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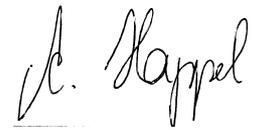
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Wien, am 10. März 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Happel', written in a cursive style.

(Andrea Happel)

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1. Introduction

My own and various other experiences have confirmed that the teaching of poetry is often neglected in the typical Austrian English classroom. If a poem appears in a coursebook, teachers tend to fall back on rather traditional methods where the learners are asked to analyse rhyme patterns and other stylistic features without much learning happening. Consequently, students generally assume that poetry is uninteresting and some might find working with it quite tedious. This problem has already been addressed and discussed by a number of scholars but still no fundamental change seems to have been brought about. That is why I want to advocate the use of poetry in any language classroom because – if taught appropriately – students can gain a lot from it.

The main question addressed in this diploma thesis is how poetry can be taught interactively in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The discussion will show that there are various reasons that speak for the usage of poems in any communicative language lesson and that there are numerous ways of how poems can be successfully implemented in the Austrian classroom.

The paper is divided into two main parts. The first one takes a closer look at the theoretical background of teaching poetry and, therefore, forms an important foundation. The thesis begins by looking at the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom, discussing reasons for it and presenting three main models, the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model. It will then go on with a detailed analysis of the teaching of poetry in the same environment. I will critically examine the question of what poetry actually is and the prejudices against it. I will suggest reasons for the teaching of poems and will look at the different approaches, i.e. the language-based approach, the stylistics approach and the content-based approach. The thesis then moves on to investigate the Austrian English classroom in particular, taking a closer look at the Austrian curriculum for living foreign languages and the Common European Frame of References, on which language teaching is based nowadays. The first part will finally consider the teacher's role with a focus on the interactive, student-centred classroom.

The main aim of the second part of this paper is to design and discuss four detailed lesson plans which focus on working with poetry interactively in the EFL classroom and which are based on the theory discussed in the first part. They are meant to function as a resource for other teachers and educators. I taught two of these lessons, "Working with song lyrics" and "A narrow Fellow in the Grass", in Austrian classes to see how successful they are. First, the design of the lessons as well as their planning will be explained. Next, I will shortly describe the schools in which the two sequences were taught. The rest of the second part is dedicated to the four lessons. For every one the theoretical background will be analysed first and then I will comment on the actual lesson plan in detail. I will also reflect on the actual teaching of the two lessons. While the designed plans are meant to function as a resource for other teachers, it must be noted that they may not be universally applicable. The chosen poems only represent a small percentage of the poetry that could be used for this purpose and the choice may have been influenced by a subjective point of view. The proposed plans can, however, always be adapted to address the learners' individual needs and, therefore, form a good basis for every English poetry lesson.

PART ONE: *Theoretical background*

2. Teaching literature in the EFL classroom

Teaching literature is impossible; that is why it is difficult.
(Northrop Frye)

The teaching of literature has been regarded with varying interest and fluctuating degrees of importance have been ascribed to it within the last century depending on the prevailing language teaching model, such as the grammar-translation model, in which literary texts served as role models, or the functional-notional communicative movement, which put emphasis only on pragmatic communication and, therefore, ignored literature completely. At the beginning of the communicative approach to language teaching, literature was rather seen as being too far removed from reality and daily communication (see Collie and Slater 2). Nevertheless, literature has gained more and more importance throughout recent years. Carter (1) claims that recently the number of publications devoted to the topic of teaching literature in English as a Foreign or Second Language classes has risen dramatically. Nowadays literature has a relatively stable place in language teaching in general and can be seen as an integral part of any EFL or ESL classroom. Still, the reasons for its use may vary. Carter and Long (1) point out that still quite often “the study of certain classic pieces of English literature is considered a *sine qua non* for the truly educated person” and, thus, is justified in itself. Nevertheless, when looking at recent discussions, it can be seen that the role of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom is being completely re-considered from different perspectives and is, hence, undergoing major changes with vital implications for language teaching (see Carter and Long 1).

However, the first fundamental question that must be asked before considering the place of literature in the EFL classroom and its significance is: why teach literature? What exactly are the reasons for teaching literature? Should literature be taught for its own sake or should it be seen as another medium for language learning?

2.1. Why teach literature?

Various scholars have proposed different reasons for the importance of teaching literature in any linguistic classroom. Still, there are often overlaps and occasional repetitions.

One aspect that is discussed in nearly all theoretical works on this topic is language enrichment. Duff and Maley, for instance, claim that, linguistically, “literary texts offer genuine samples of a very wide range of styles, registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty” (6) and, therefore, propose that they should play an important part in language teaching. Lazar (*Literature*, 17-19) agrees with this and states that literary texts encourage language acquisition and expand students’ language awareness. Moreover, they support the readers in memorising individual lexical or syntactical items more easily because of the context they occur in and, consequently, promote language learning in general (see Collie and Slater 4). In addition, Duff and Maley (6) point out that two people reading a literary text rarely come to the same understanding and Carter and McRae (xxiv) agree that ambiguities in comprehension are to be expected. That is why Widdowson (*Talking Shop*) argues that literature provides an excellent basis for activities where students have to draw inferences and discover the underlying assumptions. In addition, different interpretations can be used in an opinion-gap activity where they can be discussed in genuine communication and a solution can be found together. Hedge (281), for example, gives ‘gap’ activities as an example of fluency-based speaking tasks in which a “negotiation of meaning” has to take place in order to fill the gaps and together arrive at a shared understanding.

Furthermore, language learning is strengthened because literature represents valuable material. Carter and McRae (xxiv) suggest that literary texts should be used in the classroom because they are, as well as other texts, also non-literary, such as cookbooks or manuals, authentic and could open up new ways of dealing with various topics. Authentic in this context means that the texts are not designed for the specific purpose of language teaching. As a consequence, literature can expose the students to a genuine use of language transcending time (see Collie and Slater 3).

Referring to this, Duff and Maley also stress that the “‘genuine feel’ of literary texts is a powerful motivator” (6) for the students as the topics dealt with in literature and written about by the author are often also of importance to the learners and they can, thus, easily connect and relate to them. Similarly, Lazar asserts that “[l]iterature exposes students to complex themes and fresh, unexpected uses of language” and, additionally, believes that “[i]f the materials are carefully chosen, students will feel that what they do in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives” (*Literature* 15).

Additionally, Lazar (*Literature*) includes the aspects of ‘access to cultural background’ and ‘education of the whole person’ in her discussion. Collie and Slater agree that literature allows the reader to gain insight into other peoples’ lives and cultures.

It is true of course that the ‘world’ of a novel, play, or short story is a created one, yet it offers a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted. A reader can discover their thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave behind closed doors. (Collie and Slater 4)

Still, when talking about literature providing some access to the culture, it also has to be stressed that the relationship between the text and the real world is complicated and only provides the reader with a glimpse of a foreign culture rather than an accurate reflection of it (see Lazar, *Exploring* 774). Lazar is, therefore, aware that the teacher’s as well as the learners’ response must always be critical, “so that the underlying cultural and ideological assumptions in the texts are not merely accepted and reinforced, but are questioned, evaluated and, if necessary, subverted” (*Literature* 17). Collie and Slater (4) as well as Lazar conclude their lists of reasons for the teaching of literature by stressing that “literature may also have a wider educational function in the classroom in that it can help to stimulate the imagination of our students, to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness” (Lazar, *Literature* 19). This addresses a very important point which should always be considered as a teacher, namely that teaching is not just about instilling knowledge but also, and maybe even more importantly, about supporting the students to develop their own personality.

Carter and Long, establishing their own framework, argue that, independent of the

specific circumstances, place and context of the teaching situation, three main reasons for the teaching of literary texts have been promoted (2). These are the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model, with each of them focusing on another learning objective. These three main models of teaching literature by Carter and Long will be dealt with in more detail in the following section of this paper.

Summarising this discussion, it becomes obvious that a distinction has to be made “between the *study* of literature and the use of literature as a *resource*” (Carter and Long 3). These two different approaches are based on different traditions and, consequently, imply different methodologies. On the one hand, the study of literature refers to analysing a text using a particular set of metalanguage often with a very particular focus. It may aim attention at a specific use of language or try to establish possible connections and references to its cultural background. This approach makes the text per se the target of the examination. It involves a considerable amount of metalanguage, critical concepts, knowledge of conventions and other aspects of literary theory which presupposes a general knowledge of literature (see Maley). On the other hand, literature might be used as a resource for various aspects. As mentioned before, literary texts may be a strong resource for motivation or for personal development and growth (see Carter and Long 3). Literature can, additionally, serve as a vital linguistic resource with a lot of possible uses to encourage language acquisition and to expand students’ language awareness. This approach, as Carter and McRae point out, is based on “the fact that literature is language in use and can therefore be exploited for language-learning purposes” (xx). Literature can, thus, be seen as “a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching” (Carter and Long 4). However, Carter and Long (4) also point out that “[o]ne potential disadvantage of the *study* of literature is that it can hinder the use of literature as a resource”, especially if the course is very information-based and focuses only on the accumulation of facts, such as dates, authors and other theoretical background knowledge. This fact should always be kept in mind when using literary texts in the classroom, and a knowledge of literature should be supported in the sense that the study of literature is associated with pleasure and

enjoyment (see Carter and Long 4). Consequently, both approaches, the study of literature as well as the use of literature as a resource, have their value and their advantages. The focus chosen for using literature in the EFL classroom might, however, also influence the teaching methods and activities used. This distinction and its implications must be considered in the second part of this paper where lessons for teaching poetry will be designed.

2.2. Main models of teaching literature

In following the trend of trying to define the relationship between literature and teaching (see Collie and Slater, Duff and Maley, Lazar, *Literature*, Parkinson and Reid Thomas), Carter and Long (2) establish their own framework and propose that there are three main reasons for the teaching of literature in the classroom with each of them focusing on particular learning objectives. They differentiate between the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model of literature teaching. These three models will be explained in more detail in the following sections. Still, Carter and Long (2) stress that when looking at the distinction it should always be born in mind that they are not mutually exclusive and that overlaps can occur. They suggest that the models should, thus, rather be viewed as tendencies.

2.2.1. The cultural model

The cultural model highlights the importance of looking at and understanding the background of a literary text. Basically, teaching literature according to this model focuses on studying the text in order to “enable students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space and to come to perceive tradition of thought, feeling, and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows” (Carter and Long 2). In this model, literature is perceived as a central aspect of the study and teaching of the humanities and, thus, also of language teaching classes. Still, they (8) add that this approach represents a teacher-centred not an interactive pedagogic mode, which puts emphasis on the close analysis of the text as a product. It is usually seen as a model by which

literature is studied (see Carter and Long 8). Because of these reasons the cultural model is seen as not adequate to the focus of this diploma thesis as it does not follow an interactive, learner-centred approach to teaching.

2.2.2. The language model

What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.
(Alexander Pope)

In contrast to the cultural model, the language model does not concentrate on the study of the text but sees it rather as an instrument through which language can be learned. It is, therefore, usually related to a more language-based approach (see Carter and Long 8) and uses literature as a valuable resource to encourage language acquisition and to expand students' language awareness. However, as Carter and Long point out, this model should not be misunderstood as limiting literature to "an instrument for use in connection with the teaching of specific vocabulary or structures or for language manipulation" (2). In other words, literary texts should not just be used as a means for language teaching practises and, consequently, replace all engagement with the text per se. Otherwise all pleasure and motivation a poem or story might have provided would be spoilt (see Carter and Long 2).

Carter and Long claim that this model aims at looking at a text "with particular attention to the way language is used" (9). This model might rather be understood as using literature so that the students get acquainted with 'real', authentic language and, moreover, "to put [them] in touch with some of the more subtle and varied creative uses of the language" (Carter and Long 2). Language-based approaches, in general, are learner-centred and activity-based and can, thus, be easily integrated into the communicative classroom. In addition, they (2) argue that such language-centred literature teaching approaches support the students in finding their own ways of understanding a text by providing them with the right instruments. For this reason, it is important to teach the students to interpret the relations between the linguistic forms of a text and their literary meanings (see Carter and Long 9).

2.2.3. The personal growth model

The personal growth model is also, like the language model, student-centred with the main aim to achieve students' engagement with their reading exercises and "to motivate [them] to read by relating the themes and topics depicted in a literary text to his or her personal experience" (Carter and Long 9). According to Lazar, this "helps students to become more actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in learning English" (*Literature* 24). To achieve this, the selection of the literary texts plays a crucial role. Carter and Long (3) assert that the teacher is responsible for choosing texts which deal with topics the students can understand, comprehend and respond to. This will contribute to making the reading and teaching of literature a meaningful and unforgettable experience for the students.

