EXPLORING CRITICAL READING OF POETRY IN UTAR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: AN EYE-TRACKING CASE STUDY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that

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APPROVAL SHEET

This research paper attached hereto, entitled 'Exploring Critical Reading of Poetry in UTAR Undergraduate Students: An Eye Tracking Case Study' prepared and submitted by Chin Chun Yuan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Education is hereby accepted.

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ABSTRACT

Critical reading is an important skill and is regarded as crucial in this era of globalisation. It is defined as the ability to analyse, interpret, and evaluate the contents of any written text. However, critical reading levels in Malaysian schools have been unsatisfactory. This paper aims to discover the challenges faced when applying critical reading in poetry. By examining a sample of ED/EL students in how they read and analyse poems, this research aims to discover the effect of critical reading on a students' poetry comprehension. Using purposive sampling, 7 Year 3 students from the FAS faculty of UTAR were chosen to read two Malaysian English poems while their visual patterns were tracked using eye-tracking equipment before a semi-structured interview that tested their comprehension and their knowledge of critical reading. The eye-tracking results were analysed using a set of five pre-determined reading categories, while the interview transcripts were set to undergo thematic analysis. The research's results indicated that the visual patterns of the respondents whilst they read the poems were affected by a combination of objective, length and arrangement of poem as well as the complexity of language in the poem. The researcher also found out that language proficiency and poetic devices were the main challenges the readers faced when critically analysing poems. At the end of the paper, the research notes down several limitations present within the experiment's design as well as a few recommendations when reimplementing this research in future studies.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Critical reading can be defined as the ability to compile, evaluate, and ultimately form a coherent and unbiased stance on a particular topic or subject (Anuar et al., 2023). As such, it is a literacy skill much in-keeping with the requirement of the times in this era of globalization, making it a crucial skill to be taught to all secondary and tertiary education students. This is because extracting and processing the required information from any form of text becomes a key feature in effective evaluation and judgement of facts, especially in terms of tertiary students (Tsai et al., 2022). To develop critical readings skills, it is vital that students must learn to simultaneously analyse and think to acquire a deeper comprehension of the text. However, a mix of low language proficiency, disinterest in the English language, lack of time when reading, as well as a host of other factors have caused that rate of critical reading in Malaysian tertiary schools to be uncharacteristically low (Edward et al., 2021).

To inculcate the interest of English texts among Malaysian students, the literature component was introduced into the Malaysian Education System in 2000, featuring the three classical genres of short stories, drama, and poetry. Poetry, with its' brevity, richness in language, short number of words, and complexity of universal themes was lauded as a particularly effective tool in improving language proficiency in students as well as to cultivate a habit of reading due to its' short length (Hashim & Talib, 2019). However, the opposite instead proved true when poetry became immensely unpopular amongst students. This was mainly attributed to the low language proficiency amongst students, thus leaving them unable to understand the complex language and covert themes hidden in poems, as well as the frustration of attempting to interpret the unique rhyming structure of most English poems causing them to forgo the genre almost entirely save extremely simple ones (Wai & Abidin, 2020). Reading it not only a conscious endeavour, but also an unconscious one as the

brain interprets the information taken in from the text. Thus, it is conceived that by analysing the visual patterns of students reading poems critically, the mental processes undertaken by students to understand the poem can be understood, thus opening new possibilities for both students and teachers when approaching poetry.

Eye-tracking technology has become a popular education research tool as of late due to being able to record the real-time visual data of students reading any form of literary material. Thus, it becomes a good choice in exploring the reading patterns and thus information processing of students in various learning environments (Tsai et al., 2022). Although the knowledge of critical reading strategies being used by high language proficiency students to analyse poetry exists, data of the efficacy of such reading strategies being used real-time during the active interpretation of poems during reading is lacking. Therefore, this study will be attempting to correlate visual patterns of students reading poems with how those critical reading strategies affect the efficacy of students analysing said poems.

1.2 Problem Statement

Critical reading is one of the core skills necessary for students to master and is the basis for many essential language skills (Tsai et al., 2022). This skill is particularly evident in the study of English literature, particularly poems as it involves critical reading skills such as questioning the intention of the poet, connecting to one's personal experiences, considering its' form and structure, etc. However, poetry has always been unfavourable with students in Malaysian ESL classrooms. A study has shown that students mainly experience problems when interpreting the meaning of the poems, often resorting to memorizing guides or question banks for the sake of answering examination questions (Wai & Abidin, 2020, as cited in Gurnam, 2003). A similar study concluded that the poems chosen were pronounced to be 'too difficult' or lacking themes the students were able to relate to (Wai & Abidin, 2020, as cited in Tina et al., 2007). Another study found that students overall perceived poetry in a

negative light owing to its advanced vocabulary as well as needing the students to read between the lines. (Hashim & Talib, 2019, as cited in Sivapalan & Subramaniam, 2008). This problem extends even into tertiary education, where students experienced difficulties in analysing poetry despite its' relatively simply language.

As of recent years, there has been a lack of studies in how students navigated the intricate language and layered messages present in poems. Furthermore, poor reception by students as well as the frustrations faced by students in attempting to master the poems have led some to abandon literature entirely. Nowadays, teachers tend to favour the use of comprehension texts like textbooks and articles to foster critical reading. It can be argued that poetry can very well do the same thing with greater efficiency due to requiring critical thinking skills to appreciate, a key component of what constitutes critical reading (Wai & Abidin, 2020; Hashim & Talib, 2019). Therefore, this study will be exploring the subtle cognitive processes and reading strategies employed by students when analysing poetry by determining the visual reading patterns when students critically analyse a poem and how critical reading strategies aid in the efficacy of students understanding the poems.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To determine the visual reading patterns when students critically analyse Malaysian English poetry.
2. To examine the effectiveness of critical reading strategies in improving the efficiency of students analysing the poems.

1.4 Research Questions

With reference to the research objectives, the two main questions concerning the findings of this study are:

1. What are the visual reading patterns when students critically analyse Malaysian English poetry?

2. Will critical reading strategies make an impactful difference in how students analyse poems?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study aims to study the correlation between students' critical reading strategies and how it influences the efficiency of the students when they analyse poetry. It is hoped that in doing so, insight can be gained into how students process and interpret poetry through how they critically read the text. Also, by studying how students view and interpret Malaysian English poetry, it is intended to open up further research to be done on the effects of implementing Malaysian English poetry as teaching materials to be included in the literature components of secondary education students.

The intended beneficiaries of this finding are professionals and other practitioners as well as teachers/ lecturers/ trainers. As previously mentioned, the literature component was introduced into the Malaysian ESL syllabus with the intention of cultivate reading habits as well as to introduce primary and secondary students to more complex and difficult forms of English before their higher education (Wai & Abidin, 2020). However, it's difficulty and scope of texts has since been greatly reduced and diminished because of poor language proficiency amongst students and difficulties faced by the teachers in introducing the component into the classroom. Through understanding how students approach and understand poetry, educators and professionals can tailor instructional approaches and evaluation policies to address the unique challenges posed by poetry. It is also intended that by exploring how student interpret and analyse poetry, teachers can more effectively design lessons or classroom activities in poetry as well as other forms of literature.

1.6 Definition of Key terms

The key terms of this research are critical reading, eye-tracking, and poetry.

Critical Reading- Critical reading can be defined as the ability of a student to identify, evaluate, analyse, and judge information from different sources to form a personal stance on an issue (Tsai et al., 2021).

Eye-tracking- Eye-tracking is the process of measuring the movement of eye's point of gaze from one point to the other. It is commonly used to measure eye movements such as saccades, focusing and re-reading in relative to texts or other visual material (Corcoran et al., 2023).

Poetry- Poetry is considered the oldest form of literature, existing before and sharing many characteristics with prosaic language, such as semantics and morphology. It is mainly characterised with the presence of metre and rhyme in its' structure (Menninghaus & Wallot, 2021).

1.7 Scope and Limitations

This research aims at investigating the visual patterns of students critically analysing poetry and how the critical reading strategies they employ affect their efficiency in understanding and interpreting said poems. Owing to the experimental nature of this research, it will conduct in the scale of a case study, thus the sampling size is limited to 12-15 respondents or till the saturation point is reached. The respondents will be taken from UTAR English major undergraduate students for a higher familiarity with the language as well as poetry as a form of academic literature for critical analysis. It is to be done in a mixed method approach with eye-tracking methodology to collect real time visual data during the reading process and a structured interview post reading to identify if any critical reading strategies were used and how it affected their capability in analysing those poems. The poems chosen for this study are 'Blue Skies Soulmates' and 'The City is Not My Home' by Malachi

Edwin Vethamani in his collection the Seven O' Clock Tree (Maya Press, 2022). Both poems were chosen for their varying language difficulties, lengths, and similar themes, thus allowing for the deviations in their visual patterns to be more recognisable.

As with all case studies, several limitations have been identified. Owing to the main subject of the study being Malaysian English poetry, this study cannot be guaranteed to reflect the same findings in other genres of poetry, translated or otherwise. Also, due to the use of eye-tracking technology to collect data, technological complications that may affect the eye-tracking data may not be accounted for. Due to biased sampling for a better chance of high to medium language proficiency students, the findings of this study may not hold true for students of all age groups or of lower language proficiency. Furthermore, due to the focus of Malaysian education being on Western colonial-era poetry, the familiarity of the respondents with Malaysian English poetry and language is not guaranteed.

1.8 Conclusion

In summary, critical reading skills are extremely important in 20th century classrooms. However, critical reading skills are unsatisfactorily low in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Poetry was introduced to cultivate good reading habits and foster critical reading skills. Yet, poetry along with other modes of literature have been simplified and discarded in favour of reading comprehension texts for training critical reading skills. Thus, the focus of this study will be to uncover the information processing methods of students when critically reading poems using eye-tracking technology. With all this focus on critical reading however, one begs the question, what is critical reading really?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Critical Reading

2.1.1. Critical Reading & Critical Thinking

Critical reading, to put in layman's terms, refers to the ability to deduce and put forth an informed conclusion on a literary text. It followed the hermeneutic circle theory by Martin Heidegger that proposed understanding of a text came with understanding its's individual parts, and that by forming new conclusions of those individual parts, so do new understandings or interpretations of the entirety of the text appear as well (Martin, 1972). Put it simply, it can be said that critical reading is the practice of "reading between the lines", looking beyond the straightforward information that has been presented on paper for implicit messages and the intention in why the text was written.

Various scholars give different and sometimes conflicting definitions to critical reading. Gray L. & Reese D.J (1957) cite critical reading as one of two forms of reading alongside informational reading, in which information reading is to collect facts and information as well as to discern its' truth and reliability, and critical reading (or in their own words, recreatory reading) refers to reading text for aesthetic or entertainment purposes and forming conclusions based on ones' own judgement and experiences. Another scholar defines critical reading as "evaluating the material, comparing it to current standards and norms, and forming a conclusion upon it based on ones' own judgement" (Huus, 1965, as cited in Boyan, 1972). Spache (1963) agrees with this statement by pointing out most people's common perception of critical reading involving opinion towards a text formed out of analysis and reasoning, citing an "interaction between reader and author".

Critical reading is also often cited simultaneously with critical thinking, with the consensus of critical thinking being a product of the critical reading process. Commeyras

(1990) claims that critical thinking is like critical reading owing to their similar roles in reading comprehension, with the fact that logical reasoning and thought forming the centre of textual interpretation based on factual evidence plus background knowledge possessed by the reader. Wallace and Wray (2006) argue that we as humans participate in critical thinking through critical reading unconsciously simply by reading through the contents of a text with the intention to gain 'information', then evaluating what has been read by relating them to related previous knowledge. Thistlethwaite (1990) notes that some critical thinking textbooks that list out the critical thinking goals intended to be taught share some similarities (or in some cases are practically the same) in critical reading skills described in some reading texts.

While various versions of what constitutes critical reading exist by different scholars, textbooks often narrow it down to three common goals: a) understanding why the author wrote the text, b) understanding the information in the text, and c) analysing and summarising the information in the text (Yu, 2015). According to Wallace &Wray (2006), the skill of critical reading is finding how adequate the authors of a text are in justifying the claims they have made, i.e., the information provided in the text. Thus, it can be said that to read critically is to judge how well a text works by evaluating the information, any sublimated messages, patterns, and the context of the text's contents beyond its' confines on the page (Diman et al., 2020).

2.1.2 Critical Reading & Reading Comprehension

Critical reading skills are extremely important in academic studies (Macknish, 2011; Tagliber, 2003). As so observed by Thistlethwaite (1990), the goal of fostering critical reading in schools is to develop both analytic and metacognitive skills, both necessary skills even after leaving the classroom environment. This stance is reflected by Hidayati et al. (2020) who posited critical reading in classrooms as vital for the development of critical

thinking and reading comprehension skills, both of which play crucial roles in the students'
academic development.

       A common method of teaching critical reading in English classrooms is via practising,
often repeatedly via reading comprehension exercises. Indeed, various studies have been
carried out to study the effect of critical reading on the reading comprehension and reading
efficacy of students. One such study by Al Roomy (2022) found that besides improving
reading efficacy, implementing critical reading in studies and classrooms drastically
improved students' comprehension of texts as well as critical thinking skills, forming various
opinions based on factual and textual evidence in their own words. The study also noted that
far from placing importance on word recognition and textual accuracy, the critical reading as
implemented in the classroom focused on "understanding the information given in their own
terms", which forms a core part of critical reading. Another study by Safian & Jiar (2022) that
studies the relationship between critical reading, reading self-efficacy and reading strategies
found that the high frequency of reading strategies used correlated to a high level of critical
reading skill, further attributing to how critical reading involves with methodically
understanding the main points of the text (hence the main message of the text) through the
use of several reading patterns or strategies to do so. Strangely however, there is a negative
weak relationship between critical reading and reading self-efficacy among students, owing
to the genre of text used being academic texts, thus proposing the inverse if it were in the
case of non-academic texts. Hidayati et al. (2020) found that there was a strong correlation in
critical reading with critical thinking skills, with critical thinking being a participant of
critical reading as the basis of logical judgement and reasoning when analysing and reading
through information presented within a text, as well as to link previous related knowledge
and experiences during its interpretation and when in needed to consult other sources as the
basis for factual evidence. In doing so, it also proved a strong correlation between critical

reading and reading comprehension, with the final mode of understanding the underlying facts and information within the text through the use of the readers' own knowledge and factual evidence from both the text and other sources, thus further cementing its' importance in the modern English classroom.

Sadly, perhaps due to the frequent practise of honing critical reading in students via reading comprehension activities, there is common misconception among students (particularly low language proficiency students) that critical reading is simply reading a text for required information, i.e, skimming for answers (Anuar et al., 2023). Thus, critical reading strategies exist as guidelines of sorts for starting on critical reading. Yu (2015) narrows down critical reading strategies into five stages:

1) Pre-reading. The most common method being scanning to get a sense of the main idea of the text.

2) Reading in context. Reading in earnest and understanding the content of the text. One example of activity during this stage is annotating and taking notes of important points or passages.

3) Furthering understanding by asking and answering questions. Some examples of the questions include the author's intentions, the purpose of the text (to address any problems or issues), any underlying arguments, et cetera.

4) Further thinking and reflections after thinking. This includes re-evaluating previous conclusions of the text, differentiating informed interpretations from biased or personal evaluations, as well as looking for further evidence (even from other sources).

5) Outlining and summarizing. Forming a final conclusion backed up by informed evidence both within the text and from other sources. Includes skills such as synthesis

and construction. Students are encouraged to write out their conclusion in their own words instead of adapting from the texts in question.

Despite the benefits of critical reading, there exists a persistent trend of unsatisfactory levels of critical reading skills in students (Hidayati et al., 2020; Diman et al., 2020; Macknish, 2011; Thistlethwaite, 1990). One study by Saidalvi et al. (2022) investigating critical reading skills in Malaysian engineering students found that students often overestimated their own critical reading skills, oftentimes only progressing to the first and second stages of critical reading, namely scanning and annotating. This was further speculated to be a result of the rote memory format of Malaysian schools to deal with examination-centric evaluation model, thus giving no obligation or incentive for students to probe deeper into the validity of the texts unless absolutely required for examinations and the like. Another study by Edward et al. (2021) found critical reading to be a result of reading deficiencies among students, with the lack of such habits being attributed to the frustration and subsequent disinterest in reading altogether, which further contributes to low language proficiency that impedes the development of reading skills in the first place. Rahmat et al. (2020) attributes academic reading fear to one of three reasons, top-down reading anxiety due to lack of cultural or general knowledge pertaining to the contents of the text, bottom-up reading anxiety caused by language proficiency impediments such as grammar or vocabulary, and classroom reading anxiety as a result of incorrect teaching methods of peer pressure in the classroom to succeed (particularly in contexts of competitive classrooms in which negative connotations are grossly magnified as a result of failure), a stance supported by Al Roomy (2022).

While critical reading is greatly emphasized in the classroom environment since the start of the 20th century, there has yet to be a concrete method in evaluating or gauging critical reading skills in students owing to the various teaching methods or practices in each

classroom. Previous studies that required gauging critical reading skills in students (particularly those in pre-university and undergraduate studies) resorted to reading comprehension tests to do so, sometimes borrowing criterion from critical thinking skills due to their synonymous nature (Hidayati et al., 2020; Diman et al., 2020; Safian & Jiar, 2022; Al Roomy, 2022). Other studies attempt to create a standardized form of evaluation for critical reading skills, such as the study by Anuar et al. (2023) that posited the creation of a Critical Reading Intention Scale (CRIS) based on the theory of planned behaviour (TBP) developed by Ajzen (1991), though it only seems to be limited to be an indication of whether a students has willingly participated in the critical reading of a text. A study by Din (2020) resorted to using Watson-Glaser's Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) (2002) and critical reading test(CRT) when evaluating the critical thinking skills of students through critical reading, the results of which further cemented a strong correlation between critical reading and critical thinking skills, showing a high frequency of both skills in high proficiency students. Despite so, as with all modes of evaluation, there is a possibility of data error because of students utilizing prior knowledge of a tests' questions to answer in a way that does not reflect their actual critical reading capabilities, a possibility that has become even more real with the increase of dissemination of information via technological advancements. Thus, there became a need for more accurate data on how students utilised critical reading skills when processing and interpreting texts, which soon became possible to obtain, with a solution in the form of eye-tracking technology.

2.2 Eye-Tracking Technology & Critical Reading.

Eye-tracking refers to tracking the gaze of the eye, or the motion of the eye without moving the head, often using eye trackers. The purpose of this form of research based on the underlying theory that visual movement occurs in tandem with cognitive processes happening as visual data is recorded and processed (Pluzyczka, 2018). While it seems like a recent

discovery, eye-tracking studies have existed since the 19th century, when Louis Emile Javal found that reading does not consist of smooth sweeps across the text, but instead consisted of short pauses and saccades (Huey, 1900 as cited in Pluzyczka, 2018). Back then, eye-tracking studies were conducted using a mirror placed in front of the reader, with the researcher taking note of the eye movements through regular observation. It was not until 1908 when Edmund Huey built the first eye tracker that tracked eye-movement during the reading process, following with improved models by Guy Thomas Buswell and Alfred Lukyanovich Yarbus with studies focusing on reading patterns as well as eye movement during different reading tasks (EyeSee, 2014). With the advent of artificial intelligence and computational applications, eye-tracking technology has since been used in a vast variety of applications ranging from business to scientific research. However, even today, it is still greatly used to understand how students approach academic texts through various cognitive processes and skills.

