Introduction

The majority of the teaching of poetry at KSU is based on the traditional critical literary approach. This approach focuses on the 'literariness of the texts', including features as the setting, themes, plot, characterization, motivation, value, psychology, and background (Maley, 1997). This approach can be practical for Saudi students if they already grasped ample knowledge of English and American conventions and ideologies. Thus, a search for innovative pedagogy for the poetry classroom is necessary. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for culturally appropriate teaching. The present study draws on such research since it focuses on the particular issue of teaching poetry in English to Saudi students and the recognition of schema knowledge as an impeding factor. It explores students' perceptions to understand to what extent is poetry and schema theory directly relevant to text comprehension.

Cultural schemata offer for the reading process the existing cultural knowledge that one has obtained, are formed with all related cultural experience within ones' reach, from schools, families, and communities (Chang, 2004). As different languages possess disparate culture-specific inventories of linguistic items for expressing universal concepts, the consequent diversity of these expressions often disrupts the comprehension of culturally underlying meanings as far as a non-native reader is concerned.

Anderson, R. C., Osborn, J., & Tierney, R. J (1984) comment on this point: "the schemata a person already possesses are a principal determiner of what will be learned from a new text" (p. 439). They state that this is a hindrance in the case of students with different background knowledge and means additional teaching techniques are essential. The role of schemata in reading comprehension is referred to as schema theory, as stated by Carrel and Eisterhold (1983).

The term "schema" is often used as a superordinate label for a broad range of knowledge structures, including frames, scenarios, scripts, and plans, as described below. "Schema" is also used as a synonym for "frame" (Dijk, T., 1985, p. 78) to refer to mental representations of objects, settings, or situations. A schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory. It is a sort of framework, or plan, or script. Schemata are created through experience with people, objects and events in the world. When we encounter something repeatedly, such as a restaurant, we begin to generalize across our restaurant experiences to develop an abstract, generic set of expectations about what we will encounter in a restaurant (Cook, 1989).

Schemata are the underlying connections that allow new experience and information to be aligned with previous knowledge. When one reads a text, he or she usually uses all his levels of schemata. Schemata enable us to make sense of what is perceived and experienced in the world. In poetry, readers usually examine carefully and deeply what they are reading in comparison with other sorts of discourse. Coherence is achieved when a reader perceives connections among schemata. It is a connection between linguistic and textual features of the text, and reader's mental expectations as well as stored knowledge of the world (Cook, 1989). In teaching poetry, one of the first problems which need to be resolved is the lack of appropriate schemata in English or American texts. This lack caused Saudi students' inability to comprehend the significant implications of a poem and was a recurring theme in the teaching of many of my poetry classes.

Some researchers state that the inter-relation between schema knowledge and other knowledge (e.g., expert, autobiographical, and text world knowledge) needs to be explored further and built into an overall model with empirical testing of texts which are more complex than traditional psychological and Artificial Intelligence materials. (b) More psychological research is needed to establish how generic knowledge derived from the real world is utilized in building counterfactual worlds since the findings from current empirical work are not consistent (Ferguson & Sanford 2008 ; Nieuwland & Van Berkum 2006).

This idea was also supported by Wallace (2003), who argues that "the first part of a text activates a schema... which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows" (p. 33). In reading poems, the title can be the beginning of comprehending the meaning. This argument suggests the need to help the reader and put him on the right course in his reading.

The significance of this paper lies in its attempt to understand Saudi students' reading of poetry in English and the challenges they face as non-natives, especially since it involves both pre-existing linguistic and cultural knowledge, which form one's linguistic and cultural schemata. Students from different cultures have different schemata since they receive different education; their knowledge has been greatly influenced by their religion, social conventions, social behavior, ideology, and language. As such, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Saudi students perceive the relationship between lack of appropriate schemata and comprehending English and American poetry?
2. How do Saudi students perceive the activation of students' schemata for improving their comprehension of English and American poetic texts?

Most of the studies in the literature recognise the complexities involved in the language of poetry, the immense experience it carries, and the worldly experiences a reader brings to it. However, very few studies address Schemata or the lack of appropriate schemata as an obstacle to the reading and comprehension of English and American Poetic texts in Saudi universities.

