



## LANGUAGE IN POETRY UNDERSTANDING: A STRUCTURALIST APPROACH TO AFRICAN POETRY

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### ABSTRACT

Poetry has been one of the genres that lacks audience in schools from senior secondary schools to universities in most African countries. This sad fact has both good and unjustified reasons. The good reason is that learners are not well introduced to poetry. But the laziness and fear of learners to spend time to read and think deeply about poetry is the unjustified reason. So in order to solve this problem, this article suggests as understanding techniques some clues and guidelines to help both learners and teachers as well to love and appreciate poetry. Structuralist approach is the theoretical framework I use to conduct my analyses. As methodological steps, I use sample poems from three African poets. As results, this article discovers that in addition to formal devices there are other informal devices that also contribute to the understanding of poems. It is also revealed that the understanding of poems depends necessarily upon the manner of reading poems.

**Keywords:** language, grammatical tense, element, understanding

### RESUME

La poésie est l'un des genres littéraires qui manque d'auditoire dans les écoles depuis les lycées jusqu'aux universités dans les pays africains. Cette triste réalité a des raisons fondées et fallacieuses. La raison fondée qui explique cette réalité est la mauvaise manière dont la poésie est enseignée aux apprenants. Mais la paresse et la négligence des apprenants à passer le temps nécessaire pour lire et réfléchir afin de bien comprendre les poèmes constituent la raison non-justifiée. Pour pallier à cette insuffisance cet article se propose de suggérer quelques techniques aux apprenants et enseignants pour la compréhension et l'appréciation des poèmes. L'approche structuraliste est la théorie littéraire que j'utilise pour mener la discussion dans l'article. Comme méthodologie, j'ai utilisé les poèmes de trois poètes africains. Comme résultats, cet article a montré qu'en dehors des outils littéraires formels existants, nous avons d'autres dispositifs informels qui contribuent à la compréhension et l'appréciation des poèmes. Il est aussi révélé que la compréhension des poèmes découle de la manière de les lire.

**Mots clés :** langage, temps grammaticaux, élément, compréhension.

### INTRODUCTION

For centuries poetry has been a *bête noire* for many people including teachers and students at different levels in school curriculum and syllabus. Many are the reasons put forward to explain such a lack of inclination for poetry. How this attitude toward poetry started is difficult to establish scientifically. However, if one refers to Senanu and T. Vincent, (1999), it is the belated introduction to poetry in schools which favours in some ways such a bad attitude to poetry. In addition, what seems very probable is also the wrong ways people learners are introduced to poetry. Differently put, when people are introduced to poetry as something of higher standard of language beyond their knowledge, something foreign, difficult, etc, there is a way for

such people to show dislike and aloofness to poetry. Mazisi Kunene, (2013, p. xxv) in his introduction to *Pipe Dreams*, observes that “this laziness and fear has been imposed on the readers and students, who have been instructed that poems are merely remembrances, love songs, legacies of the deceased, traditional rites of passage, or accounts on historical personalities”. Though Mazisi’s observation is much closer to African realities, it does carry a crucial point which is common to people whether in Africa, America, Europe or wherever: this is the fear and laziness that people develop toward poetry. This attitude has made poetry an orphan among the main three genres –prose, drama and poetry – that compose literature. And such attitudes are the results of the neglect by many readers of the structures of poems while they vainly want to know the poets as a prerequisite for their understanding. How can such a view towards poetry be corrected? How should people be brought back to like and enjoy poetry? How to better introduce people to poetry to fill this gap for their study of poems? How to help people to understand and enjoy poems? These are the questions this article discusses. However, these questions cannot be answered without laying emphasis on the form of the poems and how to read them with regard to the language and diction that sustain the verses, because “*structuralism replaces the author with the reader as the central agency in criticism*”, (Abram & Harpham, 2005, p.310). This work aims at offering some informal guidelines, clues and pieces of advice to learners firstly and people at large to help them enjoy poetry as a full genre among others, because they should know that “more scope for the direction of attention to those elements which make poetry what it is”, (Nwoga, 1986, p. vii), is paramount to the understanding of it. And “in the structuralist view, what has been called a literary “work” becomes a text, that is, a mode of writing constituted by a play of component elements according to specifically literary conventions and codes”, (Abram and Harpham, 2005, p. 310). These guidelines and clues are referred to in this work as informal, because there are already formal formulae and devices such as meter, rhythm, tone, feet, types of poetry, theories and others that “have been formulated about poetry [and which] represent developments in the medium in response to the growth and the complexity of human societies and the problem of communication”, (Senanu and Vincent, 1999, p. 13).