Like its' first study, many studies today. use eye-tracking technology to investigate reading patterns among students. One study by Ming & Aziz (2019) used eye-tracking technology to investigate the reading processes and preferences of Malaysian ESL students. The study found that students preferred paragraphs that were easier to read in terms of organization, easier terminology, as well as familiarity in content, with no large variations in reading patterns. Another study by Jian (2017) used eye-tracking technology to study the relationship between the students' performance in reading scientific texts with diagrams and their reading patterns. The results showed that good performance students spend more time reading the entirety of the article compared to poor performance students, as well as a high number of saccades between the article contents and diagrams, thus proving a strong connection between visual movement and informational processing.

Forming the correct method of informational processing is vital for students, as it is a key component in the development of critical reading skills through analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information from various sources, some of which may contain conflicting information or opinions on a particular subject. Eye tracking technology, thus, becomes an important tool in investigating critical reading skills in students during such circumstances, as well as potentially proposing methods by which to enhance critical reading in students. One study by Salmeron et al. (2019) proposed the usage of eye-movement modelling examples obtained from eye-tracking technology as a method of improving critical reading on webpages presenting conflicting information about a topic. The study found an increase in references and textual evidence in conclusions on the topic by students who were exposed to the eye-movement modelling examples, as well as critical thinking skills and critical literacy among the students through identifying discrepancies throughout the titles or in the content of the irrelevant text. Another study by Tsai et al. (2022) investigated critical reading strategies in students when reading conflicting information through a mix of self-reported strategies by students and raw data collected using eye-tracking technology. They found that students with self-reported high level of critical reading paid more attention to reasoning information in the conflicting articles so as to draw inferences in formation of their own conclusions, two notable critical reading strategies when processing conflicting information were 1) saccades and rereading in the reasoning portion of texts, and 2) repeated re-reading of the reasoning and data information of the two conflicting articles. Nevertheless, while informational processing forms a large part of critical reading skills, it also involves understanding the purpose of the text, namely subliminal messages or implied meanings as is common in most works (Wallace & Wray, 2006). As such, while reading comprehension texts are common in the practice of fostering critical reading in students, other forms of literature compositions have been explored to introduce the idea of "reading between the lines" to students in the

presence of very little surface information, the most popular choice being the nightmare of all literature students, poetry (Bugeja, 1992).

2.3 Poetry in Malaysian ESL Classrooms

Poetry, as one of the oldest forms of literature, was first used in classrooms to promote citizenship and morals in the U.S. It's flexibility and rhyming nature meant that it was often modified as a teaching tool for young children beyond language, even touching on subjects like geography and mathematics (Apol, 2017). As the sciences and mathematics gradually began to be emphasized in the late 20th century, poetry as a teaching tool began to decline as it was reclassified as one of the arts. In current times, beyond its' use in pre-school to primary syllabus, poetry is often regarded as "dull, elitist and irrelevant to daily life". (Creely, 2019). Poetry was separated into two forms, 'serious poetry' and 'verse'. Serious poetry was used for the sake of teaching literary devices, such as alliteration, metaphor, et cetera. Verse was irrelevant to the official syllabus, and often included as a recreational component for language classes.

In Malaysia, poetry was introduced alongside short stories and drama as part of the literature component of English as a Second Language (ESL) in 2000 as an attempt to cultivate reading habits and introduce critical reading skills (Wai & Abidin, 2020). This sentiment is echoed in the study by Azizi et al. (2023), who cited the unique features of poetic language and arrangement as suitable factors in encouraging critical thinking through critical reading of the text. A second study by Ali et al. (2020) posits the rhythm, brevity and musicality of poems as valuable features that keep students interested and attentive during the course of the lesson, and that its' short structure lends an ease of teaching due to the poems being able to be taught in a single lesson. These features have led to poems being greatly favoured in the usage of improving language and cognitive skills such as critical reading and

critical thinking whilst being an avenue for students to explore the pleasures of deciphering and understanding hidden meanings or messages located in the poems.

Despite these benefits however, poetry remains quite unpopular in Malaysian ESL classrooms (Ghazali et al., 2009). While high language proficiency students have no problem in dealing with most poems, low-language proficiency students often struggle to interpret the vocabulary or grammar found within the poems, especially so in older classics such as Shakespeare (Wai & Abidin, 2020). A study by Beck & Koneiczny (2021) found that by altering the rhythm and metres of poems, the reading speed and method were greatly affected, thus adding to the difficulty for most beginner students with low language proficiency. In a vicious cycle, as they are unable to understand the language being used in the poem, so will low-language proficiency students have difficulty in interpreting the underlying messages within the poems. Eventually, the frustration from constantly dealing with poems far beyond their proficiency level causes the students to develop fear or loathing for the literature itself (Wai & Abidin, 2020 as cited in Gurnam, 2003). Teachers also face similar challenges with teaching poetry. Mustakim et al. (2014) posits on how teachers face similar challenges when teaching literature far above the student's proficiency levels. Oftentimes, the need to conform examinations forces the teachers to resort to traditional teacher centric classrooms and simply ends up spoon-feeding the contents of the poems to the students where they should have been allowed discover and learn for themselves.

A great part of the problems faced by Malaysian ESL students and teachers when learning poetry can be attributed to the inappropriate choice of text (Mohaideen et al., 2020). Ultimately, the students should understand the contents and the context of the poem to fully reap its' benefits, especially so if the purpose of the poem is to cultivate critical reading skills. Oftentimes, this is done so by poetry analysis, with the intention of training students to understand the message of the poem expressed in covert methods, mainly the analysis of

literary devices through critical reading strategies. Creely (2019) puts forth four aspects of poetry the reader connects with to understand poetry:

1. Connection to reader experience. According to the phenomenological approach, poetry engages with the human senses of touching, hearing, smelling, seeing, and tasting (Dufrenne, 1978 as cited in Creely, 2019). Thus, the first and simplest method of connecting with the message in the poem is by thinking back to similar previous experiences as to place the reader in the environment of the poet.

2. Transcendence. This refers to the implied meanings that are included in the poem, which may be concepts represented by a particular experience or object mentioned within the poem. Two common literary devices of this aspect of poetry are imagery and metaphor.

3. Transtextuality. This refers how the messages and meanings located in the poem may be connected to other texts. There are many versions of transtextuality, though in poetry analysis, it usually refers to interpreting how the poet intends the poem to be read (i.e., the message the poet intends to pass through the poem).

4. Hermeneutics of self. Poems are intended to connect the experiences of the poet to the experiences of the reader, and for readers to learn something new of themselves or of their interpretation of the world around them. Hence, the underlying message of poems form a key factor in the selection of texts by teacher due to the inferential and interpretative space formed as a result of said message.

Thus, it can be said that poetry is an excellent choice for cultivating critical reading among students. However, the dilemma of choosing the correct poem regardless of genre is one that has plagued teachers for many years, one that should be further taken into consideration should poetry be once again reintegrated into the broader curriculum of Malaysian classrooms.

2.4 Insights into Issues Related to Current Study

Critical reading is one of the most important literacy skills required to be learnt because of this era of globalization where various sources of information exist both physical and virtual, as a mode of questioning and forming conclusions with an unbiased and objective purpose on a specific topic or subject. This coincides with one of the many objectives by which the literature component was introduced to Malaysian schools, to teach critical reading via literary analysis of literary works, which often manifested in critical thinking questions posed during exercises. However, as a result poor language proficiency, unsuitability in materials used, and inexperience with teachers introducing literature to classes, the literature component has been greatly reduced to a supplementary module extremely deviated from its' original purpose and scale (Hashim & Talib, 2019). Hence, it is suggested that understanding how students critically analyse a poem whilst reading, and how critical reading strategies may affect the efficiency by which they analyse as well as how they analyse poetry, insight can be gained into how to design or select teaching materials as to integrate literature anew into the Malaysian ESL curriculum.

2.5 Review of Past Studies

In academic terms, a well-versed critical reader is defined as being in possession of reasonable scepticism whenever approaching a piece of text, and via usage of critical thinking as well as reference to other sources, attempts to find proof by which the author provides sufficient proof to their claims written in the text (Wallace &Wray, 2006). Hence, critical reading can be said to not be that of a singular skill, but a combination of various cognitive processes such as critical thinking, self-efficacy, and reading strategies (Safian & Jiar, 2022).

Various studies have thus been conducted to investigate the process of critical reading and its' effects on students in education. The issue of cultivating critical reading habits in

students is that they often confuse critical reading with other reading strategies, such as superficially scanning a text for answers, especially since both skills are mutually inclusive (Anuar et al., 2023). For example, one study by Saidalvi et al. (2022) found that most of the students greatly overestimated their critical reading abilities, often faltering in the HOTS questions that required synthesizing and analysing material previously learnt in class. Another study by Edward et al. (2021) reflected a similar sentiment as how students lack the appropriate level of critical thinking skills required in the global job market due to the unsatisfactory level of critical reading skills in students. This could perhaps be attributed to the focus of rote memory learning popular in Malaysian classrooms, which leave little time for deeper understanding of a text beyond scouring it for the answers required and moving on to the next item, a process that induced dislike and eventual fear of its' many repetitions (Rahmat et al., 2020).

To assuage the fear of reading caused by difficulty of textbook content, the literature component was introduced as another avenue to foster regular reading habits and in doing so, provide a starting point for the students to practise critical reading (Azizi et al., 2022; Wai & Abidin, 2020; Hashim & Talib 2019). Poetry was particularly well-liked as a starting point considering its' brevity, short reading time, and flexibility depending on the text chosen (Creely, 2019). However, because of the low language proficiency as well as the various forms and modes of English poetry, poetry became the least liked and most troublesome of the literature components to handle in Malaysian ESL classrooms, particularly in primary and secondary schools (Wai & Abidin, 2020).

Previous studies found that even the arrangement and structure of poems potentially affected how poems were read or interpreted. One study by Corcoran et al. (2023) found that prosaic arrangements tended to longer fixations as well as repeated regressions when compared to poetic arrangements of the same poem. Another study by Beck & Koneiczny

(2021) found that by manipulating the rhythm and metre of poems the time spent rereading the pre-rhyme segments (rhyme manipulation) and the entirety of the text (for prose but not poem layout) increased. The challenges posed by these poetic features were made even worse with untrained teachers, whom usually had difficulties presenting or introducing poems into class (Vijayarajoo et al., 2019; Salleh & Lin, 2019). Thus, the dilemma presents itself, that being how to best adapt lessons on poetry in a way that allows for the practise and fostering of critical reading skills without simplifying it to the point that it becomes almost superficial and one-sided in favour of accommodating low language proficiency students.

In recent years, eye-tracking technology has been a popular methodology to investigate the cognitive processes behind comprehension during the reading process. Studies such as the one by Tsai et al. (2022) used eye-tracking technology to explore critical reading strategies on texts with conflicting information by marking out areas of interest throughout the text to trace fixation and rereading patterns and thus their information processing pathways. Another study by Salmeron et al. (2020) used eye-movement modelling examples (EMME) to improve critical reading of webpages with conflicting topics to great effect. However, there is a lack of studies on how critical reading affects the interpretation and analysis of poetry. Therefore, it is theorized that by analysing the visual patterns taken by students when critically reading poems, being how their process information about the poem during reading, better measures can be made in designing and reintegrating poems (and to an extent other literary works) into the Malaysian ESL classrooms.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, critical reading is an important skill in 20th century English classrooms to navigate the large body of information present in all academic texts. The literature component was introduced as an attempt to promote good reading habits and cultivate critical reading skills in Malaysian students. Poetry was greatly favoured for this task due to its' short

structure, brevity, and flexibility to be used in lessons. However, as a result of low language proficiency and difficulties experienced by teachers in teaching literature, poetry has become quite unpopular and has fallen out of favour as a teaching tool for fostering critical reading. Thus, this study will be utilising eye-tracking technology to investigate the visual patterns of students critically reading poems and finding out how critical reading strategies affect the student efficiency in understanding and interpreting poems, the full procedure and means being explained in detail in the next chapter.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research design

      To address the research questions of this study, a mixed-method case study design was adopted as the current research model. The quantitative portion of the research will be done so via the tracking of visual patterns of the students when undertaking critical reading of the two poems using eye-tracking technology. The qualitative portion of the research will be through semi-structured interviews that explored how the critical reading strategies the students implemented affected the effectiveness by which they interpreted poems.

3.2 Sampling

      The sampling frame will be consisting of 12-15 participants as recommended of a typical case study design after referencing similar papers. The sampling method will be of purposive sampling as the main problem of this study will be exploring how critical reading affects the effectiveness of students analysing the poem as well as how it may or may not affect the way by which they perceive or interpret the poem. The participants will be consisting only of English major undergraduate students in their first to second year. This is ideal because of the higher probability of high language proficiency in the respondents to make it easier to observe their informational processing data when interpreting poems. Also, the participants are taken from their first to second year due to it being the timeframe (according to the programme structure) when they are first exposed to what would be considered newfangled literature (Malaysian English poetry, modern themes). This is to ensure that the students are familiar enough with the concept of English poetry in terms of structure, language, and theme. Finally, the participants chose were of near to perfect natural eyesight as to ease collection of data and prevent data discrepancies caused by technical or experimental error.

3.3 Apparatus

3.3.1 Eye-tracking equipment and software

The eye tracker used will be Gazepoint GP3 Eye Tracking Device with a tracking rate of 150Hz (as of current model) to collect visual patterns of the participants when critically reading the two sonnets. The poems will be displayed on a 21inch 4x3 computer screen with a resolution of 1080p. Participants were advised against shaking or moving their heads too vigorously to avoid disrupting the data collection process, with their heads affixed into a neck support device to facilitate the process. Before the experiment, a twelve-point calibration period was mandated by the eye-tracker.

3.3.2 Post-reading semi-structured interviews

To understand the effect of the critical reading strategies on the participants understanding of the two poems as well as how they interpreted each poem, a series of questions were presented to them following the conclusion of the reading activity. The questions were divided into two portions, the structured questions to test their reading comprehension and open-ended questions to test their understanding of critical reading strategies, skills, as well as their views on poetry in education. A few examples of the questions are:

- Describe the persona's feelings and thoughts about the city and its' people in your own words.
- What does the comparison of a city to a 'gangrene' suggest about the city and what it does to the persona?
- What are the things do you normally look out for in critical analysis of poetry?
- What do you know about critical reading?

A full list of the questions can be found in Appendix II.

3.3.3 Reading Text

To analyse the visual pattern shown by the students during the reading process, the reading patterns are thusly categories into one of five reading patterns according to Liao (2017) . The poems chosen for this study are 'Blue Skies Soulmates' and 'The City is Not My Home' respectively, both taken from Malachi Edwin Vethamani's collection the Seven O' Clock Tree (2022). These poems were chosen due to their similar themes, differing structure, and relativeness to modern Malaysian life, factors taken into consideration with the intent of exploring of both poems as teaching materials. The poems will be presented alone individually, following the standard format of font size 14, Arial, double spacing.

3.4 Ethics

Several measures have been taken in regard to ensure that this study is in compliance to the ethical regulations involved in humans participating as respondents for the study. This study will be conducted with informed consent, wherein the participants are disclosed the full procedure of the experiment as well as time taken and what they are expected to do during the experiment. With reference to past studies to determine the validity and safety of the methodology used in this experiment, there will be no risk of emotional or physical harm towards the subjects of research. The participation of this study by its' subjects are voluntary, with each participant given the option to withdraw during the registration portion of the experiment. For the sake of confidentiality and personal security, all information pertaining to the personal names and information of the subjects beyond the facilitating organization of the study will remain anonymous.

3.5 Data Collection

The participants will first be registered via Google Forms after being informed of the procedures and requirements of the experiment. The participants will then be divided into

batches of 3 to 5 participants per batch and called into the lab according to the scheduled timetable provided after sample division. The participants are first given some time to adjust to the calibration process followed by a 12-point fixation time mandated by the Gazepoint software, adjusting the distance and placement as necessary, then proceeding to the actual reading task. During the actual reading task, the participants are given 1-2 minutes to read each of the two poems, with the sequence of 'Blue Skies Soulmates', 10 second fixation time, followed by 'The City is Not My Home'. After the conclusion of the reading task, the participants are asked to complete the reading comprehension portion of the semi structured interview followed by the unstructured interview to investigate their interpretation of the poems cross-referencing their visual pattern distribution data. The estimated time taken would be 30 to 60 minutes per participant.

3.6 Data Analysis

The raw visual pattern data collected by Gazepoint will be subject to visual analysis to acquire pre-determined categories that place them into one of five reading patterns (Liao, et al, 2017) through reading patterns such as re-reading, saccades and regression. This will be to determine the informational processing carried out by the students when reading the poems.

The responses of the respondents to the semi-structured interview post reading will be analysed manually via thematic analysis for patterns such as similarity in answer (for the reading comprehension portion) and themes (the critical thinking portion) to determine how critical reading strategies have affected the effectiveness of the students interpreting poems.