Review of Literature
Poetry and schema theory seem to be directly relevant to text comprehension. Betjeman and Gardner (2005) propose that when we begin to analyse a poem, we try to understand what the poem evokes in us and "what the implications of the sensations derived from the poem mean. The interpretation of literary texts is dependent on responses to "linguistic devices within a poem" (p. 1). Semino (1997) explains how this process occurs, "It is one of the basic tenets of cognitive psychology that comprehension crucially depends upon the availability and activation of relevant prior knowledge" (p. 123), so "we make sense of new experiences and of texts in particular by relating the current input to pre-existing mental representations of similar entities, situations, and events" (p. 123). One of the reasons for Semino's use of schema theory in the analysis of poetry is her increased interest in the "[cognitive] process [es] of literary interpretation" (p. 152).

One of the examples which Betjeman gives is Semino's explanation of Blake's *The Tyger* According to Semino (1997), the poem contains the following keywords that target the readers'

schemata: "TIGER, FOREST, NIGHT, BLACKSMITH, ARTIST, GOD, SPEAR THROWER, TEARS" (p. 153). She further explains that:

> these schemas are connected in the text through 'deviations, patterns, and ambiguities in the language of the text. The overall effect of [a] poem, then, is to bring together these schemata either by choosing elements that they already have in common or by establishing new links between them. (p. 154)

In summarizing his theory, Cook (1989) pointed out that: The idea of 'schema refreshment' through discourse deviation is essentially the Russian formalist concept of defamiliarization restated in the light of discourse analysis. In other words, the theory builds on the notion of defamiliarization by using tools that were not available to its original creators.

Comeaux (1994) argues that the study of schemata and comprehension in poetry can be supplementary. The language of poetry is exemplary in its utilisation of the skills of reading, comprehension, writing, speaking and, listening, so Comeaux suggests that the performance of poetry should become "the center of a language arts program" (p. 77). Comeaux states that, while "the most tightly structured form of language" (p. 77) uses metaphor and rhythm to achieve its impact, it is the performance of poetry which "emphasizes the inseparability" (p.79) of those elements. "In performing poetry, students are actively using language in its fullest, and perhaps most significant, sense as they experience the capability of language to evoke feelings, to suggest images, and to describe the essence of things" (p.79).

Scollon (1995) continues this argument, adding that different cultures use different rhetorical structures. While some foreign students might use a "topic-comment order of presentation" when speaking or writing, a native English speaker would use a "comment-topic" order of presentation (p.2). This might confuse or mislead a reader about what the essential part of a message is. For example, some international students, when reading an English text, will expect the primary information to come at the end, rather than at the beginning. Thus, international students may misinterpret the main argument of a text.

Anderson, C., Osborn, Tierney (1984) also argue that activating schema knowledge can provide a bridge for the reader and the text. Bacigalupe and Cámara (2012) further support these ideas about schemata and poetry. His C-schema suggests that a lyrical subject can be created in the reader's mind by his own will when the situation necessitates its construction. Bacigalupe and Cámara say that "lyrical subjects can be described as complex bundles of personality traits, conjured up in the reader's mind, which possess intrinsic properties that make them somehow attractive and, for that reason, part of the artistic creation" (p.158).

Quindos (2007) also shares this theory. He believes that:

> The perception of a persona behind the poem is nothing strange to our everyday cognitive interpretation of discourse. Every time we come across a text, we assume it must have been produced by somebody trying to communicate something or to express himself or herself. (p.157)

The ideal example of this discourse is poetry, which "seems to be a prototypical case of subjective discourse, which makes readers have the feeling that there is a subject speaking" (p.157). Quindos uses this as the basis for an analysis of Sylvia Plath's poem 'I Am Vertical,' which focuses on allowing the reader to explore the persona speaking behind the poem's words. The aim is "to study how the mention of body position contributes here to the reader's mental construction of this persona" (p.157). Quindos believes the motor-sensory imagery and the conceptual metaphors suggested by the words of the poem, together with the long term memory of the readers' knowledge, "intermingle in a multi-connection holistic game that helps the reader construe the persona behind the words" (p.158).

Therefore, there is a link between schema theory and the understanding of poetic texts. Thus it recognises the complexities involved in the language of poetry, the immense experience it carries, and the worldly experiences a reader brings to it. Schemata are an important issue that must be addressed if the obstacles to the reading comprehension of Saudi students studying English and American poetry with cultural themes dissimilar to their own are to be understood, and teaching approaches are formulated to support their needs. For the purpose of this research, I will therefore apply culturally-relevant pedagogy as a framework for this case study to explore students' perceptions regarding schemata and studying English and American poetry.

