a way that promotes effective language training.
However, Adewumi and Ajadi (2021) concluded that successfully integrating poetry is contingent on the teacher's imagination and the availability of culturally sensitive texts. Teachers must creatively adapt poetry to suit their students' cultural contexts and learning needs. Alonge et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of cultural responsiveness in poetry teaching, advocating for the inclusion of culturally relevant materials to enhance students' engagement and appreciation.

The integration of poetry in language teaching is not merely an artistic endeavour but a strategic educational approach that enhances language proficiency, cultural understanding, and emotional intelligence. By critically examining and implementing poetry in diverse educational settings, educators can unlock its full potential as a transformative tool for language learning.

2.1.3 Teachers' Attitude and Perception towards Poetry

Ray (1999) pointed out that teachers' attitudes are central to instructional practice since they determine teaching approaches, classroom climate, and learners' achievements. According to Masbuhin and Liao (2017), it is noted assertively that positive teacher attitudes towards a particular subject can help enhance the learning process and spur the students into active participation. In contrast, negative attitudes taken by the teachers, lessen the chances of the students being exposed to different areas of learning. Regarding poetry education (Liao, 2018), particularly in L2 English classrooms, the teacher's beliefs are essential as they determine how and to what extent poetry is incorporated into lessons and how it is delivered to the students (Mellgren, 2022).

Mashbuhin and Liao (2017) stated that the significant barriers to integrating poetry were fear and lack of confidence among teachers. This fear is attributed to a perceived low level of familiarity with the genre and doubts over the suitability of poetry for students. In the same study, Timothy and Obiekezie (2019) noted that 94% of the intending ESL teachers in Nigeria had declared their unwillingness to teach poetry due to the unpleasant experiences they had in poetry while in school.

Hennessy et al. (2021) also found that several English teachers in most regions lack confidence, especially in eliciting students' genuine responses to poetry. However, they also had confidence in certain areas, such as choosing poems and giving feedback. This duality implies that though teachers understand the importance of poetry in a curriculum, they lack confidence in teaching it correctly. Liao (2018) and Ray (2006) highlighted the problem of the lack of knowledge about poetry among teachers. Liao also reported that 22% of the prospective ESL teachers were unclear on how to teach poetry because they were unfamiliar with the specific type of text. The teachers recognized poetry's educational benefits but did not feel prepared enough to teach it (Sigvardsson, 2020).

Other factors outside the classroom can make teachers avoid including poetry in their teaching practice. The respondents ' concerns included assessment regulations, exam preparations, and time limitations, as Panavelil (2011) and Marin (2017) highlighted. As postulated by (Pike, 2000), these

pressures hinder teachers from procuring suitable materials and having adequate time for poetry teaching. Nevertheless, Peskin et al. (2010) point out favourable perceptions of poetry. Teachers see its benefits for students' language proficiency, development, and ability to express themselves. In their studies, Rodríguez (2018) and Salameh (2012) established that teachers' perception of poetry was that it encouraged students and enhanced appreciation for the English language. Alvi and Alvi (2019) indicated that overcoming these barriers through professional development and support may assist teachers in enhancing the use of poetry in L2 English classrooms, especially in Nigeria.

2.1.4   Poetry and Young Learners

Young learners derive numerous benefits from reading poetry, as it fosters both interest and understanding. Khan and Alasmari (2018) argued that the brevity and rhythmic structures of poems make them memorable for learners. Melin (2010) further explained that rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in poetry aid language acquisition, retention, and pronunciation, making learning enjoyable. Khatib (2011) noted that poetry promotes engagement and affectivity, which are crucial for sustaining students' interest. This engagement fosters a positive attitude, encouraging learners to read and write, especially when encountering humorous or playful poems. Naylor (2013) highlighted that the shortness of poems facilitates comprehension and mastery of language concepts and vocabulary.

