THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRAMMATICAL ABILITY AND POETRY INTERPRETATION SKILLS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NYERI DISTRICT.

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH KENYATTA UNIVERSITY NAIROBI

JULY, 2000
DECLARATION

THIS THESIS IS MY ORIGINAL WORK AND HAS NOT BEEN PRESENTED FOR A DEGREE IN ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY

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DEDICATION

To my dear parents: my father, Jeremiah Wanjohi Mairani, for teaching me the value of hard work, and my mother, Hannah Wanjiru, for inculcating in me the humble virtue of perseverance.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to Kenyatta University for awarding me a scholarship which has enabled me to undertake this study successfully.

I feel indebted to my supervisors; the late Dr. Joseph K. Muthiani who guided me through the proposal stage of this study, Mr. C. M. Gecaga and Dr. A. Akidiva for their invaluable assistance throughout the course of this study.

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Finally, I would like to thank all members of my family and friends who, in one way or another, contributed to the successful completion of this study.
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Definition of Terms

Cohesion: The formal linkage between the elements of a discourse/text

Correlation: Mutual relationship

Grammatical ability: Used interchangeably in this study with ‘linguistic competence’ and ‘competence in language’ to refer to the degree of skill with which a person can use language, such as how well a person can read, write or understand a language.

Interpretation: Understanding the language of a text, meaning and theme(s)

Performance: The accomplishment of an activity in written form.

Provincial Schools: Secondary schools in the Kenyan education system which, as a matter of government policy, admit 15% of their students from the province in which they are situated and 85% of their students from Primary Schools from within the district in which they are situated.

Reader Response Criticism: An approach to criticism which focuses on the activities of the reader in the interpretation of a work.

Stylistics: Study of the use of language in literary texts.

Syntax: The formal arrangement of words in a sentence.

List of Abbreviations

K.C.S.E.: Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. (The Examination taken at the end of the four year secondary school course)

K.I.E.: Kenya Institute of Education
ABSTRACT

The concern of this study was to investigate the relationship between Form Four students' grammatical ability and their skill in interpreting poetry. The study explored the effect of the mastery of the grammar of English language on Secondary school students' interpretation of poetry. The study also examined whether the use of specialized language in poetry hinders or facilitates interpretation.

The sample was drawn from Form Four students in six provincial secondary schools in Nyeri District. Three research instruments were administered. These were a composition, a comprehension and grammar test, and a poetry test. Responses from 180 students were used in the analysis.

The study employed the general framework of linguistic stylistics. This was necessary because of the framework's view that linguistic clues can lead to interpretation.

Students' scores for each test were expressed as a percentage and ranked. Using the ranked scores, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient ($r_s$) was established between performance in the two tests for each school. The coefficient for each
school was positive ranging from 0.264 to 0.671. This showed that there was a positive relationship between performance in English language and performance in poetry.

The students’ responses to selected sections of the two tests were discussed in detail. It was observed that the essays written by the students in our sample lacked in sentence variation, range of vocabulary and generally in artistic language. Their answers to language questions also indicated ease at gap-filling exercises but difficulty in sentence reconstruction. In the poetry test, the students could identify aspects of specialized use of language but they could not interpret the deeper meaning hidden behind the usage.

It is on the basis of these findings that we specify some pedagogic implications of this study. Firstly, in their essays, the students displayed little awareness of the poetic or literary function of language. Designers of the Secondary English Syllabus should find ways of including this specific area in students’ learning materials.

Secondly, the findings are significant to teachers of English in secondary schools. This is because the students in our sample were good at identifying literary devices but poor at interpreting them. The teachers should lay more emphasis on interpretation.
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The literature paper is the worst performed among the three papers that make the K.C.S.E. English Examination (K.C.S.E. Examination Reports 1990 - 1996). Performance in the poetry question has been fluctuating over the years with the mean marks hardly ever going above half of the maximum score for the question. For example, the mean marks for 1993, 1994 and 1995 went below half the maximum score at 4.28 (out of a possible 10), 5.02 (out of 20), and 2.48 (out of 20). In 1991, 1992, and 1996, the mean marks went slightly above half the maximum score at 5.98 (out of 10) 6.16 (out of 10) and 10.30 (out of 20) respectively. This is shown in the Table 1 below (adapted from the Kenya National Examination Council’s 1991 to 1996 K.C.S.E. Examination reports and based on samples of papers).

Table 1: Mean marks for K.C.S.E poetry between 1991 and 1996.

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<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
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That the mean scores have either been less than or just slightly above half the possible marks shows students’ performance in poetry as poor. The cause of this poor performance in poetry has not been investigated. Scholars (e.g. Kibera 1984 and Moody
1971) have explained that most readers of poetry claim that it is difficult. Students associate poetry with symbols, hidden meanings and abstract ideas. These attitudes possibly hamper their appreciation of poetry since they claim that they cannot make 'head or tail of it' (*The Standard*, October 12, 1991).

The Kenya National Examination Council has expressed concern over performance in poetry. The K.C.S.E. examination reports constantly urge teachers to take the teaching of poetry seriously, sometimes even suggesting areas that need special attention. For example, the 1990 K.C.S.E. Examination Report specifically urged teachers to pay special attention to choice of words and their arrangement in poems. Despite this concern, performance in poetry remains poor.

It is significant that this poor performance in poetry is matched by poor performance in English language examinations in general. For example, the mean for English paper 101/1B which tests the mechanics of the language, grammar, summary and comprehension dropped significantly from 35.66 (out of 80) in 1993 to 26.58 (out of 80) in 1994. Performance in the poetry question dropped from a mean of 4.28 (out of 10) in 1993 to 5.02 (out of 20) in 1994, respectively. Though there appears to be a relationship in the students' performance in both poetry and English language in general, the K.C.S.E. examination reports cited above have not made any reference to the relationship. Neither has any focus been directed at the effect the drop in students' competence in English language has had on their performance in poetry.
In the light of the fact that performance in poetry seems to decline simultaneously with performance in English language, this study also investigates whether students' grammatical ability implies their skill in interpreting poetry. The importance of competence in language as a necessary foundation for the interpretation of literary texts has been a controversial issue. Crippen and Davies (1977:102) argue that there is no relationship between competence in English language and performance in subjects taught and tested in English. They argue that linguistic competence does not mean ability to use the same in some particular way. Bateson (1971) holds the view that the study of language has no relevance to the study of literature. In response to Fowler’s (1971:51) argument that “linguistics is an essential part of literary education from the earlier stages and invaluable tool for the critic,” Bateson (Ibid: 62) argues that:

... the sort of co-operation that Mr. Fowler and his colleagues are pleading for is vain hope... My main quarrel with Mr. Fowler – or rather with the cause for which he is pleading - is that he is presenting the study of language as a necessary concomitant to the study of literature.

Carter and Burton (1982) on the other hand argue that the study of language is a useful basis for the interpretation of literature. Culler (1975:113) perceives the importance of knowledge of language in interpretation. He argues that this knowledge of language enables one ‘to understand phrases and sentences’. Interpretation presupposes basic comprehension and this means that knowledge of language is of primary importance in the interpretation process. Culler states that in addition to understanding phrases and sentences, ‘literary competence’ is required to enable one to proceed to interpretation.
The casual correspondence observed between performance in English language and poetry compounded by the debate outlined above provoked this research.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study investigates the relationship that may exist between students' grammatical ability and their skill in interpreting poetry. The place of linguistic competence in the interpretation of literary texts has raised debate in the past (cf. 1.0 below). The debate has been about speakers of English as a first language. However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have been carried out to establish the relevance of the knowledge of English language to facility in interpretation of literary texts by students in Kenyan secondary schools.

This study specifically compares the grammatical ability of Form Four students in Kenya to their skill in interpreting poetry.

To do this, we sought to answer the following questions:

a) What is the correlation between Form Four students' grammatical ability and their skill in interpreting poetry?

b) What effect does the specialized use of language in poems have on students' ability to interpret the poems?

c) Does students' mastery of English language signify their ability to interpret poems?
1.2 **Rationale for the study**

Poor performance in the English language examinations at K.C.S.E. level seems to correspond to poor performance in poetry at the same level (K.C.S.E. Examination Reports 1990 to 1996). However, the Kenya National Examinations Council has never examined this relationship. In fact, we know of no systematic investigation that has been carried out in Kenya to establish whether there is a significant relationship between secondary school students' ability in English language and their skill in interpreting poetry. Such an investigation is essential since the findings could give a plausible explanation for the persistently poor performance in poetry and thus form a basis from which suggestions to enhance the teaching of poetry in secondary schools can be inferred.

The study is of pedagogical value. The findings may guide curriculum developers and syllabus designers in setting an integrated syllabus for English language and literature in English owing to the complementary nature of the two subjects. Designers of secondary school English course books could use the findings when developing the course content. Teacher trainers and teachers of poetry could also use the findings of the study to determine which elements to emphasize in teaching poetry.

The study is also a relevant contribution to the debate on whether competence in language contributes to comprehension of literature.
1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study had three objectives. These were to:

a) establish the correlation between Form Four students’ grammatical ability and their skill in interpreting poetry.

b) establish the role of grammatical ability in the interpretation of poetry.

c) establish the effect of the use of specialized language in poetry on the interpretation of poems.

1.4 Research Assumptions

This study was guided by the following assumptions.

a) The higher a student's grammatical ability, the higher his/her accuracy in interpreting poetry.

b) Since the language of poetry differs from ordinary language, it hinders students’ interpretation of poetry.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study concentrated on Form Four students in six provincial schools in Nyeri District.

The choice of the sample was based on the assumption that provincial schools are generally representative of secondary schools in the District.
Due to temporal constraints and the need for rigour, only the students' ability in written English (as opposed to spoken) was assessed. Written tests were used since, according to Ryanga (1982:95), they are

...more economical time-wise since all pupils attempt the test simultaneously...written tests are known to provide records of answers in detail...