In this approach, literature is again seen as a resource. The personal growth model is anti-analytic and not based on the study of information and the text. There is also "a greater impulse to encourage students to *evaluate* what they read so that they learn to distinguish for themselves great literature from less successful examples" (Carter and Long 9). Helping the students to read literary texts more effectively additionally contributes to the education of the whole person (see Lazar, *Literature* 19-20).

Carter and Long (3) raise an important point when they claim that the engagement that is promoted in the personal growth model cannot be measured in terms of a test or an examination. Quite on the contrary, they stress that teaching literature following this model is successful if the learners derive an enjoyment and enhance their love for literature reaching far beyond the classroom into their daily lives (3).

3. Teaching poetry in the EFL classroom

*Almost anything one says about [poetry] is as true and important as anything else that anyone else has said.
(Dylan Thomas)*

It is a fact that poetry is often neglected in the English as a Foreign Language classroom and if it occurs, Basler claims, it is still “the most poorly taught matter in the entire realm of educational experience” (11). Maley and Duff agree with this and point out that poetry is often not regarded “as ‘proper’ material for foreign language learning” (6). According to L. Thompson (xi), this is not only true for EFL or ESL classes but for the language curriculum in general. Even if poetry is taught in school, then usually in the traditional ways, which means rather teacher-centred, analytical and not interactive. Thus, the studying of literature is often made a scientific discipline (see Basler 12). This might be because teachers are uncertain about how to approach poetry and, consequently, fall back on how they learned it in school. The teachers, then, might start to overwhelm the students with a flow of information, for example about the author’s biography or about the historical background of the text (see Collie and Slater 7). Greenway and Greenway believe that the teachers’ own education “has made poetry a formidable discipline, not an enjoyable form of self-expression” (142). True (42) agrees with this claim that some educators teach poetry the way they were taught but feels that this is very regrettable. VK and Savaedi are also of the opinion that a critical, interactive approach to poetry “is rarely encouraged in ELT classes since instructors themselves had been taught poetry using the traditional approach where students just listen to the teachers” (1919). This is a very important but problematic point and although these facts have been known for some time not much has changed so far. Therefore, it has to be addressed more directly, and the use of new, student-centred and interactive methods has to be promoted even more.

How this situation can be improved will be discussed in the following sections of this paper. However, before an attempt to find a solution can be made, some other aspects have to be considered. Thus, at first the crucial but also difficult question “What is poetry” will be looked at critically and various theories will be examined.

Then, some prejudices against the value of teaching poetry in school will be investigated. Possible solutions will be suggested and alternative methods will be explored. After the clarification of these prerequisites, the subject of why poetry should be taught will be addressed. Finally, as part of trying to answer this question, the three approaches to teaching poetry, the language-based approach, the stylistics approach and the content-based approach, will be studied as this is the framework that will be adopted for the designed lessons in Part Two of this thesis.

3.1. What is poetry?

First, and in order to set the prerequisites for teaching it, the question of what poetry actually is has to be examined in more detail. Here are some dictionary definitions of the word 'poem':

a piece of writing in which the words are arranged in separate lines, often ending in rhyme, and are chosen for their sound and for the images and ideas they suggest
(Cambridge Dictionary)

a composition in verse, usually characterized by concentrated and heightened language in which words are chosen for their sound and suggestive power as well as for their sense, and using such techniques as metre, rhyme, and alliteration
(Collins Dictionary)

a piece of writing that expresses emotions, experiences, and ideas, especially in short lines using words that rhyme (=end with the same sound)
(Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English)

a piece of writing that usually has figurative language and that is written in separate lines that often have a repeated rhythm and sometimes rhyme
(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

a piece of writing in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by particular attention to diction (sometimes involving rhyme), rhythm, and imagery
(Oxford Dictionary of English)

When analysing these various descriptions it can be seen that they all have in common that the choice of language is of importance and that the words, usually rhyming, are chosen for their sound. Thus, typically a special kind of language is used, a "language which draws attention to itself" (Eagleton 41). In addition, the form of poems, namely that they are commonly written in short, separate lines, is

mentioned. Eagleton (25) also defined a poem as “a fictional, verbally inventive moral statement in which it is the author [...] who decides where the lines should end”, that is, the poet creates meaning by consciously breaking up a text into lines. Williams (*Reading 2*) agrees that the typical shape and a careful construction of the words is what is usually expected.

Still, all these dictionary definitions are very technical compared to what some poets say about their work of art, for example:

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.
(William Wordsworth)

Let us understand by poetry all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form, as distinct from its matter.
(Walter Pater)

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion.
(T. S. Eliot)

In these conceptions of poetry there is obviously a clearer focus on the meaning and the effect of a poem on the author. Eagleton (32) also states that “[a] poem is a statement released into the public world for us to make of it what we may”, therefore stressing the strong relation between the text and the reader.

Nevertheless, if these definitions are so completely different from each other, then, of course, the question of how poetry can really be defined again imposes itself on the reader. Is it a text that can be analysed by looking at aspects such as stress, rhythm and metre? It is simply the breaking up of a prose text into lines on a page? Or should all these formal aspects be completely disregarded and should the focus instead be shifted to the level of meaning and effect?

In trying to come up with some solution, two poems, which will also be of importance in the second part of this thesis, will be examined more closely. The first one is the lyrical poem “I wandered lonely as a cloud”, also simply known as “Daffodils”, by William Wordsworth:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(quoted in Hutchinson 187)

This is a typical example of what is usually considered to be the form of a poem. “I wandered lonely as a cloud” is neatly divided into four stanzas, each consisting of six lines. All of the stanzas follow a regular rhyming pattern, which is ABABCC and so on. Each line is in iambic tetrameter. Consequently, it could be said that this text by William Wordsworth fulfils all the formal criteria to be called a poem.

However, what can be said about the following modernist poem, “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams:

This is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably

saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

(quoted in C. Williams 354)

When looking at the poem for the first time the reader may notice that the text is split up into separate lines but they seem to be completely random. The words at the end of the lines do not rhyme and the poem does not employ any metre. Thus, it can be supposed that the meaning could also be expressed in a form like this:

This is just to say that I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox and which you were probably saving for breakfast. Forgive me, they were delicious, so sweet and so cold.

Eagleton (27) remarks that “there is something wryly amusing about the poem’s downrightness” because the form appears to tell the reader that this is actually a poem and not a prose text although it is written alluding to the meaning of a message, which might be found somewhere near the fridge by the expected addressee. Yet, the poem deviates from all the other formal aspects mentioned before. Williams points out that “the major trend in poetry since the Romantics, [sic] has been to challenge the dominance of formal rules of representation” (*Reading* 58). As a result, the so-called ‘free verse’ followed, which can take on different forms of appearance. The rhyme and metre are chosen by the poets themselves and do not adhere to prescribed rules or conventions, which, according to Williams (*Reading* 63), also makes it more difficult to write well.

These two examples have shown that defining poetry is not a straightforward task. All the ‘typical’ characteristics of poetry that could be found in Wordsworth’s poem, such as rhyme and metre, cannot be applied to William’s work and can, therefore, not be a reliable indicator. Hence, Gillespie seems reasonable in saying that “poetry—to be poetry—doesn’t necessarily have to rhyme or have minced-up lines” (40). In other words, those features that are quite often seen as being the fundamental features of a poem do not necessarily have to be present for a text to be poetry. Still, a reader is

usually able to distinguish poetry from prose texts and Gillespie stresses that “this recognition is the first important poetic act” (40). Consequently, by trying to define poetry a close analysis of the text has to be carried out and this can already lead to interesting findings.

This discussion has shown that although many researchers and poets themselves have tried to come up with a solution to the question of what poetry is, it is very difficult to find a valid definition that takes into account the various discussed factors. Williams (*Reading* 4) attempts to sum it up into two categories, namely formal presentation and subject of the verse. Therefore, it can be said that, on the one hand, regarding the formal aspects the layout of a text is important in order to be recognised as a poem but, on the other hand, that it is also about the topic or, maybe even more importantly, about the meaning and effect of the writing. As Allen Ginsberg puts it, poetry is “a rhythmic articulation of feeling” (qtd. in True 43).

3.2. Prejudices against teaching poetry

Nevertheless, many teachers reject poetry because of deep-rooted prejudices against poetry and expected difficulties that come with it. True, drawing on his experience of working with English teachers over twenty-five years, even goes as far as to say that “some teachers of language and literature [...] are actually afraid of poetry” (42). The time factor has to be considered and Widdowson asserts that teaching poetry “cannot be equated with cost-effectiveness” (*Practical* 74) as other things may be of greater importance in the EFL classroom and reading poems might be only seen as a waste of lessons.

As already mentioned, poems are usually seen as being too difficult by teachers as well as learners. Buchbinder argues that this “presupposition of difficulty arises from [a] combination of assumptions: first that the language of poetry is itself difficult, and, second, that there is concealed somewhere in this difficult language a ‘message’ that is invisible to the naked eye” (1). Williams agrees that “[t]he meaning of most poetry is often thought to be, by definition, obscure or difficult” (*Reading* 3). Steiner divides

the discussed problems into four categories and refers to them as contingent, modal, tactical and ontological difficulties (see 27-47). This categorisation will not be further discussed here as it does not seem to fit the focus of this diploma thesis. Fleming (38) also stresses that “the lexical and syntactical difficulties, the lack of knowledge of the allusions within a text or the absence of certain historical or contextual details” may complicate the analysis and work with poems.

To sum up, various areas of difficulty can be identified, namely “remoteness”, “difficult and odd language”, “lack of functional authenticity”, “imbalance of knowledge and [...] power between teacher and learner” as well as the lack of “sequencing” (Parkinson and Reid Thomas 11-13). These problematic aspects will be explained in more detail in the following.

First, Parkinson and Reid Thomas point out that “texts can be remote from learners in all sorts of ways – historically, geographically [and] socially” (11). In other words, the students do not have the needed experience and understanding of the world to be able to connect to the written passages. As a consequence, they might get demotivated as they cannot see any direct connection to their lives.

As a second argument they mention the complex and rather uncommon language of literary texts and especially poetry (see Parkinson and Reid Thomas 12). Moreover, they claim that “to interpret the text, readers not only need to work out the ‘meaning’, but [they need] to recognise that this is not the normal way of expressing it” (12). This deviant and unusual use of language as well as the common occurrence of metaphors and other stylistic devices appear to be some of the major reasons why poems are not favourably taught in classrooms (see Ainy). Due to its complexity the language of poetry may, therefore, not contribute to the general aim of EFL classes of teaching grammar and basic understanding (McKay 529). Widdowson argues that there is little place for poetry in English as a Foreign Language classes as poetry “has a way of exploiting resources in a language which have not been codified as correct usage. It is therefore misleading as a model [...] and] it has no place in an approach to teaching that insists on the gradual accumulation of correct linguistic forms” (*Explorations* 162). Besides, Hill (10) believes that poems are linguistically

inadequate. According to her, their language is not relevant to the students' needs as it is "unlikely to be used in everyday life and not related to the language which students [...] finally produce" (11). That is, the studying of poetry will not result in any language improvement for communicative purposes.

The third area of difficulty in teaching poetry Parkinson and Reid Thomas (12) identify is the "lack of functional authenticity", which also links back to the point discussed earlier, that literary texts do not correspond to the students' linguistic needs. They indicate that this, then, is an especially important point to consider when following a communicative approach of language teaching in which the main emphasis is promoting 'real life' language use (12). McKay (529) suggests that the study of poems does probably not help the learners to reach their occupational goals.

As a fourth argument Parkinson and Reid Thomas mention the "imbalance of knowledge as well as the imbalance of power between the teacher and the learners" (12). They claim that, as the learners have relatively none of both, "the teacher feels almost forced into 'lecture mode'" (12).

The fifth problem area Parkinson and Reid Thomas address is that in reading poetry there is no sequencing. In other words, there is no continual progress of difficulty which gradually prepares the students for more complicated texts (see Parkinson and Reid Thomas 12-13).

Nevertheless, Parkinson and Reid emphasise that this list of difficulties should be considered with some reservation. They question the concept of problem per se and make further distinctions.

The very concept of problem is, however, itself problematic, ambiguous and elusive. The main type of ambiguity is perhaps that between perceived and actual problems. These are loaded labels and some might prefer to distinguish between problems as perceived by the learner, by the teacher, by an observer or by various authorities. [...] Another obvious difference is between short-term problems ('what does this word mean?'), medium-term ('how am I going to cope with this novel?') and long-term ('how am I going to become a good literature student?'). (11)

Thus, some of the discussed points may be of more importance to the teacher while

others rather focus on the learners. This can have considerable consequences in teaching as the teachers do not only have to encounter and resolve the problems they are faced with but should also acknowledge the difficulties the students experience. Furthermore, the various doubts students might feel when working with literary texts, i.e. short-term, medium-term and long-term, should be addressed and dispelled.

While all these prejudices and difficulties should not be neglected they also cannot lead to a complete rejection of poetry in the EFL classroom. Rather than focusing on these difficulties that might occur, methods should be used that help students to overcome these problems and, thus, get to enjoy poetry.