In Nigerian classrooms, Hanauer (2003) argued that culturally appropriate poetry significantly enhances learning. Poetry that reflects students' cultural experiences increases interest and relevance, making the subject matter more engaging. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that students can relate to themes, settings, and characters in poems, personalizing the learning process. This cultural connection enhances understanding, as learners can link their studies to their own lives and experiences. Gönen (2018) explained that exposure to local poets and culturally embedded content preserves Nigerian cultural identity, fostering a sense of ownership among young learners. Hanratty (2011) asserted that poetry helps students acknowledge and embrace cultural differences, creating a more effective classroom environment.

However, educators must ensure that the poetry selected is accessible and relevant to diverse learners. While poetry can enhance engagement and language skills, it requires careful integration into the curriculum to maximize its benefits. Teachers should balance poetic content with other language learning tools to provide a comprehensive educational experience. By thoughtfully incorporating poetry, educators can enrich young learners' linguistic and cultural understanding, making it a powerful and transformative educational tool. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity.

2.1.5   Challenges in Teaching Poetry

Introducing poetry to young L2 English learners in Nigeria poses significant challenges, primarily due to varying levels of understanding among students. Sugandi (2015) highlighted that Nigeria's multilingual landscape means English often serves as a second or third language, complicating poetry instruction. Abidin and Wai (2020) found that gaps in English proficiency can hinder students' ability to understand and appreciate poetry. Hess (1999) also noted that young learners' rudimentary grasp of meaning can make interpreting poetic texts difficult.

Another major issue is the lack of adequate teacher training and resources. Naylor and Wood (2012) reported that many English teachers in Nigeria lack sufficient training in literature, particularly poetry. Moea (2021) emphasized that this lack of professional development leaves teachers uncertain in their methodological approaches when engaging students with poetry. Additionally, Řeřichová et al. (2014) pointed out that most Nigerian schools lack comprehensive poetry anthologies and teaching materials, limiting teachers' ability to expose students to diverse and enjoyable poetry.

Critically, while these challenges are significant, they highlight the need for targeted solutions. Enhancing teacher training programs to include comprehensive literature and poetry instruction is crucial. Moreover, increasing the availability of culturally relevant poetry materials can bridge the gap between students' linguistic abilities and the poetic content. By addressing these issues, educators can better integrate poetry into the curriculum, making it an effective tool for language development in Nigeria's diverse educational landscape.

2.2   Theoretical Perspectives of Poetry in Teaching
2.2.1   Constructivist Theories of Learning
Constructivist theories of learning, rooted in the work of Piaget and Bruner, posit that learners actively construct knowledge through experiences and interactions with their environment. Hein (1991) emphasized that this process involves building upon existing cognitive structures. Ugwuozor (2020) further noted that new knowledge is constructed based on past learning experiences, while Taufik et al. (2020) highlighted the reconstruction of knowledge into different cognitive structures of understanding. In L2 English acquisition, constructivism advocates for approaches that encourage critical thinking and active participation (Greenham, 2019). Poetry aligns with this approach by promoting constructive language use (Ugwuozor, 2020) and stimulating imagination, feelings, and deeper thinking (Shah, 2022).

Sumara and Davis (2006) emphasized the crucial role of social interaction in knowledge construction within constructivist theories. Group discussions and peer critiques of poetry facilitate vocalization of ideas, vocal comprehension development, and co- construction of interpretations. In L2 contexts, these interactions expose students to diverse thinking styles and language use (Cumming, 2007).

2.2.2   Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory
Sociocultural Theory (SCT), proposed by Lev Vygotsky, is significant in L2 English classrooms, emphasizing social interaction and culture in learning. According to LEARNING (2012), SCT focuses on how learners construct knowledge through social engagement.

Jaramillo (1996) stated that learning is a social process requiring the participation of others, such as instructors or peers. A key concept in Vygotskian theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which describes the gap between what learners can achieve independently and with assistance (Yousef & Mahameed, 2022). Anh and Marginson (2013) explained that poetry fits into the ZPD as teachers can facilitate interpretation, discussion, and feedback, guiding learners to higher understanding levels.