"Culturally-relevant teaching" is a term used by Ladson-Billings (1994). It refers to teachers creating a bridge between students' home and school lives in order to integrate the students' culture with the syllabus while continuing to meet the expectations of the curricular requirements of the district and the state. There are many other terms used to denote this type of pedagogy, including "culturally responsive," "culturally respective," "culture-sensitive," "culturally rooted," "culturally relevant," "culturally appropriate," and "culturally congruent" (Campbell, 2004; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally-relevant teaching uses the background, knowledge, and experience of the students to formulate teachers' lessons or teaching methods. Gloria Ladson-Billings first introduced this teaching approach to make teachers aware of the reality that many of their students would come to their classrooms with different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds. One crucial example found in American classrooms is when African American and other minority children face difficulties in America's public schools because of cultural reasons. The need for this form of education is based on a sense of care and responsibility from the educators themselves. Gay (2010) identifies the power of caring as one of the essential components of culturally relevant pedagogy, "The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective…. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 29).

The study provides insight into the individual nature of difficulties with different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds, and students' and teachers' experience in the context of pedagogy. Gay (2010) defines social and cultural significance to highlight their role in the understanding of the text. He explains that a social perspective acknowledges that a "reader's social role and perceptions of the social context" may shape the literary transaction, while a cultural perspective recognises that the "reader's cultural role, attitudes, contexts" (p. 8) may also shape transactions with the text. Equally important is a textual perspective, which brings to the fore the

"reader's knowledge of conventions" (p. 8), that is, the reader's "knowledge of narrative conventions, literary elements, genre conventions and other aspects of text" (p. 61). This study recognises perspectives that shape the pedagogical transaction for improving the reader's role involving a capacity for self-directed development. Eisenhart's (2001) view of cultural pedagogy is that culture can empower people. Still, it can also hold them back because there are real "social, economic, and power differences that separate people and their experiences," and each individual's "perception of the world can be constrained by culture and the enduring social structures that culture mediates" (p. 215). Eisenhart's point is relevant for this study because it shows that it is essential for researchers and educators to understand and work with culture and its needs if they are to improve teaching circumstances. Many researchers have developed and supported theories of culture-centred pedagogy, which believe that "since how one thinks, writes and speaks reflects the culture and affects performance, aligning instruction to the cultural," concepts of different students "can improve student achievement" (Gay, 2010, p. xv-xvi).

The present study draws on such research since it focuses on the particular issue of teaching English and American poetry to Saudi students. These issues are of significant concern for this study because they can provide a greater understanding of the challenges facing Saudi students.

Methodology
Participants
This study is to measure the Saudi undergraduate students' experience of studying English and American poetry and to establish the validity of the students' opinions, three poetry courses participated in the questionnaire and open questions. The participants were 51 female students from the English Department at King Saud University. The students were chosen based on convenient sampling and their willingness to participate. All of the students had studied at least two courses, which include the teaching of English and American poetry before enrolling in the poetry course they were taking at the time of the study. All the students have taken the Introduction to Literature courses, which focus on introducing students to the necessary techniques for appreciating an extensive range of poems. Additionally, the majority of the students have studied at least one of the more advanced poetry courses. These are the Romantic and Modern poetry courses, which cover the major characteristics and techniques that define these periods of poetry. This shows that the participants are appropriate for this study since they have a reasonable basis in English and American poetry. The participants in this study studied a survey of The British Literature course and completed 11 weeks before they were given the questionnaire and open questions. To conduct the influence of schema activation on students' reading comprehension of poetry in English, participants received two tests on selected poetic texts; the difference is that the first exam was conducted without receiving activating techniques for their background knowledge on the topic. While, the second exam was conducted after they received pre-reading activating techniques to improve their background knowledge and lack of appropriate schemata.

Data Collection Instruments
The study adopted a triangulation design to collect the data. Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to enhance validity. Bryman (2004) explains that triangulation is one of the several principles for multi-method research data triangulation assists in obtaining data from different resources; hence, enriching and deepening the results of the study. Additionally, it

increases the validity and trustworthiness of the study results (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Specifically, the data collected was through questionnaire and open questions. It involves the use of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a complete set of findings to assess the perceptions of students at King Saud University to learning English and American poetry, with a focus on any hindrances to reading and interpretation due to the lack of appropriate schemata.