Moreover, we limited ourselves to the grammar of English as taught at the K.C.S.E level. In assessing students' skills in interpreting poetry, we limited our assessment to content and form, the two aspects of poetry examined in the K.C.S.E. English Paper 2.
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Literature Related to Students' Performance and their Attitude Towards Poetry

The language of poetry is said to be 'peculiar to itself' and is 'set off from "ordinary language" of the day' (Leech 1969: 15). It is difficult to describe the language of poetry in general since every poem has its own language. It is therefore not possible to set rules for the interpretation of poetry since each poet uses the linguistic choices at his disposal differently every time he/she composes a poem. Such composers of poems will usually stretch poetic licence to the extreme so as to be as original as possible. It is this pursuit of originality that leads to the peculiarity of the language of poetry. It is this peculiar use of language in poetry that makes it particularly unpopular among other works of art (The standard, August 18, 1990). The same view is expressed by a poet, Arthur Luvai in the same newspaper. He states (Ibid) that 'poetry does not yield its meaning easily ... The condensed nature of the language of poetry may perhaps put some readers off.'

This attitude suggests that the language used in poetry is not ordinary language. Moody (1971:28) explains that students of poetry are baffled by poetic language that makes use of 'archaic spelling, familiar words used in unexpected contexts, obscure references, unfamiliar comparisons, nonsensical statements, chaotic sentences....'
The language of poetry is thus perceived as the major obstacle in interpretation. According to Rimbui (1982:109) most students of literature in Kenyan Secondary schools claim that the poetry section in the examination makes the literature paper most difficult. This fear of poetry is not confined to students in Kenyan schools. Jamaican poet James Berry, as quoted in *The Standard* (September 21, 1991), explains that ‘the traditional view that poetry is difficult is not held only in Kenya’.


Table 2: Mean marks for K.C.S.E. English language between 1989 and 1997 out of a possible 200 marks.

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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>57.32</td>
<td>48.75</td>
<td>50.76</td>
<td>65.21</td>
<td>65.93</td>
<td>56.48</td>
<td>55.77</td>
<td>63.79</td>
<td>69.27</td>
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The performance shown in the table is very poor, considering that in none of the years under analysis did the mean mark reach half of the possible 200 marks. This shows that most secondary school students in Kenya are not competent in English. In her study, Nyamasyo (1992:8) also observes that most students complete school with very little
competence in English. That both the standards of English and performance in poetry are reported to be poor at the same time suggests a relationship between the two.

This study sought to find out whether or not a student’s competence in language makes him/her understand poetry better. No previous study known to us has been undertaken to establish whether students' awe of poetry is due to their low mastery of English language.

2.1.2 Linguistics and Literature

In our review of available literature on stylistics, we realized that a number of unqualified statements have been made on the need for cooperation between linguistics and literature. However, most investigative works that have been done on the language of poetry have only involved linguistic analysis of poems.

Sinclair (1968:1) states:

A number of linguists have attempted to describe linguistic features as they occur in literary texts hoping that their descriptions might help a reader to understand and appreciate a text.

To give a definite approach to our study we have surveyed opinions and approaches toward the relationship between language and literature. The primacy of the study of language as a foundation in the study of literature is stressed by a number of scholars. For example, Guerin et al (1979: 258) when they argue that 'language is the medium of literature' and that 'the more we know about the medium, the more we will know about
literature'. They further argue that

...the critic may gain insight into the writer or the work or both by discovering patterns in the linguistic choices that the writer, consciously or unconsciously, has made.

Guerin et al. thus see the unlocking of a writer's language as a step towards understanding him/her and his/her work.

Ching et al. (1980:6) recognize the importance of language in literature when they argue that

...the technical analysis of how literature activates our sensitivity and appreciation should not forever neglect the study of how it utilizes our ordinary linguistic competence to do so.... Literary texts themselves must at some point represent a primal source for our understanding of literature. The texts themselves must show us what to look for through their own devices of foregrounding...

Ching et al. view as important the place of linguistic competence in the reading of literature, and disagree with those who perceive the role of language in literature as minimal. Most of the articles in the anthology edited by Ching et al (1980) make the assumption that 'our ordinary competence in language is a primary stone in the foundation of our competence with literature' (Ibid: 5). It is their view that linguistic analysis should precede interpretation. This view is shared by Brumfit (1985: 122) who argues that there is a level of linguistic and cultural competence below which it is pointless to try to respond to works of literature. He claims that minimum language competence is the first stage in
responding to the literariness of a text. Though Brumfit is referring to basic reading or comprehension fluency, he underscores the need of a reader to make sense of what he reads before making a literary response. He therefore recognizes the role of linguistic competence in literary studies.

Brumfit and Carter (1986:4) argue for the use of linguistic analysis as a step towards extending an individual's interpretive skills. They advocate the relevance of knowledge of language structure as a prerequisite for one to interpret a literary text. Carter and Burton (1982) also argue that knowledge of language is a useful basis for the interpretation of literary texts.

Some scholars have been more emphatic on the part played by linguistics in literary criticism. These scholars have gone further than simply advocate for ordinary competence in language as primary in interpretation. The scholars argue that knowledge of language is mandatory in literary criticism. For example Jakobson (1960:377) observes the complementary nature of linguistic description and literary criticism. He argues that:

a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.

Though he does not present one as predetermining the other, Jakobson suggests a fusion between linguistic description and literary criticism. This relationship hinges on the fact that the literary text is a product of language and therefore it is in the language of the text that the meaning is coded. Literature is generally defined as the creative use of language
and as such literary problems are linguistic problems: when we describe the language of a text, we are at the same time addressing its literariness. The analysis of the language of a text will lead to decoding in order to appreciate the text.

When the writer sits down to write he makes use of linguistic resources at his disposal. Fundamentally, the writer uses words and then combines and arranges them to convey a given impression. The writer is at liberty, sometimes going beyond linguistic norms, to pattern the linguistic resources to suit the impression he wants to create. Moody (1971:22) acknowledges the primacy of words and underscores the importance of their study. He states:

The study of literature is fundamentally a study of language in operation. The study of literature must always be based on the realization that each work is essentially the collection of words that are permanently available for the student to inspect, to investigate, to analyze, to build together...

Beyond the words is their arrangement. This again determines how we receive the message in a text. Nowottny (1962: 9) says:

...of all the elements necessary to make an utterance meaningful, the most powerful is syntax, controlling as it does the order in which impressions are received and conveying the mental relations 'behind' the sequence of words....when a passage relies chiefly on its especially compelling and artful syntax to make its effect, the reader and the critic who never expect syntax to be more than 'a harmless necessary drudge' holding open the door while the pageantry of words sweeps through, will be at a loss to do critical justice to its art.

Nowottny's argument is that since syntax determines which words precede or follow each other in an utterance, it is syntax, therefore, which controls the order in which impressions are received by the reader. This implies that a knowledge of the syntactic structure of English is necessary to interpret a literary text since each writer will always carefully
choose how to arrange the words he decides to use to convey a particular message in a text.

In the interpretation of any literary text, the basic thing as Brumfit (op cit 122) contends is 'reading or comprehension fluency' in order 'to make sense in general of the words on the page'. Without this fluency, Brumfit argues, one is not 'in a position to respond to the literariness of a text'. Nowotny (op. cit:1) argues similarly:

In considering the language of poetry it is prudent to begin with what is there in the poem, 'there' in the sense that it can be described and referred to as unarguably given by the words.

Criticism in literature has been taken to be something subjective and the view has been that the interpretation of literary texts is individual. Alderson and Short (1989: 72-73) argue:

...It is likely that different readers will to some extent interpret a text in varied ways. This indeed is notoriously the case for literary texts, where it is often said that there are as many interpretations as there are readers to interpret. Yet it is intuitively unsatisfying to claim that a text can mean anything to any reader......even though readers are bound to some extent to react differently, there is still an element of control which the text exerts over the reader.

What Anderson and Short are referring to as 'element of control' is brought about by the language of the text, that is, the text limits the meanings that readers create. Proponents of Reader Response Criticism may not have the same view. They do not see the text as an object but focus on what a text does to the reader. For example, Fish (1980:6) argues that a text's meaning takes place 'in the mind, not on the page'. Fish emphasizes the activity of reading - that the meaning is embedded in the structure of the reader's progress
through the text. Fish however regards the text as a 'stable entity' that controls what the reader experiences. The reader's response is seen in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time. Thus according to Fish (Ibid: 27).

...a reader's response to the fifth word in a line or sentence is to a large extent the product of his responses to words one, two, three and four.

Accordingly, meanings are actualized in the process of reading, each syntactic unit conveying its meaning. The various meanings carried by the different syntactic units are revised and consolidated at the end of the text. The linguistic competence of the reader is therefore necessary for him/her to identify meaning throughout his/her experience of the text.

A linguistic or stylistic analysis of a text also concerns itself with syntactic units. These carry the meaning of the text and a description of such units would lead to interpretation. This is the view held by Alderson and Short (op.cit:72) when they argue:

Stylistic analysis is intended to help determine interpretation through the examination of what the text contains by describing the linguistic devices an author has used and the effects produced by such devices.

Description of the linguistic devices used in a text presupposes competence in language.

It is the stand of this study that a student's knowledge of the structure of English language
plays a primary role in his/her interpretation of the meaning of a poem. This study takes the position taken by Short (1990:1082) that ‘literature is written in language and so in order to discuss literary texts and our understanding of them, we must concentrate on the language of those texts at least to some extent.’ It is the language a poet uses in his/her poem that will point to the student the literary features in the poem.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study falls under stylistics, the study of the use of language in literature. It is interested in the interpretation of literary texts using linguistic principles. The study is particularly concerned with evaluating the role of the knowledge of language in interpreting poetry. We therefore needed a theory that would assist us to explain the relationship between grammatical ability and the interpretation of poetry.

There is, however, no unitary linguistic model under which the study can be undertaken. Most scholars interested in stylistics have tried to show the uses of linguistic theory in explaining the language of literary texts but they have had different emphases, each interested in particular areas of language. Ching et al. (1980:31) argue that:

Studies of literature must stand on their own value, not upon their subscription to any doctrinaire presumptions about the correct or even about the most powerful model.
They conclude that:

The enlightened knowledge we have now gained about literary language must not stop because of the lack of a monolithic model, though there is reason to hope that a cohesive theory may evolve from the diversity of models (Ibid: 37).

The analysis of students' responses to literary questions in this study is based on the general framework of linguistic stylistics that has been proposed for literary analysis. Work in linguistic stylistics has involved the studying and analyzing of literary art by use of linguistic theory.