3.7 Conclusion

In summary, this study will be utilising a mixed-method case study design due to the small number of research samples. The eye-tracker used in this experiment is called GazePoint GP3, the materials used in the experiment are the poems 'Blue Skies Soulmates' & 'The City is Not My Home ' as well as a post-reading semi-structured interview. The respondents of this study will be mainly UTAR undergraduate English major students, who will be participating with informed consent. The study is divided into two sections, experiment and interview, where the students will be critically analysing the two Malaysian English poems with the eye-tracker then completing the semi-structured interview upon the conclusion of the experiment phase. The data collected will be processed separately, with the raw eye-tracking data put through visual analysis to identify critical reading strategies through the respondents' reading patterns and the interview answers being thematically analysed to look for patterns and to determine their views on of analysing poetry through the use of critical reading strategies as well as potential future implementation of Malaysian English poetry in Malaysian schools.
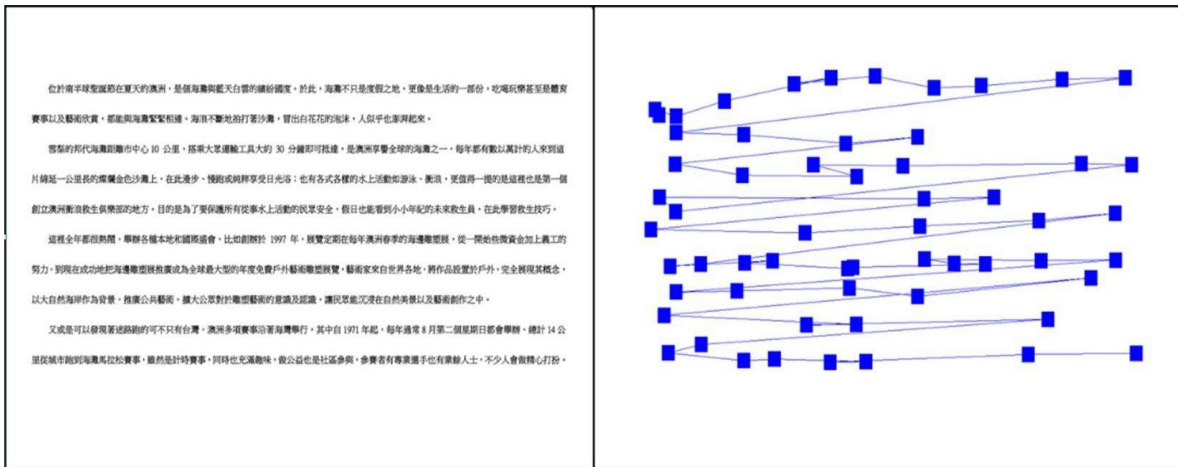
4.0 Findings

4.1. Reading patterns based on Gaze patterns

Reading patterns in the context of this experiment are the method by which a person reads a text from start to finish, be it predicting the content from the title of the text or by skimming through the text in looking for relevant information. These reading patterns can go by many names such as F-pattern reading, extensive reading, skimming, and et-cetera. Through various studies it can be found that reading patterns can be affected by quite a few factors. Tenopir et al (2009) found that reading patterns amongst academic faculty readers differed based on factors such as reading objectives and genre of articles favoured. Another study by Duggan & Payne (2011) found that students exhibited different reading patterns when presented with different types of texts in hardcover and article formats. In both studies, however, it can be surmised that reading patterns are connected to informational processing, and thus the purpose by which the reader is perusing the article, be it for pleasure or for informational purposes. Following this train of thought, it is hoped that by determining the reading patterns of the respondents, insight can be obtained on how the respondents choose to approach poems in search of information for the purpose of understanding

According to Liao et al (2017), reading patterns could be divided into five categories based on their pre-defined patterns, the explanation and visualization of which can be found in Figure 1.

a) Speed- reading: The fixation pattern for this reading style is sentence by sentence, with low frequency of fixations, low number of regressions, and high number of long saccades.

b) Slow-reading: Contrary to speed-reading, this reading pattern goes word by word, with longer fixations, high number of regressions, and multiple short saccades.

c) In-depth reading: Prioritising understanding over memorisation, this reading pattern is very similar to slow reading but shows a high number of re-reading, saccades, regressions and long fixations on certain words or phrases.

d) Skim-and-skip: This reading pattern shows large saccades and long fixations on certain words or phrases, jumping over irrelevant content and focusing on potential important phrases instead.

e) Keyword spotting: This reading pattern is characterized by constant rereading and fixations in a particular area while looking for keywords relevant to the reader.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

Figure 1: The five reading patterns according to Liao et al., 2017.

Analysis of Chosen Poems

The two poems chosen were 'Blue Skies Soulmates' and 'The City is Not My Home', both written by Malachi Edwin Venthamani and published in his 2019 collection 'The Seven O' Clock Tree'. These two poems were chosen for their similarity in the underlying theme, isolation. This was because of the prevalence of the respondents coming from all over Malaysia, and are able to connect to the two poems based on their underlying messages and relevant experiences when moving to a new place and having to adapt to it whilst studying at UTAR.

The poems were also chosen for their difference in length, language complexity, and poetry devices present. 'Blue Skies Soulmates' consists of six stanzas, with a difference in line per stanzas, with three lines in the first three stanzas and four lines in the last three stanzas. It's tone is descriptive and flowing, with frequent use of personification 'flowers wave and flutter, caress and kiss' and contrast to highlight the conflict experienced by the persona. 'The City is Not My Home', on the other hand, consists of only three stanzas, with five lines per stanzas. It's tone is more direct and complex in language, with imagery 'gangrene' and 'cantankerous' to evoke a strong sense of discomfort and dislike experienced by the persona towards the city. It also employed repetition, with the phrase 'city is not my home' being repeated at the beginning at the end of the poem to emphasis this point. For the purposes of this report, 'Blue Skies Soulmates' shall be referred to as poem 1, with 'The City is Not My Home' being referred to as poem 2 onwards.

Owing to language proficiency being a noted factor affecting poetry comprehension, poem 2 has designated the two advanced vocabulary words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene' as points of interest (POI) in both the eye-tracking section and the interview section. It is also

hypothesized that students with lower grades would preferring poem 1, and higher-scoring students preferring poem 2.

Demographics

To ensure the accuracy of the eye-tracking data, all participants were confirmed to be of perfect to single-vision eyesight. The participants were all Year 3 Semester 3 students and took the course Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) English Education. All the respondents had taken the literature component in their secondary school and considered themselves to be moderately proficient in literature. The only variety was in their results for Malaysian Literature, so taken as to determine if proficiency in Malaysian literature played a role in their views of critical reading. The majority of the respondents were of grades C to C+, with only two B- students and one A student. The full graphs of the demographics can be found in Appendix 2.

4.1.1 Eye-Tracker Results

To answer the question posed by RQ1, the visual patterns of the respondents were analysed whilst they read the two poems, namely 'Blue Skies Soulmates' and 'The City is Not My Home'. The respondents were asked to read through two selected Malaysian English poems using Gazepoint GP3 equipment, prioritising the comprehension of the poem instead of memorising the poem for quotes, which would not have been possible given the short time frame. The data is then analysed using fixation map to showcase the reading patterns of the participants cross referencing the five reading patterns present within the research paper by Liao et al, 2017. Following thusly, they were asked questions regarding their reading patterns and comprehension questions to measure their level of comprehension on each of the poems. Also, it was hypothesized that the respondents performance in the eye-tracking test could correspond to their competency in literature analysis, which is represented by their grades in the Malaysian literature subject.

Respondent V
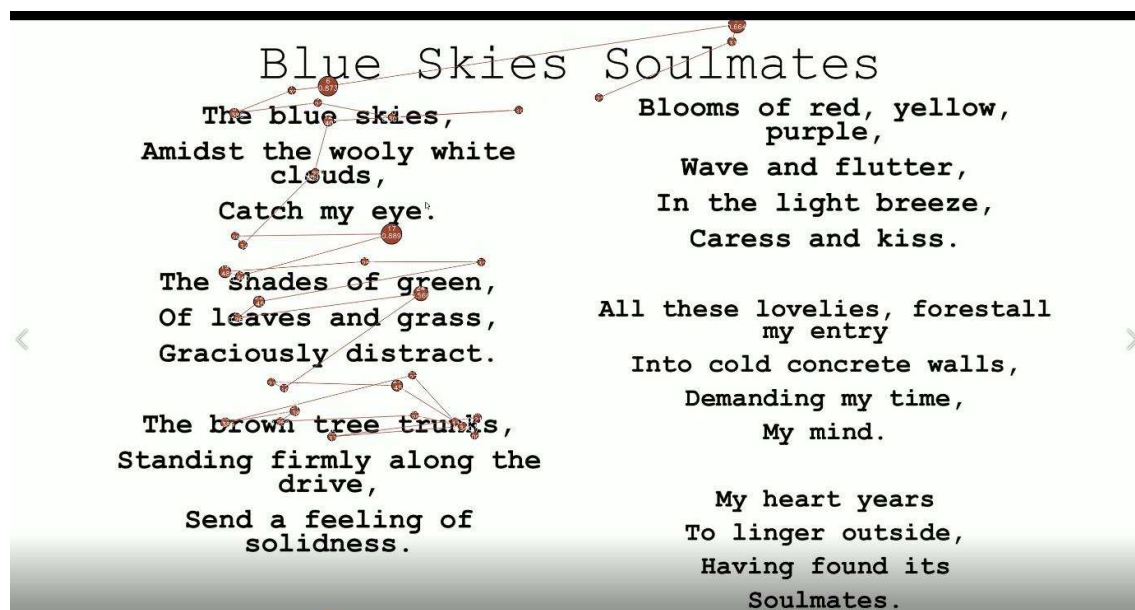
Figure 2.1: First reading of poem 1, respondent V

Blue Skies Soulmates

The blue skies,
Amidst the wooly white
clouds,
Catch my eye.

The shades of green,
Of leaves and grass,
Graciously distract.

The brown tree trunks,
Standing firmly along the
drive,
Send a feeling of
solidness.

Blooms of red, yellow,
purple,
Wave and flutter,
In the light breeze,
Caress and kiss.

All these lovelies, forestall
my entry
Into cold concrete walls,
Demanding my time,
My mind.

My heart years
To linger outside,
Having found its
Soulmates.

Figure 1.2: Second reading of poem 1, respondent V

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.
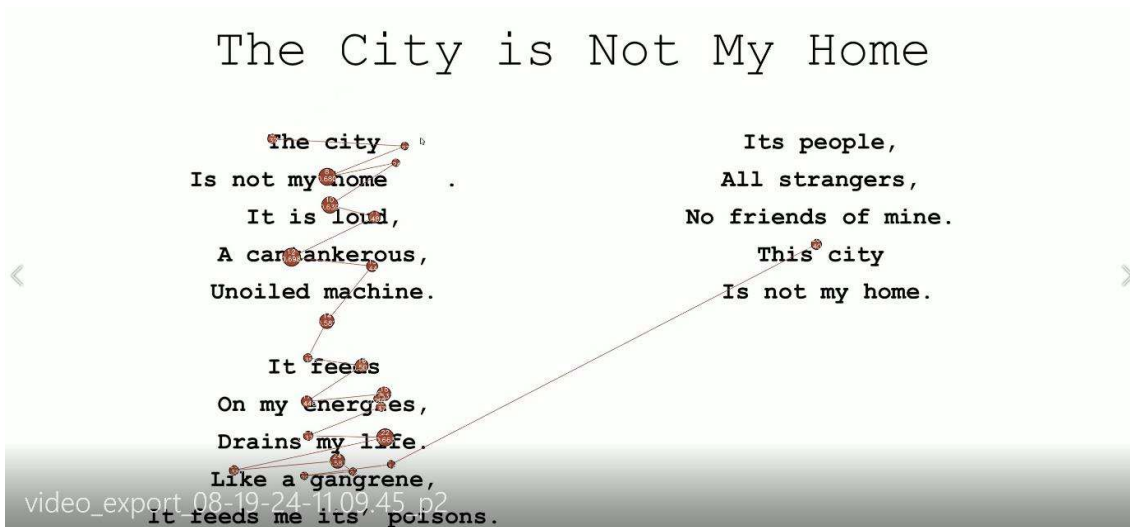
Figure 1.3: First reading of poem 2, respondent V

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.
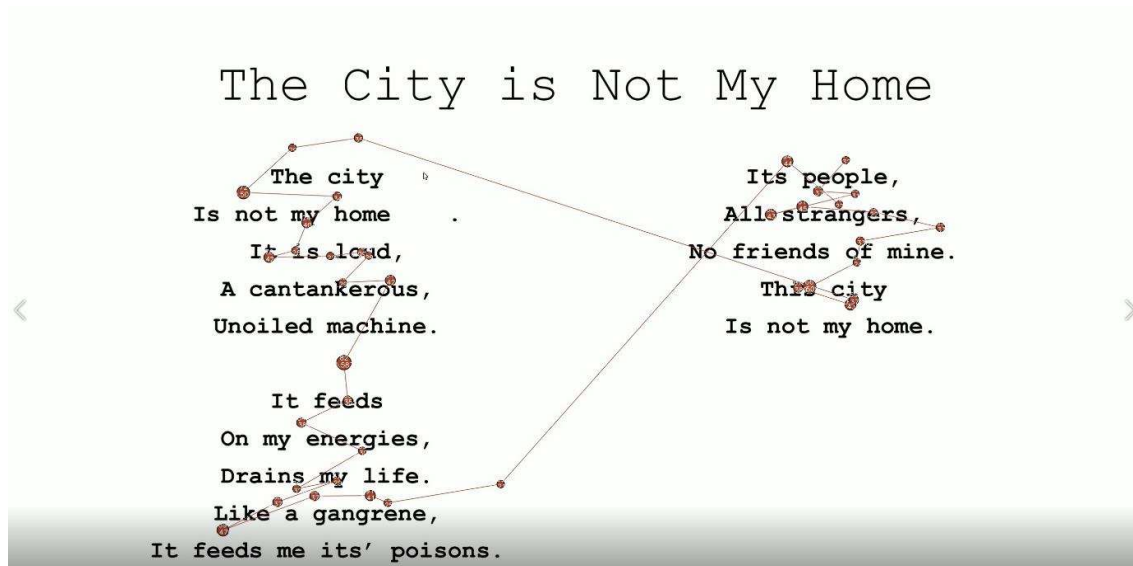
Figure 1.4: Second reading of poem 2, respondent V

From the visual patterns above, it can be said that Respondent V mainly utilised speed reading. In Figure 1.1., she utilised a quick scanning method from the title downwards in her first reading of poem 1, where there are a large number of saccades running through the entire poem. The fixations are also mainly landing on the beginning and end of the stanza's lines, which further shows that Respondent V is reading through the poem quickly without focusing on any particular word. The larger fixations in Figure 1.1. are deduced to have been transitory fixations, they do not land on any of the words. This is the same with Figure 2.2, where there are even less fixations per word, though Respondent V also went through the poem repeatedly.

For her readings of poem 2, she utilised two different methods. In her initial reading of poem 2, as shown in Figure 2.1, respondent V once again utilised speed reading. This is shown in how the fixations are evenly spaced despite having short saccades, which indicate a scanning pattern line from line going through each of the stanzas. There is one prolonged fixation on the word 'cantankerous', and another one atop the word 'gangrene', which is are considered two POI. In figure 2.2, she exhibited slow reading, where there are short fixations landing on

the phrase 'It is loud'. This indicates that Respondent V is going through the lines word by word. There is also a large number of fixations and saccades around the two lines 'Its people all strangers' in the third stanza, which are indications of regressions and re-reading. Interestingly, there is no prolonged fixation on the two POI, words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene'..
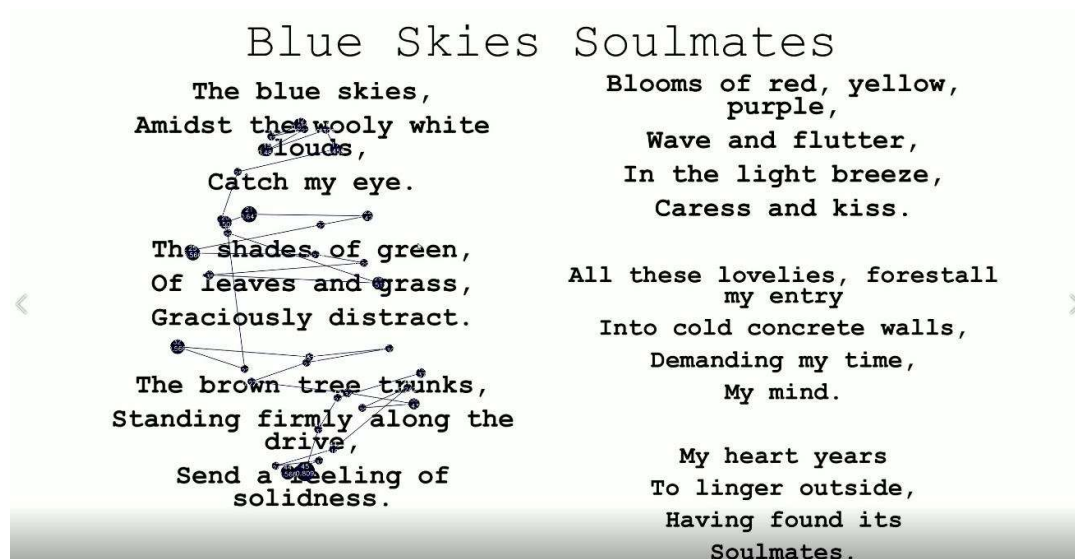
Respondent T

Figure 3.1: First reading of poem 1, respondent T

Blue Skies Soulmates

The blue skies,
Amidst the wooly white clouds,
Catch my eye.

The shades of green,
Of leaves and grass,
Graciously distract.

The brown tree trunks,
Standing firmly along the drive,
Send a feeling of solidness.

Blooms of red, yellow, purple,
Wave and flutter,
In the light breeze,
Caress and kiss.

All these lovelies, forestall my entry
Into cold concrete walls,
Demanding my time,
My mind.

My heart years
To linger outside,
Having found its
Soulmates.

Figure 2.2: Second reading of poem 1, respondent T

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home   .
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.
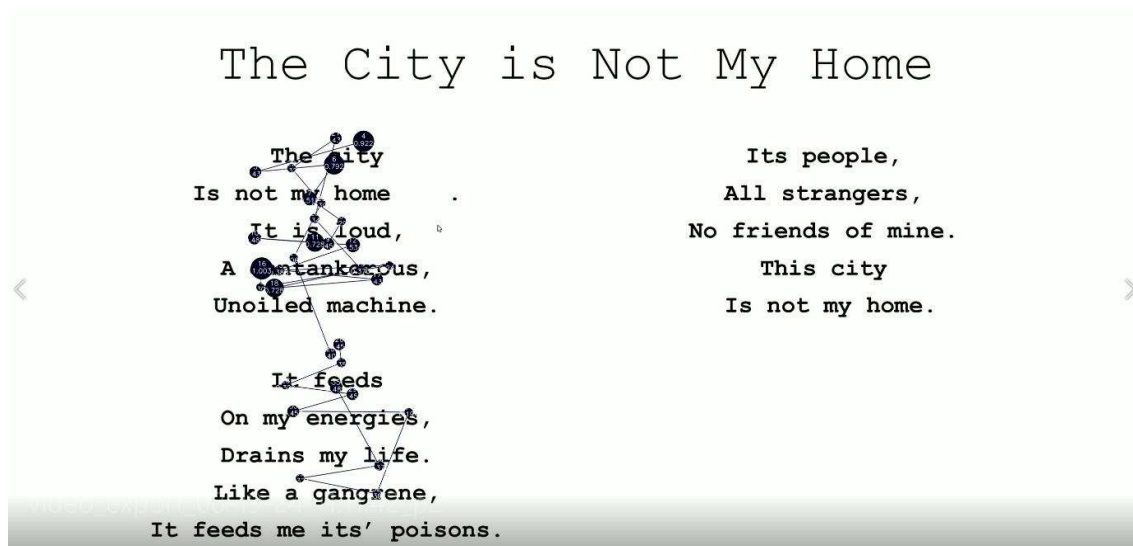
Figure 2.3: First reading of poem 2, respondent T

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.
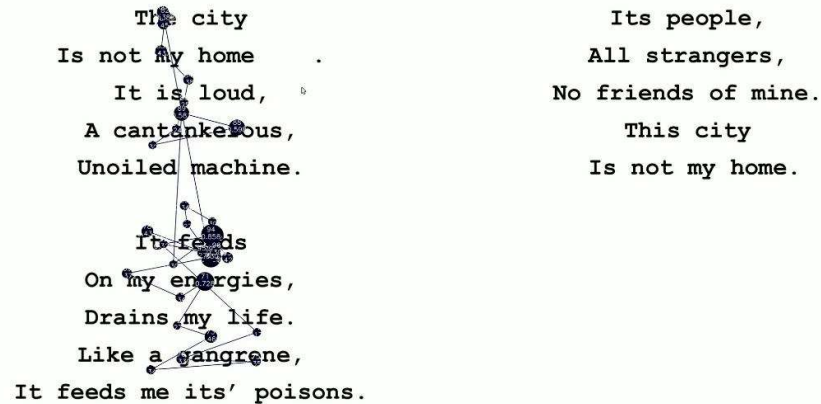
Figure 2.4: Second reading of poem 2, respondent T

According to the fixation maps above, Respondent T utilised two different reading patterns for each poem. In both readings of the first poem, speed reading is utilised. In Figure 2.1, this is shown with the fixations that frequently appear at both ends of the lines in and around stanza 2. The saccades are found to grow visibly wider and then smaller again from stanza 1 to 3. It is hypothesized that this peculiarity may be caused by a calibration error in the eye-tracking device. In Figure 2.2, speed reading is even more obvious with the short fixations and long saccades that indicate a very quick scanning motion from the end of one line to another throughout the entire poem 2 from beginning to end. From the long fixation at the blank between stanza 5 & 6, it can be surmised that respondent T also re-read the entire poem in this fashion multiple times until the end of the timed slide.