Maley and Moulding stress that “[p]oetry must be seen both by learners and teachers as something concrete, useful and relevant” (136). The students should be led to questioning their deep-rooted beliefs and poetry per se has to be demystified. The first task is to “show that poetry is both interesting and ‘non-poetic’ by offering the students a sample of approachable poems” (Maley and Duff 15). At the beginning, learners should be confronted with verses which communicate to them (see Greenberg Lott 66). Thus, the first lesson designed in the second part of this thesis is based on working with song lyrics to gradually introduce the students to poetry by using something they know and can connect to. Additionally, it is important that the chosen poems deal with topics the learners can understand and relate to.

The second aspect that has to be considered if teaching poetry is to become more interesting for the teacher as well as the learners is that it should not be ‘taught’ (see Greenberg Lott 66). That is, the lessons should not be teacher-centred with the students only being lectured. Hansen (24) claims that teachers should turn away from, as he calls it, “the role of Keepers of the Meaning” and let the learners experience poetry themselves. Hence, it is suggested that “a methodology that demands the students’ involvement, reflection and output” (VK and Savaedi 1921) is used. Various student-centred classroom procedures should be adopted, such as pair and group work, allowing the learners to study the texts themselves (see Collie and Slater 8). In using these interactive methods the students are able to exchange

and develop their ideas through conversation with each other getting thus a better understanding of the poem (see Moore 45). Teaching poetry interactively is not about explaining, for example, the meaning of a poem, but promotes a deep examination of the verse and asks the students to really work with it. In requesting them to react to the lines the students will find out how much they actually know and can say about them (see Maley and Duff 70). Student-centred, interactive procedures turn the classroom into an open-minded, participatory space where students are supported in voicing their opinions freely and, consequently, unconsciously teach themselves and one another (see Hansen 26). This approach is also promoted in this thesis and, furthermore, forms the basis for the designed lessons in Part Two.

3.3. Why teach poetry?

What's the point of teaching poetry?
(Henry G. Widdowson)

After discussing the various difficulties that the teaching of poetry might entail and subsequently trying to find some possible solutions, the question that arises is, of course: why teach poetry? In this section it will be argued that there are a number of reasons why poetry should be taught in EFL classroom and, generally speaking, in all language classrooms.

Before looking at some specific reasons, it has to be pointed out that many of the aspects discussed previously that speak in favour of the teaching of literature in general are also applicable when it comes to teaching poetry. Poems are, for example, authentic material (see Carter and McRae xxiv), which can be used for 'gap' activities or other fluency-based speaking tasks. Moreover, they encourage the learners' examination of the words and phrases used and, thus, assist language acquisition. In addition, they allow the reader to catch a glimpse of the cultural background in which they were written. So why teach poetry?

Many scholars argue that the teaching of poetry is important because a language classroom should not just be seen as a place of instruction but also as space for

education. Pendleton (314), for instance, argues that the main reason for using poetry should be for the intention of developing the personality of the students. Widdowson, who is a dedicated supporter of using literature and especially poetry in any class, stresses:

There is more to life than safe investment of effort. Language learning is surely not simply a part of *training*, an element in actuarial estimates and the calculation of manpower needs. Surely, we might murmur wistfully, it should also have something to do with *education* as well? (Widdowson, *Explorations* 161)

In other words, the language classroom should not just be about the students being taught and trained but also about educating and helping them to develop their personality. This, then, can be done through the use of poetry that deals with topics the learners can relate to. Pendleton even goes as far as saying that “[t]he teaching of poetry is [...] English instruction on its highest level” (313) because it evokes feelings and sensation.

The first quite obvious advantage of poetry is that of length (see Ainy, Collie and Slater 226, Spiro 8). Poems are usually short and, therefore, one lesson is probably enough to finish working on one. Collie and Slater claim that “[t]he fact that an entire work of literature can be presented within one or two classroom lessons is extremely rewarding and motivating for [...] students” (14). When the right poems are chosen and student-centred, interactive methods are used poetry can offer a source of great enjoyment and satisfaction for students as well as teachers (see Collie and Slater 226). Additionally, teachers can choose from a great number of appropriate poems to find those that are suitable for the learners in terms of length and difficulty. All in all, poetry is an authentic, not amended medium representing the genuine communicative purpose the poet wants to achieve (see Breen 62).

Frye summarises another benefit of the teaching of poetry in the following way: “So you may ask what is the use of studying the world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights or wrongs and all arguments are equally good. One of the most obvious uses, I think, is its encouragement of tolerance” (*Imagination* 77). In other words, when reading a poem two people will hardly ever come to the same interpretation. Poetry has, as

Widdowson emphasises, “the potentiality, the *poetentiality*, so to speak, to promote diversity which can work to the advantage of both the individual and the social self” (*Practical* 78). Therefore, the students can learn to accept or tolerate other opinions and ways of looking at a certain text. Poetry makes it possible to accept every personal judgement as valid and, moreover, to exchange these various ideas with the others, thus, learning from one another (see Ainy).

Another point that is of importance is that, when the themes of poetry are well chosen, students can easily relate to them. Poems very often explore topics of universal interest everybody can relate to whatever the cultural background may be (see Collie and Slater 226). The subjects discussed are interesting as well as important and can, therefore, act as an effective stimulus which encourages the learners’ own reflective thinking and, as a consequence, has the potential to lead to intense discussions (see Maley and Moulding 1 and 135).

As a result, poems can provoke strong reactions from the readers (see Collie and Slater 226) and can considerably improve the students’ motivation. Hess argues that poetry seems to bring out emotions and that “[e]ntering a literary text, under the guidance of appropriate teaching, brings about the kind of participation almost no other text can produce” (20). Working with poems in the classroom can lead to increased participation because the students can connect to the verse emotionally. Besides, Ainy points out that, as readers, their enjoyment might be enhanced when they become the new creators of meaning.

The teaching of poetry in the EFL classroom offers one final important advantage as, contrarily to McKay’s (529) and Hill’s (10) belief, it may contribute significantly to the students’ language development. For instance, Maley and Duff emphasise that “[p]oetry offers a rich resource for input to language learning” (7). That may be because some poetry consciously uses language to convey an intended message. It is unique in the sense that it experiments with words to create new meaning out of them (see Jensen 32). Poetry can, for example, be used for controlled language practise by analysing repetition and pattern (see Spiro 7) or, more generally, by analysing the language closely and, hence, decipher the meaning of the text (see

Lazar, *Exploring* 775). Various poems are suited for helping the students to get more familiar with the typical speech rhythm of English (see Maley and Moulding 1). Still, Maley and Duff add that the teaching of poetry should not be used “as an end in itself [...] but as one part of a process” (14) in which the students encounter possible difficulties, overcome these obstacles and learn from this experience of coping with the text. Poetry can, then, help to increase all of the learners’ language skills because it extends their knowledge by using special vocabulary and complex sentence structures (see Povey 187). Lazar agrees that if the teachers support their students by guiding them through linguistic problems they might encounter, poems can serve to enhance their general language awareness (*Exploring* 774). She states that “[s]tudents will become aware not only of how specific language items function but of more generalisable linguistic principles” (*Exploring* 774). Hess is also of the opinion that poetry is a good medium for language practice and suggests a nine-step process: trigger, vocabulary preview, bridge, listen, react, and share, language, picture, more language, meaning and spin-off (21-25). She describes all of them in more detail demonstrating how they should be applied to produce the best output and, therefore, offers a possibly practical guideline. Hess (20) claims that this procedure works well with any kind of poem and various levels.

All these features prove that there are various reasons why poetry should be taught in school. There are many factors which it addresses and, hence, dealing with poems in the English as a Foreign or Second Language classroom can help with cultural as well as language enrichment and can increase literary enjoyment and personal involvement. It was shown that the emotional content of poetry can stimulate the interest and thereby the motivation of the learners which ensures that if poetry is taught using student-centred, interactive methods it will enhance the language learning in various aspects. Depending on the approach that is being adopted poetry can be used as a way of improving the students’ language competence, their historical knowledge or of further developing their personality.

3.4. Approaches to teaching poetry

There are different approaches to the teaching of poetry and literature in general.¹ In this thesis the focus is on the framework developed by Lazar (*Literature* 22-47), which includes a close analysis of the language and the content-based as well as the stylistics approach.² These methods differ in their ways of analysing the text focusing on various aspects. Still, as with the main models of teaching literature there may be overlaps and similarities.

When using these approaches in the EFL/ESL classroom teachers have to consider that they all have their advantages as well as disadvantages. It is, therefore, best to vary and combine them. When teaching poetry the focus should not be on one of the approaches but it is suggested to use them appropriately, depending on the chosen poem and the main aim of the lesson. The lessons designed in the second part of this thesis employ a variety of methods based on these approaches, which form a vital theoretical foundation for the practical implementation.

3.4.1. The language-based approach

When teaching a poem following the language-based approach the main focus is on, as the name already suggests, the language. As Lazar explains, “detailed analysis of the language of the literary text will help students to make meaningful interpretations or informed evaluations of it” (*Literature* 23). In doing this the students simultaneously increase their language competence. The texts are usually selected because they represent particular linguistic features that the teacher wants to demonstrate (see Lazar, *Literature* 23). More generally speaking, they are chosen to strengthen the learners’ interpretive and inferencing skills based on making meaning out of the words and phrases used (see Carter 3). Through the close study of a poem’s language the students, thus, explore its meaning. Therefore, the main aim of the language-based approach is “to involve students with a text, to develop their perceptions of it and to help them explore and express those perceptions” (Carter

1 See, for example, section 2 of this paper

2 The personal enrichment approach will not be discussed as it was already examined in close detail as a main model for teaching literature in section 2.1.3 of this thesis.

and Long 8). The importance of using this approach in EFL or ESL classrooms is stressed by many scholars because it integrates language and literature and helps them in improving their knowledge of English (see Carter and Long 8, Lazar, *Literature* 27). Hence, poems are seen as a resource for language practise.

Language-based approaches are usually student-centred and activity-based, promoting the use of group and pair-work activities. Thus, they support an interactive way of teaching poetry. Lazar states that this method aids students in how to approach a poem because they “are helped to develop a response to literature through examining the linguistic evidence in the text [... and] are provided with analytical tools with which to reach their own interpretations” (*Literature* 25). In closely analysing a text following provided guidelines, the learners are encouraged to use and possibly also question their linguistic knowledge when facing an obstacle. The use of pair and group-work can, then, help them to overcome these problems together.

However, Lazar (*Literature* 25) also points out some possible disadvantages of the language-based approach. She remarks that “[i]f applied too rigidly, so that analysis of the text is undertaken in purely linguistic terms with little chance for personal interpretation, this approach could become very mechanical and demotivating” (*Literature* 25). Carter and Long (8) are also of the opinion that poems, although they are excellent material for language teaching, should not just be seen as a linguistic resource and that their emotional power should not be neglected. Otherwise the students might easily lose the pleasure in working with poetry (see Carter and Long 8). In addition, this approach appears to lack the integration of the text’s historical, social or political background which might contribute to the learners’ better understanding in offering relevant cultural knowledge (see Lazar, *Literature* 25).

Adopting the language-based approach in the EFL/ESL classroom implies applying methods which are usually employed in a language teaching classroom to the teaching of literature and poetry. As a consequence, activities such as prediction exercises, cloze exercises, active comprehension tasks and role plays are used for working with the text (see Carter 3, Carter and Long 7-8).

Lazar provides some examples for language-based activities; one is presented here for better understanding:

Students are given three very short and simple poems in English, but without their titles. They are also given a list of six titles – three genuine and three invented. After reading the poems, they have to decide which title is most appropriate for each poem. (*Literature* 29)

Similar language-based activities are used in the lessons designed in the Part Two of this thesis.

3.4.2. The stylistics approach

The modern study of style, i.e. stylistics, has its roots in classical rhetoric: the ancient art of persuasive speech, which has always had a close affinity with literature, probably because it was regarded as a persuasive discourse, too. As is pointed out in this text, classical rhetoric was prescriptive in that it provided guidance as to how to be persuasive, whereas modern stylistics is descriptive in that it seeks to point out the linguistic features that can be associated with particular effects. (Hough 1-4)

To put it simply, the stylistics approach, which is based on classical rhetoric, closely focuses on the language used in a text and its significance. It can be defined as “the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation” (Widdowson, *Stylistics* 3). Stylistics is interested in the examination of style (see Verdonk 3) which entails “the analysis of distinctive linguistic expression and the description of its purpose and effect” (Verdonk 121). This means that any interpretation made about the text must be based on the linguistic constructs. The stylistics approach stresses the “close study of the linguistic features of a text in order to arrive at an understanding of how the meanings [...] are transmitted” (Lazar, *Literature* 27). It is not the final interpretation that is of importance but rather the process of making meaning out of the words and of investigating the linguistic features (see Widdowson, *Practical* xiv). Consequently, the stylistics approach serves as a way of improving the students’ language awareness as well as their interpretive skills (see Carter 4). Widdowson (*Stylistics* 116) even claims that stylistics basically fulfils a pedagogic purpose because it enables the students to discover how language works and helps them in interpreting a text by providing them with analytical tools. To summarise, the stylistics

approach has two main objectives: firstly, to help students in making valid interpretations of a text and, secondly, to further increase the learners' linguistic knowledge (see Lazar, *Literature* 31). It combines the teaching of a closer study of poetry with additional language practise.