LEARNING (2012) also noted that poetry enhances language proficiency through participation and meaning making. Jaramillo (1996) emphasized poetry as a cultural tool, aiding cognitive and linguistic development. Negueruela (2003) suggested that exploring various poetic genres expands cultural perspectives and appreciation of the target language's literature.

Lantolf and Beckett (2009) highlighted SCT's attention to private speech in acquiring new knowledge. Reciting poetry allows students to use private speech to practice words, discover meanings, and play with language (Yousef & Mahameed, 2022). This process aids in acquiring linguistic structures and vocabulary. However, while SCT provides a robust framework for integrating poetry into L2 learning, educators must ensure that activities are culturally relevant and accessible, balancing SCT principles with other pedagogical approaches to optimize learning outcomes.

2.3   Research Gaps
A significant gap exists in understanding teachers' perceptions and implementation challenges of using poetry in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in Nigeria. While studies like those by

Hijazi & Al-nature (2012) and Khan (2020) focus on pragmatic goals such as vocabulary development and cultural sensitivity, they often overlook region- specific issues. For instance, Liao (2017) discusses poetry's benefits without addressing challenges faced by Nigerian teachers. Similarly, Syed and Wahas (2020) mention teacher perceptions but fail to analyse how these relate to local factors like students' literacy skills and resource access.

Research at the primary education level, where foundational language skills are developed, is notably lacking (Kigal et al., 2023). This oversight is critical, as early language experiences significantly influence later learning outcomes. Understanding how poetry is perceived and applied by teachers of young learners in Nigeria could provide valuable insights into early language training and its long-term effects.

3   METHODOLOGY

This study employed a stratified random sampling technique, effectively capturing a diverse population across variables such as residence, school type, and teaching experience. Participants were purposefully selected to ensure a diverse group of teachers involved in ESL instruction in Nigerian schools. Male and female teachers aged 20-50 from Nigeria's five geopolitical zones, representing both rural and urban schools, were chosen to examine gender factors and the influence of different education systems. The sample included novice and experienced teachers from public and private schools. The quantitative component involved 40 teachers, a number deemed sufficient for population generalization and data analysis (Fowler, 2014). For the qualitative component, six teachers were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. To ensure the study's validity, data were collected using two methods: questionnaires and interviews (Nunan, 2012). The Likert scale (1-5) was used to gauge responses, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. It consisted of two sections: Section A included thirty-two items assessing factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards poetry, perceptions of its effectiveness in L2 instruction, and how these factors affect their practices. Responses were measured on a Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Section B gathered demographic information, including gender, age range, school type, teaching experience, and geographic location, with teachers selecting one response per items.

Non-numeric data were collected through interviews, allowing for in-depth exploration of teachers' roles and attitudes towards poetry adoption in L2 English classes. While combining these methods enhances the study's validity, potential biases in self-reported data and interview responses were acknowledged. Interviews complemented the questionnaires by providing a deeper understanding of responses and addressing more specific aspects of the research questions. Unlike the structured nature of questionnaires, interviews were open-ended, allowing the interviewer to deviate from standard questions and delve deeper into details based on participants' answers.

Data integration occurred at the discussion stage, where quantitative and qualitative findings were synthesized to provide a holistic understanding of the research questions. This integration allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the results, potentially revealing insights that might be missed in single-method studies.