We considered four approaches to stylistic analysis and adopted two for our study. The first is the approach proposed by Widdowson (1980). He calls for 'a wedding of linguistic and literary methods'. He (1980: 235) states:

In order to understand what it is that a writer is trying to express, we must know what means he is using in relation to the linguistic resources he has at his disposal......We must also know what ends are achieved in terms of the communicative effect of the language used.

He suggests that neither the means (the focus of the linguist) nor the end (the literary scholar's focus) can be said to be complete in themselves and therefore should not be separated. He takes stylistics to be the study of literature as a mode of communication and argues, therefore, that the means and the ends must be taken to be of equal status and, as such, interdependent. He argues that once we are able to use and comprehend language as communication, then this is a basis for understanding of literature in general. He therefore assumes a position intermediary between the linguist and the literary scholar.
The major tenet of Widdowson’s stylistic approach to analysis of literary work is that linguistic clues can lead to interpretation. The approach makes the student of poetry aware of the way language operates in its normal communicative use. In Robert Frost’s Poem, ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening’, Widdowson identifies linguistic items that can lead to an interpretation of the poem. For example, he identifies the preponderance of pronominal forms in the first verse.

Whose woods these I think I know

His house is in the village though He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow

He observes that, on the strength of the use of the pronominal form ‘whose’ in the thematic position of the first sentence and the double use of ‘his’ in the verse we can deduce that the theme of the poem has something to do with the woods. In the same manner, he analyses the semantic specifications of the nouns ‘woods’ and ‘house’ to show that they are not equivalent in the language code and, therefore, demonstrate that ‘woods’ are given the same qualities as ‘houses.’ This demonstrates that the ‘Woods’ can also be possessed just like artefacts such as ‘houses’ Widdowson further pursues the use of the verb ‘have’ in the line, ‘But I have promises to keep,’ to show its use both as a lexical verb (carrying the meaning of possession) and as modal auxiliary (carrying the meaning of obligation). He shows that the two senses are compounded in the line.
Widdowson’s approach is relevant to our study in that it will help when analyzing and describing students’ responses to literary questions that draw their meaning from linguistic items used in the poems. By so doing it will be possible to assess whether the students’ mastery of the grammar of English language assisted them in interpretation.

This study also uses Leech's approach to stylistic analysis. His approach 'aims at relating linguistic description with critical interpretation' and showing 'what the former can contribute to the latter' (Leech 1970:120). In his approach, Leech points out that a work of literature contains dimensions of meaning additional to those operating in other types of discourse. He expresses the view that linguistic description needs some adjustments in order to apply to literary texts. He suggests the incorporation of three stylistic concepts, viz: cohesion, foregrounding and cohesion of foregrounding.

Leech (Ibid) defines cohesion as the way in which linguistic choices in different points in a text correspond with or presuppose one another forming a network of sequential relations.

According to Leech, the patterns of meaning throughout the text will only lead us to ‘a linguistic account’ of the content of the poem. Relations of cohesion give interpretive clues which are strengthened by use of language that may not be used in a normal language situation. Leech therefore introduces foregrounding as the second dimension of analysis.

Foregrounding is defined (Ibid:121) as ‘motivated deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norms.’
In foregrounding, the poet transcends the normal communicative resources of language and the choices he makes are deviant from the language code. These linguistic forms according to Leech, are 'unintelligible' since they do not conform to the linguistic code. We have to seek the significance of the foregrounded aspects through our own imagination.

The third stylistic concept that Leech incorporates is cohesion of foregrounding. This according to Leech (Ibid: 123) refers to the way:

...the foregrounded features seen in isolation are related to one another and to the text in its entirety.

The deviant structures as a result assume some normality since, though they are foregrounded against normal usage, they fit into the context of the whole text by being related to deviations of a similar kind. They are therefore seen as a form of cohesion.

Leech's approach is relevant to this study in that it relates linguistic description to interpretation and therefore helps in determining the way linguistic choices made by the poet affect the subjects' interpretation of poems. The assessment of students' account of the content of the poems is based on Leech's claim that the three dimensions of analysis — cohesion, foregrounding and cohesion of foregrounding — are necessary in interpretation.
Our analysis of the students' grammatical ability is based on the grammatical framework of Quirk, *et al.* (1972) which takes grammar as the complex set of rules that specify the combination of words forming larger units. We specifically take Quirk *et al*.'s notion of grammar to include syntax and inflections of morphology. We adopt this framework since, as the authors say (1972: vi), it 'has drawn heavily both on the long-established tradition and on the insight of several contemporary schools of linguistics.'

Sinclair (1966) proposes an approach which makes use of linguistic description in interpretation. He posits that modern methods of linguistic analysis based on more comprehensive and detailed theories of language can at least tackle the problem of describing literature. He suggests two aspects of linguistic organization which play an important part in the setting up of inter-textual patterns in literary texts. These are arrest and release. Arrest occurs when a predictable syntactic pattern is interrupted and delayed by interposed linguistic units. Release, on the other hand, occurs when a syntactic structure is extended after all grammatical predictions have been fulfilled. This means that extra linguistic units are added to a pattern which appears syntactically complete.

Sinclair emphasizes on the analysis of the structure of sentences in a poem. He begins with the analysis of sentences into clauses and looks at how the clauses fit the lines in Philip Larkin's poem 'First Sight'. He further examines the structure of groups and finally the structure of words themselves. Sinclair's approach, however, fails to show the relevance of this analysis of sentences, clauses, groups and words to literary interpretation and we, therefore, find it unsuitable for our study.
Widdowson (1974) proposes a stylistic approach that hinges on the view that a literary text can be construed as a secondary language system formed by the relations which the writer has set up between the language items within his text.

In interpretation, he argues, we must recognize both the intra-textual relations between language items within the context itself and the extra-textual relations between language items and the code from which they are derived. He argues that a linguistic item does not change the meaning bestowed to it by the code but acquires another meaning from the context of the text in which it occurs. He suggests that in order to discover patterns of language and reality in a literary text, we should 'pick on features which appeal to first impression as unusual or striking in some way, then explore their ramifications (1974:210).

We did not adopt this approach for our study since, by suggesting that we pick on features in the text that appear 'unusual', the approach fails to account for features that are relevant for the interpretation of a text as a whole but which may not strike us as unusual. For example, Widdowson does not account for the use of such features as pronominal forms, modals, the grammatical person and so on. Since it is not only through what is 'striking' that meaning is conveyed, the model fails to address itself to 'usual' linguistic features.
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Area of Study and Study Population.

The population for this study was Form Four students in six provincial secondary schools in Nyeri District. Provincial secondary schools were preferred on the basis of their midway position in the categorization of government secondary schools. They fall between National secondary schools which admit their students from primary schools all over the country, and District schools which admit their students from the district within which they are situated.

We made the assumption that any six provincial school selected would give representative data since provincial schools in Nyeri District are adequately staffed with trained teachers. All the schools use at least the recommended English course books and they all have a library. The schools selected were assumed to have the same calibre of students since conditions of admission to provincial secondary schools in the district are standardized.

The choice of Nyeri District was motivated by the researcher’s interest in education in his home district. The close proximity of provincial schools to each other enabled the researcher to carry out his fieldwork within a short duration of time.
We preferred Form Four students to other classes since according to the Secondary English Syllabus, at this level “the learner will have consolidated his understanding of the structures and literary devices used in novels, plays, poems and oral literature.” Concurrently, the learner will have been exposed to a lot of the grammar of English between Form One and Form Three and according to the Secondary English Syllabus, at Form Four “grammar work should consolidate what has already been covered.”

3.2 Sampling Procedure

Three boys’ schools and three girls’ schools were used to avoid gender bias. However, it turned out that difference in the gender of our subjects was not a significant variable.

Although data from The Kenya National Examinations Council indicate that girls do better than boys in English at K.C.S.E., this was not significant in our study since the difference between the performance of boys and girls proved minimal. Table 3 below which illustrates the comparative performance of boys and girls between 1989 to 1995 underscores this point.

Table 3: A comparison between the number of boys and girls who scored B- and above in K.C.S.E English for the years 1989-1995.

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<th>YEAR</th>
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<td>1995</td>
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(Source: Kenya National Examinations Council)
We included all the three provincial boys' secondary schools in the district. We then wrote the names of all the five provincial girls' Secondary schools in the district on pieces of paper of equal sizes. These were then folded and put into a small box, shuffled and three of them picked at random. This gave each school an equal chance of being selected. In each of the six schools picked, one Form Four class was selected, again by balloting. The research instruments were then administered to all the students in the selected Form Four classes. This was done to ensure that the students found the assessment a serious exercise. The used answer booklets were kept in separate bundles for every school. Since each class had more than 30 students, the scripts for each school were numbered from the first to the last for each test and every script bearing an odd number was picked. This was repeated until the researcher got 30 scripts for every test from each school. This meant that each script had an equal chance of being selected. The study population totaled 180 students. The resultant scripts were 180 for each test administered.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

As stated earlier, this study aimed at establishing the relationship between students' grammatical ability and their skill in interpreting poetry. The subjects were given two tests. Test One had two sections: A and B. Section A of Test One required the students to write a composition based on a topic given by the researcher. The composition was used to test the students' ability to apply the conventions of language they had learnt. Attention was focused on agreement, tense, sentence construction, elementary vocabulary, punctuation and correct usage of common prepositions. Section B of Test One was comparable to K.C.S.E. Paper I (b) and tested the mechanics of English language,
grammar and comprehension. Test One provided data for testing the students' grammatical ability.

Test Two was based on poetry. Section A of Test Two required the students to paraphrase various lines taken from poems. The section tested the students' ability to interpret the language used in poems, especially when language used in the lines was 'unusual' or was what Leech (1969:15) calls 'peculiar'. This also assessed the students' facility in paraphrasing. Section B of Test Two required the students to respond to questions based on two complete poems. This section was less restrictive and tested whether the students could infer meaning from the wider context of a whole poem. Test Two, therefore, provided data for particularly testing the students' ability to interpret poetry.