This work urges readers to understand that “the actual text should be our guideline, not what the author has perhaps wanted to say”, (Bertens, 2003, p. 23). Put differently, readers should avoid what Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946, p.96), refer to as “the intentional fallacy” and “affective fallacy” – “while the intentional fallacy has to do with the author, the affective fallacy has to do with the reader”. Differently put, readers of poems must not let themselves be blinded by the author’s intention on the one hand, and should not either be lured by their own immediate, emotional, shallow and eager responses to the poems in the total neglect and abandonment of

the text –the poem or verses they are reading. Lawrence in David Lodge’s *20<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Criticism* (1946, p.78), advises readers: “never trust the artist. Trust the tale”. Rinehart and Winston (1985, p.14) in their book, *Understanding Poetry*, have concluded that: “in an important sense, all poems are fictional, even poems that profess to be autobiographical, for the voice of the poem is inevitably a creation and not a natural and spontaneous outburst”. This means that in such a creation, the creator does not have a full control over the creation. The poet cannot claim to totally say faithfully what he has to say without any betrayal on the part of the words he uses. As a result, readers, sometimes, should have structuralist lenses while reading poems by focusing more and mainly on the text rather than the author because “the poem’s meaning can only be discussed by turning a respectful and trained attention to the way its language works on us,” (Annemarie, 1983, p. v). This article has two sections on the whole. The first one, elements of attention in poems reading as understanding skills, is followed with the last one, reading techniques and level of language as poetry understanding skills.

### **1. Elements of Attention in Poems Reading as Understanding Skills**

One of the fundamental troubles people have as far as the understanding of poetry is concerned is how to read poems. But before solving this difficulty, it behooves any reader to, first for all, know the elements that should draw their attention while reading poems. In this vein, there are elements such as the title of the poem, leading word(s), grammatical tenses, pronouns and the structure of the poems and the figurative languages that build up the whole poems. These elements are not exhaustive but for the analysis purposes these ones are enough to give some guidelines to understand and appreciate poems. The interpretation of poems is not and should never be a past time activity but rather a serious commitment on the part of the reader who should try to penetrate the mystery of unity among the component elements. Many learners want to read poems as they read prose and drama, which is not obvious because poetry appreciation and understanding are energy and time consuming activities.

The preliminary tool, that is not the least to the rests, is the use of the dictionary to check the denotative meaning of words that the poet uses: “keep a dictionary by you and use it. It is futile to try to understand poetry without troubling to learn the meanings of the words of which it is composed” (Arp & Johnson, 2006, p.668). As one reads novels, short stories and other works of fiction trying to have a general view of the themes without necessarily understanding lots of the words in the story, poetry reading does not allow such reckless let alone bad attitude in its study, for “poetry is made with words not ideas,” (Annemarie, 1983, p. viii). The laziness of many people starts from this point. They don’t have time to go through their dictionaries to check the words that they do not understand, yet they want to