3.1   Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were carefully addressed in this study of Nigerian teachers' perceptions of using poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners. Participants were fully informed of the study's objectives and their right to withdraw at any time, ensuring informed consent. Anonymity was maintained through pseudonyms and restricted access to identifiers. Cultural sensitivity was prioritized to minimize researcher bias.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Respondents' Demography

This study examined L2 English teachers across various age ranges and genders, providing a diverse sample for analysis. The age distribution revealed a predominance of teachers aged 31-40 (53.3%), followed by those aged 20-30 (40%), with a smaller representation of 41–50-year-olds (6.7%). Gender distribution showed a higher proportion of female teachers (56.7%) compared to male teachers (43.3%), with variations across age groups. While this diverse sample offers insights into different demographic segments, the uneven distribution, particularly the underrepresentation of older teachers, may limit the study's ability to fully capture experiences across all career stages. Additionally, the gender imbalance, though reflective of many educational settings, could potentially skew results.

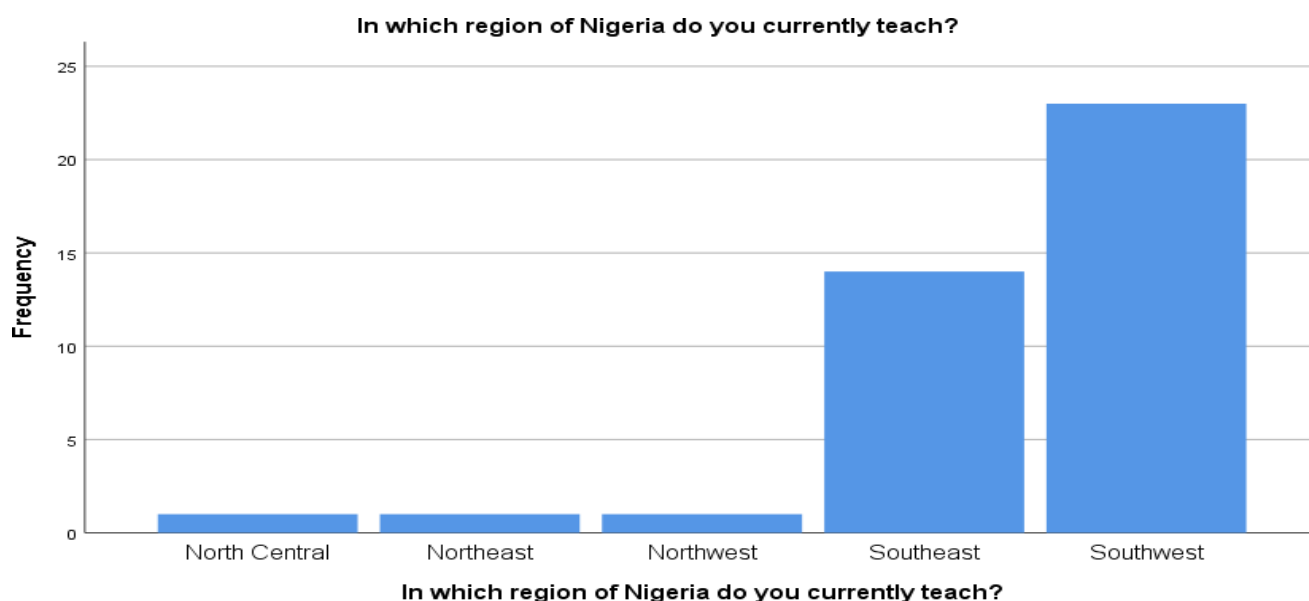**Table 4.1: Age Distribution across different Genders of the Teachers**

Age Range (Years)	Male (n, %)	Female (n, %)	Total (n, %)
20-30	4 (13.3%)	8 (26.7%)	12 (40.0%)
31-40	8 (26.7%)	14 (46.7%)	22 (53.3%)
41-50	1 (3.3%)	5 (16.7%)	6 (20.0%)
Total	13 (43.3%)	27 (56.7%)	40 (100.0%)

Source: Test Result, 2024

4.1.1 Region Distribution

The survey responses were predominantly collected from teachers in Nigeria's Southeast and Southwest regions, with the largest number of respondents from these areas (Figure 2). This concentration is largely due to the higher number of educational institutions in these regions, which employ more L2 English teachers. The Southeast and Southwest are recognized as centres of academic excellence and English language proficiency, facilitating access to a larger pool of respondents compared to other parts of the country. However, this regional bias may limit the study's generalizability, as it may not fully capture the diverse experiences and challenges faced by teachers in less represented regions.