For both readings of poem 2, Respondent T appeared to utilise keyword spotting. In Figure 2.3, there are visibly long fixations and short saccades in stanza 1, tapering to short fixations and short saccades in stanza 2. The main points of focus are the words 'city', 'home', and 'cantankerous', two of which can be connected to the title of the poem and are hypothesized to be the keywords chosen by Respondent T. In figure 2.4, this trend appears to be inversed,

with a combination of short saccades and long fixations widening to a cluster of long

fixations and short saccades in the first line of stanza 1. The main words of focus are 'feeds'

and 'energies', with the reading pattern ending at the second POI , the word 'gangrene'.

Respondent F
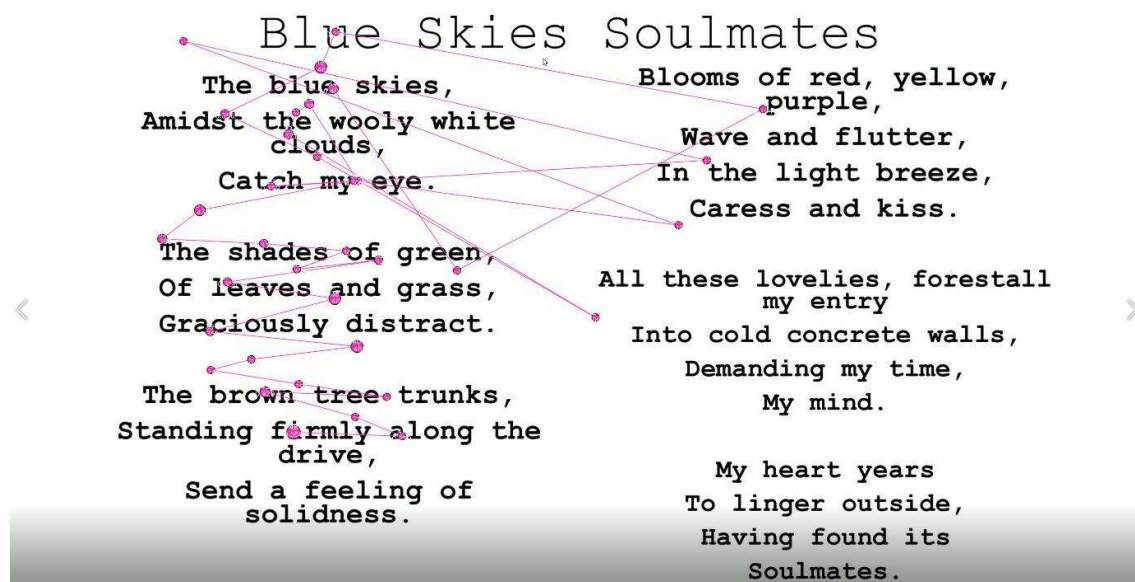
Figure 3.1 Reading of poem 1, respondent F
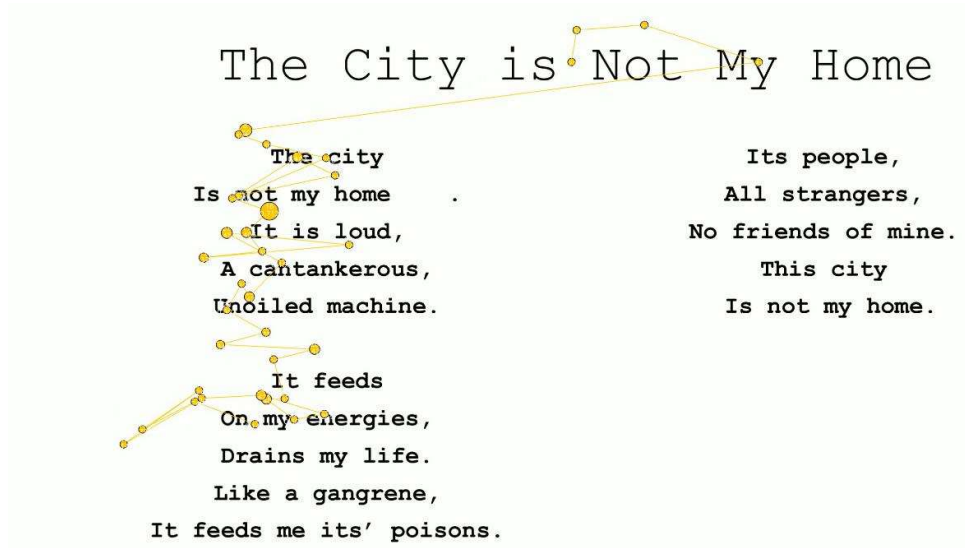
Figure 3.2 Reading of poem 2, respondent F

Respondent F is shown to adopt two different approaches to reading each poem. For poem 1, he has exhibited the speed-reading method while in poem 2, he has exhibited slow reading. In Figure 3.1, there is a regular pattern of short fixations and long saccades on the sentences of the stanzas. In Figure 3.2, the fixations and short and spaced regularly with short saccades, thus indicating that the reader was going through the lines word by word, as indicative of slow reading. The two POI, words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene', did not show signs of fixations. It is important to note that during both collections of Respondent F's visual pattern data, the calibration function malfunctioned by causing large saccades from tracking the reflection in respondent F's eyeglasses.

Respondent D
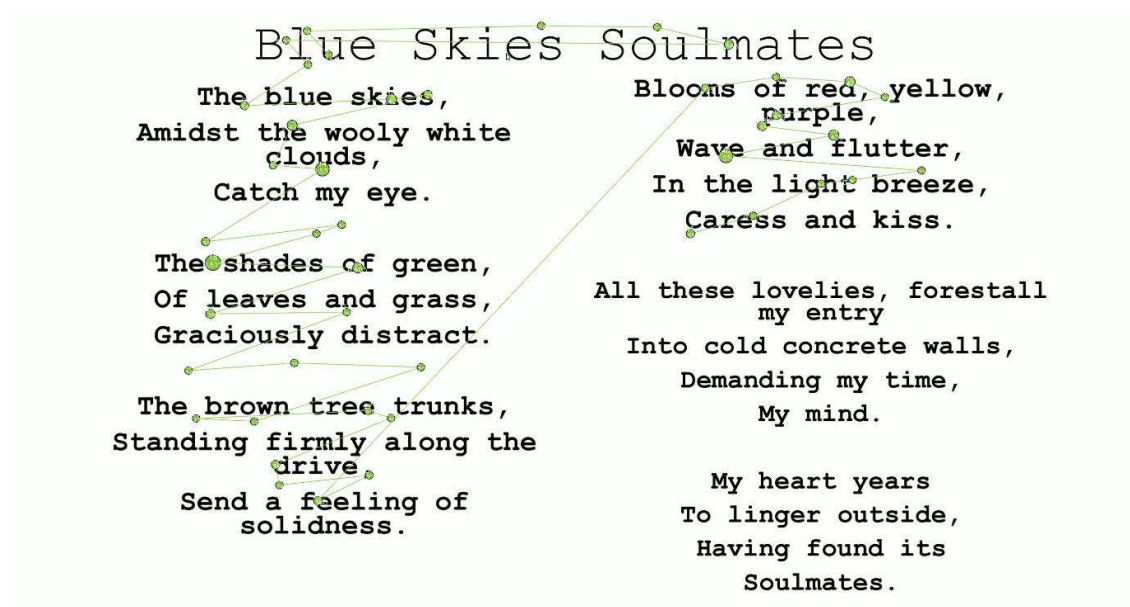
Figure 4.1 First reading of poem 1, respondent D
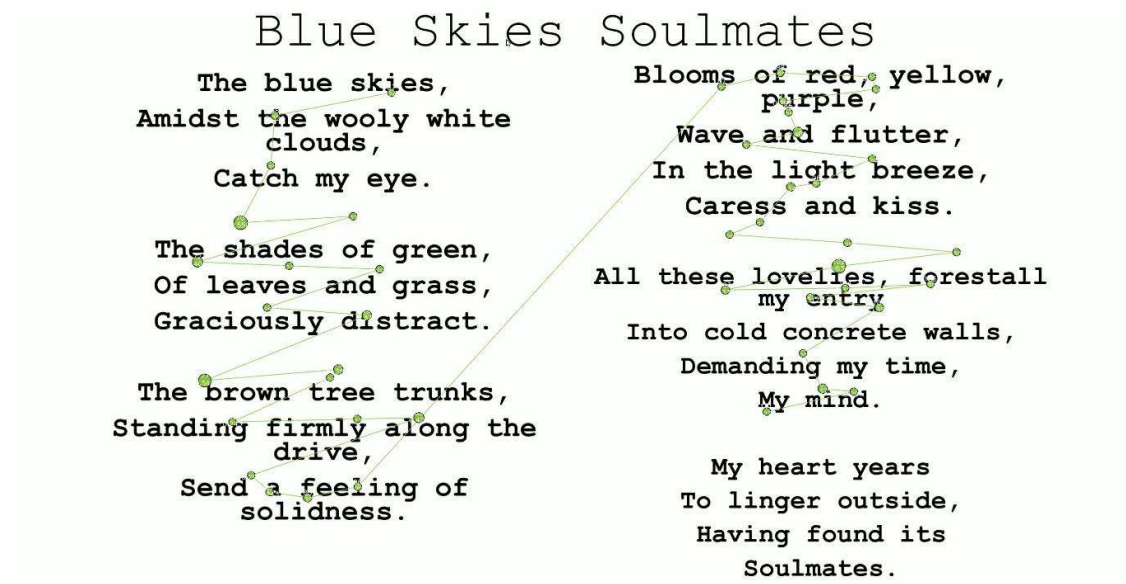
Figure 4.2 Second reading of poem 1, respondent D
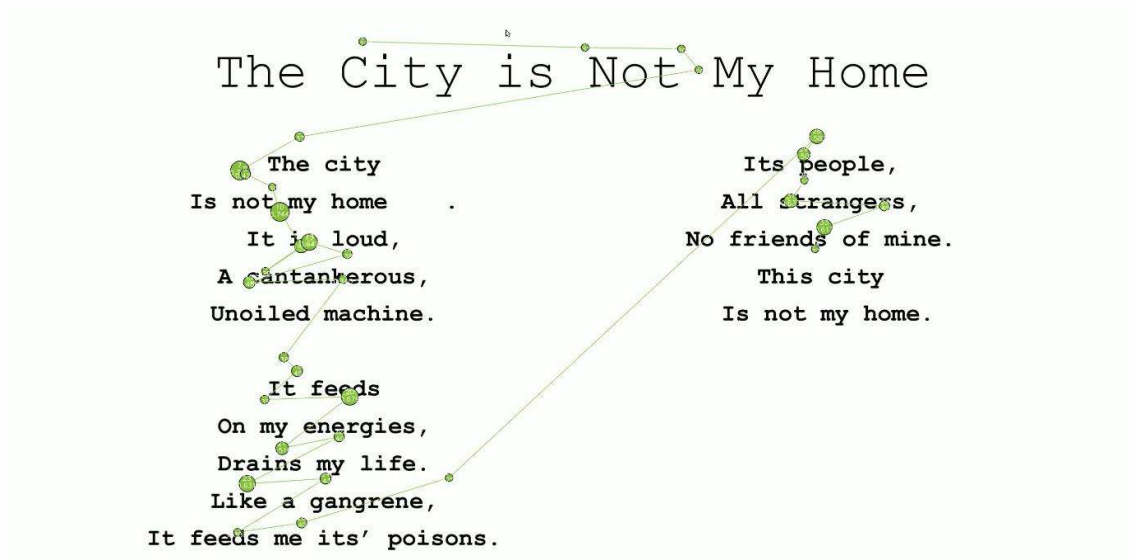
Figure 4.3 First reading of poem 2, respondent D
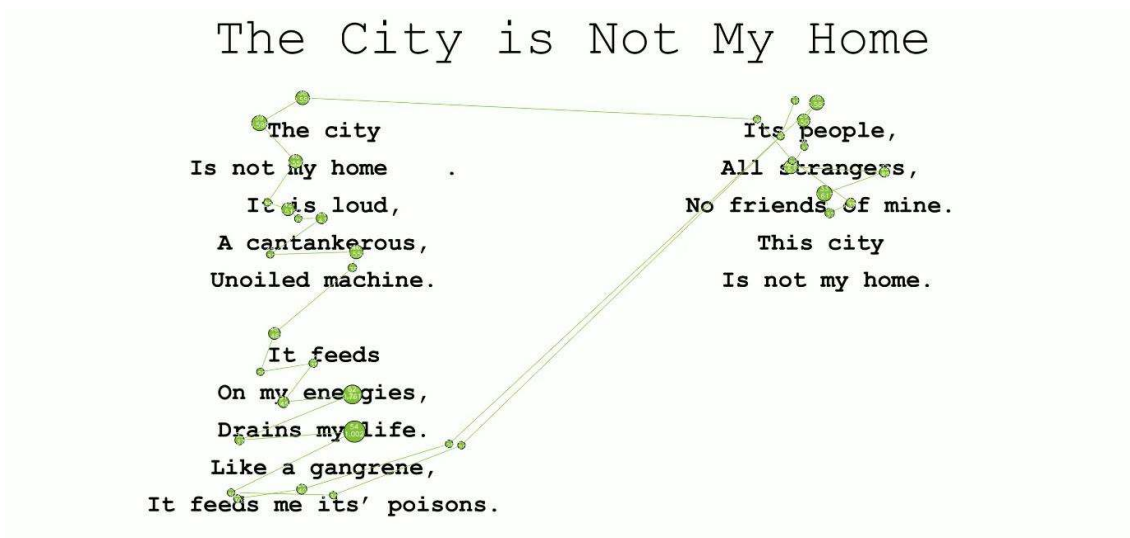
Figure 4.4. Second reading of poem 2, respondent D

From the visual map above, it can be deduced that Respondent D utilises speed reading in both poems. In figure 4.1, he approaches poem 1 from the title downwards, with the characteristic short fixations and long saccades that begin and end at the two ends of the lines within all of the stanzas. The same pattern can be seen in his second reading of poem 1, as shown in figure 4.2, with the saccades becoming shorter and faster, with multiple repetitions

throughout the poem. It can be deduced that this second reading tends more towards

skimming over the content that has already been previously memorised in the first reading.

Speed reading is also present in both readings of the second poem. In the first reading of

poem 2, figure 4.3, the fixations land on the beginning and end of the lines within the stanza,

being noticeably short and connected with short saccades. In the second reading of poem 2,

figure 4.4, the pattern is similar, with frequent fixations connect by short saccades that run

throughout the poem. The two notable fixations are on the words 'energies' and the phrase

' my life', and the regression from stanza 3 to the end of stanza 2 suggests that there are more

than one instances of re-reading in the second reading of poem 2. In both readings of poem 2,

respondent D did not show interest in the two POI, words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene'.

Respondent S

Figure 5.1 First reading of poem 1, respondent S

Blue Skies Soulmates

The blue skies,
Amidst the wooly white clouds,
Catch my eye.

The shades of green,
Of leaves and grass,
Graciously distract.

The brown tree trunks,
Standing firmly along the drive,
Send a feeling of solidness.

Blooms of red, yellow, purple,
Wave and flutter,
In the light breeze,
Caress and kiss.

All these lovelies, forestall my entry
Into cold concrete walls,
Demanding my time,
My mind.

My heart years
To linger outside,
Having found its
Soulmates.