Instruments
The Questionnaire
The issues raised in the questionnaire are various factors that hinder Saudi students' reading and comprehension of English and American poetry, all of which are based on my teaching experience and my research for this study. The discussions of issues in the questionnaire are divided: interference and misunderstanding of background knowledge, problems due to different rhetoric, and examining students' openness to schema activation techniques within the poetry classroom.

    The questionnaire uses closed questions that are answered on a dichotomous scale so that the research could obtain feedback and concentrate on the particular problem or problems that are perceived to be having the most substantial effect on students' reading of English and American poems. The second stage of the data collection is open questions, which allow students to discuss issues regarding schemata and the poetry classroom freely. Tashakkori and Teddle (2003) explain that close-ended items indicate the participants' views on the usefulness of a particular program or study. The use of the open-ended questions reveals their views on its benefits and limitations. The questionnaire is given to three classes to ensure a large number of respondents, and it comprises nine questions.

    The first category deals with interference and misunderstanding of background or cultural knowledge. From my teaching experience, some Saudi students lack the appropriate schemata for reading and analysing English and American poetic texts. This category attempts to discover the students' perceptions of these issues. It goes to inquire about the differing English and American social and cultural references and religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text and whether they can relate to the topics formulated in the poems. Thus addresses the problem of students' inability to identify with English and American poems and poetic conventions and how this may prevent them from understanding the thematic implication or main idea of the poem.

    The second category examines problems associated with the lack of appropriate schemata regarding the differences in the Arabic and English language. This results in different rhetoric. For example, students will have a problem finding a starting point when reading an English poem due to the differences in sentence structure and composition between Arabic and English. Arabic is a Semitic language that is read from right to left and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, making it extremely complex, allegorical, and structural. In contrast, English is direct and values simplicity and individualism compared to the more social topics that are common in Arabic discourse. The questionnaire addresses students' failure to understand a poem's main idea as a result of the different word order in English and Arabic. For example, the usual word order in English is SVO (subject then verb then object), while the usual word order in Arabic is VSO, and the Arabic sentence does not have to contain a verb, whereas the English sentence must (Kanso, Karim Sinno, & Adams 2001). These factors look at problems of comprehension that prevent

students from fulfilling their potential when they are reading and analysing English poems independently.

The third category examines students' openness to schema activation techniques within the poetry classroom. This is proposed to maximize comprehension of the poems. For instance, to introduce some common knowledge about English and American conventions, customs, habits, historical background, and so on aimed at improving and guiding the students' reading.

The last category in the questionnaire is an open question that gives participants space to express any problems or weaknesses in their comprehension of English and American poems due to lack of appropriate. Data collected through the open questions enables the researcher to see which of the recognised factors that impede the reading of English and American poems coincide with students' own opinions and views. It also shows whether students hold any other ideas that contribute to this research, adding further dimensions to the study.

Also, because qualitative and quantitative methods are used as data sources, there are two different forms of data coding, which offer the opportunity for triangulation. The qualitative data from the open questions are analysed using labelling of the major themes and concepts identified from my teaching experience. The quantitative data is analysed using the appropriate corpus or program to measure the extent of the problems the students encounter and their awareness of these problems. This will be presented using percentages and charts. The two methods are conducted concurrently on the same group and campus, yet the results are independent of each other. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is that doing so brings together the strengths of both forms of research in order to validate the study.

The categorisation of the responses was necessary for the data analysis. The questions in the questionnaire are divided into different categories based on the students' answers as follows:

1- Positive responses mean that students agree with or are aware of the obstacles and difficulties in reading English and American poetry.
2- Negative responses mean that the respondents do not agree with or are not aware of the existence of any obstacles and difficulties.
3- The open questions allow students to comment and to give their personal input.

The results of the questionnaire are divided into two sections, one for the closed questions and the second for the open questions. This research involves the use of multiple methods, and I present the results according to the research method; the findings of the questionnaire are presented first. The remaining results from the open-questions are presented afterwards.

Students' Perceptions
This part of the study describes the findings of the Saudi students' perceptions, based on a dichotomous scale. The findings are presented in tables that show the total number of students who responded to the question and the category, which is based on the coding of the closed questions: Yes-1 and No- 2.