appreciate the subject matter of the poem. Read poems and pretend to understand them in haste while extrapolating the significance of its dictions is not possible or rather dangerous and unliterary. The lack or refusal to use dictionary in poetry understanding is symptomatic of readers' misunderstandings because the "initial difficulty in understanding what the poem means may come from our being unfamiliar with some of the words that the poet uses", ( Senanu & Vincent, op. cit. p. 14). Because readers need to respond effectively and affectively to the poems, but how should such a response be possible if they have not succeeded in communing with the speaker's emotions and experiences hidden in the tone and rhythm championed by the words in the poems? Arp & Johnson (op. cit. p. 653), stipulate that "ultimately, therefore, poetry can be recognized only by the response made to it by a practiced reader, someone who has acquired some sensitivity to poetry". Once the use of dictionary is put as the grassroots tool and prerequisite for approaching poems, the other aforementioned elements can be added as clues to understand poems. To understand poems, the first element the readers' eyes meet is the title, if any, of the poem. Sometimes, if the poem has a title, it can stand as a question: either interrogative, which will be solved in the course of the poem; or exclamatory and affirmative, which the poem will, in the long run, corroborate. Another aspect of the title is the figurative languages that it may embody. In other words, the title can sometimes contain a particular figurative language that is there for a purpose that the reader should decode in order to understand the poem. In other cases, the title can be a borrowed word from another language that has a particular connotation with the subject matter of the poem. For instance, the titles: "consolation", "before the altar", "fatal attraction", leopard hunting", "let the voiceless speak" in Darmani's *Shadows of the Earth 101 Poems* (2008), must propel some reflections from the readers. Firstly, in the title "consolation", the reader, before going deep into the poem, may ask the following questions; who consoles whom? Why? On which occasion? Or Is the title ironical? In "before the altar", the reader may wonder: which altar: traditional or modern? Who is before the altar? Why before the altar and not elsewhere? What is being said? To whom? In "fatal attraction", these questions may come to the mind of the readers: what makes the attraction fatal? Why is it fatal? Which attraction is it: free or compulsory? Physically or spiritually? Who attracts whom or what attracts what? In "leopard hunting", readers need to know the following: what does the leopard hunt? Is the title a metaphor? Who is the leopard? Who is hunted? Why? In "let the voiceless speak", readers must ask these questions: who or what prevents the voiceless from speaking? Why are they voiceless? Who are they? Where are they? Why should they be let to speak? What do they have to say? To whom are they going to speak? All these attempts lead to the fundamental realities of poems as Rinehart & Winston, (1985, p.13), underscore it. That is, in poetry there is "the saying"; "the way of the saying"; "the nature of the said"; "the sayer"; and "what provokes the saying".

These questions are intrinsically connected to all the elements including the titles of poems.

In Awoonor's case there are titles like: "the light is on", "what more can I give?" "betrayers", "prayer", "life's winds", "for Henoga Vinoko Akpalu", "the wayfarer comes home". Readers of these titles may ask these questions: in "the light is on", which light is on? Who lights it? Is it caused by nature or human action? Why is it on and not off? In "betrayers", one can ask: who are they? Why have they betrayed? Whom have they betrayed? In "what more can I give", the reader may be shocked: what has already been given? To whom? Is the giver free or obliged to give? Who is the receiver? In "prayer", it is important to ask: who prays? To whom? Why? On which occasion? Where? What prayer is it? etc. When the title is a borrowing word, the reader must check the real meaning of it if the poem does not offer any translation. In Gomo's (2010), *A Fine Madness*, his poems' titles like: "Tinyarei", "kufa kunesu machewe" have been translated as "give us a break" and "death is with us for real". So if the poem offers these translations it is because their meanings are very important for the poems' appreciation.

In addition to the title, what is referred to in this article as a leading word plays a meaningful role. This is the word which is the cornerstone in the poem. This word(s) is like a leitmotiv carrying the gist of the poem. This word may occur only once or many a time but it is a word around which the whole poem turns. So, the identification of this or these word(s) is vital for the readers' appreciation of the poem. This is also the word which signals the ideology behind the poem. It is a word which is charged with various meanings. And readers cannot do without it. Sometimes, this word can traverse the whole poem. Because of its importance in the poem, it is referred to in this work as a leading word. Without the understanding and the implication of such a word, one may have a shallow if not a mistaken idea about the poem. This word is at the center of the image of the poem.

What has happened in our approach to the poem is that we have discovered that a single word, both in its literal and symbolic meaning is the main structural device that the poet uses to impose a unified and coherent meaning on his thoughts. An appreciation of what happens in a poem can come as we try to discover both the strategies and the devices of organization in each poem, (Senanu and Vincent, op. cit. p. 17).

As these two scholars have observed, the word which is referred to as a leading word, commands the structure and the form of the poem and conditions thereby readers' appreciation and understanding. In the poem "the blank CD" of Kodjovi, (2016, p.81), the word "CD" occurs seven times in the whole poem to stand as the cornerstone in the poem.

On the playground, a schoolboy has found  
This CD and brought it to his father,  
A Portuguese computer scientist who  
After analysis put his programme on it

Because it was empty.  
 But a flood came and all his belongings were gone.  
 And the CD has fallen in the hands of a  
 Spanish computer scientist who  
 After formatting put his own programme  
 But a war came and he rushed home for safety  
 Abandoning his belongings.