The stylistics approach is especially important when analysing poetry because the essence of poems is the way in which language is used. Therefore, everything in a verse is of importance and contributes to its meaning, for instance phonology, lexis and grammar. These aspects should be examined closely as they constitute the ground for any interpretation (see Widdowson, *Practical* 47).

One of the advantages of stylistics is that it offers the learners a quite straightforward method of examining a poem, it is a clear step-by-step process which they can follow, and, thus, helps them to become more confident in analysing the language (see Carter 4-6). Carter stresses that the process is retrievable in the sense that "it shows how you reach or begin to reach an interpretation" (5). In other words, the students can explain how they got to their interpretation step-by-step. Furthermore, according to Lazar, the stylistics approach "has the advantage of illustrating how particular linguistic forms function to convey specific messages" (*Literature* 32). It does not only support students in using their existing knowledge of English but also helps them to improve their language skills.

However, Carter (6) remarks that the stylistics approach, because it presupposes a quite high level of linguistic knowledge, is better suited for more advanced classes. Instead he suggests that the language-based approach can form a basis and stylistics can develop out of it later on. Moreover, he claims that language cannot be neutral. Stylistics is a highly linguistic approach and tends to view language as a neutral system neglecting ideologies and socio-cultural contexts (see Carter 6). He criticises the belief that a text can only have one central meaning which every reader can grasp if analysing the language in detail. He asserts that there cannot be such objectivity in interpretation. Finally, as already mentioned, the stylistics approach completely disregards the historical background of the text and, thus, loses a lot of information (see Carter 7).

Nevertheless, depending on the focus of the lesson, the stylistics approach may be used in the EFL or ESL classroom. Widdowson suggests to use “activities which will engage students with poetic texts and draw their attention to the possible significance of particular linguistic features as conditions on interpretation” (*Practical* 90). That is, in using student-centred, interactive tasks the learners can explore the words of a verse together, negotiate when they are of different opinions and, consequently, learn to value the importance of how language is used to create meaning.

3.4.3. The content-based approach

In contrast to the previously discussed approaches, which are both concerned with linguistics and the language of a poem although their foci are different, the content-based approach focuses on the literary character of the given text by looking closely at its meaning and background. It is interested, for example, in examining “the history and characteristics of literary movements; the social, political and historical background to a text; the biography of the author and its relevance to his or her writings” (Lazar, *Literature* 35) and other similar aspects, which can be interesting to apply when teaching poetry. Parkinson and Reid Thomas (31) believe that this approach is valuable because it widens the students’ cultural horizons by exploring the poem. It is suggested that this is the most traditional approach, which is also commonly used in higher education, such as in university courses. The amount of background information the learners’ are confronted with depends on various factors. Attention could be paid, for instance, to biographical information about the author, distinctive features of the author’s style or the historical, political and social background of the text (see Lazar, *Literature* 38). Therefore, when designing the activities and tasks, the teacher should consider which information will help the learners in understanding the poem and which might be overwhelming for them.

A clear advantage of the content-based approach is that the students do not only analyse a verse but also improve their general knowledge, it is, therefore, a “[g]enuinely educational approach in that understanding of texts is enhanced by situating them within their literary and historical contexts” (Lazar, *Literature* 25). It is

very teacher-centred and relies heavily on the teacher for imparting the necessary information to the students. As a consequence, the learners cannot work on a text independently, which also leads to reduced participation. This approach may be more appropriate for a higher level because understanding of the language is presupposed because the focus lies on the content only (see Lazar, *Literature* 25).

4. The Austrian English classroom

So far the teaching of literature and especially poetry in the English as a Foreign or Second Language classroom and its advantages as well as common prejudices have been discussed. Two different frameworks, one focusing on teaching literature generally and the other specifically on poetry, have been introduced and critically analysed. In this section of the thesis the focus will be particularly on the Austrian English classroom in secondary education, in which English is taught as a foreign language. Therefore, the Austrian Curriculum for living foreign languages for lower secondary education, “*Lebende Fremdsprache (Erste, Zweite) AHS-Unterstufe*” (2006), as well as for higher secondary education, “*Lebende Fremdsprache (Erste, Zweite) AHS-Oberstufe*” (2004), and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) published in 2001, on which the curriculum – and English teaching in general – is based, will be explained in the following.

4.1. The Austrian curriculum for living foreign languages

In Austria, pupils usually officially start learning English at the end of primary school, when they are approximately nine years old. When they move on to lower secondary education, it is generally the first living foreign language they study. It is, hence, referred to as “*erste lebende Fremdsprache*” in the Austrian curriculum (see BMUKK, *Unterstufe* and BMUKK, *Oberstufe*). The detailed description of English learning according to the CEFR starts in the first form of lower secondary, which is why it is often seen as the starting point although learning has already taken place before.

In higher secondary education, there are three main education and teaching objectives (see BMUKK, *Oberstufe* 1), which are

- *Handlungsorientierte Fremdsprachenkompetenz*, where the main focus is on the four competences *Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing* and the students being able to apply their knowledge of the language appropriately in various communicative situations. This also includes social competences in multicultural surroundings.

- *Interkulturelle Kompetenz*, which means that by using intercultural topics the students are to be sensitised for the language diversity in Europe and the world and to deepen their understanding about other cultures and lifestyles.
- *Kompetenz zum lebensbegleitenden autonomen Sprachenlernen*. The foreign language class is meant to convey a wide range of learning strategies to the students for their lifelong, independent learning. Opportunities of self-evaluation are of central importance.

The teaching of languages in the Austrian classroom is based on general didactic principles (see BMUKK, *Oberstufe 2-4*).

- *Kommunikative Sprachkompetenz als übergeordnetes Lernziel*
- *Gleiche Gewichtung der Fertigkeitsbereiche*
- *Berücksichtigung der Lernaltersprache*
- *Zielsprache als Unterrichtssprache*
- *Reflektierender Sprachenvergleich*
- *Vielfalt von Lehrmethoden, Arbeitsformen und Lernstrategien*
- *Vertrautheit mit Lehrmaterialien, Nachschlagwerken und Hilfsmitteln*
- *Einbindung authentischer Begegnungen*
- *Fächerübergreifende Aktivitäten*
- *Erwerb linguistischer Kompetenzen*
- *Erwerb pragmatischer Kompetenzen*
- *Erwerb soziolinguistischer Kompetenzen*
- *Vielfältige Kommunikationssituationen*
- *Vielfältige Themenbereiche und Textsorten*
- *Länder und Kulturen*
- *Leistungsfeststellung*

The Austrian curriculum for living foreign languages in higher secondary education, which typically means from the students' fifth year of learning English to their eighth, includes some points that support the teaching of poetry in the EFL classroom. First and foremost it supports the students in improving their language knowledge. This already advocates the use of poetry. Lazar, for example, stresses that "the inclusion of literature in the language syllabus [is justified] since it fulfils students' main aim – to improve their knowledge of the language" (*Literature* 25). Besides, in the point

“*Vielfältige Themenbereiche und Textsorten*” the importance of using various text forms for dealing with different topics is stressed. Poems are listed as one of these forms:

Die verschiedenen Themenbereiche sind durch möglichst vielfältige Textsorten zu erschließen (wie zB Sachverhaltsdarstellungen, Analysen, Stellungnahmen, Anweisungen, Zusammenfassungen, Berichte, Beschreibungen, Kommentare, Reflexionen, Geschichten, Dialoge, Briefe, E-Mails, Märchen, Lieder, Gedichte). (BMUKK, *Oberstufe 4*)

In addition, it is pointed out that in the course of a humanistic oriented general education literary works should be taught for their own value: “Im Sinne einer humanistisch orientierten Allgemeinbildung ist bei der thematischen Auswahl fremdsprachiger Texte auch literarischen Werken ein entsprechender Stellenwert einzuräumen” (BMUKK, *Oberstufe 4*). The significance of the use of authentic material is emphasised (see BMUKK, *Oberstufe 2*) and poems clearly meet this requirement. According to Breen, poems are a valuable authentic source because “[t]he poet uses language as a means to stimulate our interpretations of his intended message. He has a genuine communicative purpose to achieve” (62). Stimulating creativity is also mentioned as a crucial factor in language education (see BMUKK, *Oberstufe 1-2*), which can also be achieved through working with poetry.

As a consequence, the teaching of poetry in the Austrian classroom is justified for a number of reasons and the use of poems is promoted by a number of aspects. It contributes, for instance, to the students’ language learning (*Handlungsorientierte Fremdsprachenkompetenz*) as well as to their social and intercultural competence (*Interkulturelle Kompetenz*). Poems are an important authentic text-type and they can be used to perform different functions and to achieve a number of language learning objectives.

4.2. The Common European Framework of Reference

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR or CEF)³ is a guideline to describe language learning

³ In German it is called “Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen: lernen, lehren, beurteilen” (GERS).

published in 2001; it was devised by the Council of Europe, which has actively pursued the process of creating such a framework since 1971 with the help of many teaching professionals across Europe and beyond. It is of great importance in language teaching nowadays as it forms the basis for the teaching and learning of languages around the world and has already had a wide-ranging impact. The CEF

provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. (CEF, *Framework 1*)

The Common European Framework of Reference can, therefore, be seen as a general reference and a common language for describing language learning and teaching worldwide. The Austrian curricula for living foreign languages are both based on the CEFR (see BMUKK, *Unterstufe* and BMUKK, *Oberstufe*). Its main uses include the planning of language learning programmes, the planning of language certification and the planning of self-directed learning (see CEF, *Framework 6*).

The Common European Framework is based on a communicative language teaching approach and uses "can do" statements, which are always expressed in a positive way and do not focus on the deficits, to explain what a learner can do a six specific levels, which are A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. These levels are also divided into "Basic User" (A1 and A2), "Independent User" (B1 and B2) and "Proficient User" (C1 and C2), which approximates native speaker like language competence in all skills.

The Global Scale lists what a learner can do at the specific levels as can be seen in Table 1. It is important to note that the Global Scale can be used with any language to describe the learner's competences. However, the Global Scale is very general and may be difficult for students to understand. So called self-assessment grids are supposed to help them to reflect on their learning.

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Table 1: Common Reference Levels: global scale (CEF, Framework 24)

The Global Scale is, consequently, broken down into more specific and descriptive scales focusing on the different skills and covering three areas of communication:

- Understanding (Listening and Reading)
- Speaking (Spoken Interaction and Spoken Production)
- Writing

In these grids the descriptors can be used by the students for self-assessment and course books as well as curricula, i.e. the Austrian Curriculum for Living Foreign Languages, are usually based on them. In Table 2 the descriptors for B1 and B2, the levels for which the lessons in Part Two of this thesis were designed, are presented. The competences are separated into more detailed parts in the illustrative scales (see CEF, *Overview 8-31*). The teaching of poetry may be used for the improvement of various skills. The learners, for example, have to understand a poem in order to make inferences about the meaning when they read it or they might have to talk about it and, according to an “opinion-gap” exercise, exchange their opinions to come to a shared interpretation.

As already mentioned, in Austria the beginning of lower secondary is seen as the starting point of learning English as the first foreign language according to the CEFR. After the second year the pupils are supposed to have reached level A2 in the skills listening, reading and writing and A1 in the two speaking skills, spoken interaction and spoken production (see BMUKK, *Unterstufe 5*). At the end of their fourth year of learning they should already be aiming at level B1 (see BMUKK, *Unterstufe 5*). The students have to reach level B2 in order to pass the standardised “New Matura”.

*Nach dem 7. und 8. Lernjahr (8. Klasse) der ersten lebenden Fremdsprache
Hören, Lesen, an Gesprächen teilnehmen, zusammenhängend Sprechen,
Schreiben: B2 (BMUKK, Oberstufe 6)*

In higher secondary education, from the students’ fifth year of learning their first foreign language to their eighth, they are, thus, expected to develop from B1 to B2 (see BMUKK, *Oberstufe 6*).

		B1	B2
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
	Reading	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letter.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my view.
	Spoken Production	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interest. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

Table 2: Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid, B1 and B2 (CEF, Framework 26-27)

Two of the lessons designed in the second part of this thesis, “Working with song lyrics” and “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson, were taught in Austrian schools in two different classes, one at level B1 and the other at B2. The lessons are in general aimed at independent users of the language and assume a basic knowledge of English. This should enable the students to examine the lyrical texts in more detail without being deterred by the rather unusual vocabulary and phrases. Furthermore, it is believed that this supports a more comprehensive analysis and understanding of the poems.