Figure 5.2 Second reading of poem 1, respondent S

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home   .
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.
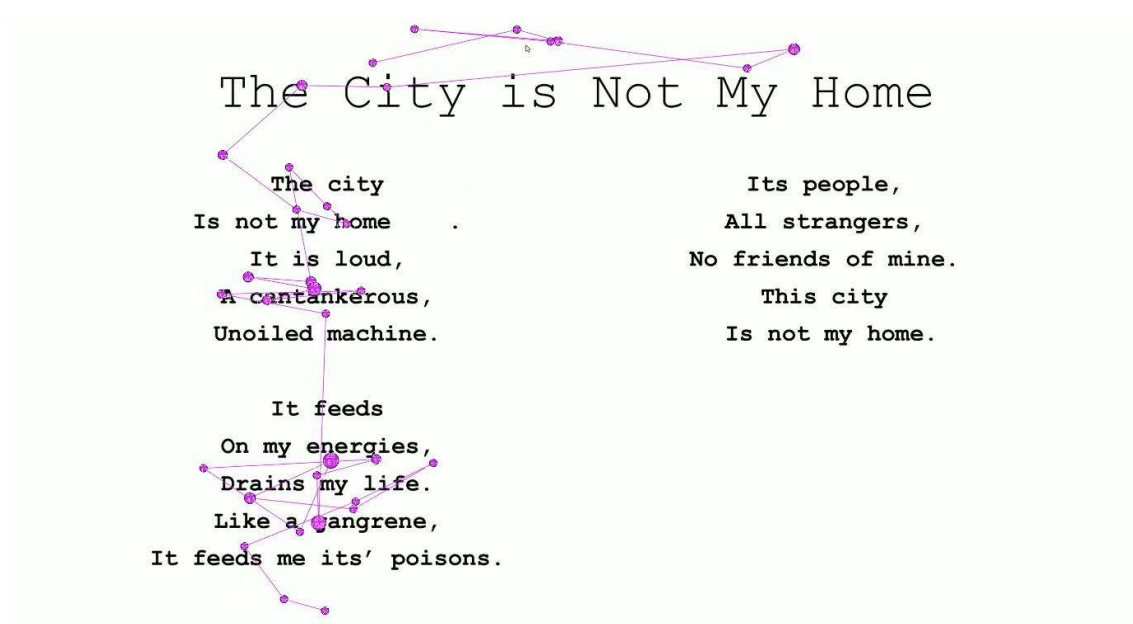
Figure 5.3 First reading of poem 2, respondent S

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home   .
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.
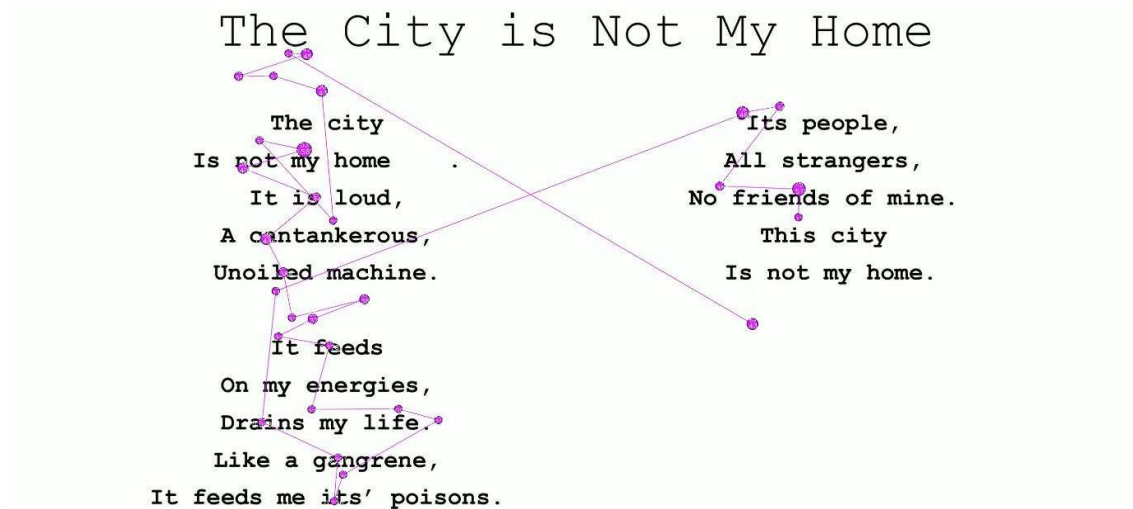
Figure 5.4 Second reading of poem 2, respondent S

According to the fixation map, Respondent S practiced slow reading for both readings of poem 1. In figure 5.1, which is the first reading of poem 1, there is initially a succession of short fixations and saccades characteristic of speed reading. However, there is a cluster of fixations and short saccades surrounding stanza 2, with a similar but smaller cluster of the same fixation and saccades in stanza 3. This is theorised to have been caused by re-reading, and may include in between lines, as shown in the horizontal saccades between the lines 'The shades of green' and 'of leaves and grass' in stanza 2. A similar pattern could be found in figure 5.2, the second reading of poem 1, with the main focus being on stanzas 4 and 5. The short fixations connected by short saccades have formed a tangled cluster as a result of regressions and re-reading. The last few fixations and saccades were abruptly cut off as they began on the second line of stanza 6, indicating the reader was just beginning to read the lines before the timed slide was cut off.

The skim-and-skip method was adopted for poem 2. In figure 5.3, the first reading of poem 2, the fixation map began top down from the poem's title, with regression on the first three words 'the city is', which could be a result of re-reading. The same phenomenon could also be seen in the first two stanzas of the poem, with two notable fixations on converging on the

three words 'cantankerous', 'energies', and 'gangrene'. For the second reading of the poem, speed reading was adopted instead, as shown in figure 5.4, with the short fixations and saccades running through the lines in stanza 1 and 2, especially between the first and third line of stanza 1, 'the city' and 'it is loud'. There is a noted possibility that a calibration error caused the fixation map to not affix itself properly on the words of the poem.

Respondent W
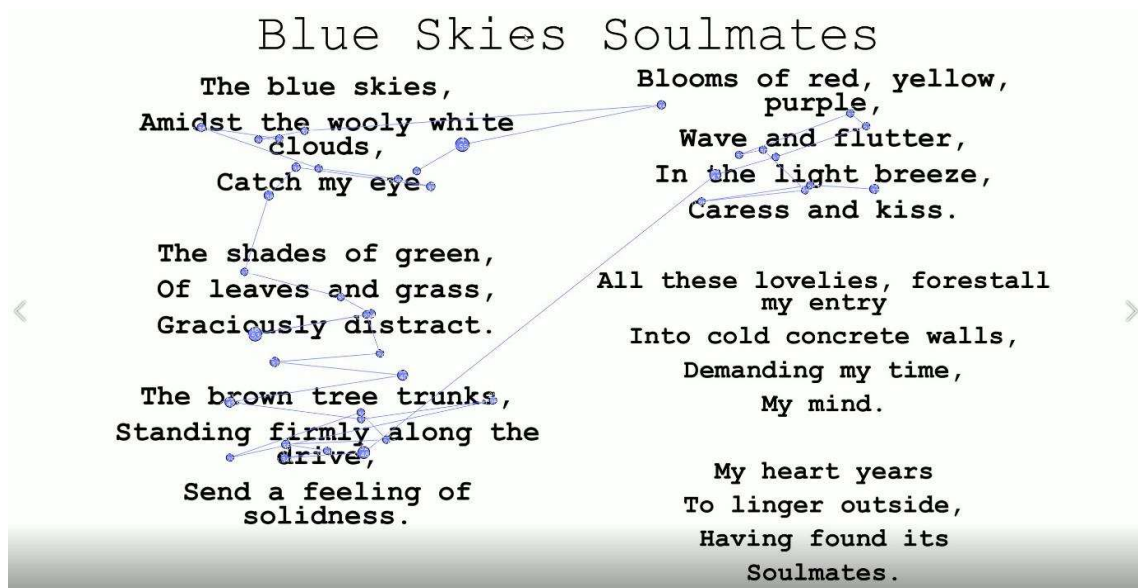
Figure 6.1 First reading of poem 1, respondent W

Blue Skies Soulmates

The blue skies,
Amidst the wooly white
    clouds,
Catch my eye.

The shades of green,
Of leaves and grass,
Graciously distract.

The brown tree trunks,
Standing firmly along the
    drive,
Send a feeling of
    solidness.

Blooms of red, yellow,
    purple,
Wave and flutter,
In the light breeze,
Caress and kiss.

All these lovelies, forestall
    my entry
Into cold concrete walls,
Demanding my time,
My mind.

My heart years
To linger outside,
Having found its
    Soulmates.

Figure 6.2 Second reading of poem 2, respondent W

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home   .
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.
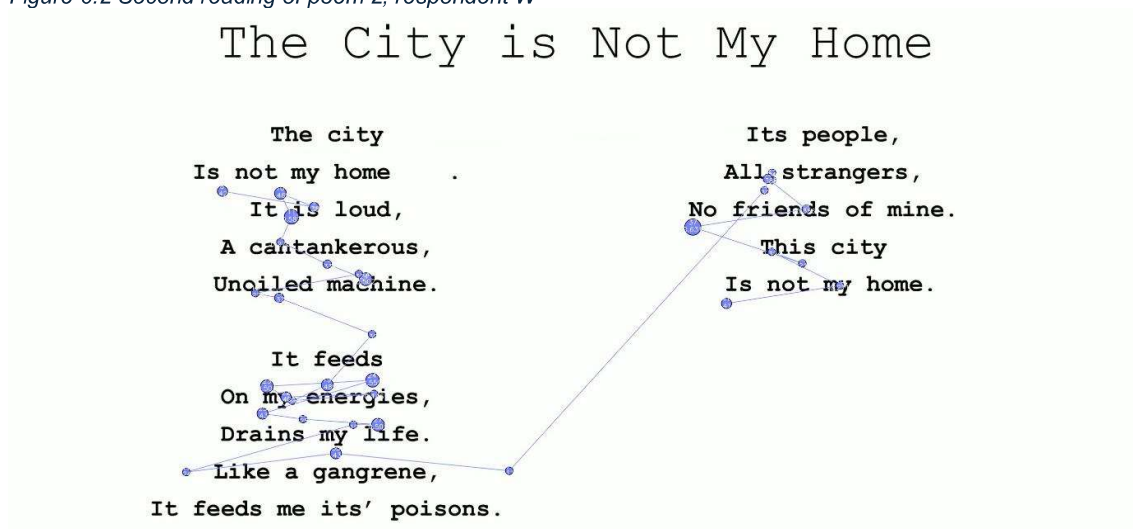
Figure 6.3 First reading of poem 1, respondent W

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home   .
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.
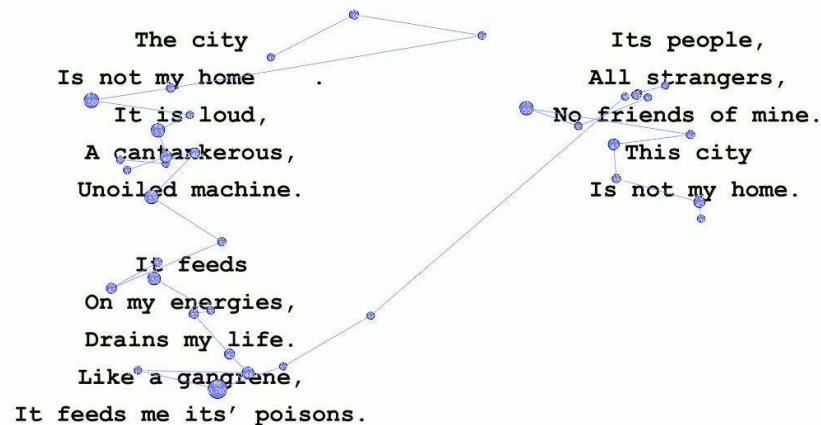
Figure 6.4 Second reading of poem 2, respondent W

From the visual patterns presented, it can be surmised that Respondent W utilised mainly the speed-reading pattern in his reading of poem 1. In figure 6.1, his first reading of poem 1, there is a steady pattern of short fixations connected by short saccades that proceed along the lines in each stanza in gradual succession, a characteristic formed from speed reading by which the reader moves from line to line with little to no fixation on the words and phrases within each line. There are a few moments of regression shown in the line of the second stanza 'standing firmly along the driveway' as well as between the second and third line of the fourth stanza, 'wave and flutter' and 'in the light breeze'. This clusters are indicative of rereading, which could be connected to the length of the lines. In figure 6.2, the second reading of poem 1 by respondent W, a similar pattern can be observed, through the cluster of fixations in both areas shown previously have decreased somewhat in number, with wider saccades compared to the first reading of poem 1 as indicative of line-to-line scanning. It is not considered skim-and-skip despite the similarities due to the long fixations on the words 'eye' and 'firmly', as they are too disconnected and cannot be construed as looking for information.

Slow reading is also utilised in the first reading of poem 2. In figure 6.3, respondent W's first reading of poem 2, there are short fixations that are connected by very short saccades

that land on top of the words the lines of each stanza. This can surmise that respondent W went though the stanzas word by word instead of scanning through the lines from one end to the next as is the characteristic of speed reading. In figure 6.4, however, the skim-and-skip approach is used for the second reading of poem 2. This can be observed in the short fixations and short saccades present throughout most of the stanzas that land on the beginning and end of the lines in each stanza, which is normally found in speed reading. However, there are numerous clusters formed by short fixations connected by short saccades which are indicative of multiple regressions. These clusters are found on both POI, the words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene'. It is interesting to note that the fixations are short and evenly spaced on the word 'cantankerous' instead of forming one large fixation spot on the fixation map as on the word 'gangrene', which may indicate of several re-readings and fixations on 'cantankerous'.

Respondent M
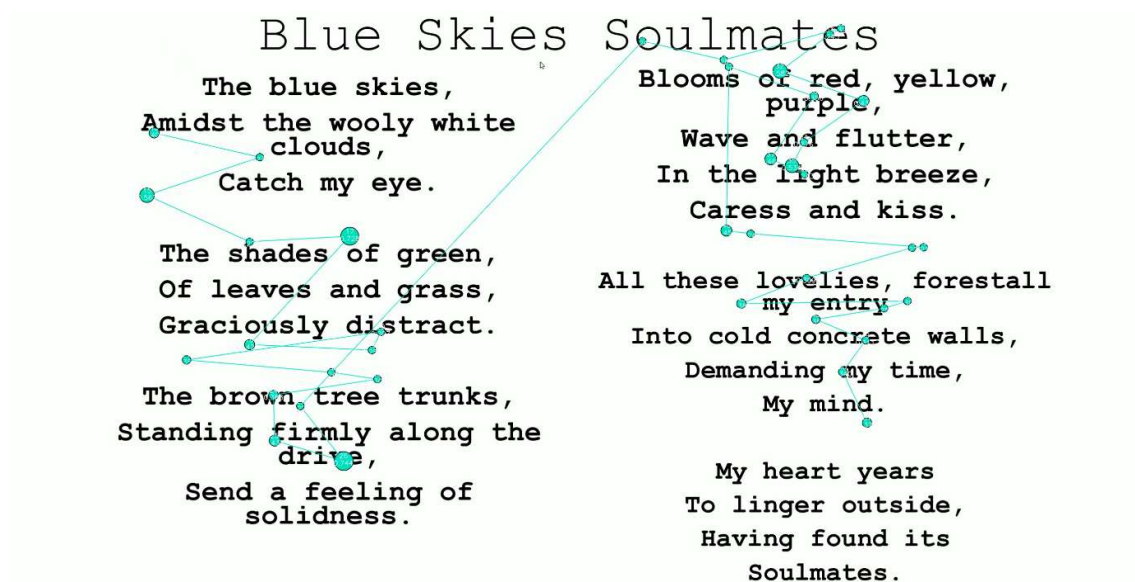
Figure 7.1 First reading of poem 1, respondent M

Blue Skies

The blue skies,
Amidst the wooly white
clouds,
Catch my eye.

The shades of green,
Of leaves and grass,
Graciously distract

The brown tree trunks,
Standing firmly along the
drive,
Send a feeling of
solidness.

Soulmates

Blooms of red, yellow,
purple,
Wave and flutter,
In the light breeze,
Caress and kiss.

All these lovelies, forestall
my entry
Into cold concrete walls,
Demanding my time,
My mind.

My heart years
To linger outside,
Having found its
Soulmates.

Figure 7.2 Second reading of poem 1, respondent M

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home
It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
This city
Is not my home.
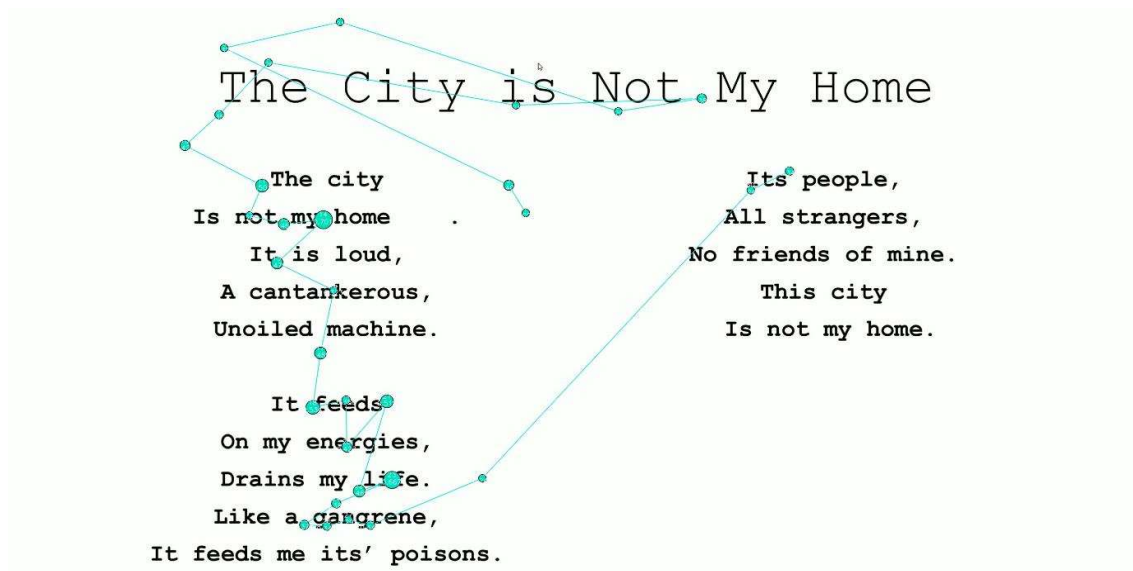
Figure 7.3 First reading of poem 2, respondent W

The City is Not My Home

The city
Is not my home   .
    It is loud,
A cantankerous,
Unoiled machine.

Its people,
All strangers,
No friends of mine.
    This city
Is not my home.

It feeds
On my energies,
Drains my life.
Like a gangrene,
It feeds me its' poisons.

Figure 7.4 Second reading of poem 2, respondent W

From the fixation map above, it can be surmised that Respondent M utilizes a variety of different approaches to both poems in each reading. For both the first and second readings of poem 1, as shown in figure 7.1 and 7.2, she utilised the speed-reading method, which can be seen in short fixations and various long and short saccades connecting them that land on opposing ends of the lines in each stanza, a characteristic sign of scanning by the reader from one end of the line to the next instead of fixating on the words in each line individually.

Speed reading is found as well in the first reading of poem 2 by respondent M. As shown in figure 7.3, there are short fixations connected by long and 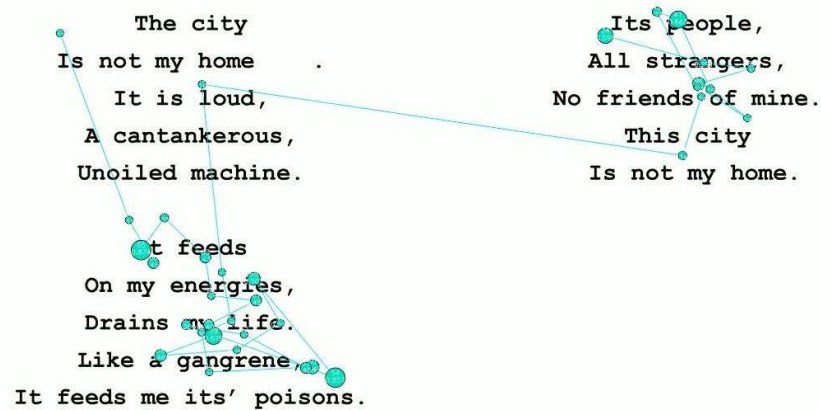short saccades that land on the lines in each stanza. The straight line and short saccades that connect each line can be purported as quickly skimming through the poem for information, with a notable focus on the poem's title, which is suggested to be because of its' large size. In figure 7.4, the second reading of poem 2 by respondent W, there is a high number of fixations, short saccades and multiple regressions present within stanza two of poem 2 centring around one of the POI, the word 'gangrene'. This can be interpreted as the keyword spotting technique, seeing as how the short fixations and short saccades branch out and centre around the larger fixation of the

word 'gangrene', which could be indicative of attempts to determine the meaning of the word via looking for context in the surrounding lines within the stanza.

Reasons for choosing their reading patterns referencing Gazepoint data

Before moving into the comprehension questions, the respondents were all shown their Gazepoint data and asked to give the reason for which they chose to read the poems the way they did based on the fixation map shown. The students were not informed of the five pre-determined categories of reading patterns used in the analysis of their GazePoint data and are asked to explain their reading patterns in their own words.