**Figure 1: Region in which the Teachers under the Survey are teaching across Nigeria**

Source: Test Result, 2024

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4.1.2 Teachers' Years of Experience

The study's participants exhibit varied teaching experience levels, with 45.0% having 5-10 years of experience, 30.0% with less than 5 years, 22.5% with 11-15 years, and a mere 2.5% with 16-20 years. This distribution emphasizes a diverse range of teaching tenures, predominantly in early to mid-career stages. While this diversity offers valuable insights into different experience levels, the limited representation of highly experienced teachers may restrict understanding of long-term perspectives on poetry use in L2 English classrooms.

Figure 2: Pie Chart Representing Teacher's Years of Experience

Year of Experience in Teaching

Legend: ■ 11-15 years ■ 16-20 years ■ 5-10 years ■ Less than 5 years

Pie chart values: 22%, 3%, 45%, 30%
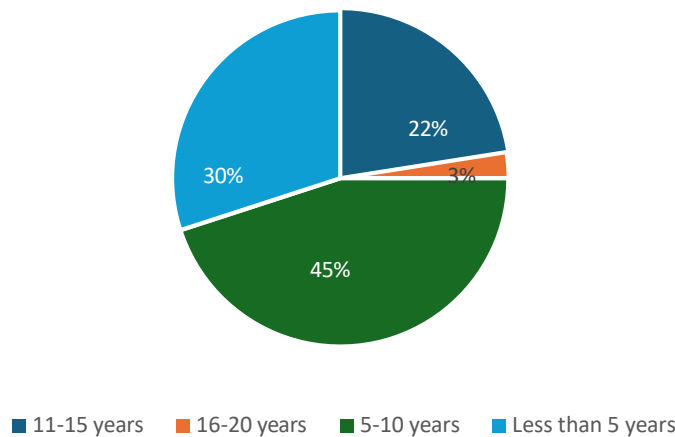
Source: Test Result, 2024

4.1.3 Reliability Test

The scale's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha to determine its reliability (Wadkar, et al., 2016). The calculated Cronbach's Alpha of 0.723 indicates acceptable reliability for the research items. When based on standardized items, the value improved to 0.831, suggesting enhanced internal consistency. This implies that the 20-item scale effectively assesses teachers' perceptions of using poetry in L2 English classrooms for young Nigerian learners. While these results demonstrate good reliability, it's important to note that Cronbach's Alpha has limitations. It assumes one-dimensionality and can be inflated by a large number of items. Additionally, the improvement in Alpha when using standardized items suggests potential variability in item scales or variances.

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Table 4.2: Reliability Test for the Instruments

	Dimensions/Measures of the study variable	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards poetry, perceptions of its effectiveness in L2 instruction, and how these factors affect their practices	20	.831
2.	information, including gender, age range, school type, teaching experience, and geographic location, with teachers selecting one response per items	12	.723
3.	**Total**	**32**	

Source: Test Result, 2024

4.2   Data Analysis

4.2.1   Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions of Poetry's Effectiveness for L2 English Students

This research investigates L2 English teachers' perceptions of poetry's effectiveness in the classroom, focusing on its impact on vocabulary enhancement, student engagement, and cultural awareness development. The analysis reveals varied opinions across these dimensions, as shown in the table below. While the study provides valuable insights, it's important to consider potential biases in self-reported data and the need for complementary observational research to validate these perceptions. Table 4.3 shows the results of the analysis of teachers' perceptions of poetry's effectiveness for L2 English students. The results are expressed using mean and standard deviation.

An analysis of the mean scores and standard deviations regarding teachers' perceptions of using poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners reveals significant insights into its perceived effectiveness. The generally high overall mean scores indicate a strong belief among interviewed teachers that poetry positively influences English language learning.