5. The teacher's role

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.
(statement ascribed to Benjamin Franklin)

The teacher's role has changed within the last decades and is a different one in a learner-centred, communicative approach to language teaching compared to rather traditional methods. Altogether, Richards (9) identifies three main perspectives on teaching with varying roles of the teacher.

A teacher-centred perspective sees the main features of a lesson primarily in terms of teacher factors, such as classroom management, teacher's explanations, teacher's questioning skills, teacher's presence, voice quality, manner, and so on. This view of a lesson sees it as a performance by the teacher. A different view of a lesson, which can be termed the *curriculum-centred perspective* sees a lesson in terms of a segment of instruction. Relevant foci include lesson goals, structuring, transition, materials, task types and content flow and development. A third perspective on a lesson can be called the *learner-centred perspective*. This views the lesson in terms of its effect on learners and refers to such factors as student participation, interest and learning outcomes.

In learner- or student-centred approaches "the construction of knowledge is shared and learning is achieved through students' engagement with activities in which they are invested" (Kain 104). The learners, consequently, get the possibility to play a more active and participatory role in their language study.

However, the student-centred approach also has implications on the teacher's as well as on the learners' roles. Tudor, for instance, claims that it "makes the teacher's task more complex than in an approach to language teaching based on a pre-established content syllabus realised by means of a set of approved teaching procedures" (Tudor xiii). Teachers have to be spontaneous in reacting to the learners' requirements. They need "to use a wider range of management skills than in the traditional teacher-dominated classroom" (G. Thompson 13). Furthermore, it is required that he or she is "able to react flexibly to the needs of her students and of the educational context within which she is working" (Tudor 231).

Moreover, Carter and Long (24-25), for example, point out that "[a] student-centred

literature class is one which allows *more exploration of the literary text by the learners* and invites [them] to develop their own responses and sensitivities” in contrast to a teacher-centred classroom where the students usually do not have enough opportunities to express their opinion and feelings about a given text because the teacher talks most of the time. Giving the students more responsibility to work with their text independently will also take away some pressure from the teachers because then they may not have the feeling of being threatened with their own lack of knowledge about a literary text. The focus shifts away from the teacher’s input to the students’ own learning. In a student-centred approach, they are encouraged to share their views which also helps them to better understand the text. This also allows them to use the target language more extensively and, thus, helps to improve their language skills.

Nevertheless, Fleming (38) emphasises that the teacher has to take on a constitutive role in helping students to create meaning out of the text. This implies a student-centred, interactive approach where the teacher, still, has to play an important part in supporting the students in their learning process and in providing enough assistance. The teacher, for example, has to decide which methods to use when working with a text and even though the learners are invited to share their interpretations with the class, the teacher has to ensure that they are valid and well-founded (see Carter and Long 27). As Stibbs points out, “time spent in working alongside pupils rather than teaching them may be more effective in promoting poetry in the classroom than businesslike instruction” (49). The difficulty lies in finding the right balance.

In her book, Hedge lists a number of possible teacher’s roles. Based on a study by Karavas-Dukas in which practitioners were asked which roles they performed as teachers most of the time, she talks about the various responsibilities and also argues that during one lesson a teacher has to take on a number of roles (26). The shortened list (qtd. in Hedge 28-29) shows the role categories and the percentages that emerged from the study.

1 Source of Expertise (46.4%)

2 Management roles (35.7%)

- 3 Source of advice (53.5%)**
- 4 Facilitator of learning (64.2%)**
- 5 Sharing roles (17.8%)**
- 6 Caring roles (25%)**
- 7 Creator of classroom atmosphere (14.2%)**
- 8 Evaluator (10.7%)**
- 9 Example of behaviour and hard work (3.5%)**

Some of the roles that Hedge suggests are, for example, the instructor or informant, the manager, the source of knowledge, the guide and sometimes also the friend and entertainer (28-29). Still, Tudor points out that, even in student-centred approaches, teachers can never take off completely their central role as “knowers”, this is, then, just “subsumed within the roles of learning counsellor and educator” (232). There is no rule which of these roles is most appropriate in a given situation. That depends on the lesson, the students, the teacher and many other factors. Nevertheless, it is important that the focus lies on student-centred and communicate teaching. As Carter points out, “the teacher’s role is assisting such [meaning-making] processes obviously has to be active and purposeful” (3). The role that is adopted by the teacher should, therefore, always make use of this approach and, above that, support the students’ learning.

PART TWO: *The poems*

6. The lessons

The second part of this diploma thesis takes a more practical approach. Based on the theory discussed in the first part, I developed four lessons with a particular focus on teaching poetry interactively in the EFL/ESL classroom. First, I will analyse as well as discuss the poems and some background information is provided. The lesson plans are, then, presented and reflected on in detail, for example considering why certain methods are applied and how they contribute to student participation, contemplating what has to be anticipated as well as thinking about obstacles that might occur and solutions to overcome them. As two of the lessons could be taught in an Austrian classroom, the performance is reflected on considering the interactiveness of the lesson as well as student participation and motivation in particular. Hence, an anonymous feedback sheet was designed where the students were asked to state their opinion about the lesson either in English or in German so that language does not constitute a barrier to express their thoughts. It was, then, collected at the end of the teaching session. The learners' anonymous feedback is of great importance to be able to perceive the lesson not only from the teacher's perspective but also from the learners' point of view and, consequently, see if it was successful or how it could be improved.

6.1. Planning and teaching the designed lessons

The main focus when planning the four lessons was on teaching poetry interactively in the Austrian EFL classroom and to, thus, step away from the more traditional ways to a communicative approach. The lesson plans are designed for a period of 50 minutes as this is the typical duration of a lesson in Austrian schools. In the try-out classes where "Working with song lyrics" and Emily Dickinson's poem "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" were taught five minutes were set aside to allow the students enough time to fill in the feedback sheet.

The lesson plans use various student-centred activities in which the teacher takes over the role of a supporter to allow the students to become more active in their learning process. Hansen (24) is certainly correct in saying that

[t]o combat these certainties, we need to extricate ourselves from the role of Keepers of the Meaning and to turn poems over to our students. Any activity we devise, as long as it motivates them to explore their own way into a poem until they begin to experience it imaginatively, will serve this purpose. There are hundreds of such activities. Many of them seem simple—elementary, even. Most are fairly commonplace. Nonetheless, they work.

The devised lesson plans are based on the three approaches to teaching poetry, the language-based approach, the stylistics approach and the content-based approach, which were discussed in detail in the first part of this thesis and which also mainly follow this interactive, student-centred approach. However, the purpose when designing the lessons was not to focus on one approach to teaching poetry only but rather to combine and alternate them to get as much out of them as possible. A variety of different types of poems was chosen so that the students have the possibility of dealing with a wider part of the whole range of poetry that exists.

The design of the lesson plan is based on the template of the Centre for English Language Learning (CELT), which can be found at the Department of English at the University of Vienna and which is inter alia responsible for teacher development and research in English language teaching.

When looking at the designed lessons, the reader should bear in mind that they only represent a first draft which may be revised after having tried it. It also has to be pointed out that the lessons can be adapted to address the needs that vary from class to class as well as from student to student. The detailed commentary that is provided for each plan is supposed to help other practitioners in determining why and when the activities and the suggested order may be useful and describe which problems and benefits they might have.

6.2. The schools

The two chosen lessons, “Working with song lyrics” and “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”, were taught in two different Viennese schools, which I will shortly describe in the following so that the reader can get a general idea and an insight into their philosophy.

6.2.1. The Wasagasse Gymnasium

The lesson centring on “Working with song lyrics” was taught in the Wasagasse Gymnasium, which is located in the 9th district of Vienna, close to the University of Vienna. The school is accommodated in an old but recently renovated building and there is a school playground in the middle of the building.

The educational opportunities of the school focuses on the eight-year long form of grammar school. In higher secondary education, from the 5th to the 8th year, the students can choose between two different alternatives, the classic gymnasium with the main emphasis on communication and linguistic competence or the other option which puts more emphasis on information and communication technology. The Wasagymnasium offers a range of additional courses, for example on “social competences and consultation” where peer-mediation – students helping and supporting each other – plays an important role. A special business licence (“Unternehmerführerschein”) can be obtained. The school promotes an intercultural understanding between its students and special courses are offered for those who speak German as a foreign or second language (see Wasagasse Gymnasium).

6.2.2. The Wiedner Gymnasium

I taught the lesson plan designed for the poem “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson in the Wiedner Gymnasium, which is on the Wiedner Gürtel 68 on the outer edge of the 4th district of Vienna. The Wiedner Gymnasium is in an old building, which already accommodated other schools before.

The Sir-Karl-Popper school is an integral part of the Wiedner Gymnasium. It is a school pilot project to support “highly-gifted pupils comprising grades 9 to 12”, i.e. from the 5th to the 8th class. Helping students learn and supporting them in their development rather than teaching them is one of the guiding principles. Applicants have to pass a test lasting several hours, which is based on two internationally acknowledged intelligence tests, and a personal interview to be admitted to the school (see Sir Karl Popper Schule). There are only two classes per year with a maximum of 24 students in each. What is special about the school is that it is based on a modular system where students can compile a part of their timetable themselves and, therefore, get more freedom of choice. In addition, there are some fixed points in the calendar of events, such as intensive language weeks, participation in EU-projects or discussions with politicians, scientists and contemporary witnesses (see Wiedner Gymnasium).

7. Lesson 1 – Working with song lyrics

In the following the lesson “Working with song lyrics” will be introduced. First, I will present some theory, where reasons which speak for the use of songs in the classroom will be discussed. Then, the actual lesson plan is provided and I will comment on it. Finally, as there was the possibility to teach this lesson, I will reflect on the outcome to see whether the design was helpful in supporting the main aim of this thesis, namely teaching poetry interactively. Thus, I will also include the students’ opinions, which were collected by way of a feedback sheet.

7.1. Theory

Students are confronted with songs the whole time, they listen to them and probably also often sing along. Song lyrics are very close to their reality; why should they, therefore, not be used in school to enhance the learning process.

Poems are not just words and lines, they are a sensory medium as well. Especially in good poems, Cobbs stresses, “the sounds of words delight and signify” (28). Ezra Pound referred to this as melopoeia, which means that words can have some musical property in addition to their normal meaning (see Dunn). Moreover, Welsh identified four different types of lyric mode in poetry, which he labelled, speech, chant, charm and song (133-242). This clearly shows that the auditive quality of poetry is of considerable importance.

However, the older the students get, the less they tend to listen to or read out poetry aloud. Particularly the studying of poetry takes place quietly.

[O]ne of the reasons we have so much trouble teaching students about the aural dimensions of poetry is that we tend to privilege the written text over the aural one, analysis over performance, even as we emphasize the intellectual experience of poetry at the expense of the sensuous one: mind over ear. (Dunn 16)

Yet, teaching students to listen to poetry again could not only help them to get a better understanding of the texts and, consequently, come to deeper and maybe

more imaginative interpretations but could also awaken their interest in lyric and bring back the joy of reading in general. One way of re-establishing the sensory experience is by teaching poetry through song. Under guidance as well as encouragement, they will soon be able to transfer this auditory feeling to the music poetry makes and will experience how much rhythm and rhetoric can influence the meaning of a text (see Cobbs 32).

As was already mentioned, there is a strong connection between poetry and music. Dunn defines a song as an “integrated system of meaningful sound, produced by the interaction of text and music” (4). A poem, of course, is usually not accompanied by music in the sense of instruments playing. Still, artful combination of words produces its own sound. Cobbs, for example, argues that poetry, like music, “draws on harmony and meter, the quality and the quantity of particular sounds; [it] derives expressive power from the blending of similar sounds and the clash of dissimilar ones, and it exploits our physical response to rhythm, pacing, and accent” (28). Furthermore, music and poetry do not primarily address our minds, they both rather appeal to our senses and emotions, and the feelings that are evoked in response can often not be expressed in words (see Dunn 3).