Respondent V

Respondent V mentions that she reads very slowly, and goes word by word to make sure that she understands it all. She says that she prioritizes understanding over memorising, with the fact that she approached both poems with the intention of giving answers based on her own understanding instead of memorising the poem for evidence with the consensus that she can recall the more important points. She describes her approach to reading the poem as putting herself in the persona's shoes and going through the entire storyline while connecting with her own past experiences. Respondent V also cites the lengthy stanzas as one of the reasons she does not prioritise memorisation.

Respondent T

Respondent T states that she uses skimming and scanning a lot because she likes to look for themes. She explains that she does this by describing her approach to poetry as prioritizing looking for important points throughout the poem, especially things like synonyms or words that have a similar meaning to the poem's title.

Respondent F

Respondent F describes his approach to understanding poems as predicting the overall message or theme from the title of the poem and looking for keywords based on said prediction through speed reading.

Respondent D

Respondent D explains that he uses the speed-reading approach in order to gain a general understanding of the storyline of the poem and to look through the poems for keywords that correlate to the main themes, commonly found in stressed syllables in each stanza like 'energies' and 'machine.'

Respondent S

 Respondent S explained slow reading as her approach to new poems, which is reading through the entire story of the poem as well as taking note of any contextual clues that can be used to justify the underlying theme of the poem. She also mentioned this to be effective in both memorisation and understanding since picking up contextual clues whilst reading the poem aids in forming an impression that helps in recall of quotes in the poem. Respondent S cited both the length of the poem that led her to choose this process and the lack of time that prevented her from making a final skim-and-skip read through.

Respondent W

 Respondent W explains that he likes to read through the poems in search for keywords and important quotes. This approach is explained by Respondent W's approach to reading poetry, which he describes as mainly looking through the poems in search of metaphors and imagery to derive justifications from the poem by means of symbolism.

Respondent M

Respondent M explains this by following their approach to new poems, which she describes as going through the poem in search of poetic devices such as metaphors, themes, and poetic devices that are present throughout the theme. She cites the time constraint as the main reason for reading very quickly out of the fear that she would not be able to finish the poem before the slide is changed.

Respondent M explains this process as attempting to look for relevant quotes and themes in the first reading and then attempting to derive the meaning of the word 'gangrene' by looking for other contextual clues in the sentences throughout the stanza.

Correlation and comparison of reading patterns based on respondents score demographic

It was previously hypothesized that respondents would choose different reading patterns based on their grade scores in the Malaysian Literature subject, chosen as an indication of their proficiency with literature. Respondents M, D and F, who all reported their scores as C+, utilised the speed-reading pattern for both their readings of poem 1. However, they exhibited different reading patterns in their readings of the second poem. Respondent M utilized speed reading in the first reading of poem 2, and then keyword spotting in the second reading of poem 2 with a re-reading cluster around the second POI, word 'gangrene'. Respondent D utilised speed reading in both readings of poem 2 and exhibited no fixations on either of the two POI in the poem. Respondent F utilised slow reading for his reading of poem 2, again exhibiting no interest on either of the two POI.

Respondent V, who reported her Malaysian Literature score as C, utilised speed reading in her first reading of poem 2. For her second reading of poem 2, she utilised slow reading, going word by word through the lines of each stanza. Similar to Respondent D and F, she did not exhibit interest on the two POI.

Respondent T and W, who reported their scores as B-, also exhibited a difference in their individual approaches to reading poem 2. Respondent T utilised keyword spotting in both of her readings in poem 2, exhibiting interest in the first POI, the word 'cantankerous' in her first reading of poem 2. Respondent W first utilised slow reading in his first reading of poem 2, and then progressing to the skim-and-skip method in his second reading of poem 2, with a re-reading cluster forming around both POI, words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene'.

Respondent S, who reported her score as A, showed a noticeable deviation from the reading patterns of the other respondents. She utilised the slow reading method in both of her readings of poem 1 as opposed to the speed-reading method favoured by the other contestants, with re-reading clusters forming in each stanza before moving to the next as indicators that she read through each stanza word for word repeatedly. For her readings of poem 2, she utilised two different reading patterns. In her first reading of poem 2, she utilised the skim-and-skip method, with rereading clusters centred around both POI, words 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene'. In her second reading of poem 2, she switched to the speed-reading method with short saccades running through the whole poem, with signs of regression that signify multiple re-readings of the entire poem.

Conclusion for RQ1

From the data shown above, it can be surmised that the most frequently utilised reading pattern for poem 1 is speed reading. This is shown in both readings of poem 1 in almost all of the respondents, with varying lengths of saccades that connect the short fixations placed at the beginning and end of each line forming up all of the stanzas in poem 1. Respondent S was the only respondent to utilise slow reading in both readings of poem 1, going word-to-word and rereading each stanza before moving onto the next, which continued until she was abruptly cut off with the end of the slide's timing.

For poem 2, the respondents utilized a vast variety of methods. The most frequently used reading pattern for poem 2 would be speed reading. This reading pattern is utilised by Respondent V and M in their first reading of poem 2, Respondent S in her second reading of poem 2, and Respondent D in both of his readings of poem 2. The second most frequent reading pattern in poem 2 would be the slow reading method. This reading pattern is utilised by Respondent V and F in their second reading of poem 2, and respondent W in his first reading of poem 2. Both of these reading patterns did not exhibit interest in the two POI of poem 2.

The third and fourth most frequently used reading patterns are keyword spotting and the skim-and-skip method. Keyword spotting is used by Respondent M in her second reading of poem 2, forming a re-reading cluster centred around a large fixation on the second POI, the word 'gangrene'. It is also used by Respondent T in both of her readings of poem 2, with the first reading forming a visible fixation on the first POI, word 'cantankerous'. This reading pattern is utilized by Respondent S in her first reading of poem 2 as well as Respondents W and M in their second reading of poem 2, with all uses forming re-reading clusters around either one or two of the POI in poem 2, the word 'cantankerous' and 'gangrene', respondent. The skim and skip method is utilised by Respondent S in her first reading of poem 2 and Respondent W in his second reading of poem 2. Both instances generated a re-reading cluster centred around the two POI of poem 2.

4.2 Interview Results and Thematic Analysis

To answer RQ2, the respondents of the experiment were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that aimed to find out the students' views on critical reading, their mastery of critical reading, as well as how it may have affected their efficiency in their critical analysis of poetry. The semi-structured interview was divided into two parts, comprehension questions to gauge their comprehension level through their critical analysis of poetry, and a series of subjective questions revolving around objectives of RQ2. The comprehension questions were taken from the 'Suggested Reading Questions for the Poems' from pages 64-72 of the Seven O' Clock Tree collection corresponding to the two poems chosen from the book. As following with the subjective nature of literature, the degree of the respondents' comprehension was derived from their feedback in the comprehension questions (quotations taken from the two poems, what did they use to justify their answers, et cetera). The respondents' input were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with an example of the transcript being provided in Appendix 3. The transcriptions then undergo thematic analysis to find interpretations of the respondents with regards to critical reading and its' probably impacts on the respondents.

4.2.1 Comprehension Questions

The comprehension questions are divided into set of three for each poem. The responses for these questions were graded based on three criteria, namely the degree of elaboration (ability of expression), justification provided (past experiences and personal judgement), and examples given (quotes taken from the two poems). There are also open ended questions (critical reading questions) to test their ability to utilise 'evaluation' and connect with the two poems to form their own judgement. This was done to test their proficiency with critical reading skills as well as the possibility of practice of rote-memorisation as was a common practice amongst examination-based assessments in schools.

Comprehension Question Results

Respondent V

Respondent V showcased a low recall rate, with a large number of her answers relying heavily on guesswork. She does attempt to provide examples of quotes taken from poem 1, though this is infrequent.

V: Maybe he's more of a nature person? He wants to be out in the open where there's colours. But in reality, he spend most of his time maybe in a room where there's no colours. That's why he mentioned cold concrete walls instead of colours such as blue, red, yellow, purple (Respondent V, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

When give open ended critical questions, Respondent V uses a combination of the contextual clues given in poem 2, such as imagery and description of objects, as well as her own judgement drawing on her previous experiences to answer the question.

V: Maybe he does not feel mentally healthy in the city, like the gangrene is rotting his mind and his emotions. Maybe he is following the saying where there's nothing that feels like home, with the city being a big part of it (Respondent V, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

Respondent T

Respondent T gives very short and brief answers, and uses contextual clues mainly taken from the title of poem 1.

T: It's saying that the blue sky catches the persona's eyes. That's why this is the soulmate love at first sight now (Respondent T, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

She forms her answer for the question based on her own experiences instead of looking to poem 2 for answers.

T: Maybe because of people action, The people's action, or their pattern makes that persona feels not like the city (Respondent T, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

When asked to answer critical questions, she attempts but fails to answer the question concerning the advanced vocabulary and resorts to asking the interviewer for the meaning of the word 'gangrene'. However, she does not utilise this meaning in her answer, as shown above.

Respondent D

Respondent D answers mainly using the summary of poem 1 instead of quoting the lines of stanzas word for word. When this is insufficient, he substitutes the justification using his previous experiences instead of quoting from poem 1.

D: So as seen, I think more most probably it's quarantine. As since it's quarantine, he is not allowed to meet people. So that's why the blue sky become his soulmate. Because that's the way he's communicating things to, uh, the readers. Yeah. (Respondent D, personal communication, July 8, 2024).

Respondent D also attempts to form his own understanding when faced with advanced vocabulary using semantic clues by taking apart the word itself instead of looking to poem 2 for contextual clues such as imagery and descriptions in the lines adjacent of the POI. He then gives his answer based on his incorrect understanding of the POI.

D: I think… I'm not sure about the meaning of gangrene, but I'm trying to form upon the word itself gangrene. It means by, uh, gangster town of city. Okay. So, I think since it's just mentioning like, it's a gangrene. So, it's like more of the town is moving to a darker side of the underworld. About gangsters and whatnot. So maybe that's the reason he's not into it [the city] (Respondent D, personal communication, July 8, 2024).

Respondent S

Respondent S responses are well structured and almost always includes a short quote taken from the poem. She also constantly refers to contextual clues by using imagery and other poetic devices present within poem 1.

S: Most likely at a park, maybe walking to a park or driving or cycling to a park? Where there's a lot of beautiful nature on a clear, blue sky day (Respondent S, personal communication, August 19, 2024).

When asked to answer the open ended critical reading questions, Respondent S looks to poetic devices such as tone and imagery to use as justification for her answers, which she derives from the storyline of poem 2.

S: From my own knowledge, gangrene means a certain part of your body, your flesh, which has rotted away. And so that reflects his feeling about the city where he feels that it is already destroyed, long gone. It's just their standing but without a soul, basically like a walking zombie. It's a physical place that exists but he couldn't feel its soul anymore (Respondent S, personal communication, August 19, 2024).

In regard to the POI word, she utilises previous knowledge to understand it as she already knows the word before.

Respondent W

Respondent W's answers have a decent amount of elaboration and utilises a mixture of quotes from poem 1 as well as imagery present within the poem. He also utilises personal judgement and his own interpretation of contextual clues to further provide justification and examples for his answer.

W: I think the term soulmate is used because it is what the persona is yearning for as important as a soulmate. So, I think it's the persona desires his freedom. That's why he describes the sky as the soulmate because the sky is broad and is limitless (Respondent W, personal communication, July 31, 2024).

When asked to answer the critical reading question, Respondent W utilises his previous experience and knowledge to connect to the underlying message of poem 2 and present his point of view on the question given. He attempts to predict the meaning of POI 2 using previous knowledge but does not recall back to poem 2 to look for answers using contextual clues such as imagery and descriptions, such as the line 'It feeds me its' poisons' following the POI that hinted to the meaning of the word.

W: So this word means, uh, slow death, so which means that the longer the persona stays in the city, the worse the feeling of the persona will be about the city. So, it's like a cancer because the cancer it starts small, and then over time, it just spreads. So, in other words, the persona is trying to imply that the longer he tried... he or she tries to stay in a city, the more dreadful it will be for him or her (Respondent W, personal communication, July 31, 2024).

Respondent M

Respondent M uses a combination of both her judgement and quotations from the poem as justification and examples for her answer, and also draws on contextual clues taken from the imagery present within the poem.

M: The persona is inside a room where he requires to write things. Because at the last stanza he says, 'I don't want to be in these four walls of mine, I want to be outside'. So. that suggests that he is inside somewhere surrounded by walls. So therefore, I believe that he required to be in a room for a very long time, then he was before this, where he was outside

with like the bees, the trees, the trunks and everything (Respondent M, personal

communication, August 5, 2024).

Respondent M answers the open-ended questions using both contextual quotes taken from poem 2 as well as her own previous experiences.

M: I would say that the persona is not a city person. He feels alienated when he came to

city. And usually, people who are in village are usually closer with more than another. But

when he come to city, people are very much busy and don't have time to think about other.

They tend to forget about other people. I think that's what he mentions and he dislikes living

in a city because he don't like the loud noise. Where he came from, maybe people used to care

about each other. That's why he dislikes being in city. (Respondent M, personal

communication, August 5, 2024).

She attempts to guess the meaning of the second POI using the tone and context given by the poem, predicting that it means 'a chaotic place of people'.

4.2.1 Subjective Questions

Critical Reading

Understanding and Application of Critical Reading

According to the respondents' answers, most of them defined critical reading as either both or a combination of its' first two stages, namely 'analysis' and 'interpretation'. Respondent F cites critical reading as reading through a passage trying to understand the contents in their own words.

F: Critical reading is just read[ing] through a passage, and you trying to understand each

part of like the passage and you go through carefully and analyse each components of the

passage to see what it really means (Respondent F, persona communication, July 30, 2024).

Respondent D defines critical reading as reading through a body of text, acquiring the key points, and understanding what the key points mean using context from the poem and previous knowledge instead of memorising the text.

D: Critical reading is when you get a passage or a text to read, you read it and summarize the important part, the major topic of it. Then you go through [your main topic] for what is the key points so you know the content of the passage (Respondent D, personal communication, August 7, 2024).

Respondent T narrows down the definition of critical reading to simply skimming and scanning, while respondent W states that critical reading is understanding the contents of a reading text in the reader's own words.

W: Critical reading refers to the process of reading and then understanding to provide your own interpretation (Respondent W, personal communication, July 31, 2024).

Respondent V narrows down critical reading to investigating the plot of a story or the contents of a text for the information contained inside.

However, Respondents S and M both touched on the last stage of critical reading 'evaluation' by mentioning the need to reflect or to make evaluations based on a readers' own experiences as well as other valid resources such as online articles or input from experts such as teachers and professors.

S: When you read something beyond just to simply just understand and gathering information, you read to evaluate, you compare it to other texts or other poems. So, basically, you read to evaluate, to compare-to form your own analysis about it, and when to reflect (Respondent S, personal communication, August 19, 2024).

M: When you read a passage, you need to interpret what it's written there. Then you have to have the ability to criticize. For example why they're talking about the sky? Why they are talking about blue? Then you have to connect to criticise, for you to compare and contrast. That is critical reading I believe (Respondent M, personal communication, August 5, 2024).

From the responses of the respondents, it can be deduced that most of the respondents attempted to practice critical reading unsuccessfully. This can be attributed to their incomplete understanding of critical reading, which is limited to the first two stages. In fact, more than half the respondents answered that their impression of critical reading lay in uncovering the message behind the poem and interpreting in their own words. As quoted by Respondent M in verbatim:

V: Critical reading is reading through a passage and trying to understand each part of the passage. Not just the title or whatever, but instead you go through carefully and analyse each component of the passage to see what it really means. (Respondent V, personal communication, July 31, 2024)

This indicated that they have only touched on the first two stages, 'analysis' and 'interpretation'. When asked about 'evaluation', the final stage of critical reading, most of the respondents cited their past experiences as being the basis by which they form their own evaluation and judgements on the poem. However, this cannot be considered true 'evaluation' in a sense that they did not seek further validation for the conciseness and accuracy of their judgements. Hence, it can be said that strictly speaking, most of the respondents did not practice critical reading during this instance of poetry analysis.

Application of Critical Reading in Poetry Analysis

In keeping with their perceptions of critical reading being limited to the first two stages, it was found that most respondents were able to successfully deduce the underlying themes

and messages of the poems in their own words, thus fulfilling the first two stages of critical reading, namely 'analysis' and 'interpreting'. To do so, they often quote using examples or imagery found in the text, though the quotes used are often incomplete or very short.

M: Because the sky and the clouds are always together. Therefore, I believe he mentioned it as a soulmate because soulmates are meant to be always together. And the same thing applies for blue skies where the blue sky is there. So, I think that's why he mentioned it as soulmates (Respondent M, personal communication, August 5, 2024). .

Attempts to form their own evaluations can be found in their views on the message of the poem, with most of them drawing on recent events in their previous experiences as the basis for their judgements and evaluations. Respondent D even used his experiences during quarantine as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as the basis for how the poem portrays the blue sky as a 'soulmate', which is framed as a longing for freedom despite quarantined by the circumstances of the pandemic.

Critical Reading Strategies Applied

When approaching any form of text, the respondents mentioned various methods of analysing the contents of said text, with interpretation based on their own judgement or a mix of other online resources. An example of this is how Respondent F mentions frequently utilising online resources as well as input from other students to form his own conclusion on certain topics, deferring to the opinion of experts such as teachers and other experts.

F: I will just read through, let's say a passage like to three or four times myself. Then when there's something that I haven't set my mind, I would get a second or third opinion to see or other people perspective, then I can connect it with my own, like, you know, perspective of what I'm trying to understand (Respondent F, personal communication, July 30, 2024).

Respondent S gives a similar answer by stating how she looks through the poetic devices such as personification and metaphor which she can use to interpret various evidences that can be linked to the underlying message of the poem. The same can be said for respondent D who states that he tends to highlight key points on the first reading through a passage and then using those key points to serve as anchors when looking for other quotes in the passage that he reading to justify those key points, a practice which is followed by respondents W and V.

Respondent T explained that she usually goes through the poems and look for themes based on what she had predicted from the poem's title. Respondent M utilises a similar technique in that she uses the title to predict the underlying theme of the poem before looking through the poem itself in search for contextual clues such as imagery, symbolism, and metaphor.

Challenges Applying Critical Reading

While all of the respondents expressed that applying critical reading was not a problem for them, their responses often contradict each other. For example, while respondent F mentions that he would look for online sources or seek expert advice on their opinion regarding certain topics, he also mentioned that he would not do so as the process is often frustrating with various conflicting information and different viewpoints from each writer. He also cited the difficulty of verifying the conciseness of information on the internet with lack of resources and references to valid sources. Respondent W shares a similar viewpoint, stating that there was no point in searching for the validity of the answers when it is often predetermined by the information present within the school syllabus.

Respondent S had a different viewpoint by stating that critical reading was already being applied to all aspects of life during this informational age, as the prevalence of fake or inaccurate information prompts the informed reader to search for other sources of validation

to form their own judgement on any set of news. She gives this response using fake news and online pop-ups as examples. Respondent D agreed with this point.