The statement "Using poetry in L2 classrooms improves students' vocabulary" received a mean score of 4.30 with a standard deviation of 0.911, suggesting a strong consensus among teachers about poetry's role in vocabulary enhancement. This perception aligns with research highlighting poetry's potential to introduce new words in meaningful contexts, facilitating deeper lexical understanding and retention. Notably, the highest mean score of 4.58 (SD = 0.636) was attributed to the statement "Poetry helps students better understand the rhythm and sound patterns of English." This strong agreement underscores teachers' recognition of poetry's unique capacity to enhance prosodic feature comprehension, including rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns. These elements are crucial for developing pronunciation and listening skills, contributing to a more natural and fluent command of spoken English. The low standard deviation indicates a high level of consensus among teachers on this point. However, the statement "Analysing poetry helps students develop better critical thinking skills" yielded a lower mean of 2.63 with a higher standard deviation of 1.675. This result suggests a more divided opinion among teachers regarding poetry's effectiveness in fostering critical thinking. The lower mean and higher variability in responses highlight a potential area for further investigation, as it may reflect differences in teaching approaches, student engagement levels, or the types of poetry used in classrooms.

Cultural awareness aspects of poetry teaching received positive evaluations. The statement "Poetry activities promote cultural diversity awareness among young learners" had a mean of 4.33 (SD = 0.829), while "Poetry can be a valuable tool for introducing young learners to diverse cultural perspectives" scored 4.40 (SD = 0.744). These high mean scores indicate that teachers generally view poetry as an effective medium for cultural education in L2 classrooms. While these results provide

valuable insights into teachers' perceptions, several limitations should be considered. First, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Teachers might overestimate the effectiveness of poetry in their classrooms due to perceived expectations or personal beliefs. Second, the study does not account for potential variations in teaching methods, or the specific types of poetry used, which could significantly influence outcomes.

Furthermore, the discrepancy between the high perceived value of poetry for language skills and cultural awareness versus its lower perceived impact on critical thinking warrants deeper exploration. This difference might stem from challenges in implementing effective critical analysis techniques with young learners or a lack of appropriate resources and training for teachers in this area. While the study demonstrates a generally positive perception of poetry's role in L2 English classrooms, particularly for vocabulary, prosodic features, and cultural awareness, it also reveals areas of uncertainty, especially regarding critical thinking development

Table 4.3: Benefits of Poetry

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using poetry in L2 classrooms improves students' vocabulary	4.30	.911
Poetry helps students better understand the rhythm and sound patterns of English	4.58	.636
Analysing poetry helps students develop better critical thinking skills.	2.63	1.675
Poetry activities promote cultural diversity awareness among young learners	4.33	.829
Poetry can be a valuable tool for introducing young learners to diverse cultural perspectives	4.40	.744

Source: Test Result, 2024

4.2.2   Challenges that Teachers Face when Teaching Poetry and it is Expressed Using Mean and Standard Deviation

The analysis of the challenges in implementing poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners focuses on teachers' perceptions of these difficulties. Mean and standard deviation values highlight areas that may pose significant challenges.

The statement "Lack of resources is a challenge when using poetry in the L2 classroom" received a mean score of 3.93 with a standard deviation of 0.997. This high mean indicates that teachers frequently encounter a shortage of resources, such as poetry materials, textbooks, and access to quality poems, which hinders their ability to effectively incorporate poetry into instruction.

For the statement "Time constraints are a challenge when using poetry in the L2 classroom," the mean was 3.70 with a standard deviation of 1.137. This suggests that many teachers struggle to find adequate time within the school syllabus to teach poetry, due to competing language learning activities and curriculum demands.