The discussion shows that song lyrics can be a useful way in approaching poetry and that there are many reasons for teaching it through music. The rhythm of songs might enable the learners to discover the sound of poems and through attentive listening ear and mind could be awakened to poetry (see Dunn 7). Johnson et al. point out that by working with poems in a modern, nontraditional way students can slowly be guided to valuing classic poetry because it has meaning, just as music has (see 24). To put it simply, students come to understand the meaning of poetry better and realise the relevance it can have for their own lives. Thus, songs can be very motivational sources for language teaching as they are close to the students’ reality. According to McRae, the best and, thus, most useful songs “usually contain a basic element of ‘story’, or a character clash, a point of view, an engagement with a social or other issue” (*Literature* 35), which can all be very helpful for opening a discussion or interpretation. Generally the learners can connect to the topics discussed in music, such as love, family or freedom. Besides, popular songs have an inherent

entertaining element, which can occasionally also be an advantage in promoting language learning (see McRae, *Literature* 36). Possibly students have some singers or groups they look up to and see as idols. By using their songs in the classroom they get the opportunity to study “poetry through the poets who speak to *them*” (Haugh et al. 26). Through working with lyrics students can, then, slowly be guided to applying more theoretical concepts, such as poetic terminology, to them. Music can, for example, be analysed looking for stylistic devices, such as rhythm, metre or rhyme scheme. Kaufman (64) proposes some general discussion questions: “What do the songs tell you about contemporary society? What is the subject matter of the poem? What metaphors does the author use to describe his feeling? Does the meter or rhythm of the poem enhance the sentiment?” This is just to give an idea of the possible topics that could be considered by using song lyrics as a starting point.⁴ As a consequence, the students can slowly be guided to working and possibly enjoying poetry.

7.2. Teaching⁵

First, the aim of the lesson is introduced. The students were asked to bring a printout of a song text. The thought behind this is that they are even more excited and motivated when they are allowed to bring in their own favourites to class. Songs picked by the teacher may not be very popular or old-fashioned and could, consequently, destroy the internal motivation this lesson is aimed at. However, it can be expected that some of the students will forget to bring songs themselves. This should be checked right at the beginning of the lesson to prevent them from not being able to do the following activities. The teacher should, therefore, be able to provide some additional copies of different lyrics which could be interesting for the learners. These are then handed out randomly so that not too much time is lost for those who did not bring any song lyrics.

Now it is the students’ turn to start getting engaged with the song more intensely.

4 Similar and additional questions were also used for the handout of this lesson, see Appendix – Handout 1 – Working with song lyrics

5 For the complete lesson plan see Appendix – Lesson plan 1 – Working with song lyrics

With their seatmate they discuss why they like this song and what they like about it in particular. This is a language-based exercise as the main focus is on speaking and expressing their opinions. Moreover, it has an emotional aspect, which can enhance the learning process because the students are supposed to talk about their feelings. This activity also allows them to connect to their personal lives as they are usually confronted with songs the whole time outside the classroom. That is why they are asked to choose the lyrics they like. Still, as some of the learners might have forgotten to do that and now only have the texts the teacher has given them, they may experience some problems in talking about what they like about it. In this case, they should be asked to read through the song and find out what it is about. Then, some students are asked to report their reasons for bringing these particular song lyrics.

The third part of the lesson takes a more content-based approach as the students are supposed to analyse the text according to its meaning and context. Before that, the teacher instructs the same pairs of learners to agree on one of their two songs and to examine this more closely so that there is one text per pair now. This is partly due to time constraints as not all of the lyrics can be analysed in detail in one lesson as well as so that those students who forgot to bring their own and got one from the teacher do not have to continue working with a song they do not like and maybe have not even known before. The teacher provides the students with a handout with study questions,⁶ such as “What is the *topic* of the song? What is the song about?”, “Could you think of an *alternative title* for the song?”, “What does the song (indirectly) tell you about contemporary *society*? What can you *learn from it*?” and “Do you think the *message* of the song is *relevant today*? Where (school, town, world) may it be relevant? If not, why not?”, which they are asked to answer together. This exercise is designed as a pair work to make it more interactive and, as a consequence, to enhance the exchange of different opinions and ideas between the learners.

As a next step the teacher presents an exemplary analysis of a song text.⁷ First, the content is addressed resembling the questions the students have just been

6 See Appendix – Handout 1 – Working with song lyrics – Content analysis

7 See Appendix – Power Point Presentation – Presenting an example

discussing. Secondly, the structure and special linguistic features are examined, such as rhythm and metaphors. This serves to indirectly give the students an idea of how they can examine their own lyrics later on. While the teacher is pointing out some of these stylistic and linguistic devices, a clear reference to the similarity of songs and poetry should be made so that the students learn to make this connection and start to get prepared for the study of poetry. This short teacher presentation is meant to provide the learners with some guidance for their own analysis and poster presentation afterwards. However, they are not strictly asked to do it exactly like the teacher but it should just present an example to them. After this, the teacher instructs the students to turn round their handout to find the information for the formal analysis, get together in groups of four now and again choose one of the two songs they will further examine according to the instructions on the handout.⁸ They are told that they should investigate the lyrics for any structural and linguistic devices, such as alliterations, anaphoras or similies, used. The questions, “How is the song *structured* (e.g. refrain, verse, development of message)?”, “Does the *rhythm* of the song intensify the meaning?”, “Does the singer use *metaphors* to describe his/her feelings?” and “Does the writer of the song use *repetitions* of words or ideas, e.g. refrains?”, serve as an additional guideline. Furthermore, they are asked to design a poster within approximately ten minutes with all information they could gather on this song regarding content as well as language, for instance topic of the song, audience, structure and anything else they found interesting, which they will later have to present to the class. Posters are provided by the teacher which are distributed while the students are analysing their songs. The activity is designed as a group work as this ensures that an exchange of ideas can take place and the students, again, have the possibility to choose a song that may be more suitable than the other one for this activity. It could, of course, be possible that some of the learners do not participate much and let the other team member do most of the work. This is a question of group dynamics and can vary considerably depending on the class. Still, one can expect that even less excited students may find this activity motivating because of the stimulating material. If the groups are not able to finish their posters within the time frame, they can be given a bit more time while the poster presentation and the

8 See Appendix – Handout 1 – Working with song lyrics – Formal analysis

reflection can be shortened.

When the students have finished their posters, the groups present their findings. They can choose whether one person of the group wants do to it alone or the whole group can do it together. The teacher should not correct the language of the students during the presentation as the focus is on the content and not on linguistic accuracy. If the classmates find a song particularly interesting, they may ask additional questions after the presentation.

After the poster presentation, a general reflection is encouraged. This can be used to again establish and point out the quite strong connection between song lyrics and poetry. Furthermore, the insights that students have gained through the analysis of the text can be reviewed.

“Working with song lyrics” was one of the two lessons I taught in the course of my research for this diploma thesis. The students were asked to fill in the feedback sheet at the end of the lesson where they had the opportunity to voice their opinions anonymously. These responses are considered in the following reflection on the lesson.

7.3. Reflection

I taught the designed plan in the Wasagasse Gymnasium in the first lesson of the day starting on eight o'clock. The class was a fifth grade and there were 20 students present.

In general, the majority of the learners stated on their feedback sheets that they liked this Introduction to Poetry lesson very much. I could also observe this during the teaching because most of the time they were really engaged with the activities. The learners talked a lot to each other in both the pair and the group work while doing the tasks, which shows that the lesson was successful in following this interactive, student-centred approach to teaching. A number of students wrote that they especially liked the songs or getting to know the songs and one person answered the

question *Did you like anything in particular?* with

That we could think about the song texts from songs we always hear.

This was also noticeable while the students were creating as well as presenting their posters because most of them had some really interesting findings and designed nice posters, although some were under a bit of time pressure.

These are two rough replications:

Chandelier	Skyscraper
Sia	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → pop charts → anaphora → metaphor → repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → verse → refrain → verse ... → rhythm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → message? 	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p><u>topic:</u> sad woman</p> <p><u>another</u></p> <p><u>title:</u> tear me down</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; font-size: small;"> <p>song lyrics (some things highlighted)</p> </div> <div style="margin-left: 10px; color: green;"> <p>* Anaphora</p> <p>* Metaphor</p> <p>* Simile</p> </div> </div>

As could be expected some of the students forgot to bring their own song lyrics and so they got some of the prepared ones.⁹ Some of the groups even preferred to work on these rather than their own.

However, sometimes not all the members of a group knew the songs of their classmates which is why I offered them to listen to them online using their mobile phones and headsets. To be allowed to listen to the songs in class was also suggested as an improvement to the lesson by two students. As this can be easily done nowadays, this should be integrated into the lesson and the learners should be told right from the beginning that they can use their mobile phones to actually listen to the songs. This will also help them with their formal analysis, for example, when looking at rhythm or possible rhythm changes.

The students stated on the feedback sheet that they found the roles the teacher, i.e. I, took on during the lesson helpful. Some of those they mentioned were advisor, supporter, instructor and organiser.

⁹ The song lyrics were “Black or White” by Michael Jackson, “Brave” by Sara Bareilles, “Counting Stars” by Coldplay, “Father and Son” by Ronan Keating, “Imagine” by John Lennon, “In the Ghetto” by Elvis Presley, “Lemon Tree” by Fool’s Garden, “Radioactive” by Imagine Dragons, “Skyscraper” by Demi Lovato and “The A Team” by Ed Sheeran.

Finally, it can be said that teaching the lesson “Working with song lyrics” following an interactive approach was successful and presented a first step towards working with poetry in class, and maybe also towards the students’ own enjoyment of poetry. They actively collaborated with their partners for the activities, discussing and weighing the possible answers together. Moreover, that working with song lyrics is a topic that has a high potential of motivating the students intrinsically and that this is something they really enjoy is shown by these two students’ answers:

it's a great + interesting idea

it's a great idea

8. Lesson 2 – “I wandered lonely as a cloud” by William

Wordsworth

The second lesson is devoted to one of the so-called classics, “I wandered lonely as a cloud”, which was written by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth between 1804 and 1807. At first, I will again analyse the poem theoretically, looking at its main themes. I will briefly explain the reasons for why it was chosen to be taught interactively in an EFL or ESL classroom. Finally, I will present and comment on the designed lesson plan.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(quoted in Hutchinson 187)

8.1. Theory

In the poem “I wandered lonely as a cloud”, which is sometimes also called “Daffodils”, the lyrical I is remembering an experience of happiness when strolling through the rural landscape. The speaker recounts that he or she was wandering “like a cloud” through the hills and valleys when suddenly seeing “a crowd, / A host, of golden daffodils” (3-4) beside the lake. The roles of the persona and nature are reversed here. While the lyrical I is metaphorically connected with the cloud, the daffodils are personified, for example, when they are described as “Tossing their heads in sprightly dance” (12). This serves to stress the strong, ultimately good influence of nature on human beings, a theme that often occurs in Wordsworth’s poetry. Williams (*Reading* 71) remarks that

[f]or Wordsworth, nature served ultimately as a source of revelation for the existence of a benign deity. In his early work God and Nature become virtually synonymous. Where nature cannot be represented as soothing and reassuring, its sublimity will point beyond to a just God; where harshness and contradiction appear, they are always resolvable, ultimately concordant.

The last stanza represents a change, the speaker is back at home and remembers experiencing the vastness and sublime beauty of nature and, once again, “my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the daffodils” (23-24). The sight of the daffodils that interrupted the solitary strolling remains imprinted on the “inward eye” (21) (see McRae and Pantaleoni 84).

The sublime is an important point addressed in “I wandered lonely as a cloud”. The English Romantic poets, to which Wordsworth belongs, viewed the sublime as a “realm of experience beyond the measurable” (Greenblatt 54). It was believed that it was beyond rational thought and could, therefore, not be observed directly but arises primarily from intense fear and intimidating natural phenomena (see Greenblatt 54). Brennan asserts that Wordsworth’s poem dramatises such “an experience of the *sublime* in its first three stanzas, which the poet recollects and re-experiences as a ‘spot of time’ in the last stanza” (141). Furthermore, the daffodils’ infinity, which is expressed in the phrases “They stretched in never-ending line” (9) and “Ten thousand saw I at a glance” (11), illustrates the sublime idea of vastness and

endlessness (see Brennan 141).

Another aspect typical of the Romantic era is the emphasis on feeling and pleasure. The focus is on the emotional aspect of poetry. That is also why it should be written in the language of common speech which is natural and not artificial. As a consequence, these poems provide a good resource to be used in the EFL/ESL classroom as the language is not expected to present a major obstacle to the students. Even though it might occasionally be quite antiquated, it can be easily understood with appropriate guidance from the teacher. A further reason why the poem "I wandered lonely as a cloud" was chosen is that it enables the learners to focus primarily on its meaning and the themes that are discussed in it, such as the importance of nature and the power of memory, and not necessarily on the formal aspects. Hence, an interactive and student-centred approach can be promoted.