Ideally, the students were to be tested during English lessons so as to fit in with the schools' time tables. However this was not possible in some schools and the tests were administered during prep time. Though Test One Section A was supposed to take 40 minutes and Test One Section B and Test Two were supposed to take one and a half hours each, no student was asked to stop at the end of the stipulated time. This gave the students ample time to weigh their responses and give only their best answers. Teachers of English in the selected schools and specific classes chosen helped to administer the tests. This made the students take the test more seriously and be more relaxed than they would have been with a stranger. The students were instructed to write down on their scripts their names and the names of their schools. This served two purposes: the students took the test as a serious assessment and at the same time it ensured that the scripts would
not get mixed up. Teachers of English in four of the secondary schools in which the tests were administered assisted the researcher in constructing the marking schemes. Marking of the scripts was done exclusively by the researcher to ensure uniformity of grading.
4.1.1 Introduction

The two tests administered (cf. 3.3 above) were marked and a percentage score calculated for each test. The percentage scores were arranged into two ranks. The raw scores provided data for the calculation of the coefficient for each school. The raw scores are presented in Table 4 (below) which shows the scores for the 180 students in our sample for Test One (English language) and their corresponding scores in Test Two (poetry). The scores for Test one are arranged in descending order of performance. Scores for the two tests are juxtaposed to show that each student performed better in Test One than in Test Two.

Students' performance in various sections of the two tests is discussed in detail. Students' strengths and weakness in the two tests are analysed in Section 4.2.1 in order to show how performance in one test related to performance in the other.
Table 4: Raw scores for Test One and Test Two

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Where: $s$ = Student
$Sc_1$ = Scores for Test One
$Sc_2$ = Scores for Test Two
Tables 5 to 10 below show the scores for schools A - F for Test One (arranged in descending order) and the corresponding scores for Test Two. The tables also show the ranks for both Test One and Test Two, the differences between the ranks and the differences squared. Note that though not significant in the calculations, the sums of ranks and the sum of differences have been indicated to show that no error has been made in calculating the sum of differences squared.

The following notations have been used

\[
\begin{align*}
S & = \text{Student} \\
A_1 - F_1 & = \text{Scores for Test One (in descending order)} \\
A_2 - F_2 & = \text{Scores for Test Two} \\
RA_1 - RF_1 & = \text{Rank for Test One scores} \\
RA_2 - RF_2 & = \text{Rank for Test Two scores} \\
D & = \text{Differences between the ranks} \\
D^2 & = \text{Squares of D}
\end{align*}
\]
4.1.2 Relationship Between the Scores

The relationship between the scores for Test One and the scores for Test Two was established by calculating the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ($r_s$) for each school. This was done using the following formula:

\[
Spearman's\ rank\ correlation\ coefficient\ (r_s).\\
= \frac{6 \sum D^2}{1 - \frac{n(n^2-1)}{n(n^2-1)}}
\]

Where $D = \text{differences in ranks}$

$n = \text{the number of pairs of scores}$

The calculation to determine the coefficient for each school is also presented.
Table 5: Ranked scores for school A showing differences between the ranks and the squares of the differences.

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<th>S</th>
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<th>R_{A1}</th>
<th>R_{A2}</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D^2</th>
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Σ_{RA_1} = 465  \quad Σ_{RA_2} = 465  \quad ΣD = 0  \quad ΣD^2 = 1481
The coefficient 0.671 shows positive correlation between scores for Test One and scores for Test Two. The positive correlation indicates that students in school A who perform well in English language perform better in poetry than those who perform poorly in language. This positive correlation reveals that there is a relationship between students’ performance in English language and their performance in poetry. This further indicates that a student’s grammatical ability is related to his/her skill in interpreting poetry. This relationship is further illustrated in Fig. 1 below.
Fig1: A line graph showing students' performance in Test one and Test two for School A.
Table 6: Ranked scores for School B showing differences between the ranks and the squares of the differences

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ΣRB₁ = 465  ΣRB₂ = 465  ΣD = 0  ΣD² = 2038
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient for School B

\[
= 1 - 6 \sum D^2 \\
\frac{n(n^2 - 1)}{}
\]

\[
= 1 - 6 \times 2038 \\
\frac{30(900-1)}{}
\]

\[
= 1 - 12228 \\
\frac{26970}{26970}
\]

\[
= 1 - 0.453
\]

\[
= 0.547
\]

The coefficient for school B is 0.547, showing a positive correlation between students' scores in Test One and Test Two. This indicates that students in school B who attain high scores in English language also perform better in poetry than those who attain low language scores. The positive correlation implies that a student's grammatical ability is related to his/her skill in interpreting poetry. This relationship is further illustrated in fig. 2 below.
Fig 2: A line graph showing students' performance in Test one and Test two for School B.
Table 7: Ranked scores for School C showing differences between the ranks and the squares of the differences.

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ΣRC₁=465   ΣRC₂=465   ΣD=0   ΣD²=3173
Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient for School C

\[ r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum D^2}{n(n^2-1)} \]

\[ r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \times 3173}{30(900-1)} \]

\[ r_s = 1 - \frac{19038}{26970} \]

\[ r_s = 1 - 0.706 \]

\[ r_s = 0.294 \]

The coefficient 0.294 shows positive correlation between scores for Test One and scores for Test Two for students in school C. The coefficient is much lower than that of both schools A and B. The coefficient, however, does indicate that a student’s knowledge of the grammar of English language is related to his/her skill in interpreting poetry.

Figure 3 below further illustrates this relationship.
Fig 3: A line graph showing students' performance in Test one and Test two for school C.
Table 8: Ranked Scores for School D showing differences between the ranks and the squares of the differences

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\( \Sigma RD₁ = 465 \quad \Sigma RD₂ = 465 \quad \Sigma D = 0 \quad \Sigma D^2 = 2657 \)
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient for School D

\[
\begin{align*}
&= 1 - \frac{6 \sum D^2}{n(n^2-1)} \\
&= 1 - \frac{6 \times 2657}{30(900-1)} \\
&= 1 - \frac{15,942}{26,970} \\
&= 0.409
\end{align*}
\]

The coefficient 0.409 for school D shows that there is a positive correlation between scores for Test One and scores for Test Two. This again reveals that those students in school D who performed well in the English language test performed comparatively better in the poetry test than those who performed poorly in language. The positive correlation indicates that a student's knowledge of the grammar of English language is related positively to his/her skill in interpreting poetry. Figure 4 below further illustrates this relationship.
Fig 4: A line graph showing students' performance in test one and test two for school D.
Table 9: Ranked Scores for School E showing differences between the ranks and the squares of the differences

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ΣRE₁ = 465  ΣRE₂ = 465  ΣD = 0  ΣD² = 3307.5
Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient for School E

\[ 1 - \frac{6 \sum D^2}{n(n^2-1)} \]

\[ \begin{align*} 
1 & - \quad 6 \times 3307.5 \\
& \quad 30 \times (900-1) \\
& = 19845 \\
& \quad 26970 \\
& = 0.7358 \\
& = 0.264 
\end{align*} \]

School E has the lowest coefficient at 0.264. It is however indicating a positive correlation between scores for Test One and scores for Test Two. This reveals that those students in school E who perform well in English language do also perform better in poetry than those who perform poorly in language. It implies that a student’s knowledge of the grammar of English is related positively to his/her skill in interpreting poetry.

This relationship is further illustrated in figure 5 below.
Fig 5: A line graph showing students' performance in test one and test two for school E.
Table 10: Ranked scores for School F showing differences between the ranks and the squares of the differences

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ΣRF₁ = 465  ΣRF₂ = 465  ΣD = 0  ΣD² = 1966.5
Spearman’s rank Correlation Coefficient for School F

\[\frac{6 \sum D^2}{n(n-1)} = 1 - \frac{6 \times 1966.5}{30 \times (900-1)} = 1 - \frac{11799}{26970} = 1 - 0.437 = 0.563\]

The correlation 0.563 shows a positive correlation between scores for Test One and scores for Test Two. This indicates that those students in school F who perform well in English language perform better in poetry than those who perform poorly in language. It further reveals that a student’s knowledge of English language positively is related to his skill in interpreting poetry.

Figure 6 below further illustrates this relationship.

The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient calculated for each school reveals that there is a positive correlation between a student’s performance in English language and his/her performance in poetry, that is, a student who performs well in English Language performs better in poetry than a student who performs poorly in language.
Fig 6: A line graph showing students' performance in Test one and Test two for school F.
4.2.1 Analysis of Performance

As many as 94% of students in our study could express their thoughts and ideas logically and coherently in the compositions they wrote in Section A of Test One. Only a few (6%) gave contradictory or illogical ideas which hindered the flow of their stories. Even these few, however, still communicated. Most of the students also demonstrated adequate control of vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Most of the errors made were in the verb phrase, noun phrase and the use of prepositions. A large number of the students (97%) made various errors in the verb phrase, mostly the failure to know whether to use the present or the past tense. For example,

1. a) My sister jump from her seat and ran towards the door.
   b) I notice some light from a distance and I think some of the people notice too.
   c) It was in December holiday when my friends and I have planned to go and steal money.
   d) I quickly run after it and remove the arrow.
   e) No one attempted to communicate with the other as we are in a dilemma.

Students totalling 70% made errors in the noun phrase while 80% of the students used the wrong prepositions. For example, the following errors were observed in the noun phrase.

2. a) I longed for the dawn.
(‘Dawn’ had not been mentioned earlier in the text).

b) At my friends home we were welcomed warmly

c) The mother to my friend was sick.

d) One of my friend came in the afternoon.

e) It is illegal to kill an wild animal.

f) My feets were aching.

g) My mother had injured himself during the day.

The following are examples of some of the errors made in the choice of preposition.

3. a) This dream made me scream on the top of my voice.

b) I shouted so that neighbours could come for my help.

c) I was gazing to the youths.

d) The day was bright and the sun was shinning high on the sky.

e) My mother was frightened to see my friend carrying me at her back.

Fewer students, however, erred in sentence construction. 40% of the students had at least one sentence wrongly constructed. Most of the errors observed involved the use of incorrect word order. For example:

4 a) My friend now was dead

b) I was awakened by colleagues who requested me to accompany them to take my brother to hospital who had become unconscious reason being unknown.

c) Unfortunately my aunt got sick the two days before I was almost to go.
d) The question which he first asked made me to even almost collapse. He asked me “Is this what you have only attained” (The punctuation errors were also in the student’s text).

e) I asked myself, “why all these to happen”.