Background Knowledge

The second category includes the students' responses to three questions concerning background knowledge and comprehending the main topic of the poem. Table 1 summarises the participants' responses to questions 1-3.

Table 1. *Background knowledge*

		Category	Number
QUESTION 1	Yes	1	36
	No	2	15
	Total		51
QUESTION 2	Yes	1	31
	No	2	20
	Total		51
QUESTION 3	Yes	1	24
	No	2	27
	Total		51
Total	Yes	1	91
	No	2	62
	Total		153

The first question in this section (question one) is, "Do you have a problem comprehending the implications or associations evoked by the title of the poem in the English or American poem?" This question is based on the researcher's previous teaching experience: students' lack of appropriate schemata had problems linking the title of the poem to the main idea of the English and American poem. The results reveal that the majority of the students find it a hindrance: 71% answered 'Yes' to the question, and only 29% do not believe that this was a problematic factor.

The second question (question two) is, "Do images and illusions as they are constructed in the English, and American poem cause a problem with the comprehension of the poem?" The question is particularly relevant to Saudi students because they are all Arabic and Muslim and have different background knowledge. Without the appropriate cultural schemata, it is natural for Saudi students to fail in obtaining the appropriate meanings. Hence, they are not likely to form relevant images in their mind.

Thus, it was not surprising to find that the majority of the students' responses agreed that different cultural, religious ideologies and references could impede their configuration of the images and illusions in the poem. 61% of the students answered 'Yes' and only 39% do not believe this to be a challenge to comprehension.

The third question (question three) asks, "Do you have a problem identifying with the author or persona, his life, his background?" This question investigates students' ability to identify with English and American poets and the personas constructed in the poem that have different social, cultural, and religious ideologies. 47% of the students agree that this is an obstacle, while 53% do not believe that this was a problematic factor.

Social and cultural ideologies and references seem to have more of an influence on comprehension. The students' beliefs appear to be based on their individual experience of studying English and American poetry and the extent of their exposure to English and American ideologies. Only 41% of respondents do not find social and cultural ideologies and references to be problematic in their reading of English and American poetry. Furthermore, 59% of the respondents feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems. This percentage, although lower, suggest that a large number of students face problems as a result of the difference in the cultural context and are at a disadvantage compared to students who have appropriate social, cultural and religious schemata for English and American poetry.

Language Differences

The first category includes the students' responses to three questions pertaining to one issue. Table two shows the participants' responses to questions 4-6, which investigate problems concerning language differences in the questionnaire.

Table 2. *Language differences analysis*

		Category	Number
QUESTION 4	Yes	1	19
	No	2	32
	Total		51
QUESTION 5	Yes	1	18
	No	2	33
	Total		51
QUESTION 6	Yes	1	21
	No	2	30
	Total		51
Total	Yes	1	58
	No	2	95
	Total		153

The first question shown here (question four) is, "Do you find a problem with reading the English and American poem due to the different linguistic deviation and sentence structure?" The results show that less than half the students (37%) had problems, and 63% of the participants said that they had no problems due to language variation.

The second question in this section (question five) is, "Do you find a problem reading and understanding the English and American poem due to differences in the Arabic and English rhetoric?" This question is asked because Arabic is a Semitic language that reads from right to left and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, making it extremely complex, allegorical and, structural; in contrast, English is direct and values simplicity and individualism rather than Arabic's more social topics. The figures reveal that 35% of the students have problems reading the poem due to the differences in Arabic and English rhetoric, while 65% indicate that this was not an obstacle to their reading and comprehension.

The third question in this section (question six) is, "Do you find a problem comprehending the English and American poem due to linguistic choices in the poem?" This question is asked to understand the correlation between the poets' core vocabulary and the Saudis students' schema. Do they comprehend the poets' voices? 41% of the students feel that this hinders their comprehension, while 59% do not believe it to be a problem in their reading of English poems.

This problem is observed by Scollon (1995), who suggests that different cultures use different rhetorical structures. While some foreign students might use a "topic-comment order of presentation" when speaking or writing, a native English speaker would use a "comment-topic" order of presentation (p. 2). This can actually confuse or mislead a reader who is searching for the most important part of the message.