8.2. Teaching¹⁰

As this poem is usually considered a classic it is already taught in school quite regularly. The focus, however, tends to be on a theoretical analysis, such as rhyme scheme, metre and similar aspects. In this lesson, a more modern, interactive approach is adopted. The learners, having been told the aim of the lesson, are actively involved in the process of trying to discover the general meaning of the poem. At first, the teacher only shows the students the first stanza and asks them to read the text silently and then talk to their neighbour about how it might continue. The picture of a daffodil was added to the overhead in case some of the learners might not know what the flower looks like. They are given approximately two minutes per stanza, which should be enough time for both partners to express their opinion. If the teacher, however, notices that a majority of the students have already stopped talking or, contrarily, that they are still discussing the topic after the allocated minutes have passed, the time frame can be adapted. The stanzas can be presented either via the overhead projector,¹¹ in which case the teacher would have to cover the remaining

10 For the complete lesson plan see Appendix – Lesson plan 2 – "I wandered lonely as a cloud" by William Wordsworth

11 See Appendix – Overhead – "I wandered lonely as a cloud" by William Wordsworth

stanzas in order to not give away the rest of the poem, or in a Power Point Presentation where each stanza is on one slide and the teacher presents one after the other. The mode of presentation may depend on the available equipment but the students might favour the more modern method. The task is designed as a pair work instead of letting the students write down individually what they think, in order to follow an interactive approach to poetry teaching. This allows them to exchange their opinions, help each other if they experience difficulties or do not understand a particular part and to develop new ideas together. When the teacher has shown the learners the second stanza, they are asked to discuss if that is how they had expected the poem to continue and in how far it might deviate from their expectations. In doing so, the students incidentally practise and further develop their speaking skills, forming hypothetical sentence structures or expressing that the story turned out quite differently than they had expected. This activity, therefore, focuses on a language-based approach to poetry teaching. The process is repeated until the last stanza is presented. In the end, some of the students' impressions are gathered in class to, for example, see which of the stanzas surprised them most or if they could guess the content generally quite well. This exercise is meant to actively involve the students in trying to grasp the meaning of the poem. By asking them to guess how it might continue the students get the possibility to fall back on their own experiences and talking about unexpected plot twists can help in making them aware of the underlying structure. In addition, it prepares them for a more comprehensive analysis because they achieve a general understanding of the poem.

In the third part of the lesson the students are asked to analyse the poem in more detail in groups of three. The groups are formed by the teacher to prevent the students from always working together with the same people. This should, furthermore, allow a better mixing of students with different levels, who can, then, help and motivate each other. Afterwards the poem¹² as well as the handout¹³ are distributed and the teachers instructs the learners to do the exercises. The teacher, whose main task is to function as an observer and a supporter, is available for help if needed while the students are analysing the poem according to the study questions,

12 See Appendix – “I wandered lonely as a cloud” by William Wordsworth

13 See Appendix – Handout 2 – “I wandered lonely as a cloud”

for example “Underline all the *positive words* in the poem. What can you see?”, “What *feelings and themes* can you find in the poem in general?”, Why does Wordsworth talk about ‘A poet’ in line 15 and ‘I’ in line 16? Is there a difference between them?” and “Where is the main *turning point* in the poem? Which effect does it have?”. When the students have finished the tasks, the answers are compared in class. Still, the results should not just be read out but further discussions can also be encouraged at this stage. As can be seen, the third part of the lesson focuses mainly on analysing the content of the poem in detail by closely looking at the language used. The activity is interactive as the questions are supposed to be discussed in the group and answered together. The students have to closely examine the language in “I wandered lonely as a cloud”, for instance when underlining all the words that have a positive connotation or when discussing the difference between “A poet” (15) and “I” (16). The exercise, hence, follows the language-based approach to teaching poetry.

In the fourth stage of the lesson, the students are asked to go one step further, from analysing the poem to working with it. These activities are meant to allow them to be creative and produce something on their own based on Wordsworth’ poem. The learners remain in their groups and turn their handout.¹⁴ The tasks, “Try to come up with some other *comparisons*. [...] How would they *affect the meaning* of the poem?”, “Try to *sum up the whole poem* in a few sentences.” and “‘I wandered lonely as a cloud’ is about a powerful personal experience. Have you ever had a *happy memory* that you sometimes think about? *Describe it!*”, should be self-explanatory but the teacher should stress the innovative character of the activities again before the learners start. It can be expected that some students are more creative than others. If the majority of the class have already finished or do not know how to continue, the teacher may interrupt the exercise. Alternatively, the students who are really engaged in doing the tasks and, thus, spend a lot of time on them because they want them to be really original, could be asked to finish them at home and, for example, get a plus for participation as they put additional, voluntary work into them. Some of the students are, then, asked to present their work to the class. An open exchange of

14 See Appendix – Handout 2 – “I wandered lonely as a cloud” 2.)

ideas and a good atmosphere should be encouraged by the teacher and nobody should be forced to present their ideas. Again, a discussion is promoted. The fourth stage of the lesson is meant to show the students that writing about poetry does not necessarily have to be difficult, while asking them to describe one of their experiences may serve as a preparation stage for their own creative works of art.

Finally, the whole lesson should be rounded off. The teacher might ask the students what they liked most about the poem. They should also be allowed to say that they did not like the poem but after working with it for one lesson they should be able to give reasons for that. Further questions that could be discussed are, for instance, "What makes "I wandered lonely as a cloud" a good poem?" or "Can you think of reasons that explain why this poem is quite well-known?" It would, furthermore, be interesting to inquire which activities the students liked most. The information that can be gathered in this informal discussion can be used by the teacher to adapt the lesson plan for the next time. Moreover, the students' statements might hint at their personal preferences. The teacher can, then, use this knowledge to adapt the further selection of poems as well as the choice of exercises that can motivate the learners.

9. Lesson 3 – “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams

Next, a lesson is developed around the poem “This is Just to Say”, written in 1934 by the modernist poet William Carlos Williams. This imagist poem may represent the complete opposite to the Romantic “I wandered lonely as a cloud” – and was chosen partly due to this fact. I will point out the reasons why it serves as a good example to be taught in the EFL or ESL classroom. First, I will present some theoretical background of the poem and especially discuss its structure. Finally, the lesson plan is again introduced and examined.

This is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

(quoted in C. Williams 354)

9.1. Theory

When looking at the poem “This is Just to Say” by the poet William Carlos Williams its shortness and directness are immediately noticeable. The lines as well as the poem in general are brief and the message seems to be quite straightforward: The speaker is asking for the person’s forgiveness for eating the plums because he or she just could not resist. Williams claims that “William Carlos Williams’s tiny, enigmatic poem astonishes with its simplicity and brevity [...]. Yet it is seductive in its spareness, its clarity of attention” (*Toolkit* 257). There may therefore be the urge to

find hidden meanings in the poem. The title, for example, can be seen as ironic because the text is actually about more than just apologising. In the introductory line, “This is Just to Say”, as well as in the first and the second verse, guilt is expressed but there is also some satisfaction coming through when the lyrical I is describing the taste of the plums: “they were delicious / so sweet / and so cold” (10-12). Eagleton (40) quite pointedly remarks that

William’s apology for eating the plums is oddly incoherent: he asks to be forgiven for the act of raiding the plums, appealing to the fact that they turned out to be delicious. But he could not have known this when he decided to eat them. What if they had not turned out to be delicious? It is rather like saying: ‘Forgive me for shooting your dog; I got such a kick out of it.’

Interestingly, the phrase “Forgive me” (9) is – besides “I have eaten” (1) – the only line starting with a capital letter. In addition, it sounds quite formal in this context where “sorry” would be sufficient (see Widdowson, *Practical* 28).

The form of the poem is of great interest as well. William Carlos Williams’ texts are excellent examples of free verse poetry. Greenway and Greenway emphasise that although his poems are often seen as simple, “they are some of the most highly structured in the language” (140). In addition, many scholars agree that “This is Just to Say” resembles very much a note that could have been left on the fridge. Eagleton presents the poem as an example of a non-pragmatic discourse stressing that it “reads like a message to his wife” (39). Consequently, when using this poem in class many textbooks suggest to at first present it in form of a note and only later reveal its original layout¹⁵ (see e.g. Ainy, Maley and Duff 73-74, McRae, *Language* 5-6, McRae and Pantaleoni 1-2 or Widdowson, *Practical* 23-31). Widdowson refers to this method as “contextual detachment” and points out that it “directs the attention of the reader to the language itself” (*Practical* 32). As long as the words are presented as a note, it is easy to make meaning out of them because of presumably shared background knowledge. As soon as it is presented in its original form as a poem, it loses this context and the language that is used becomes more important in helping to grasp its meaning. Furthermore, according to Hill, this procedure can “demonstrate that the way a poem is designed and laid out is inextricably part of the work and cannot be

¹⁵ This suggestion of the sequence of activities is also adopted in the planned lesson.

changed without subtly altering the content” (82).

It is remarkable that “This is Just to Say” consists only of simple, ordinary words and that there are no stylistic devices one might usually expect: “it is markedly free of the verbal devices which are traditionally associated with poetry: there are no tropes and figures, no alliteration, no metrical regularity or rhyme” (Widdowson, *Practical* 31). The lines are very short, containing only two or three words with the one exception where “saying” (7) forms a whole line. There is no punctuation, not even at the end. The whole poem consists of enjambments which develop its rhythm and push the reader on (see Williams, *Toolkit* 258). William Carlos Williams in general as well as the poem “This is Just to Say” in particular are often closely associated with the ‘imagist’ movement in poetry (Williams, *Toolkit* 257), which advanced precision of imagery and language and brevity. The characteristic feature of imagism is that it focuses on one precise image and “This is Just to Say” clearly centres on the plums.

This poem by William Carlos Williams was thought to be suitable for teaching in an EFL classroom because it is meant to show the students that poetry can be very simple and ordinary. Its language should present no problem. What may be the most difficult hurdle to overcome here is that the students have to challenge their preconceptions about poetry as being something remote.¹⁶ Williams’ poetry serves as a particularly good example of this because it reflects everyday life and uses common language.

9.2. Teaching¹⁷

At the beginning of the lesson the aim should not be mentioned. That is because the students are not supposed to know right from the beginning that the text they will be presented with is actually a poem. The lesson directly starts off with the teacher presenting “This is Just to Say” in note form to the students without further commenting on it. The text can be presented via an overhead projector or a Power

¹⁶ See 3.1. What is poetry?

¹⁷ For the complete lesson plan see Appendix – Lesson plan 3 – “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams

Point Presentation depending on availability and preferences.¹⁸ The learners are asked to first read the text silently on their own and then discuss the three questions, “Who do you think wrote the message, and to whom? Why?”, “Where would you expect to find this message?” and “What is the meaning of the message? Could it be expressed in fewer words? How would you say it?”, which are also on the screen, with their neighbour. These questions guide them in analysing the content and the meaning of the text more closely. The teacher should make sure that the fourth question is still covered as this already hints at the presumed message actually being a poem. The students should discuss these questions with their partner for some time before some of the ideas are gathered in class because this allows all of them to participate and voice their opinions. As mentioned before, pair and group work are, generally, of great importance in an interactive classroom because they increase the students’ talking time and participation.

In the third stage of this lesson the fourth question, “Do you think this message could be a poem?”, is shown and the students are asked to individually try writing this message as a poem and to give it a suitable title. Afterwards they compare their results with their partners to see whether there are some differences and similarities and are asked to discuss these as well as how they went about doing the task. This activity serves to activate the students’ preconceptions about poetry unconsciously because in trying to write the message as a poem they are expected to fall back on their background knowledge and expectations. Their assumptions will then be questioned in stage four. Some feedback and results, for example, suggested titles, are then collected in class and discussed shortly.

Last but not least the students are presented with the real version of “This is Just to Say” in the fourth part of the lesson. The teacher gives the next instructions and the students are told to get together in groups of three. Varied and accidental ways of group formation are of importance because talking with different classmates may help the learners to gain new insights. Moreover, it helps to prevent that close friends who would rather like to talk about private topics than about the tasks always remain together. Three people per group is usually seen as the ideal size and allows good

¹⁸ See Appendix – Overhead – William Carlos Williams

group dynamics. A group of four may break up into two pairs. When the students have formed the groups the handout¹⁹ with the poem is distributed. The students read “This is Just to Say” and analyse it according to the study questions, which are “Compare the poem to your *own version*. What similarities/differences can you find?”, “Does the *title* of the poem surprise you? What is its effect?” and “Which effect do the *short lines* and the *missing punctuation* have?”. Here they are also confronted with their preconceptions about poetry when they discuss the fourth question, “Do you think ‘This is Just to Say’ is a *poem*? Discuss. If yes, what makes the text a poem?”. The teacher supports the groups when necessary but should not interrupt them. The questions follow the language-based approach to teaching poetry as they focus on examining the meaning by closely looking at the language used. When the students have finished the tasks the answers are compared. During the discussion in class the teacher can again put emphasis on the questionable nature of poetry and what exactly makes a poem a poem as one of the main aims of this lesson is that the students start questioning their assumptions and begin to realise that poetry can take on various forms.