In case where this word is repeated many a time as in this poem, the reader's attention is automatically drawn to it. But this does not make it easy to understand without serious analysis of it as the center of the structure of the poem. In this poem of Kodjovi, the way the "CD" moves from hands to hands as results of some happenings is to analyse. It is remarked that the first person to have the "CD" is a Portuguese, followed by a Spaniard and after by a German before landing finally in the hands of a French. Each time the "CD" has to go out of the hand of the holder, the speaker creates an event which paralyses the holder in favour of another one. To get the full meaning of the poem, the reader then needs to know what is really the meaning of the "CD" in the poem. But after paying attention to the holders of the "CD", one discovers that these four hands –the Portuguese, Spaniard, German and French" are nothing else than some of the former colonizers of the African continent. Then the symbolism lying behind the use of the "CD" in the poem becomes clear. The speaker talks about African countries which passed from one European power to another before being finally shared by them.

Another element that needs readers' attention in poems is the grammatical tenses they embody. The tenses the speaker uses are of great importance. The manipulation the speaker makes of the tenses in the poem is a revelation of the thematic preoccupation in the poem. The speaker can move from one tense to another for a purpose which influences seriously the ideological position in the poem. For instance, the use of past tense is never the same as the use of present tense or present progressive tense. And this has to do with other knowledge on grammar as well:

We have found a new land  
 This side of eternity  
 Where our blackness does not matter  
 And our songs are dying on our lips  
 .....  
 And in the new land we have found  
 The water is drying from the towel  
 Our songs are dead and we sell them to the other side, (Awoonor, 2014, p.278).

At first glance at the poem, the reader may think of land as the natural earth. But a due attention to the tenses used by the speaker highlights the preoccupation that lies behind the poem. This piece of poem is composed of three tenses –present perfect, simple present tense, present progressive. A good grammatical knowledge of tenses usage is required here. The verses which comprise the present perfect stress the relationship that exists between the past and the present. The consequence of the

finding that is felt as the death of the speaker's songs and the dryness of water, is in fact the requirement of the present perfect tense used by the speaker. In addition, the present progressive tense comes to corroborate the progressive death of the speaker's songs. Finally, the use of the present tense shows the general truth about the new land found by the speaker. On the whole, this piece of poem is about the loss of African cultural and spiritual values when the continent has been in contact with Western civilization. The effects of this encounter is still being felt and observed in African countries today through the daily choices Africans are making as international citizens belonging to worldwide culture. And the immediate aftermath is the death of the speaker's songs –cultural values. So instead of being a poem about the discovery of a new land –earth, by the speaker, it is rather a lament and regret of the speaker vis-à-vis the degradation, death, and disappearance of his cultural values.

As for the grammatical elements like pronouns, determinants and adjectives, three of them are principally used: demonstrative and personal pronouns and possessive adjectives. For demonstrative ones, they are mainly used for emphasis purpose to corroborate the ideology of the poet. In the above poem of Kofi Awoonor, the use of "this" is to lay accusative emphasis and precision on the place where his cultural values are destroyed. In some other poems, the speaker use "you" to invite the reader to take part in what is his preoccupation in the poem.

Mama,  
Your jingle is our singing voice  
And the ringing of our heart.  
So ring! Jingle! And sing.  
For we are happy then to wear you  
To bear you closer to our heart,  
Our blood our spirit.  
Mama! Mama! Mama!  
Naked I stand before you  
To proclaim your righteousness  
And your suffering that must  
Be honoured and celebrated.  
Let no one forget and neglect.  
Lest your tears should rain on them, (Kodjovi op. cit. p. 64-65).

This poem of K. Kodjovi starts with a sort of jubilation in the tone of the speaker including his community by the use of possessive adjective "our." It is to invite the reader to believe that the "goddess Mama" which is celebrated in the poem belongs to the whole community who is happy to have it. But as for the severeness of the goddess, the speaker distinguishes himself from the community through his warning in the last two verses. This attitude shows that there is fear in his heart about the neglect of the goddess but the community on the whole is not aware of this. Here, the manipulation of these grammatical elements –you, our, we, you, them- helps to highlight the speaker fear in the midst of the joy and happiness that prevail in the

community. The interpretation of this poem requires the knowledge of these different grammatical elements that the poet uses. It is at this level that the response of readers to poems is vital and crucial for their understanding. Senanu & Vincent, (op. cit. p. 6), observe that “the intention is that students should understand these terms in the contexts of the poems assembled here, and that they should also be able to apply them meaningfully in their appreciation of any poetry or even in their own writing”. But on the whole, one should bear in mind that these elements whether formal or informal constitute the unity of the poem. “The total relationship among all the elements in a poem is what is all important; it is not a mechanical relationship but one that is far more intimate and fundamental” (Holt Rinehart & Winston, op. cit. p. 11). In other words, readers need to bear in mind that their appreciation and understanding of poems must take into account these elements –the titles, the tenses, the grammatical elements, the leading words – as a whole entity working for an end and not as isolate entities working singly for an end.