Students' Openness to Schema Activation Strategies

The third category is dedicated to investigating students' openness to Schema activation strategies as a process to improve reading comprehension of the poetic texts. Table 3 summarises the participants' responses to the three investigated issues.

Table3: *Students' openness to schema activation strategies*

		Category	N
QUESTION 7	Yes	1	46
	No	2	5
	Total		51
QUESTION 8	Yes	1	43
	No	2	8
	Total		51
QUESTION 9	Yes	1	35
	No	2	16
	Total		51
Total	Yes	1	124
	No	2	29
	Total		153

The first question in this section (question seven) is, "Would you want an elaborate discussion about the title or topic of the poem to build or guide your reading?". The result shows that the majority of the students (88%) approve, and only 12% do not.

The second question (question eight) investigates students' perception of improving core vocabulary through a schema activation process: "Would you want to discuss and explore key words in the poem related to necessary background knowledge?" The responses show almost complete agreement with 82% in favour of the idea, and only 18% disagree.

The third question in this section (question nine) is, "Would you want schema activation classes for the history part in the poetry class to provide you with information which fills in your lack of social, cultural, and religious knowledge necessary for understanding the English poem being studied?" 69% of the students agree that supportive teaching techniques for historical information would be beneficial, while 31% disagree.

This section investigates students' perception of the present teaching approach and to see whether their opinion supports the researchers' perspective that there is a need for the implementation of activation techniques tailored to their needs and their schemata. A large majority believe that there is a need for such a change in pedagogy, with 124 of the 153 responses indicating that they find the traditional teaching approaches problematic, only 29 of 153 found them useful. According to Anderson, R. C., Osborn, J., & Tierney, R. J. (1984), pre-reading activities function as a way to access the reader's prior knowledge and "provide a bridge between his knowledge and the text" (p.610).

Open Questions
This section presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of the open questions. The following are the questions asked:
1- Has the lack of appropriate schemata limited your comprehension of an English or American poem? State your experience by giving an example of a poem you've previously studied and had difficulties with due to any cultural, religious, or ideological issues.
2- Do you find that with the more texts you study, your schema develops? Please give examples if you can from previous studies.
3- Please leave a comment suggesting ways you would find helpful in the development of your own schemata.

The purpose of the first question is to explore the Saudi students' beliefs about the lack of appropriate schemata and the role they play in hindering the comprehension of English and American poems. The second question asks the students to explain if there is a development in their schema with the more text they study or is the situation the same due to the lack of schema intervention techniques. The third question allows the researcher to hear Saudi students' voices and lets them suggest any problems I did not take into consideration. The results are presented according to the students' answers to each question. All the students answered the questionnaire, but not all gave their opinion in response to the open question. Of the 51 students, 20 state their opinions. This number is considered more than sufficient to allow me to gather data for this section

of the study. To facilitate the presentation of the beliefs of the students, five answers that are representative of each particular question are shown, since some were similar in answers.

Question One
Has the lack of appropriate schemata limited your comprehension of an English or American poem? State your experience by giving an example of a poem you've previously studied and had difficulties with due to any cultural, religious, or ideological issues.

In the first extract, student one relates her experience with poetry and the lack of appropriate schemata:

> As a Saudi, there is a gap between us and the west, especially in that we perceive things differently. I remember reading a poem for Sylvia Plath, "Getting There" and being asked to analyse it. It talked about a person that was in a train and he was describing things he was seeing. My friends and I thought it was just a trip a person was enjoying, and from past experience, I was always mesmerized by the view outside during car rides. Thus, it only made sense that he was enjoying the view outside and that was merely it. It turned out that he was seeing his life. He was about to die and go to the other side. Another thing that I found very interesting was the use of incense in different cultures. For Saudis, it usually means a guest is coming over or something close to that, but for instance reading a play like "Medea" by Euripides it meant something else or like Family or Life. Ultimately, incense has got to do with one's culture or in the case of Family Life or religion. (Shahad)

Student two also believes that she needs to have the same background knowledge to understand the main idea of a poem because she lacks the appropriate schemata to understand the references in the poems:

> It is evident that my background knowledge differs from that of the poets I study, and most of the times this presents itself in the limitation of my analysis and interpretation. It is hard for me to resonate to the deeper meaning of most texts and poems because I lack the experiences and emotions the works are based upon. Maybe as I grow and face different things in life, I am able to grasp the concepts of these works better and I find that I can pinpoint certain words and phrases that indicate an underlying meaning. For example, when studying the works of William Wordsworth, I perceived the recurring mentions of nature as the author's deep fascination of the world. Upon reading more about Wordsworth's life, I came to the understanding that nature was the friend to him that he could not find, which explained the repeated use of personification in his work. On the other hand, my schemata limiting me has helped me find the simpler and more stripped meanings of many works, it helps me overlook all the minute details and focus on the main idea the author is trying to communicate.(Danah)

Student three states that cultural differences are a hindrance to the comprehension of English and American poems:

> First, my schemata limited my comprehension of English poem in several ways. For example, the poems by William Shakespeare were too difficult to be understood when I started studying them in course Eng. 318. I think because I was not familiar with those types of literary works. Some of his poems were about the Elizabethan age and their

> customs, and I did not know anything about their society or about the whole age. Once I started learning the age, I understood his poems and why he wrote them. I think my schemata developed a lot once I studied the ages because without studying them I think I will never be able to analyze works such as poems or any literary work. (Amani)

Student four also supports the idea that different cultural and historical backgrounds cause the students to be unable to relate to the poem:

> The first poem I studied was Sonnet 116, by William Shakespeare. To me it was very easy to understand because it resembles so many Arabic poems that I read. It talks about love and describes it as a special feeling and so on. On the other hand, "Death Be Not Proud" by John Donne was a little bit hard to understand. Because I had to focus more on the experience and background of the poet in order to understand his message. (Razan)

Student five also shows an awareness of religious differences hindering her comprehension:

> It limited my comprehension when it came to the "periods". For example a certain time period has a set of characteristics that can mostly be applied to that time period's texts, as a result I generalised those characteristics to all the texts from that period not knowing that some text do not necessarily have those characteristics. Another example would be that I see the western world, and mostly American works and news, nowadays tend to be violent and savage which developed a certain pattern in my mind about them, however, from what I studied they are completely different.

The perceptions for this question highlighted ideas which I, as an educator, did not consider. They emphasised lack of appropriate schemata gained through life experience and age. This can be very helpful when considering schema activating techniques. Furthermore, from the participants' responses, media was also an influential factor which may or may not be a trustworthy source to base their analysis of the works they study

Question Two
Do you find that with the more texts you study, your schema develops? Please give examples if you can from previous studies.

In the first extract, student one relates her experience with the development of her schemata:

> The more I read, the more I start to become aware of how things go in different cultures. I started reading books about racism and how Hitler treated people of different colour, religion, and background. At first I was oblivious of what went on. To illustrate, I often heard about concentration camps, but only knew that it had to do with Hitler, and that he only put people that did not match his criteria. Later on, it turned out those concentration camps was a process with different phases. It meant gas chambers, death, torture, isolation, suicide, labor, and the list goes on (Man's Search for Meaning). Another example that would fit with what's going on today is how Black people were treated during Apartheid.

> I knew there was racism but was not aware of the fact that they had to live in certain places, could not associate with different colours and so on (Born a Crime). (Shahad)

The second stresses the importance of developing one's schemata so that they can understand symbolism and references in the poem.

> Yes, it develops because the brain absorbs more knowledge and in result it enhances the experience I get when reading new texts. For example when I read T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland", I thought it is difficult but I knew it is a Modern text which helped me understand the poem more because Modernism has distinctive features and it was applied in "The Wasteland". (Nora)

Student four touches upon an important issue related to the differences in rhetoric and the internal struggle Saudi students face when studying English and American poems.

> I do find that the more I read, the easier it is for me to make sense of more works. With the right guidance, I can tackle more difficult poems and styles of writing. For example, when studying Emily Dickinson's poems I had difficulty understanding her method of writing and why it was effective, the more I read, the clearer it became to me that it was indeed effective.   (Danah)

Student four shows that Saudi students are at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding English and American poetry when compared to English and American students who can relate to their own theory and history.