Out of the 180 students tested, 14% had used either a word(s) or expression(s) in the wrong context indicating that the students only knew that the words or expressions existed but did not know their meaning. The following are examples of sentences in which words or expressions were used inappropriately;

5

a) We dressed him and showed a clean pair of heels towards the hospital.

b) For a spur of moment I remained dumbfounded.

c) The whole crowd got engulfed in a hot pursuit.

d) To be genuine, I can’t tell how I fitted in one of the small pails in the room.

e) In the nick of time, I heard a loud bang and the door gave in to his massive gaunt body.

The use of a very narrow range of vocabulary and the failure to use a variety of sentence structures were weaknesses that affected all the students in our study.

The majority of students did not show any awareness of style. However, 29% of the students used figures of speech, most of which were cliches. For example:
I tried to shut the door as quickly as lightning.

I started trembling like a chameleon on a feeble tree.

It was as silent as a grave.

I was as happy as a king.

I felt like an elephant walking on the legs of a mosquito.

Four students (2.2%) had very rich and artistic use of language. For example, the use of the repetition in the following sentence was quite artistic:

7. I shed tears of frustration, tears of self-pity and of a world I did not believe I would see again.

The student’s emphasis on his feelings was well brought out by the use of repetition. The descriptive language used in the following sentence also showed the student’s command of language.

8. I almost stuck out my little chest in pride but the bloodshot eyes peeping through the hoods terrified me.

The students’ strengths and weaknesses in the composition as highlighted above related to students’ performance in Section B of Test One as well as Test Two as will be discussed below.
For Section B of Test One, the results show that the students in our study performed quite well in the grammar exercises that involved the filling in of certain structural elements in given sentences. For example, 82.8% of the 180 students scored 50% and above in Test One, Question 2(f) which required them to attach the correct question tag at the end of given statements. Again, 88.9% of the 180 students scored 50% in Question 2(g) of the same section. This required them to fill some blank spaces with appropriate prepositions. This contrasts with the students’ performance in questions where they were supposed to reconstruct sentences. In Question 2(a), which required the students to rewrite sentences using alternative sentence structures, a lower proportion (40.6%) scored above 50% of the possible 10 marks. An even lower proportion of the students (10.6%) scored above 50% in Question 2(b) which required the students to give a word or words to replace certain expressions contained in given sentences. Question 2(a) demanded creativity and flexibility in sentence construction while Question 2(b) tested whether the students appreciated common expressions. The poor performance in these two questions, (2(a) and 2(b)), corresponds to the weaknesses observed in the students’ composition in Section A where most of them neither used a variety of sentence structures nor a wide range of vocabulary and expressions. That performance in Questions 2(f) and 2(g) is good and performance in 2(a) and 2(b) is poor could be explained by the fact that emphasis in the Secondary English Syllabus is on grammatical terms and structural elements. The Secondary English Syllabus (1992 edition) states:

The grammar component of the language course should help the student understand:

i) how sentence patterns correspond to human needs, feelings, emotions and thought.

ii) Syntactical and structural elements such as words, phrases, clauses, tenses and parts of speech.
The prescribed English language course books (Integrated English Students Book 1 – 4) designed by K.I.E., however, concentrate mainly on syntactical and structural elements without any guidance on how the same can be related to students’ needs, feelings, emotions and thought. Though the books are meant to cater for a system that integrates literature and language (thus the title ‘Integrated English’) they fail to address the literary function of language. The syllabus also fails to prescribe ways of ensuring wide readership since though it rightly observes that extensive reading ‘enhances the development of both language and literary skills’ the syllabus only makes a cursory suggestion that ‘class libraries should be maintained’ at Form I and II and that at Form III “students should be encouraged to read other literary works.”

This means that students in our sample may not have been exposed to a wide vocabulary and to a wide variety of sentences. They may not also have been exposed to what we are here calling “common expressions.”

The literary function of language may not also be adequately addressed in Literature in English since the teaching of literature in Kenya Secondary Schools is mostly based on the literary texts being examined for a particular year.

The results also show that those students who performed well in Section A of Test One also did well in section B of the same test. This means that those students who scored highly in the section testing their knowledge of the mechanics of language did apply their knowledge in writing to convey meaning. Students who scored very low marks in section B of Test One could hardly communicate in the composition. The results also show that those who performed relatively poorly in Test One also performed relatively poorly in Test Two. This relationship is exemplified below.
As indicated, the scores ranged between 27% and 91% for Test One and 4% and 60% for Test Two for the poorest and the best students respectively. The mean score for the 180 students tested was 59.76 for Test One and 24.87 for Test Two. This shows there was better performance in Test One than in Test Two. Of all the students tested, 53.3% scored above the mean mark in Test One. This contrasted with the performance in Test Two where only 47.2% of the students scored above the mean score. Again only 1.7% of the students tested scored above 50% in Test Two. This was a very poor performance in comparison to the performance in Test One where 86.7% scored above 50%.

The above results show that the students tested generally performed very well in Test One. Though the range in the scores for Test One was high (91 - 27 = 64), the scores were not widely dispersed since most (of the scores) were concentrated around the mean score. This shows that the majority of students tested understood most of the items they were tested on and had knowledge of the mechanics of the English language. The range in the scores for Test Two (60 - 4 = 56) was not as high as that for Test One, and the distribution of the scores was normal with most of the students scoring around the mean score.

The results of the two tests show that the students performed far better in language questions than in the poetry questions. This is evident from the fact that the mean score for the language test (59.76%) was much higher than the mean score for the poetry test (24.87%). In fact, out of the 180 students in our sample, none got a higher score in Test Two than in Test One. The results correspond to K.C.S.E examination reports which show that students perform better in language than in literature.
4.2.2 Discussion of Students’ Response to Literary Questions

In our discussion of students’ responses to literary questions, we have isolated the six main areas of poetry tested in Test Two. These are the questions touching on the following areas in poetry:

a) Foregrounding  
b) Imagery  
c) Point of view (1st person)  
d) Rhetorical questions  
e) Use of verbal group for literary effect  
f) Content

In section A (i) of Test Two, the students were tested on whether they could identify any ‘unusual’ use of language and then explain to what end this ‘unusualness’ was used in the lines. Each of the lines contained one form or another of linguistic deviation. According to Leech (1969:61)

"... a linguistic deviation is a disruption of the normal process of communication: it leaves a gap, as it were, in one’s comprehension of the text."

Leech’s description of a linguistic deviation implies that it is possible for the deviation to attract attention to itself (and this is the intention of the writer) when it leaves a gap in one’s comprehension of a text. It was observed that there, indeed, was a gap in the students comprehension of the lines. Thus they could identify the oddity in the lines. For example, 78.3% of the students tested identified the linguistic deviation in the line.

The stripped skeletons pray.
As many as 52% of the students pointed out that ‘skeletons’ could not pray. This is probably due to the fact that they could easily tell that the words ‘skeleton’ and ‘pray’ are not compatible and therefore cannot co-occur in such a structure. 42% of the students also noticed the redundancy in the word ‘stripped’ since ‘skeletons’ are things that are already stripped of flesh. The high facility values (the proportion of students who answered the question correctly expressed as a percentage of the number of students tested) showed that the students’ attention was attracted to the apparent absurdity in the line. Despite the fact that the absurdity seemed to attract their attention, only 21% of the students gave a correct interpretation — the metaphorical reference to the poor and emaciated people who are praying. This shows that the students’ knowledge of grammatical rules of English language assisted them in identifying the use of ‘unusual’ structures. The low facility value of those who gave a correct interpretation suggests that students’ competence in English language may not be enough to enable them to arrive at a correct interpretation of foregrounded features.

Few students pointed out anything peculiar in the line

... he clung desperately to his single life.

The deviation in the line was in the redundancy in the use of ‘single’. Only 40.5% of the students tested identified the metaphorical use of language in the line while none of the students identified the redundancy in the use of the word ‘single’. The fact that none of the students tested identified anything unusual in the use of the word ‘single’ to refer to one person’s life can be attributed to the fact that, at face value, no grammatical rule had been broken and therefore the structure failed to create the kind of gap Leech (Ibid) describes. The word ‘single’ actually fits very well in the adjective position and may well
have been replaced by a word like 'dear' to become 'dear life'. The same can be said of the figurative use of 'clung' in the line. The metaphor blended so well in the syntactic and semantic structure of the line that the students failed to grasp the visual image drawn by the poet, especially since the word 'clung' collocated with the word 'desperately'. The word 'life' which would have made the students identify the intrusion of 'clung' was flung to the end of the line, and this made the linguistic deviation escape their notice. A very high proportion (89.5%) of the students tested identified the use of repetition in

The man moved, moved, moved nearer

The reason for this high proportion of positive identification of repetition could be the fact that the words 'moved' fall in the positions immediately after each other in the syntax of the line, thus making the superfluous use quite obvious. This high proportion of positive identification was not matched by a high proportion of accurate statement of the meaning the line conveyed. Only 19% of the students explained that the repetition was made to emphasize the man's determination to reach a certain object or that the use of repetition created suspense.

The results, however, show that though the use of specialized language in the lines given in the section captured the students attention, the majority could not accurately interpret the significance of such use. The students could, therefore, identify the use of such devices as metaphors and paradox but could not say to what end. Leech (*Ibid*) says that a deviation can be rendered significant,

... only if by an effort of his imagination the reader perceives some deeper connection which compensates for the superficial oddity.
Leech's position tally's with Ching et al.'s (1980:6) who point out that 'how much the student gets out of a poem is often the direct function of how much he brings into it'. Ching et al. argue that students may not understand a poem 'until they have a notion of what to look for and enjoy'. The students in our study could have failed to interpret the lines correctly since they were ignorant of what was required of them in order to perceive some deeper connection. They seemed not to have any notion of what to make of the devices used. This shows that in addition to their competence in the English language, the students need to know how to perceive the connection between the words in a poem and the deeper meaning they carry. The students in our study lacked this knowledge which explains why they failed to state correctly the significance of the devices used. We should, however, underscore the fact that identification of devices precedes interpretation and these devices can only be identified if the student is competent in the English language.

Questions in Section A (ii) were more straightforward and, unlike those in Section A (i), they did not involve oddity either in their semantic or syntactic structures. The students were given four different stanzas extracted from four poems. They were required to read those stanzas carefully and then explain what they understood by each. Performance in this section was surprisingly poor. Surprising because the verses carried relatively simple messages based on contemporary issues. Results show that only 4.5% of the students tested scored 4 marks and above out of a possible 8 in the section.