## 2. Reading Techniques and Levels of Language in Poetry Understanding

Because poetry deals with sounds and rhythm in its language, the way to read a poem counts a lot for its better appreciation. Another important aspect of poetry is that it is most of the time meant to be sung or performed depending on the context of the poem. Thomas & Johnson, (op. cit. p. 804), argue that:

in poetry tone is likewise important. We have not really understood a poem unless we have accurately sensed whether the attitude it manifests is playful or solemn, mocking or reverent, calm or excited. But the correct determination of tone in literature is a much more delicate matter than it is in spoken language, for we do not have the speaker’s voice to guide us.

So, it is then the reader who should know how to read so as to identify the tone of the poem.

To read aloud is, simply, one of the ways of exploring the experience of a poem. In the end this process should make you capable of sensing more fully the range of language, and of the dimensions of the poetic experience, even when you read to yourself, (Rinehart and Winston, op. cit. p. 50).

In this vein, Foster (2018, pp. 11-13), suggests six rules on how to read poems for better understanding. The first rule he proposes is to “read the words” without paying attention to their occurrence; the second rule, he says is to “read all the words”, that is to read the words in their contexts. Thirdly, he proposes to “read sentences” which means to read the verses as sentences ignoring the structure of the poem: the capital letters in the beginning, some full stops, commas, semi-colon, etc... Fourthly, his rule is to “ignore lines on first reading” that is, to read the poem ignoring the lines which are not meaningful in isolation but to read respecting meaning and not the lines. The lines may stop but the meaning may continue, so the reader should only respect the meaningful pause and not line pause. Rule five of



Thomas is to “obey all punctuation, including its absence” which is to pause for comma; pause more for colons; semicolons, and dashes. Stop for question marks, exclamation marks, and of course, periods. In other words, it to respect all the punctuation marks wherever they occur. In his last rule, he advises to “read the poem aloud” so as to hear how the poem sounds. In the same vein, Arp & Johnson, (op. cit. p. 668.), offer five techniques: firstly, they suggest reading the poem more than once, secondly they encourage readers to read using dictionaries; thirdly, they also think it is good to read so as to hear the sounds of words in the mind. Fourthly, they advise to read while paying attention to what the poem says; and finally to read aloud to hear the poem. All these ways concur to suggest that reading of poems determine what the reader will get as meaning whether the total or the prose meaning.

An important test of your reading will be how you handle the end of a line that lacks line-ending punctuation. A frequent mistake of the beginning reader is to treat each line as if it were a complete thought, whether grammatically complete or not, and to drop the voice at the end of it. A frequent mistake of the sophisticated reader is to take a running start upon approaching the end of a line and fly over it as if it were not there. The line is a rhythmical unit, and its end should be observed whether there is punctuation or not. If there is no punctuation, you ordinarily should observe the end of the line by the slightest of pauses or by holding on to last word in the line just a little longer than usual, without dropping your voice, (Arp & Johnson, op. cit. p.668).

So, it is important for readers to know how to read poems before appreciating them. It becomes clear that words play important role as far as poem appreciation is concerned. It is also vital for readers to know that sound in poetry is very crucial and unavoidable in the appreciation of poems. So, the poet in his selection of words deals greatly with the imagery as umbrella under which lie the experiences to share with the reader. It is important to remind young readers that “to distinguish the total meaning of a poem –the experience it communicates (and which can be communicated in no other way) –from its prose meaning –the ingredient that can be separated out in the form of a prose paraphrase”, (Arp & Johnson, op. cit. p.791.), is the central question of poetry understanding. To better get the point here, the prose meaning is the surface structure –denotative – meaning and the total meaning as the deep structure –connotative –meaning: that is the direct and indirect meaning. Rinehart & Winston, (op. cit. p. 267), observe as well that “the total meaning of a poem, then, is to be carefully distinguished from the event, real or imagined, that occasions the poem, as well as from the material of the poem or event from particular statements in the poem. Nor is the basic meaning necessarily the topic that first catches the eye”. So, it becomes urgent to warn against the haste readers have in pinpointing the meaning of poems. The poem has experiences to share and it is the task of readers to respond to the poem by being connected to the experience before trying to appreciate or interpret the poem. Rabinowitz, (1994, p.225), in his article “Canons and Close Readings” concludes that “the reader is the space on which all

the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination". And, it is obvious to whoever reads a poem to still bear in mind that words in poems are more used for their connotative rather than denotative meanings. For readers to respond to poems, they need to be very sensible to the imagery of the poem, because poems are concerned with senses, feelings and emotions. Therefore, the poem cannot achieve this effect without playing with readers' senses through the diction. Thomas & Johnson, (op. cit. p. 700), in their book, *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense, Ninth Edition*, illustrate well this point:

The poet's language, then, is more sensuous than ordinary language. It is richer in imagery. Imagery may be defined as the representation through language of sense experience. Poetry appeals directly to our senses, of course, through its music and rhythms, which we actually hear when it is read aloud. But indirectly it appeals to our senses through imagery, the representation to the imagination of sense experience. The word image perhaps most often suggests a mental picture, something seen in the mind's eye –and visual imagery is the kind of imagery that occurs most frequently in poetry. But an image may also represent a sound (auditory imagery); a smell (olfactory imagery); a taste (gustatory imagery); touch such as hardness, softness, wetness, or heat and cold (tactile imagery); an internal sensation, such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, or nausea (organic imagery); or movement or tension in the muscles or joints (kinesthetic imagery).

This list of images in literature in general and in poetry especially is not exhaustive as these scholars, later on, observe in the same book. So when readers read poems they must make sure they have the kinds of images behind the poem's diction and their desired effects must as well be felt. This is one way to respond to the poem's experience. To do this, the reader must be sensitive enough to the symbols in the poem and the aesthetic use of the language by the poet, for the poem may have a conversational or discursive and narrative tone. The experiences that the poet has to share is beyond the information young readers chase in poems and the poet does not use a common or ordinary language but rather a literary language which is multidimensional and needs to be apprehended by the reader with all his senses. A. Heywood, (1983, p. v), stresses this when she observes that "the poem's meaning can only be discussed by turning a respectful and trained attention to the way its language works on us."

Poetry, finally, is a kind of multidimensional language. Ordinary language –the kind that we use to communicate information –is one-dimensional. It is direct at only part of the listener, the understanding. Its one-dimension is intellectual. Poetry, which is language used to communicate experience, has at least four dimensions. If it is to communicate experience, it must be directed at the whole person, not just at your understanding. It must involve not only your intelligence but also your senses, emotions, and imagination. To the intellectual dimension, poetry adds a sensuous dimension, an emotional dimension, and an imaginative dimension, ( Heywood, 1983, p. v).

So to read and understand poetry implies the involvement of the whole person of the reader not just a part of his being. Full attention is required and the activation of one's senses is also unavoidable in this enterprise, because "the focus of structuralist

criticism, accordingly, is on the impersonal process of reading which, by bringing into play the requisite conventions, codes, and expectations, makes literary sense of the sequence of words, phrases, and sentences that constitute a text", (Abram & Harpham, 2005, p.311).

## CONCLUSION

The discussion in this article moves from the importance of poems' titles and their functions to other internal elements that make up poems. Under the headline of titles, it is recommended to take into account the nature of the title. The discussion further addresses the leitmotiv of the poem, that is, the leading words or expressions that are the stakeholders of the poem. After this, the importance of grammatical tenses usage in the poem is highlighted as crucial for understanding poems. As in grammar, it is shown that the use of tenses in poems touches the ideological stance of the poem. The use of tenses is combined with the use of other grammatical elements accordingly. Later on, a particular emphasis has been laid on how to read poems before any claim to appreciate them. Different ways of reading have been discussed and their impacts on the meaning of the poems are revealed to be very important. This work discovers that language is a tool structuralists highlight in their analyses of literature in general. One aspect of language that is strongly advised to dissect in poetry understanding is the diction that conditions the sound effects of the poem.

As result it has also been discovered that beyond the traditional formal devices like meter, foot, rhythm, tone, and others, there are still some clues that can help to understand and appreciate poems. It is even revealed that with the advent of free verse and modern poetry these formal devices are tending to lose hold on poets in their writing. Finally, it is revealed that no elements in creative writings is useless especially in poetry.

This article is a paramount tool for younger readers or learners to regain their lost love for poetry. Another solution this work brings to the world of poetry particularly is its suggestions for readers to know how to read poems.

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