4.2.2 Poetry

Approaching Poems

All the respondents stated that they had used some form of mental imagery or simulacrum as their go-to method for understanding the poem's underlying message. Respondent V quoted that she tended to look at a poem like a storybook, putting herself in the persona(s)'s point of view to make sense of the underlying message of the poem. Respondent T and D utilised similar approaches by looking for code words that can be linked to the title of the poem, with Respondent T pointing to the refrains in each stanza and Respondent D relying on the stresses in each rhyming couplet.

D: Since I have issues in correlating in stanzas, I'll try to understand which I can understand first. So, I look for the key point. Usually, there is one word or the one line that actually can tell you what is this whole thing about? What is the theme of this poem, or what is this whole poem about, alright? So that is where I will look into the critical analysis where I looked through, what is the word mainly focusing? But there are words there will be stressed in poems. That's where I look (Respondent D, personal communication, August 7, 2024).

Following such, the respondents all quoted as using previous experiences such as childhood memories (Respondent W) and knowledge learnt (Respondent M) to interpret the messages they have extracted from the poem. During this period, they also conducted a form of unverified evaluation using their previous experiences and values on the relativeness of the poem by placing themselves in the writer's point of view (Respondent S).

Challenges with Poems

From their responses, it is found that the main problem faced by the respondents when undertaking poetry analysis were with poetic devices and language difficulties. Respondents V and D cited the varying rhythms and metaphorical use of symbology and language (particularly concerning western poems) as the main problem they faced when attempting to interpret the hidden meanings of poems in general. Respondent M also cited poetic devices as the main cause of difficulties faced by them when analysing poetry, particularly Malaysian English poetry.

M: I would say the rhythm is a bit difficult. They will ask the meaning of the words, Most of the poem are very, very old time.. So, the English is not the same as what we have right now. So, when we are asked to define some of the words, it's very hard (Respondent M, personal communication, August 5.2024).

Respondents F, and S cited the lack of context concerning colonial-era poems such as the ones presented in the Malaysian Literature lessons as the main problem faced, along with structural devices like hyperbole and alliteration. Respondents T and W cited advanced vocabulary and language as their difficulties faced when analysis poetry.

4.3 Discussion

Reading Patterns

From the various responses of the respondents, it can be seen that the most frequently used reading pattern for both readings of poem 1 is speed reading, with Respondent S being the sole respondent to utilise slow reading instead. The reading patterns for poem 2 are, in descending order of frequency, speed reading, slow reading, keyword spotting, and skim-and-skip. The specific numerical data of which is presented in the pie chart Figure 8 below.

Frequency of Reading Patterns for poem 2
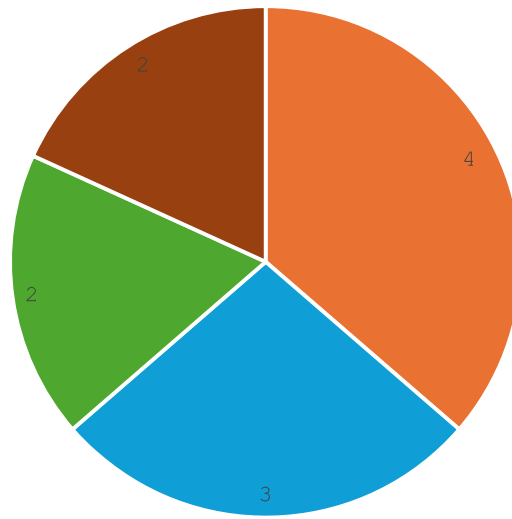
Legend: ■ Speed Reading ■ Slow Reading ■ Keyword Spotting ■ Skim- And Skip

Previously it was posited that that the reading patterns utilised by the respondents will affect the students' comprehension of the two poems. From the respondents' performance in the comprehension questions, it can be said that this hypothesis is true. For example, as many of the respondents utilised speed reading in order to collect as much data as possible from poem 1 before the timing of the slides expired, they were able to provide the general gist of what the poem was about, but not entirely. This can be seen in Respondents V, T, W, M, F and D, where their answers were consisted mainly of their interpretation of the poem's contents using very short quotes to provide examples. This can be theorised as a result of the respondents unanimously choosing speed reading as the reading pattern when approaching poem 1, this could be as a result of the intimidation felt by its' length and how it could affect their completion owing to the nature of the timed slides. Speed reading was chosen to collect as many details as possible from the lest possible time before either branching off to another

reading pattern to collect the specifics (respondent V) or speed reading several times more in effect of memorisation (respondent W). Respondent S's answers are detailed and have much more complete quotes due to her slow reading pattern that allowed her sufficient time to read the poem. The main concern of this phenomenon, however, is whether or not this kind of questions is classified as 'understanding poetry' if it all boils down to memorising quotes from the poem. The argument is that this phenomenon is only possible due to the environment caused by the case study, where the students are made to answer comprehension questions which they have assumed to be similar in format to the subjective questions present in literature exams. Indeed, it appears to be this assumption that causes the students to adopt reading strategies suitable for understanding or memorising the poems that were given to them in a short time frame, which will inevitable cause contradictions in their understanding of how critical analysis is supposed to go and the method of critical analysis in which they are used to, as will be explored in the section below.

Understanding vs Memorisation

Upon the completion of the Gazepoint data collection, the respondents were all asked to explain the reason for their choice of choosing to read the poem in the way that they did. However, it was found that the answers given by the participants during the interview phase did not always match up to their visual patterns whilst reading the poem, which gave insight into their processing pathway whilst reading the poems.

This contradiction is present in a few respondents, most notably in respondents V.

Respondent V explained in the interview that her style of approaching poems are that she reads the poems thoroughly and will attempt to understand the underlying story as well as potential themes or messages of the poem before moving on to interpreting said themes in a way that she can understand. She describes that she chooses slow-reading because of the

poem's length which makes it hard for her to process all the information and in-depth reading in order to better follow through with the storyline of the poem.

However, there is a visible contradiction in her response to the comprehension questions that refutes this answer. In the comprehension questions, she exhibits visibly low recall, and forms her conclusions through relying on contextual clues, such as her constant use of the title 'blue skies soulmates' as the evidence for her answer and little else. This can be linked to her reading pattern of speed reading, which aims to collect as much information as much as possible instead of other reading patterns such as slow reading and keyword spotting which prioritise examining and analysing a specific set of content in the text rather than read through the poem thoroughly.

While Respondent T did mention prioritising understanding over memorisation, she showed conflicting performance in her comprehension questions for poem 1 and poem 2. For poem 1, quite visibly using speed reading techniques to take in the entirety of poem 1 instead of aiming for skim-and-skip as mentioned in her interview. During the answering session, she also relies heavily on contextual clues provided by the poem's title, 'Blue Skies Soulmates', and occasionally her own past experiences as justifications for her answers. This appears similarly in her responses for the comprehension questions of poem 2. She exhibited low recall, did not use any of the keywords present within her reading patterns despite using the keyword spotting method, and also showed limited ability to express and elaborate as well as provide justification for her answers in the comprehension questions. She did admit that her inability to answer properly was a result of her low language proficiency, and her inability to understand the advanced vocabulary present in the two POI of poem 2.

A similar contradiction could be seen in Respondent F. While he stated that he also prioritised understanding over memorisation, he exhibited a notable difference in his response

to the comprehension questions for each of the poems. For his answers to poem 1, he exhibits a low recall rate and constantly looks to the interviewer for confirmation regarding each of his answers, with various fabricated evidence formed from piecing together various words taken from the poem. He also relies heavily on conclusions formed form his own judgement to justify his answers by drawing on past experiences and previous knowledge for examples instead of from poem 1.

This phenomenon becomes the inverse in his response for the second poem. He is able to cite full quotes taken from the poem as concrete evidence for his answers. He also uses both contextual clues from each of the stanzas coupled with his own conclusions as justification for his answers. As seen below, he brings in his previous experience of arriving in Kampar as a working student and the loneliness he experiences in a new place with no friends as an example for how the persona might dislike the city.

F: Because city life is not enjoyable as you have to work every day and you have less time for people. So, I guess that is draining the persona's energy whether like he doesn't have anyone to hang out with because he says everyone is 'a stranger to him'. So, I guess that's why it's draining him. Because everything- he doesn't have time for himself (Respondent F, personal communication, July 30, 2024).

Respondent D showcases average recall, being able to cite complete phrases from the poems, though there were also several instances where he misspoke or made up words to complete the phrase so that it would remain consistent to the message and underlying themes of the poem. When there were no phrases he could remember, he would instead use contextual clues from the poem, commonly the title, to use as justification for his answers.

D: After reading through the poem thoroughly, the persona is referring to the blue skies as soulmate because this poem's story is more about greenery, about nature. So that's the reason

why he's using blue sky. He's referring blue skies as his soulmate, and in the he's mesmerized with the way of nature, like the trees and whatnot. (Respondent D, personal communication, August 5, 2024).

Respondent S explains her approach going through the poem to look for poetic devices such as simile and metaphors connected to the poem's themes and main message. This is evident in her answer for both of the poems, which are filled with quotes taken from the imagery and descriptions of the two poems. For example, she used descriptors such as the 'brown tree trunks' and 'shades of green of leaves and trees' as examples to justify her answer on how she feels that the main conflict the persona is experiencing in poem 1 is that of love towards nature. Another example is how she says that the second POI, 'gangrene' in stanza 2 of the poem is paired with the personification 'it feeds me its' poisons' as a way of implying that the persona is infected with the negative aspects of the city that is he cannot escape. This approach is adopted by both Respondent M and W.

In essence, it can be said that the respondents have been hardwired to approach poems in a way that makes it easier for them to collect and present their answers with justification taken from the poem. This proves that the consensus of what it means to understand poetry is while memorisation is a key part of poetry analysis, the end point of poetry analysis is to understand and form one's own conclusions about the poem through their own judgement and knowledge, though in order to complete the examinations, memorisation has become the priority in order to correctly answer questions in literature exams.

Critical Reading and Challenges

From the results of the research above, it can be said that the critical reading proficiency amongst the respondents is unsatisfactory. Respondents W, T, D, V and F all defined critical reading as either 'analysis' or a combination of 'analysis' and 'interpretation'. This can be

seen in their citing of critical reading as some form of reading through the text and understanding its' contents in their own words. Only respondents S and M have mentioned that critical reading is to not only understand the contents of a text, but also to criticise said contents by questions proof of its' validity. The most frequently mentioned stage of the three stages of comprehension is 'interpretation', which makes sense due to the prevalence of having to prove the meaning of points written being the main method any student understands a topic.

Nevertheless, respondents W, T, V, D and F all expressed that there were difficulties in implementing critical reading within schools. A large part of this is that there is no valid incentive to do so in schools, particularly as a result of school-based assessments ramping up the number of examinations, thus requiring the students to rely on rote-memorisation more than ever to score well in said exams (respondent V). It does not help that some teachers resort to spoon-feeding the students on what will come out in the school examinations, especially since the students are required to follow the rigid school syllabus without means of creative thinking (respondent T). This is the same in personal perceptions as well, as two respondents F and W mentioned that there is no valid incentive to actively practice critical reading in the academic sense owing to the frustration of looking for valid sources of information on niche topics when they would rather just read for pleasure, even outright stating that they were lazy to do so. However, respondent S and respondent M argue that critical reading has always been practiced, and that a distinction should be made between academic critical reading and daily critical reading. Indeed, the main challenge of implementing critical reading amongst students is to provide them the incentive to seek proof for the content they have read, thus allowing for the third stage of critical reading, 'evaluation', to take into effect.

Chapter 5 : Conclusion

RQ1

The main reading pattern utilised by the respondents in reading poem 1 is speed reading, with the main reading patterns being used to read poem 2 being speed reading, slow reading, keyword spotting and skim-and-skip. The main objective of these reading patterns is to collect important and relevant information as quickly as possible. The several factors causing the formation of these reading patterns were the time constraint in data collection as a result of the timed slides, the act of reading through the poem in search for information, and the assumption that the comprehension questions used in RQ2 are similar in format to the subjective questions present in past literature questions. Another possible factor for this trend of reading pattern is that it may have been influence by the length, placement and the size of the font, on the times slides. This coincided with the findings by Corcoran et al. (2023), which showed longer fixations on poem 1, which had a prosaic inclination in their arrangement as a result of enjambment in their poetic devices.

The answers given by the students in the comprehension questions section of the semi-structured interview could also be triangulated to the reading patterns they had previously exhibited. This was most evident in Respondent S's performance compared to the other six respondents W, T, F, D, M and V. This was when she utilised slow reading in both readings of poem 1 instead of speed reading like the other participants. Her answers were well-structured, contained complete quotations taken from the poem, and has a clear layout of justification and example (quotes). This coincides with the findings by Tsai et al. (2022), where a high number of repeated re-readings on a particular portion of the text coincided with the informational processing of conflicting information. In short, the way that the respondents read the poem using critical reading patterns directly affected their level of comprehension of the poems they have read.

RQ2

As previously mentioned in previous studies by Anuar et al., (2023) and Saidalvi et al., (2022), critical reading skills are not widely used within poetry. Critical reading is not widely practiced by students due to a mixture of various factors including a flawed assessment system, frustration when dealing with advanced language (Rahmat et al., 2020), and the lack of healthy reading habits among the Malaysian youth (Edward et al., 2021).

This is similar to the results of the study by Saidalvi et al.,2022, with the difference that the respondents are aware of the lack of proper 'evaluation' and justification in many cases of critical reading instead of pure overestimation as a result of the experiment's design.

When analysing poems, the two main problems commonly faced by the respondents are that of language proficiency and inability to understand poetic devices. The respondents also cited relativeness as one of the main factors that affected their reading of poetry, with many of them using simulacra drawn from imagery of their past experiences. This coincided with the results from the study of Mohaideen et al., 2020 and one of the four aspects of poetry comprehension mentioned by Creely (2019). Thus, the dilemma of providing a poetry lesson derived from this lesson should be focused on poems that are both appropriate in level of difficulty as well as being able to connect to the local cultural knowledge shared by the students.

As the respondents were mainly future teachers, they agreed that the use of literature (namely poetry) in Malaysian ESL classrooms were to improve the students command over the English language through exposure to different writing styles, the use of metaphor and implied meaning in text, as well as advanced vocabulary.

When asked about the possible reasons of poetry being removed from the Malaysian curriculum, Respondent T and V ironically cited advanced vocabulary being one of the main

factors. Furthermore, owing to the incomplete and flawed implementation of the School-Based Assessment system (SBA) in various schools, the students are less inclined to learn about something that could not help them in tackling the school exams.

Limitations and Outlook

The most limiting factor in this study is the lack thereof of participants. Despite considerable efforts, the number of participants in this study fell drastically beyond the optimal number of 12-15 for purposes of data saturation. This greatly impacted the data collected during the study, with the number of participants numbering at 7. Furthermore, while all participants were from the English Education program (ED), they were all of the final year and semester of their time at UTAR. This took away the possibility of variety in their input of critical reading's effects on comprehension in poetry analysis

The fact should be considered that all participants are of trainee teachers who have previously undergone teaching practice, and are such predisposed to read or analyse poetry in a certain way. The results can vary differently if presented with a different sample of participants.

Also, there lies the fact that the equipment used had a few problems as well. GazePoint GP3, while suitable for low scale research, has been found to be prone to inaccuracies when dealing with slight discrepancies such as distance from the recording device, calibration errors with respondents of corrected vision, and lack of comprehensive data processing software.

Recommendations for Future Studies

There are a few recommendations for furthering the topic of this aspect of research in future studies. One of which would be to use a more quantifiable benchmark of literature

proficiency instead of exam grades, as using exam grades can be outdated due to the students' language proficiency being able to improve over time.

The same could be said in determining the level of poetry comprehension in students in RQ2. It is suggested that a more quantifiable and measurable form of evaluation for poetry comprehension be used, such as a written comprehension test or a multiple choice question. The test should be administered both before and after the eye-tracking session to allow for a comparison between the poetry comprehension levels before and after the application of critical reading strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is found that critical reading affects students in how they analyse and understand poetry. The main challenges faced in implementing critical reading are lack of incentives, incomplete understanding of critical reading, time constraints faced by students, and lack of obligation to practice critical reading. The challenges faced in the critical analysis of poetry are, language proficiencies, poetic devices present, and the relativity of the poems' underlying message and content to the reader's local culture and previous knowledge.

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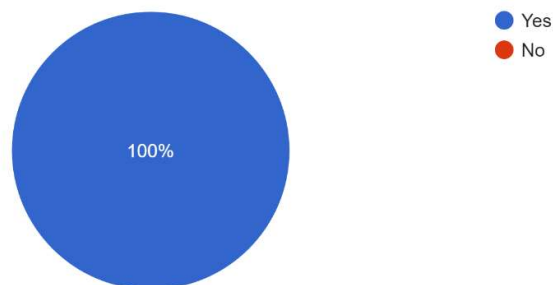http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0501.18

Appendix

Appendix 1: Respondent Consent Form (Google Forms)

Appendix 2: Demographics Charts (taken from Respondent Registration Form)

Have you ever read any form of literature in secondary school? Think poems, novels and short stories.

8 responses

- Yes
- No

100%

How good would you consider yourself in literature?

8 responses
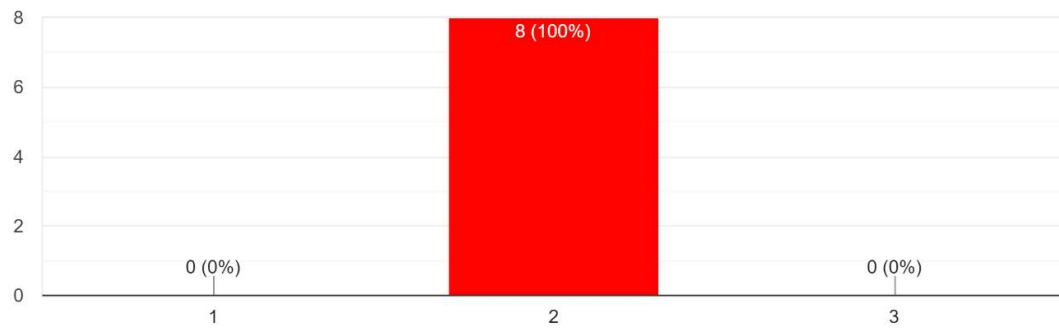
Respondent	Grade
T	B-
V	C
S	A
F	C+
W	B-
D	C+
M	C+

Appendix 2: Post-reading Semi-structured Questions

Semi-Structured Interview

Comprehension Question (choose three of each at random, totaling 6) – ask of how they understood the poem first

Blue Skies Soulmates (Critical Analysis)

1. Where is the persona in this poem, and which words suggest this?

2. Why do you think the persona describes the blue sky as 'soulmates? *

3. What is the conflict the persona is experiencing?

4. What would you do when faced with similar circumstances?

This City is Not My Home

1. Describe the persona's feelings and thoughts about the city and its' people in your own words.

2. What does the comparison of a city to a 'gangrene' suggest about the city and what it does to the persona?

3. What could be some of the reasons why the persona does not like the city?

4. When you met new people or entered certain places, what did you do to make sure you blended in? *

5. What do you think helps a person feel like they 'belong'? *

Subjective Answers (Critical Reading)

The two poems for this study are taken from the Seven O' Clock Tree by Malachi Edwin Vethamani, a collection of poems designed to be relatable to both Malaysian teachers and students.