This poor performance in this section can be attributed to the tendency by most of the students to merely give a paraphrase of the content of the verses. For example, Question (b) 2 of the section required the students to say what they understood by the following verse.
Later the cops will come  
Will record elaborately  
(Not forgetting the commas)  
And the small body, now cold, will lie covered there  
For a while  
The court-file will gather dust  
After a while  
And the driver will be guilty  
For a while  

An overwhelming 87.2% of the answers were a mere re-statement of the verse, with varying degrees of distortion as can be seen from the following responses:

9. a) After the accident the policemen will come and record everything that caused the accident then measure (sic) the accident spot. The dead body which lie down (sic) will be taken to the hospital, wait (sic) for the judgement from the court after correcting (sic) information for the cause of the death.

b) The police will write everything and won’t forget commas. It will then be forwarded to court where it will stay for a while before the case is opened.

c) After the accident has occurred the cops comes and records (sic) some things. The bodies that were involved in the accident are now cold meaning that the bodies are dead. The driver will feel guilty for a while meaning that if he/she survives he/she will not be willing to leave his/her job.
d) An accident has occurred where a small boy was hit and the writer is telling us that the police would arrive later to record everything. We are also told that the boy had already died and he lay there covered for a while. The driver will have to go to court and will be found guilty.

e) When a car will be involved in an accident the policemen will arrive and record on how the accident took place. And the victim (small boy) will lie covered and dead (cold). After some time the matter will be taken to court and registered in the files and after some time the driver would be found guilty.

From the answers given it can be observed that the students' knowledge of the English language made them get the general idea that the stanza was about a road accident in which somebody died. They, however, failed to understand the connotation carried by the 'while' phrases in the stanza. As a result, the students failed to understand that the stanza was commenting on society's indifference to human suffering which makes those entrusted with overseeing the meting of justice either negligent of their duty (like the indifferent policemen who come to the accident scene 'later' and take down even unnecessary details - the commas) or outrightly unjust (like the courts which fail to punish the offending driver). This reveals that though a student's grammatical ability assists him/her when interpreting a poem, it (grammatical ability) is not enough in itself. This is discussed further in section 4.3 below.
In Question A(ii) 25.6% of the students gave responses that revealed their lack of skills in reading comprehension. When required to state what they understood by

Aids

Aid indeed

A gift of death

Through a gift of life

The students simply dwelt only on the consequences of acquiring the disease ‘Aids’.

Some answers were completely off the mark. For example,

10. a) When you get Aids, definitely you will die as Aids has no cure.

b) Aids is responsible for death after the gift of life is over hence you die since it’s inevitable.

c) Aids snatches the gift of life since once you get it you have to die.

d) Aids referring to the disease is a good way that can help someone pave way (sic) to death of his precious life.

e) Aids kills

The responses showed that the students used their general knowledge about the disease to aid their comprehension. They knew that Aids is incurable, that it results in death. They, therefore, had their comprehension narrowed to the word ‘death’ and this made them fail to perceive the significance of the pun on the words ‘Aids’ and ‘Aid’ and the irony in the fact that what is meant to create life (sexual encounter) could also bring about death.
Students' performance in Section B of Test Two was not any better though the questions were to be answered from the context of complete poems. Question (i) of Poem One required the students to identify the simile used in the first stanza. Of the students tested 88.9% identified the simile correctly. This was a very high proportion in contrast to percentages for other questions. This can be explained by the fact that the students just needed to identify a comparison between two things in the syntax of the sentence. In this case the presence of the word 'like' prompted the students to identify the simile. This can be supported by the fact that 10% of the students tested gave a partial response starting from the word 'like', that is,

...like a dreaded disease

This shows that they only knew that a simile must contain the word 'like' but they did not know where the simile started or ended. The partial response, therefore, was not accepted since it never brought out the two objects being compared. However, only 28.9% gave a correct interpretation of the meaning the simile helped to convey, suggesting that the majority of the students had only a basic knowledge of what a simile entailed but could not explain the effectiveness of the simile used. The students' knowledge of English syntax in this case enabled them to identify the comparison but the same knowledge could not assist them to explain the significance of the comparison. This indicates that competence in English, though necessary, is not enough when identifying and explaining the use of similes.

In Question (ii) of Poem One, the students were expected to explain the use of the first person singular pronoun in the poem. Only 5.5% of the students in our sample gave a correct response. Some of the responses given included:
11. a) Use of ‘I’ shows that the poet is the persona
b) The poet uses ‘I’ to stand for all human beings
c) To help in differentiating between him and other murderer (sic)
d) The poet use ‘I’ in the poem because even if he fears he has to pass through it (sic)
e) The poet uses ‘I’ to emphasize on his problems, the way he hates night fall and the way he fears and also shows that he is the one who is directed to the fear (sic)

The reasons for the low score could be, either that they did not understand what was meant by the first person (which is unlikely since the grammatical person is taught right from primary school) or, they could not transfer their knowledge of the use of the grammatical person to the literary point of view in poetry. The latter is a more likely explanation. This means that though the students are conversant with the grammatical person, they lack the knowledge of literary significance of the same, something they may remain ignorant of unless they are trained to decipher the relationship between the two.

When talking casually with teachers in the schools where the tests were administered, we confirmed that point of view in poetry is tested in the literature paper at K.C.S.E., dispelling fears that the question might have been strange to the students. As many as 15% of the students did not even attempt the question and these could be those who did not understand what ‘1st person’ meant. A number of the students (28.9%) stated that the 1st person singular pronoun was used to represent those who are suffering, thus failing to differentiate between the 1st person singular and the 1st person plural pronouns.
Question (iii) of Poem One was better performed. The question required the students to explain why the poet used the present tense throughout the poem. Of these, 53.3% of the students gave the correct response. They understood that the tense used in the poem was the present simple and was meant to show that the events in the poem happened habitually. A few students (8.3%) however, understood the events in the poem as only happening momentarily at the time of writing, failing to differentiate between the meaning conveyed by the present simple and present continuous tenses. Some of these responses were:

12. a) These deeds are happening at the present moment of nightfall.
   b) The poet is writing the poem at night and the murders and night attacks are taking place.
   c) Whatever he is talking about is happening now and never existed sometimes back.
   d) The evil things did not happen in the past but in the present.
   e) The poet is talking about what is happening now (at the time of writing).

The students' knowledge of the use of the present simple tense enabled them to understand the plight of the victims of violence in the poem, that they live in constant fear.

Question (v) of Poem One was based on the use of rhetorical questions as a device of heightening. The rhetorical questions were

Where is my refuge?

Where am I safe?
This basically required the students to say what the poet intended to heighten by the use of the questions. It was puzzling that only 30.6% of the 180 students tested gave the correct response since 60.6% of the students actually recognized them as rhetorical questions. This could be explained by the fact that the use of rhetorical questions might not have struck the students as ‘unusual.’ They could have failed to perceive the literariness of the questions due to their (the questions’) congruity with the general theme of the poem. This is enhanced by the persona’s response in line 25.

Not in my match box house

The 109 (61%) students who labeled the questions as rhetorical gave explanations that showed that they did not realize the negation the questions suggested. For example;

13. a) To shows that those who have been living with troubles now could seek help from any source (sic).

b) The poet use question because he is talking of something that is quite obvious. Rhetoric question which don’t need answers (sic).

c) The poet uses the questions to show that he is a refuge and he goes where he safe to live (sic).

d) It help in making the poem more realistic and also create an image or picture of the living conditions in Soweto.

f) They are rhetoric questions which provoke serious thinking and questioning. They also give suspense.
The questions actually heightened the persona’s hopelessness and sense of insecurity.

Students’ knowledge of the structure of English language enabled them to recognize the questions as rhetorical but they could not perceive the questions as serving any literary function due to the fact that they lacked the knowledge that the mere use of rhetorical questions in any text is significant. Students’ mastery of the English language in this case only assisted them in identifying the questions as rhetorical but they lacked the facility that would have enabled them to explain their use.

For Poem Two Question (ii) the students were required to explain why the poet made use of both the past and the present tenses in the poem. Performance in this question was very poor compared to that of question one which was similarly based on tense. It was expected that students’ performance in the two questions would be uniform since the two dwelt on the same aspect. However, only 10.5% of the students tested gave a correct response to this question. Though the students could identify the poet’s demarcation of past events on the one hand and present events on the other, they gave very vague answers which showed that they did not know what either of the tenses in the poem entailed. This can be attested to by the following responses:

14. a) The poet uses both the past and the present tense in the poem to show or to emphasize to us how things were or used to be in the past and how they are today.

b) The writer uses past and present tenses in the poem because the things that are discussed in the poem used to happen sometimes ago and even now
they still continue.

c) The poet has used past and present tense to show the occurrence of the events before the colonial rule has used past and after the colonial rule has used present to create awareness in the poem (sic).

d) The poet use both past and present tense to show the events of the past and present the difference between them. (sic)

e) He uses the past and the present in the poem because he wants to inform us what happened in the past and also what is happening at present.

The students lacked clarity in their explanation of what they called “the events of the past and those of the present”. This could mean that they did not exactly understand the difference between the two tenses. In fact, a majority of the errors made by the students in Section A of Test One (composition) were in the use of tenses. The students failed to distinguish between the various tenses in English and especially mixed the present simple and the past simple tenses. For example,

The day start with only the fear I still had in my body and my blood remain constant ready to get into whatever would happen (sic).

The students may not have mastered the use of the tenses and this explains whey they gave vague answers to question (ii) of Poem Two. Their lack of mastery of English tenses hampered their comprehension of the poem, indicating that competence in language is necessary in the interpretation of a poem.
Another possible explanation is that the students failed to comprehend the meaning of the imagery used in the poem and they could, therefore, not comprehend 'the things' in the poem that used to happen 'sometimes ago' and still continue to happen. For example, only 22.2% understood 'a colonial dusk' in line 4 to mean the end of colonialism. The possibility of the imagery used in the poem hampering students’ interpretation is discussed in detail under question (vii) of Poem Two below.

Question (iii) of Poem Two required the students to explain what the words 'I have to...' in line 2 conveyed to them about the song the persona was about to sing. The question tested whether the students' knowledge of the use of 'have to' to express obligation could assist them to understand the message contained in the line. A relatively high proportion of the students tested (55%) gave the correct response. The reason for this relatively good performance in the question can be attributed to the students' knowledge of the functions of the modal auxiliary, an item given much emphasis in the secondary school English syllabus. That the students could use their knowledge of the functions of the modal auxiliary to appreciate the meaning of a line in a poem illustrates that grammatical ability is essential in the interpretation of poetry.