> When I was studying criticism we were discussing the Marxist theory which explains the struggles between social classes. Schemata helped me to link the theory with a poem I read in the poetry class. I had enough knowledge to write my final paper and link the Marxist characteristics. (Ghoid)

Student five in the fifth extract clearly states that the basic problems related to the comprehension of the English and American poetry are the differences in rhetoric:

> At first, I barely ever understood what the poet is talking about. Now, I'm able to look deeper into every line, and find the meaning behind it. For example, I would look more into the cultural, religious, personal background of the poet and try to relate it to his poem, or I would even look for the Era in which the poem was written. (Razan)

The perceptions for the second question support the belief that the students' schemata develops with more exposure to various forms of literature and poetry from all ages. Furthermore, from the participants' responses, there is a shift towards independent learning, analysis to develop their critical powers and thus their schema knowledge.

Question Three:
Please leave a comment suggesting ways you would find helpful in the development of your own schemata.
The participants' agreed that reading is a major factor for improving their schema knowledge in the poetry classroom. Their beliefs also suggest that experience allows them to understand and learn differing background knowledge. These are some of the suggestions:

1- The only way, for me, is through reading. The more you explore, read, and research, the more you will come to know the cultures, religions, and beliefs in general of different people from different places and backgrounds. (Shahad)
2- Personally, I find studying the author's history and lifestyle helps me relate to their work the way they intended it to be read. This aspect is commonly overlooked, but I find it immensely valuable when analysing specific lines and phrases talking about the author's feelings and emotions that majority of time, are the biggest keys and indicators when trying to analyse the poem as a whole. (Danah)
3-Being educated and well-read will develop a great deal of my schemata, because schema is your background knowledge ex: the vocabulary you know movies you have watched, books you have already read with the ability to link your pervious knowledge and experience with a brand new one. (Ghoid)
4- I always find generalization helps because many cultures share common ways. Although, it can be wrong, bias, and prejudices sometimes. Therefore studying and reading is essential.
5- I think the best way to develop a schema is reading. Read and explore the world as much as you can. (Amani)
6-We should read more about the English and American culture and history and try to look deeper into the lines by understanding all the main words. (Razan)

Discussion
Predominately, the results demonstrate that students' schemata play a significant role in their reading and comprehension of poetic texts in English. It is notable that the results of the current study are in line with those of Bacigalupe and Cámara (2012); Cook (2001);   Comeaux (1994); Quindos (2007); Scollon (1995) who point out the significance of background knowledge in the interpretation of texts and highlight the importance of the concept of schema as a theoretical construct in reading comprehension. The results for the questionnaire and the open questions suggest a need for the implementation of activation techniques for their schemata tailored to their needs because the content of the topic in the poems became more accessible. In this regard, Anderson, C., Osborn, Tierney (1984) suggest, activating schema knowledge as a way to access readers' knowledge can "provide a bridge between his knowledge and the text" (p. 610).

The students highlighted their need to understand some keywords from the poetic text to improve their comprehension. They also perceived experience, reading, and all forms of studying to be a helpful tool that assists them to understand other cultures and thus comprehend the main idea of the poem. Thus, the students' recognized the need for schema activation tasks to recompense for the absence of a lack of appropriate cultural knowledge and possible vocabulary deficiencies. This claim is supported by Compaore (2004), who claimed that a language is not detached from the socio-cultural milieu in which it evolved and that it is imperative for non-native

speakers to have some degree of immersion or exposure in that milieu. It is worthwhile concluding from the outcome of the questionnaire that only a third of the respondents do not find social and cultural ideologies and references to be problematic while 49% of the respondents feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems. This percentage, although lower, suggests that a large number of students face problems as a result of the difference in the cultural context and are at a disadvantage compared to students who have appropriate social, cultural and religious schemata for English and American poetry. This evidence, in turn, confirms my hypothesis that helping learners activate their cultural schemata successfully reinforces their reading and comprehension of poetic texts in English.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that a lack of appropriate schemata affects the reading process and comprehension of English and American poems. If students are familiar with the main ideas in the poem in relation to religion, social conventions, social behavior, ideology, they will comprehend the poetic text easily. Furthermore, activating students' background knowledge can improve their comprehension of English and American poetic texts. Thus, the use of schema activating techniques supports students for the content of the text. Summarily, the results of this study validate the topic addressed. The outcome of this research study suggests that lack of the appropriate schemata can be an obstacle to the reading and comprehension of English and American poetic texts. The researcher suggests that more efforts to be taken to improve teaching techniques to develop students' comprehension in the poetry classroom. This study supports the need for ongoing research to create a framework for teaching poetry to non-native students that reduces stress and provides students with teaching techniques to support their reading and comprehension of American and English poems.

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