1. Which of the two poems appeals to you the most? Why?

2. When reading, do you attempt to connect the happenings in the poem to your own experiences?

3. Why do you think that poems are written? Would you write one willingly?

4. What are the common difficulties you have experienced when analysing poems for information?

5. Why do you think we are asked to learn poetry in school? Do you think it is necessary and why?

6. Can you describe your experience reading Malaysian English language poetry?

7. Before coming to UTAR, have you come in contact with Malaysian poetry before?

8. What do you think makes Malaysian poetry difficult? (language, theme, cultural context)

9. The previous questions were all on critical analysis of poems. Why do you think that we engage in critical analysis of poetry? (ask if they have taken literature in school before coming to UTAR)

10. What are the things do you normally look out for in critical analysis of poetry? (what parts do you look for information, what do you use from previous knowledge to connect with the poem)

11. Do you think critical analysis of poetry counts as a part of critical reading?

12. What do you know about critical reading? (We have always been reminded of developing critical reading skills in secondary schools, i.e. teaching of reading (chunking > skimming > scanning> critical reading), highlighting important points, do you think those things count as critical reading). If so, define in your own words.

13. We all know that critical reading skills are important. In your perspective, can you tell me why?

14. Critical reading is divided into analysing, interpreting and sometimes evaluating the content that we are reading. Do you think previous knowledge or past experiences play a part during any of this process?

15. One thing we practice critical reading a lot is during studying. What sort of techniques or methods did you apply to use critical reading during those times? (taking notes, predicting using the title, etc.)

16. Have you increased the times you have applied critical reading since you entered UTAR? If so, why? (can it be because of a course? That you needed to look up verified resources for assignments?)

17. What do you think makes it hard for you execute critical reading skills and how did you overcome them?

18. From your perspective, what part of critical reading skills help you in your comprehension of certain subjects or texts?

19. Lastly, what advice would you give to students who want to develop their own critical reading skills? (were there any tips and tricks you might find helpful?)

20. Is there anything you would like to say about this experience in studying critical reading on the effect of comprehension in Malaysian poetry?

Appendix 3: Verbatim Sample of Interview Transcript (Respondent S)

I: Okay, so this study will basically be on how critical reading affects the reading proficiency of your comprehension skills in Malaysian English poetry. So now this interview will be divided into two parts. Mainly the comprehension questions for the poems you read and subjective questions on critical reading in general, Understand?

R: Yes.

I: All right, so the first poem, Blue Skies Soulmates. All right. So, first of all, what did you understand about this poem? What-what do you know from just reading this poem?

R: First of all, each stanza talks about a specific color and each of the color correlates to a certain type of- certain part of nature such as the tree, the flowers, the blue sky, the brown bark, right?

I: Yes. So, from these words, where do you think the persona is in the poem? And what kind of words suggest this?

R: Most likely at a park, maybe walking to a park or driving or cycling to a park? Where there's a lot of beautiful nature on a clear, blue sky day,

I: Okay. Uh, then what conflict do you think he is experiencing- the persona is experiencing?

R: Maybe he is missing his soulmate or he is yearning to look for a soulmate.

I: Okay? Um, why do you think the persona says that the blue sky is his 'soulmate'?

R: That's the first stanza. The blue sky is in the first stanza.

I: Why do you think? Why-why do you think he is, uh, saying that blue sky is his soulmate?

R: Um, I think because blue sky indicates that it is a clear, um, day, bright day without rain. So usually it-it means that it's a promise of a bright future ahead with that person.

I: Oh, okay. So, the second poem, the City is Not My Home. So, describe the persona's feelings and thoughts about the city and its people. What is- what do you think about this?

R: Poor. It has a very pessimistic tone. And at a first glance, you can straight away tell that the persona really hates the city. It hates how cold it feels, how loud it is, and how unfriendly the people are.

I: All right, then. One- one of ,uh, what could be some of the reasons why the persona does not like the city?

R: Um, the first stanza talks about the loud noise, and then I think the third stanza talks about how cold and indifferent the people are. So, he couldn't feel the warmth. You couldn't feel-he doesn't feel that he belongs there.

I: Okay. So, one of the words the persona uses to describe the city is the word gangrene. So, what do you think the word gangrene describes about the city and what it has done to the persona?

R: Um, from my own knowledge, gangrene means a certain part of your body, particularly your flesh, which has rotted away, which is dead basically. And so that's the-that reflects his feeling about the city where he feels that it is, um, that place the place is already destroyed, long gone. It's just their standing but without a soul, basically like a walking zombie. It's-it's a-it's a physical place that exists but he couldn't feel its soul anymore.

I: Okay. Then, what do you think by describing the city as a gangrene? What do you think he is implying that the city is doing to him?

R: Um, since gangrene signifies death in a way, death and rot. So, what the feeling that it gives him is that basically, it sucks out all his happiness, all his optimism, his positivity. It makes it and it leaves him with all the negative energy and feeling of pessimism, I guess.

I: Okay, so this poem is about moving to a new place, an unfamiliar place. So, when you as a person- personal experience, when you met new people or entered certain places, what do you usually do to blend in?

R: I am literally, uh, quite introverted. So, my first response when I'm in public or when I meet people, it's usually to avoid it. But of course, when we move to a new place, we have to

find a way to survive, which means that, um, in some ways I still have to, I cannot run away from society basically. So, I guess, um, finding a familiar face among the crowd, basically someone that you feel that can relate to you at a deeper level, someone that makes you feel comfortable and below even though it's hard to find that person. But eventually I think, um, you will get attracted to each other and he will find you. I guess like life or relationship will find its way, even friendship.

I: Then, uh, one more thing about this poem is that it also touches on, uh, the themes of belonging. So, what do you think helps a person belong?

R: Um, I think that when we talk about moving to a new place, let's say, um, since it's a place that we can't run away from, we have to make peace or but of the fact that we have to stay there for prolonged period of time. So, the first thing that you have to do is, of course, just to accept it-accept your new surroundings, accept the new people or maybe new co-workers or friends that you will have to get along with. And then, um, I guess finding beauty in- so I think its own beauty, if even if it's in hidden places, maybe if let's say your person who like nature you can find a part or um, you know, a lakeside in that city where you can walk through, you know, just find your own, uh, places of comfort that, yeah, just to find basically, to find a sense of belonging.

I: To find a place where you can connect like to your past experiences.

R: Yeah, in a way.

I: Okay. alright. So that's it for the comprehension questions. Now for the subjective questions. So, the two poems that you read, just now, as mentioned earlier, were written by Malachi Edwin Venthamani. So, these poems were taken from his book, the Seven o'Clock Tree, and they were designed to connect to both Malaysian teachers and students. So, of the two poems, which of them appeals to you the most?

R: The first one right away.

I: Why?

R: Um, I like how bright it is. How optimistic and beautiful it is, and it gives you a very positive feeling after reading it.

I: Okay. So from that one- so from that can I surmise that when you read you connect the happenings in the poems to your own experiences?

R: Yes. Usually, when I read something, I will take time to digest it and I will try to relate to emotionally, by reflecting on my own similar experiences so that, I think, that's how I gain the most happiness, from my reading, by trying to relate to it as much as I can. And for me, I find happiness, the most appealing when it makes me feel a deep connection, when it makes me feel fake things

I: Then. so, one of, so, one of the things that I have asked you to do in this poem, it's more or less understanding this poem. So, can you describe some of the common difficulties that you experience when analysing poetry?

R: In general?

I: Yes.

R: Um, I think maybe, um, first is my unfamiliarity with the subject mat-matter. So, let's say that poems come from abroad and, um, persona or the poet writes about something that is very foreign to me, a foreign culture. Uh, so, maybe it is, uh, I need a bit of research, um, to understand the full extent of it because of the unfamiliarity.

I: Okay, Then, a lot of people say that poetry is difficult. So why do you think they say poetry is difficult?

R: First of all, it can just be due to the lack of interest itself.

I: Okay.

R: And secondly, it can also stem from maybe they would not talk to appreciate it enough when they were in school. For me, I've always loved reading. And after that, when I learned literature in secondary school, I fell in love with it more, So I guess it comes, it is-it can be due to your own personality or maybe lack of experience or with it or just- and maybe some people find it difficult because it just, it doesn't just end with reading it or a-appreciating it. You- also, in school, especially you are required to analyse it and there's a lot of terms that you have to learn and memorize like hyperbole, personification, all those things. Maybe all those technical things make them despise it because of those.

I: Okay, So one thing about it is, um, why do you think we are asked to learn poetry in school? You mentioned learning poetry quite a bit. So, why do you think we as secondary students are asked to learn poetry in school?

R: Okay. Um, first is, of course, to create an appreciation towards literature itself. Because I-without this initiative of teaching it in school, incorporating it into our syllabus and curriculum, I think most students would not just go out of their way to finally feature books or poetry books to read just based on their own effort, right? So, first is, of course, the exposure. It gives the student exposure and secondly, um, it's train your higher order thinking skills. Of course, when you want to interpret something, you have to analyse it, you have to compare it with your own experience. So, I think it is something that you cannot achieve through just normal reading comprehension, through just normal factual texts. So, poetry goes beyond that, and I guess it's an-it teach them more about life as well.

I: Okay. So, all in all, do you think it is necessary? This form of teaching English necessary, right? So, why do you is it necessary?

R: Um, so basically the question is- is, for teaching poetry at school necessary?

I: Yes. That your question.

R: Yes. Um, yes, because I found a lot of joy in it, but I can say that it's not for everyone. So, this approach may not be beneficial for all types of students. So, I guess it is good if we can make literature component as, uh, not as compulsory subject but more of ,uh, I'm not sure what's the word but something that you optional.

I: So, elective.

R: Yeah, instead of making it compulsory, make literature as something optional or elective.

I: Elective, yeah? Okay. So, these two poems deferred from previous studies in that they are Malaysian poetry. So, can you describe your experiences about reading Malaysian poetry?

R: Um, I learned some in secondary school although I cannot recall much of them now, Um, so that's my first exposure to its Malaysian poetry. Um, and to be honest, I don't- I am not someone who consumed or read poetry usually. So usually when I read poetry... so usually when I read poetry, it's always for classes. So, my second exposure to Malaysian poems is, of course, during my a few courses that we have in UTAR. So that's where I learn more about our Malaysian literary poetry.

I: Okay. So, before coming to UTAR... Oh, you said you're already read Malayian poetry before, right? Okay. Sorry, my bad. Um, what do you think poems are written? And why-why do you think poems are written?

R: Um, I think it is... poetry is basically similar to writing songs. Um, it's a way for you to express your feelings, your thoughts in a more beautiful way. I guess, compared to just writing a story or it is more. First of all, it's more compact so people can consume and appreciate it at a faster rate. And then second is, of course, expressing of your feelings and

your thoughts. And last one, I think people write because they have to fulfill an assignment like, so, for academics purposes.

I: Okay, then if given a chance, would you write poetry willingly?

R: Oh, I see. I have made a few attempts actually of writing poetry really, but I do admit that I'm not good at it, compared to a lot of my classmates. My poetry, I think because of my lack of experience with it, it is very surface level, it feels fake. So, um, I don't think that I am gifted in this area. Yep, that's all specifically Malaysian poetry. Yeah. Uh, I mean, guess I would in general. I would say.

I: Oh, okay. All right. All right. Okay, so, the previous questions were on the critical analysis of poetry. So, first of all, I would like to ask, why do you think we engage in critical analysis of poetry?

R: Um, to understand human nature in general? The beauty of the human experience, the beauty of languages. Um, and also, I think it's exploration of a new culture, um, because it and, as well as, um, learning the history, learning about the past because it really depicts the true experience of the poet self that time. Like learning, even reading Shakespearean work, or 500 years later, and we can still appreciate the beauty of it. And we can also learn about how the thoughts or the things that people back then worry about or think about, okay, just not much different from how we are today.

I: Okay. All right, then. So, can you tell me what are the things you normally look for during critical analysis of poetry? Um, when you read for information, critical analysis of poetry, what parts do you-what are the things you normally look out for in the poem?

R: Um... I think because I have learned, I have been trained in school to follow certain format. You look for the tone, you look for the theme, um, then you look for the technical literary devices like, you know, personification, metaphor, all those things. So, I guess and

then after that for me but then those are like, when I want to approach it academically because that's how I've been taught. But let's say I want to read it for leisure. I would just, for me, it's always looking for the emotion looking for the words that can evoke the strongest emotion and me and can make me reflect and then it leads to me reflecting about my own life. And basically, like this is how I enjoy poetry. Yeah.

I: All right. understood. Uh, then, do you think critical analysis of poetry counts as part of critical reading?

R: Yes. It is still reading and you are still analyzing it so I guess. Yes. Technically yes.

I: All right. Now, what do you know about critical-critical reading? Just explain it in your own words.

R: Okay, Um, when you read something beyond just to simply just understand and gathering information, you read to evaluate, you compare it to other, I mean, other texts or other poems. So, basically, you read to evaluate, to compare-to form your own analysis about it, and when to reflect.

I: All right, then, we all know that critical reading skills are important. Can you tell me why, in your perspective, you know, analysing, interpreting, evaluating, you say that these are all important bits of critical reading and is what makes up critical reading. And we see that in normal society, nowadays that critical reading skills are important. So, can you tell me why in your perspective and in your own words?

R: Okay, when we think back about our generation, we are so exposed to, um, the media especially with a lot of applications, a lot of social media nowadays and I guess the importance of critical thinking of critical reading is when you can make you your own judgment, your own evaluation, whether you can trust a certain piece or is it just a propaganda? Is it just a viral? Um, written text that doesn't have much value except for, you

know, to gain clicks. Is it just a clickbait? So I think that because we are bombarded with so much information basically every day, every minute of the day so critical reading comes in handy in that you can choose or what is valuable to you that you can take in and add them to your life. And what is just nonsense or fake news and you can just ignore.

I: All right, all right. Um, just now we talked about how critical reading is and is evaluating…right- evaluating information based on knowledge or experiences. So, in your perspective, do you think previous knowledge or past experiences, your own past experiences without looking at the books, without looking at research, using that place a huge part of this process?

R: Critical reading in general or specific to literature?

I: In general.

R: Okay. Um, yes. I think just like in any aspects of our life, we are our values. Our thoughts process, it has been formed through our experience. Growing up, how we were moulded by our parents, by our teachers, our peers. So, we cannot get away from the fact that we are a product of our experiences.

I: Yeah. Okay. Yes. So, one thing we practice critical reading a lot, as you may have noticed since we are already third year in university, is study. So, what sort of techniques do you usually apply to facilitate critical reading during those times?

R: Um, just in general, right? Okay. So, I am not a person, like when it comes to studying, I am not someone who writes or take notes. I am very bad in notes. Thinking I would say, I usually just, I like to take my time when I read something. So, I will read it over a few times. So, let's say I'm given a novel to analyse in class for literature class, so I will read the first time just to note the story that, you know, the plot, the characters and then I would read it the second time where I will scrutinize it more deeply. Um, I will look for the elements that I

have to analyse more deeply like, why is character behave a certain way? Why? And then I will, analyse more about these settings, maybe research more about the place, the time, the history behind the story. So, I guess when it comes to reading a certain text or certain novel, or poem, so, whatever it is, I like to read it a few times. Where for each time, I will go deeper and deeper into the material until I fully understand and appreciate it.

I: Right. Understood. Have you found it, ever found it difficult to execute critical reading skills?

R: Um, it's something that I've never really given much thought about.

I: Okay.

R: I, uh, basically since reading is something that is pleasurable for me, I read for fun and I also, um, and I've been doing that since I was young, so, especially when- especially when it comes to not, oh sorry, fictional work. Um, I since I read for fun, I don't find reading at something that is troublesome. Or I just feel like it's a chore.

I: Uh sorry. Let me just put that into perspective a bit. I meant critical reading like for critical reading skills, it is to analyze any and all information. So, when you read for pleasure, that's nothing to be said. But what if I were to ask you to constantly apply critical reading skills, even in your daily life? Would you think you are capable of accomplishing that?

R: To be honest? I think yes. I mean I don't want to sound smug but-but then I feel that I, don't everyone do that? Doesn't everyone do that in the-your daily life? When even, when you read something. um, as simple as a post that you see, let's say on so-social media after reading it, then you digest the meaning of it. And then of course you would, um, evaluate, you know, like is this real is this fake? Do I need to research more about this topic? Like it always leads to further. Oh, like for this, the next step of you, you know, like you're always leads to extra things, it doesn't end with you just reading it. So, I feel like we are doing this

every day, subconsciously, without intending to. So, I, that's why I don't feel that this is something that we think about much, but we subconsciously are doing every day.

I: All right. Okay. So, in your perspective do you think critical reading skills help you understand certain subjects or even reading texts better?

R: Yes.

I: Okay. Then how- in what way would you say?

R: Um, I think I'm like being repetitive. Oh, because I feel that. Yeah. Uh, just like what I said before when we read something. Even, um, if it's not for academic purposes, we always have to evaluate. We always have to appreciate. We always have to judge it and see its value or it's worth in our life.

I: Alright. Then, say if you have several juniors, or you have several kids that want you to teach them how to apply critical reading skills to not only their studies but also in their daily life. What advice or tips and tricks would you give them to apply critical reading?

R: First of all, I want them to find the joy in reading itself, okay? So only once you find the joy in reading and the thirst for knowledge, then you will be more eager to apply the reading. What is it called? Critical reading skills. Uh, it will come naturally to you once you. So basically, I will start with first letting them find the joy in it and secondly, I guess I would teach them the different steps. Like, first of all, let's say it's a story, then what do you analyse it first? Maybe the setting, then you go to the characters, then you go to the lessons, the moral values. So, similar to what we have been taught in school. When you come to analysing literature, I think I will just go through that process.

I: All right, then last question. Anything you would like to say about this experience in studying critical reading on the effects of comprehension of Malaysian poetry?

R: I think that it is critical reading. Like, okay, I'm-I'm like repeating this.

I: It's fine. It's fine. Go.

I: I feel that. It's something that we, um, unintentionally have been doing a lot in our daily life, daily activities. It's just that when it come, when we points it out, I guess only then we reflect and we realize that oh, we have been doing that all this time. And I guess it's something that comes naturally to everyone. I don't know, what was the question again? Okay, what do I what do I want to say about it? Is it this experience?

I: This experience in this study participating.

R: I thought like taking critical reading classes or something, okay. hey, I was like okay, it's fine maybe I should have rephrase it. Okay. Oh, so my experience taking, but in this study,

I: Yes.

R: Okay. Uh, I find- I found I the tracking machine thingy, very fun, So I really enjoyed it but even though my eye tracking was a bit weird. So, but I hope that it's still usable the data because I don't want the data to go to waste like possible. And, uh, I, I do enjoy the process. I guess the interview itself because I feel that you feel, um, I feel that you really listen, um, you-I can feel that you care about the project and you listen when I explain things. So, I yeah, I do find it a pleasure going for this study.