Question (vii) of Poem Two required the students to explain what the poem was about. The question was marked out of 8 marks. The highest score was 3 out of 8 and only 4.4% of the students scored that. A mere 10.6% of the students scored 2 out of 8 while 26.7% scored one out of 8. The rest 58.3% got no mark. The students were expected to trace the development of the plot of the poem from the historical struggle for independence to the current life in exile. They were supposed to describe the four stages,
viz, the struggle for independence, attainment of independence, abuse of power by the new government and finally, disillusionment when people were sent into exile. The students performed very poorly and this can be attributed to the extensive use of imagery in the poem. The students failed to draw a line between the figurative and literal meanings. They could not explain the reference to the church in the second stanza. Though they could understand that the poem was not basically about the church, most of the students could not explain what it (the church) represented and they simply took the metaphor literally. The following responses illustrate this.

15. a) The poem is about the person who discovered the emergence of colonial rule and he started advising people to resist it. We are also told that churches refused his call.

b) The poem is about the salvation in that in the early days the people used to speak of no salvation and time went by churches were opened and new people rejoice of the salvation in the life (sic).

c) The poem is about the kind of life people use to live during colonialism.

d) The poem is about those church songs sung during the older days and present days.

The mention of ‘the church’, ‘salvation’ and ‘soul’ reveals that the students perceived a religious theme in the poem, not the struggle for independence and the disillusionment thereafter. This reveals that the students took the words at face value without attempting to unearth any hidden meaning. The students’ competence with language made it possible for them to understand the poem in terms of those words on the page whose meaning they knew but they lacked the knowledge of literary conventions which would have made them
question the occurrence of the religious imagery in an otherwise political poem. It appears that mastery of language is of primary importance in that it enables the student to reach a literal meaning of an image in a poem, but knowledge of literary conventions is necessary if the student is to understand the deeper meaning carried by the image.

Use of unfamiliar words in some of the images drawn also hindered students' comprehension of the poem. For example, they could not comprehend the following simile.

Like the beatles

The evangelical hymns

of conversion

Rocked the world and me.

The allusion to 'beatles' is the focus in the comparison yet it is likely that none of the students had come across it before since it is not a dictionary entry. It required some background knowledge of who the 'Beatles' were. As argued above, a student's mastery of language will assist him/her in understanding the literal meaning of an image drawn by a poet. In this case, however, the students could not even comprehend the literal meaning of the simile since they were not familiar with the cultural background from which the simile was drawn. The word 'totems' in stanza four also hindered students' comprehension of the lines:

I knelt before the new totems

I had helped to raise

The students could not identify what 'totems' were since it is not a familiar word. Like the allusion to 'beatles' discussed above, the use of the word 'totems' completely
hampered the students’ comprehension of the metaphor. The use of lexical items beyond the students’ language level is very likely a hindrance to interpretation.

In these two examples, the students could not give a literal meaning to the images since they did not understand what the comparisons were about. The use of imagery can hinder students’ interpretation of poetry unless the ground of comparison is identified. This ground can only be perceived if one of the objects in the comparison falls within the students’ socio-cultural experience. It is only then that they can understand the similarity the image is focussing at. We can, therefore, conclude that the use of imagery can make the meaning of a poem inaccessible if both the objects being compared are taken from a background alien to the students as was the case with the images in Poem Two.

4.3 Interpretation of the Findings

The analysis done in Section 4.1.2. above showed that Form Four students perform better in English language than in poetry. This is illustrated by the mean scores for both Test One and Test Two which were 59.9% and 24.7% respectively. The mean score for Test One was significantly higher than that for Test Two. That none of the students in our sample scored higher in poetry than in language also demonstrates that poetry was done poorly as compared to language. This is illustrated by the coefficient calculated for every school shown in Table 11 below:
Table 4.7: The coefficients for schools A - F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>COEFFICIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>0.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coefficient for the whole sample was approximately 0.5. The positive coefficient reveals that a high score in English language was matched by a relatively high score in poetry. We, therefore, conclude that students’ competence in language is related to their skill in interpreting poetry. Though grammatical competence was found to be necessary when interpreting poetry, we observed that it was not adequate in itself. Firstly, as observed above, the students in our sample performed very well in language and very poorly in poetry. Only 3 students (1.7%) attained 50% and above in poetry while 157 students (87%) attained 50% and above in language. This disparity in performance would not have been experienced if grammatical ability was all that was required when interpreting a poem.

Secondly, we observe that a very high proportion of students identified various poetic devices used in poems but they could not account for their use. For example, given the line: ‘The man moved, moved, moved nearer.’ 89.5% of the students identified the use of repetition. Their linguistic competence enabled them to perceive the repetitive use of the word ‘moved’ in the syntax of the line. However, only 19% of them accounted correctly
for the use of the repetition. The same can be said about the students’ failure to interpret
the use of rhetorical questions as a device for heightening. The students were able to
recognize the questions, ‘where is my refuge? Where am I safe?’ as rhetorical but they
failed to perceive the literariness of their use. Their competence in English language only
assisted them in recognizing the questions as rhetorical but they lacked the ‘literary
competence’ that would have enabled them perceive a literary usage.

Specialized language used in poetry attracts attention to itself and this makes it easy for
students to identify devices such as paradox and metaphor when used in a poem. The
students in our study were good at identifying these devices but they failed to account for
their use. We can then conclude that students’ grammatical ability enables them to
perceive oddity where foregrounding is used. Such oddity acts as a signal to guide them
to the content of a poem. The identification of poetic devices is the first step in
interpretation and the students in our sample were aided by their grammatical ability to
go through this first step.

It was, however, observed that the students merely lack the knowledge of literary
conventions that would lead them to perceive not just the surface meaning, but the
figurative usage also. It seems that students’ failure to give a correct interpretation is due
to their lack of what Culler (1975:113) calls ‘implicit understanding of the operations of
literary discourse.’ It is this understanding that makes students use contextual clues
which would enable them to perceive a connection between the words on the page and
some deeper meaning. It, therefore, means that only a combination of competence in
language (which facilitates students’ ability to pick out foregrounded features) and the
knowledge of literary conventions (literary competence) can lead to an accurate interpretation.

Use of specialized language hinders students' interpretation of poetry. As explained above, the students in our sample were able to identify the poetic devices used in Test Two. However, the students could not interpret the deeper meaning such devices carried. For example, although 78.3% of the students tested identified the oddity in the line, "The stripped skeletons pray," only 21% gave the correct interpretation. Their competence with language made them read and "understand" the line but they could not get what the poet was out to convey.

Use of lexical items alien to students also hinder interpretation. For example, the students in our study could not interpret the simile, "like the beatles, the evangelical hymns of conversation rocked the world and me" since the word "beatles" is not an item in the English lexis and could only be understood within a particular historical or cultural context, which was apparently unknown to the students. Yet, the poet, in the exercise of his poetic licence, used the word like any other lexical item. The students in our study were also unable to interpret the lines:

I knelt before the new totems
I had helped to raise.

They were simply unable to get the meaning of the word "totems" since it was not familiar to them. This was another instance where lexical item beyond the students language level hindered interpretation.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1: Introduction

The preceding chapters in this study have concentrated on

a) a comparative analysis of Form Four students' performance in English language and in poetry, and

b) an examination of the relationship between the students' performance in language and in poetry.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study, giving pedagogic implications of the results, limitations of the study and possible areas for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

This study explored the relationship between a secondary school student's grammatical ability and his/her skill in interpreting poetry. The analysis done has demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between competence in language and accuracy in interpreting poetry. This was revealed by the coefficients for all the schools in our study which were positive, ranging from 0.264 to 0.671.
The analysis also revealed that though grammatical competence is necessary when interpreting poetry, it is not a sufficient condition. It was observed that students' competence in English language only assisted them in identifying oddity in language use in poetry but they lacked the special knowledge that would have enabled them to interpret the deeper meaning behind such usage.

This observation concurred with the position taken by proponents of the study of language as a useful basis for the interpretation of literature. For example, this study established that grammatical competence is not an exclusive prerequisite for the interpretation of poetry agreeing with Culler's (op cit) argument that in addition to understanding phrases and sentences, 'literary competence' is required for one to interpret literature. It is possible that it is this knowledge of literary conventions that the students in our sample lacked.

It was also observed that the language of poetry (which has been referred to in this study as 'specialized' or 'unusual') hampers interpretation of poems. Students are only able, because of their linguistic competence, to identify devices such as metaphors and paradox but they are unable to explain the meaning the devices carry. The use of lexical items from outside the students' cultural background or beyond their language level in poetry also hinders their appreciation of a poem.

5.3 Pedagogic Implications of the Results.

The findings of this study are relevant to the teaching of English in Kenyan Secondary Schools, especially at the syllabus designing level. The findings showed that the students in our sample displayed little awareness of the literary function of language. This was
observed especially in the students' essays and response to literary questions. They were able to positively identify literary devices but they could not account for their use. This is not surprising considering that neither the Secondary English Syllabus, nor the prescribed course books (read 'Intergrated English Students’ Book 1 – 4,' the main English language course book designed by K.I.E.) address themselves to the teaching of literary criticism. The teaching of literature in secondary schools in Kenya is mainly text based, that is, teachers concentrate mainly on the set books for a particular year. The syllabus does not prescribe the amount of poetry to be studied throughout the secondary course. It is, therefore, possible that students are ill-equipped to respond to literary questions. Designers of the Secondary English Syllabus should, therefore, find a way of including the teaching of literary criticism as part of the syllabus. We recommend that if possible, a minimum amount of poetry be studied between Form One and Form Four and this should be quantified.

In addition, teachers of English should encourage students to read poetry as widely as possible so as to develop interest in the genre so as to be conversant with poetic language. Beginning at Form One, students should be introduced to the reading of poems for pleasure.