In contrast, the statement "Students often find poetry difficult and uninteresting" had a lower mean of 2.75 and a standard deviation of 1.373. The lower mean suggests that teachers generally do not agree that students inherently find poetry difficult or uninteresting, though the high standard deviation indicates diverse opinions on this matter. This variation may reflect differences in student engagement and comprehension across different classrooms or teaching methods. The analysis reveals that lack of resources and time constraints are significant challenges for teachers, while student interaction with poetry is more varied and context dependent. Addressing these resource and time issues could enhance the effectiveness of poetry instruction, while further exploration of student engagement strategies may help tailor approaches to diverse classroom need.

Table 4.4: Challenges to Poetry

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of resources is a challenge when using poetry in the L2 classroom	40	3.93	.997
Time constraints are a challenge when using poetry in the L2 classroom	40	3.70	1.137
Students often find poetry difficult and uninteresting	40	2.75	1.373

Source: Test Result, 2024

5   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1   Conclusions
This study examines Nigerian teachers' perceptions of using poetry in ESL (L2) instruction for young learners, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide comprehensive insights into poetry's role in language teaching and associated challenges. The findings reveal a generally positive attitude among teachers towards poetry's relevance in L2 education. This corroborate teachers' strong agreement on poetry's importance and effectiveness as an engagement tool. These perceptions align with previous research highlighting poetry's potential to enhance L2 learning contexts (Cazden, 2001; Pappas, 2018; Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

Teachers view poetry as a means to capture students' interest and imagination, corresponding with Vygotsky's (1978) social learner acquisition theory and Littlewood's (1981) communicative approach. This supports teachers' beliefs in poetry's benefits for these areas, aligning with Carter (2007) and Nation (2001). However, the study also reveals challenges in implementing poetry in L2 classrooms, including resource scarcity and time constraints. These obstacles highlight a potential disconnect between teachers' positive perceptions and practical implementation.

The study provides valuable insights into the use of poetry in L2 English classrooms for young learners in Nigeria, revealing both opportunities and challenges. While teachers generally view poetry as a valuable tool for language instruction, the findings highlight a complex interplay of factors affecting its implementation and effectiveness. The high perceived importance of poetry aligns with Cameron's (2001) observations on its unique benefits for language and cultural learning. However, the study also exposes significant barriers, such as resource scarcity and time constraints, echoing Wolff's (2004) assertions about curriculum pressures. These challenges necessitate innovative approaches to poetry integration.

5.2   Recommendations
i.   The research suggests potential strategies to enhance poetry's effectiveness, including incorporating multimedia resources (Smith & Higgins, 2006) and using culturally relevant poetry (Nuttall, 1996).

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ii.　It is crucial to critically examine the feasibility of these approaches within resource-constrained environments.

iii.　The study reveals a discrepancy between teacher enthusiasm and student engagement, highlighting the need for targeted instructional strategies. This aligns with Gibbons' (2002) observations on the importance of appropriate difficulty levels in maintaining student interest.

iv.　Although the study offers valuable insights, it also underscores the need for further research into effective implementation strategies, particularly in addressing the identified challenge.

v.　The questionnaire addresses language development, student interest, and creativity, offering a multifaceted view of poetry's perceived impact. However, future research could benefit from complementary qualitative methods to provide deeper insights into teachers' reasoning and experiences.

vi.　Considering students' perspectives alongside teachers' perceptions could offer a more comprehensive understanding of poetry's role in L2 English classrooms.

5.3　Implication for Practice

While this approach provides a structured method for assessing teachers' views, it's important to acknowledge potential limitations. Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias, and the predetermined categories might not capture the full complexity of teachers' perceptions. Additionally, the study's focus on Nigerian contexts may limit generalizability to other educational settings. However, potential limitations include the risk of social desirability bias in participants' responses and the challenge of maintaining complete objectivity in cross-cultural research. Future studies could benefit from employing member checking and peer debriefing to enhance credibility. Additionally, considering the power dynamics between researchers and participants in educational settings could further strengthen the ethical framework of similar studies in developing countries.

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