5.4 Limitations and Possible Areas for Further Research

This study concentrated on the relationship between secondary school students' grammatical ability and their skill in interpreting poetry. Though our findings showed that those students who performed better in English language performed correspondingly better in poetry, it was observed that performance in language was much better than in poetry. This indicates that though a knowledge of the grammar of English language is
necessary in the interpretation of poetry, there could be other factors influencing interpretation. Those factors may include

a) The methods used in the teaching of poetry
b) The level in the school system at which poetry teaching is introduced
c) Students' attitude towards poetry
d) The attitude of teachers of English towards poetry and its teaching

It would be inaccurate to assume non-existence of such factors and we would, therefore, suggest further study to establish the extent to which these factors may influence interpretation of poetry.

It should be noted that our study only covered Provincial Schools in one district and compared students' performance in English Language and only one genre of Literature, that is poetry. We would suggest that further study be carried out to cover:

i) other genres of literature so as to find out their correspondence with students' grammatical ability.
ii) respondents from District, National and Private schools.
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SECTION A

In about 500 words, write a story entitled 'The most uncomfortable night I have ever spent'.

SECTION B

Answer all the questions

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

His father, Ezekieli, tall, severe in his austere aloofness, was a wealthy landowner and respected elder in the hierarchy of the Presbyterian Church. He was tall and mean in his austere holiness. He believed that children should be brought up on boiled maize grains sprinkled with a few beans and on tea with only tiny drops of milk and no sugar, but all crowned with words of God and prayers. He was, despite his rations, especially successful in attracting faithful labour on his farm. Two of the labourers had remained in his father's employment ever since Munira could remember - still wearing the same type of patched up trousers and nginyira for shoes. Off and on, over the years, he had engaged many hands - some from as far as Gaki, Metumi, Gussiland - to help him in cultivating his fields, picking his pyrethrum flowers all the year round and drying them, and picking red ripe plums in December, putting them in boxes and taking them to the Indian shops to sell. They nearly all had one thing in common; submission to the Lord. They called him Brother Ezekieli, our brother in Christ, and they would gather in the yard of the house after work for prayers and thanksgiving. There were of course some who had devilish spirits which drove them to demand higher wages and create trouble on the farm and they would be dismissed. One of them attempted to organize the workers into a branch of the
Plantation Workers' Union that operated on European farms. He argued that there was no difference between African and European employers of labour. He too was instantly dismissed. He was even denounced in a church sermon. He was given as an example of 'the recent trials and tribulations of Brother Ezekiel'. But Munira even as a boy was quick to notice that away from his father's house, in their quarters down the farm, the workers, even as they praised the Lord, were less stilted, were more free and seemed to praise and sing to the Lord with greater conviction and more holiness. He felt a little awed by their total conviction and by their belief in a literal heaven to come. (Adapted from Petals of Blood by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o).

a) Whose view do you think is expressed by the following statement, 'There were of course some who had devilish spirits...?'

b) What three things in the passage show that workers on Ezekiel's farm were not well treated?

c) What evidence do we have in the passage that the church supported exploitation of the workers?

d) Describe Ezekiel's character giving illustrations from the passage.

e) Which farms offered better working conditions; African or European Farms? Give evidence from the passage.

f) Which of the statements below is a more accurate account of the workers' feelings about Ezekiel?

i) That apart from a few devilish-minded individuals, the workers regarded him as a brother in Christ.

ii) That most of them feared him, although a few hated and despised him.
iii) That the majority probably hated and feared him.

iv) That the majority respected him although a few plotted against him.

g) What do you think kept the workers on Ezekiel's farm despite poor pay?

h) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage.

i) aloofness

ii) off and on

iii) hands

2. a) Rewrite each of the following sentences according to the instructions given. You must keep the same meaning.

i) Until the money came, we could not start building. (Begin 'Not until...')

ii) Smoking is dangerous. (Begin 'It...')

iii) The newspaper dedicated an article to the minister. (Begin 'An article...')

iv) My father left the car at the garage. He had to catch the bus to work.

(Join the two sentences beginning with 'Having left...')

v) I'd advise you to take it back and to ask for a refund (Begin: 'If I...')

vi) Mary lent her brother some money (use 'borrowed' instead of 'lent')

vii) The board spent a long time considering the proposal but they finally rejected it (Rewrite using 'much')

viii) He had only just finished addressing his final campaign meeting when the rain started to fall (Use 'hardly').

ix) Peter is an only child. His parents are often away. He is frequently lonely.

(Combine the sentences starting 'in addition to...')

x) Kamau's mother warned him not to walk alone at night as she had heard there was a leopard in the area. (Use direct speech).
b) Rewrite the following sentences replacing the underlined expressions with word(s) that have the same meaning.

i) The people remained in the dark about the government's plans.
ii) Opanga's article added fuel to the flames of popular discontent.
iii) The children were full of life.
iv) He can't stand his wife's nagging.
v) Her first album was an instant hit.

c) Explain the difference in meaning between the following pairs of sentences.

i) 1. There are a few people I dislike
    2. There are few people I dislike

ii) 1. The car stopped when the lights changed
    2. The car was stopping when the lights changed.

iii) 1. I did not know where he was driving to
    2. I did not know what he was driving at.

iv) 1. If I became famous, I would change my name.
    2. If I become famous, I will change my name.

v) 1. These are my brother's pencils.
    2. These are my brothers' pencils.

d) Fill in the blank spaces in the following passage with the correct form of the word in the brackets.

Franco was the.........................(bad) of all the workers in the office. The boss was always complaining that he was ...................(efficient) I remember one day when hardly had he ...............(entrance) the office than he picked up the phone and rang his girlfriend. Half an hour later when the boss came in everyone was
working (diligence) except Franco who was reading the newspaper. Despite the warning he got from the boss he seemed (immunization) to fear of losing his job. Minutes later, he was doing the cross word!

e) Rewrite the following sentences using one word to replace the underlined words.

i) He bought an instrument for sharpening pencils

ii) The dress she is wearing today is clear to see through

iii) My friend is expecting a baby.

iv) This pen is the only one of its type

v) His work was very good and attractive

f) After each of the following statements, add the correct question tag.

i) The old couple held a party last evening,?

ii) This isn't your mother,?

iii) The work has not impressed you,?

iv) They go to work every day,?

g) Fill in the blank spaces in the following sentences with the correct preposition.

i) His stupid argument resulted a fight.

ii) She was accused robbery.

iii) He does not always agree me.

iv) I thanked him being good to me.

v) The leaders were cautioned making inflammatory statements

h) Use the most appropriate word to fill in the blank spaces to link up the ideas in the following sentences.

i) The council must do something to improve the roads in the city, the councillors will lose in the next election.
ii) We arrived there late, we were able to present our papers.

iii) He did not perform well in his examination, he was not admitted into the university.
SECTION A

i) The following lines have been taken from contemporary poems. Study them carefully and for every line briefly say what captures your attention in the way language is used. What meaning do they convey?

1) Looking and not looking

2) That girl - If girl indeed she is-

3) The man moved, moved, moved nearer

4) The kind doctor's cruel words.

5) The stripped skeletons pray

6) ... he clung desperately to his single life.

ii) The following are excerpts from contemporary poems. Study them carefully and then explain briefly what you understand by each.

1) The excerpt below is from a poem about death and the mourning period. It is entitled 'Twice Poorer' and written by J. K. Agunda.

   Some Came
to help drain the pool
   of grief,
but had eyes screwed on property
to determine portability.
2) The following excerpt is from the poem 'Accident' by K.E. Kaso.

Later the cops will come
will record elaborately
(Not forgetting the commas)
And the small body, now cold, will lie covered there
For a while
The court-file will gather dust
After a while
And the driver will be guilty
For a while

3) The following excerpt is from the poem 'Aids' by J. K. Mungai.

Aids
Aid indeed
A gift of death
Through a gift of life.

4) The excerpt below is from the poem 'Africa's Plea' by Roland T. Dempster.

God made me *me*
He made you *you*
For God's sake
Let me be *me*
SECTION B

C) POEM ONE

Read the following poem carefully and answer the following questions that follow.

NIGHTFALL IN SOWETO

Oswald Mtshali

Nightfall comes like
a dreaded disease
seeping through the pores
of a healthy body
and ravaging it beyond repair

A murderer's hand,
Lurking in the shadows,
clasping the dagger,
strikes down the helpless victim

I am the victim
I am slaughtered
every night in the streets
I am cornered by the fear
gnawing at timid heart;
in my helplessness I languish.
Man has ceased to be man
Man has become beast
Man has become prey:
I am the prey;
I am the prey;
I am the prey;
I am the quarry to be run down
by the marauding beast
let loose by the cruel nightfall
from his cage of death.

Where is my refuge?
Where am I safe?
Not in my matchbox house
Where I barricade myself against nightfall.

I tremble at his crunching footsteps,
I quake at his deafening knock at my door.
‘Open Up!’ he barks like a rabid dog
thirsty for my blood

Nightfall! Nightfall!
You are my mortal enemy
But why were you ever created?
Why can't it be daytime?
Daytime forever more?
Questions

i) Identify the simile in the first stanza. What meaning does it help convey?

ii) Why does the poet use 'I' in the poem?

iii) Why does the Poet make use of the present tense throughout the poem?

iv) How can you describe the living conditions of the speaker in the poem? Give evidence for your answers.

v) Why do you think the Poet uses the questions in lines 24 - 25?

vi) Who is referred to by 'his' in line 28-31?

vii) Who is being referred to as 'mortal enemy' in line 33?

POEM TWO

Read the following poem carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Yet Another Song - David Rubadiri

Yet another song

I have to sing;

In the early wake

of a colonial dusk

I sang the song of fire

The church doors opened

To the clang

of new anthems

And colourful banners
Like the beatles, 10

The evangelical hymns
of conversion

Rocked the world and me

I knelt before the new totems
I had helped to raise,
watered them
with tears of ecstasy.

They grew
Taller than life,
Grimacing and breathing fire. 20

Today
I sing yet another song,
A song of exile.

Questions

i) Identify the three ‘songs’ the persona talks about in the poem.

ii) Why does the Poet use both the past and the present tense in the poem?

iii) What do the words ‘I have to.’ (line 2) tell us about the song the persona is going to sing.

vi) What do the following lines in the poem mean?
a) .... a colonial dusk (line 4)

b) of new anthems (line 8)

c) Taller than life

(Lines 19)

v) What do the words 'Grimacing and breathing fire' (line 20) tell us of those who are in power

vi) Briefly describe the mood of the poem.

vii) Briefly explain what you think the poem is about.