In the next stage the learners get even more actively involved with the poem. At first, they listen to William Carlos Williams reading his poem. The recording should be played twice so that the students are able to focus on the way he interprets his text, for example by paying attention to pitch and placement of pauses. The recording can be found on YouTube. Afterwards the teacher tells the students to turn their handout²⁰ and to do the following exercises, which are “Do you like William Carlos Williams’ version of reading his poem? *Try to read out ‘This is Just to Say’ to your colleagues!* Which parts do you want to emphasise? Where do you pause? Might your interpretation of reading the text have an influence on its meaning?” and “Have you ever done something you knew you should not do and tried to apologise afterwards? Together with your colleagues, *write your own poem* [...] *on the poster* given to you apologising for something you have done. Be prepared to *present the poem* later on. You can design the poster however you like.”. The focus is on developing their creativity and on further enhancing their understanding of “This is Just to Say”.

19 See Appendix – Handout 3 – “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams

20 See Handout 3 – “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams 2.)

Especially for the first task, where the students should try to read out the poem themselves, it is important that the atmosphere in the class is supportive and that the teacher takes a step back. These activities are supposed to be fun as this can enhance the learning process considerably. If some of the students are quite shy and do not want to read out the poem within their group, they should not be forced to do it. They may simply discuss the questions theoretically. When the groups have started with the tasks, the teacher hands out the posters, which are needed for the exercise where they are supposed to write their own poem.

Composing their own poem based on “This is Just to Say” allows the students a glimpse into the writing of poetry. They are asked to follow its structure because this provides them with a guideline for forming and expressing their own ideas. The instructions should, however, not be too strict as this would rather inhibit than stimulate creativity. For example, the number of words per line need not follow Williams’s poem.

When the groups have finished writing their poems they are asked to present them. One group after the other puts up their posters in the classroom and the students read them out. The groups can decide themselves if they want to do this together or if they assign one person to do the task. Short feedback from the other students, such as what they liked particularly about the poem, is encouraged. The teacher can provide some positive commentary as well. If possible, it can be suggested to leave the posters up for some time to show appreciation for the results of the students’ own creative work.

The lesson is ended by requesting the students to continue questioning their preconceptions about poetry and by again stressing the unusual character of “This is Just to Say”.

10. Lesson 4 – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson

The last poem that was chosen to be discussed in this thesis is “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson, which was published for the first time in 1866. The poem is meant to again open up new perspectives of perceiving poetry for the students. To begin with, I will analyse the most crucial aspects of the poem in greater detail, such as the representation of nature or Dickinson’s particular style. Then, I will present and discuss the lesson plan. Finally, as “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” was taught in a class, I will reflect on the performance of the lesson and the students’ motivation with reference to the feedback sheet.

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone –

Several of Nature’s People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –

(quoted in Johnson, *Final* 229)

10.1. Theory

The poem “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson is mainly about nature or rather how it is perceived by the lyrical I: is the relationship with nature generally more positive or more negative? Dickinson, unlike many other British or American Romantic poets, realised that nature is not only beneficial but mysterious and harmful as well. It has been suggested that Dickinson’s “love of nature had in fact its reserves; she had conceived a shrewd suspicion that nature is in essence profoundly alien to man, fascinatingly unknowable, possibly hostile” (Whicher 266). Consequently, the view of nature that is expressed in her poetry is also balanced. In “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” Dickinson is aware of the potentially dangerous feature of nature. Although the snake is referred to as “A narrow Fellow” (1), which may express some level of familiarity, it causes fear and a sudden chill. This alien aspect is emphasised especially in the last two stanzas, line 17 representing a turning point, where the snake is compared to other animals, “Several of Nature’s People” (17), for which the speaker has a feeling “Of cordiality” (20). The “narrow fellow” itself, however, embodies the harmful aspect of nature and causes “tighter breathing” (23) when met.

The “narrow fellow” is usually understood to refer to a snake and it could be seen as a religious symbol hinting at the creation myth and the corruption of Eve in the Garden of Eden, but there are other interpretations as to what the phrase might symbolise. This is because the reader is actually never told that it is indeed a snake. Dickinson’s reasons for this vagueness are unknown but she may have intended to evoke a mood of wonder and surprise. It has, for example, been suggested that the narrow fellow is a shadow (see McRae and Vethamani 73). The snake might also be perceived as representing a phallic symbol as it is also explicitly referred to as male in the poem: “You may have met Him – did you not / His notice instant is –” (3-4). Whatever it may symbolise, this encounter has an immediate and chilling effect on the lyrical I.

The speaker in “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” is male. In the third and fourth stanza it becomes clear the the lyrical I is recalling a memory of a past boyhood experience:

“But when a Boy, and Barefoot” (11). Dickinson might have been assuming a male persona in the poem because boys normally had more freedom at that time in the religious society she was living in.

Emily Dickinson’s poetry is remarkable due to the variety of stylistic features she uses. The dashes, the lack of standard punctuation, the unusual capitalisation and the unfamiliar word order all contribute to creating the meaning of “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”. This particular poem by Dickinson was specifically chosen because it incorporates all her typical trademarks. McRae (*Language* 73), for example, claims that Dickinson’s use of stylistic devices in the poem serves to strengthen the content:

Emily Dickinson’s punctuation and capital letters make us read it differently from normal, and her regular rhyme and rhythm give a (deceptive) air of simplicity. The snake is a ‘Fellow’ but moves from friendly to chilling, from the idea of positive Nature (‘cordiality’) to a threat in the final line. The images are domestic/familiar (‘a Comb’) and violent (‘a Whiplash’); heat and cold too are mixed, past and present, I and you.

The dashes in the body of the text represent a typical aspect of Dickinson’s poetry and were obviously placed there by the poet on purpose and, thus, aid in creating the rhythm of the text. Partly, they are also used to replace full stops or commas as there is generally no punctuation. In addition, the unconventional and often use of capital letters may seem striking, especially when contrasting it to “This is Just to Say” where the only words capitalised were “Forgive me” (9) and “I” (1), but could be a technique applied by Dickinson to highlight and put more emphasis on certain words.

10.2. Teaching²¹

At the beginning the students are briefly told that in this lesson they will be working with a poem by Emily Dickinson in this lesson. It should not be mentioned that it is usually referred to by its first line, “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”, as the learners are expected to find possible titles in the first activity.

As a first step, the teacher distributes a handout with the poem on it²² and instructs

21 For the complete lesson plan see Appendix – Lesson plan 4 – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson

22 See Appendix – Handout 4 – A poem by Emily Dickinson

the students to think of a meaningful title. It is important that the handouts are mixed thoroughly before they are handed out because they have numbers, 1-4, on them which will be necessary for group formation in the fourth stage of the lesson. The students are told to read the poem silently for themselves and to try and understand the general meaning without focusing on individual words. When they have finished reading, they can get together in pairs with their neighbour and try to find a suitable title for the poem. For this activity it is necessary that the students have really understood the gist of the poem. It is done in pairs so that the partners can exchange their ideas and help each other if problems of understanding occur. Moreover, it is meant to appeal to the creativity of the students as they can come up with any meaningful title as long as they can justify their decision. This activity is again based on the language-based approach because they have to focus on making meaning out of language and on expressing this interpretation in their own words. However, if the students have real difficulties in finding a suitable title, the teacher could help them by, for example, telling them that it was named "The Snake" when it was first published in the *The Springfield Republican* in 1866 (see Johnson, *Biography* 264). Some of the headings the students have come up with are then collected on the blackboard where the teacher tries to group them according to possible similarities, such as the occurrence of the word "snake", or of other animals or references to nature.

The teacher provides some background information to help the students with their further analysis of the poem.²³ Yet the presentation should be kept to a minimum and only include what is really necessary. A crucial feature of all of Emily Dickinson's poetry, namely that her poems do not have a title and are, thus, usually referred to by their first line is also pointed out.

In the fourth part of the lesson the students form groups. This is now done by using the numbered handouts of the text so that there are four groups in the end. The numbers on the sheets serve to make the process of group formation more dynamic and also more random. Moreover, it allows students to work together who otherwise maybe would not, which may lead to a new exchange of ideas. The fourth part of the

23 See Appendix – Overhead – "A narrow Fellow in the Grass"

lesson focuses on a formal analysis of the poem where the students have to examine “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” according to the study questions,²⁴ such as “Can you identify some *stylistic devices*? Highlight them in the poem! Which effect do they have?”, “The *dashes* are a typical feature of Dickinson’s poetry. Do they influence the way you read the poem? If so, how?” or “In the poem, various *images of movement* are created. How is this effect achieved? Which words are used?”. When the students have finished the teacher asks if there are any uncertainties and some answers are collected to make sure the students have the right results.

In the next part of the lessons the students have to look in more detail at the content of the poem. For this, four posters with different questions, each focusing on another aspect of the text, are needed. First, the teacher explains the following activity to the students and then distributes the posters²⁵ so that each group gets one. The questions on them are “What do you think the ‘narrow Fellow’ is? Can you find evidence for your assumption in the text?”, “Who is the speaker? Find evidence in the text! Does this surprise you? Is there still a feminine sensibility?”, “Is the speaker’s relationship with nature rather positive or negative? Would you describe the experience as terrifying, delightful or both?” and “In your opinion, what is the poem about most: nature, the relationship between man and nature, the ‘narrow Fellow’, the ‘I’ or something else? Give reasons!”. The groups start with the poster they have got at first and after four minutes move on to the next station. This process is repeated until all the groups have finished working with the fourth poster. This exercise tries to combine a content-based and a language-based approach: the students have to focus on analysing the content using the background knowledge they were given about Dickinson’s life and poetry in general as well as on the specific language used in the poem. It is a dynamic exercise as the learners move around the classroom. Besides, by adding their own thoughts to the poster after other groups have already done so further promotes the exchange of ideas.

When the groups have reached their fourth station and have finished working on the poster they stop where they are. Now, one after the other, one member of each group

24 See Appendix – Handout 5 – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” – Formal analysis

25 See Appendix – Posters 1 to 4 “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”

reads out the collected findings to the whole class. This could also lead to a further discussion. That is why enough time should be allowed for this final activity; it serves to round up the whole lesson on “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”.

This lesson was also taught in the course of my research for this thesis. That is why five minutes were dedicated to the feedback sheet where the students were again asked to write down their opinions anonymously. As a result, the lesson plan design and the methods used can be evaluated better from the students’ perspective. The general teaching and this feedback is reflected on in the following.

10.3. Reflection

I taught “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” in a seventh form of the Sir-Karl-Popper school of the Wiedner Gymnasium. The lesson lasted 50 minutes. There were eleven students in the class.

In general, the students said that they quite liked the lesson. On the feedback sheet the majority pointed out that they enjoyed working with the posters in particular; one learner wrote down that these were very communicative. Some of them stated that they especially liked the group works and that there were many different opinions. Most of the students were really engaged in the tasks and came up with creative answers. These are some of the titles they found for the poem:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Fog</i> <i>Nature’s People</i> <i>The Salamander</i> <i>A narrow Fellow in the Grass</i></p>
--

Interestingly, one pair was right in their guess to simply title the poem using the first line as originally the poem also does not have a title. That the majority of the students liked working in groups and with the posters shows that an interactive approach to teaching poetry was, generally, successful in this lesson.

The feedback sheet, moreover, proved that choosing an appropriate poem can be

quite difficult. While some of the students remarked that they enjoyed the poem, others did not. Personal preferences can play an important role here. That is why the teacher should always try to use different texts over the semester and year to make sure to get through to as many students as possible.

Some students observed that more time would be needed for the group works as well as for the discussions in order to improve the lesson as sometimes the activities were too short or too fast for them. An option would be to shorten the formal analysis of the poem a bit, for instance, by reducing the examples of stylistic devices,²⁶ in order to allow for more in-depth discussions and focus more on the activities that were found to really engage the students. However, even though it seems that there was a generally positive consent about these interactive exercises, one student pointed out that he or she is

*no more used to this kind of setting for the lesson,
I'd rather just listen to the teacher and have a brief
discussion afterwards.*

This is a quite interesting remark and demonstrates that some learners rather prefer a teacher-led than to a student-centred classroom. A conclusion that could be drawn from this is that, although they are very helpful and engaging, interactive activities should not be overused and that some other interaction formats should be applied as well to ensure that there is a considerable variety and to focus on what is best for the learners.

Furthermore, most of the students found that the roles I took on as a teacher during the lesson were helpful and appropriate in achieving their purpose. According to the feedback sheet, the most prominent roles in general were instructor and organiser but advisor and supporter were also mentioned a few times. One student remarked that I could have been a little more instructive.

To conclude, it appears that the lesson mainly went well and that teaching “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” following an interactive approach was successful. The students engaged with their partners and in doing so were able to help and support each

26 See Handout 5 – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” – Formal analysis

other. The fact that they themselves asked for more time for the group works and the discussion shows that they were really immersed in the tasks and came up with various ideas. One student wrote on the feedback sheet that he or she

liked the idea of teaching [a] poem like this.

11. Conclusion

This diploma thesis discussed the interactive teaching of poetry in the English as a Foreign Language classroom. It was divided into two parts, the first one starting with a theoretical introduction in which the existing literature that deals with this topic was analysed. Here it could be seen that detailed research has already been undertaken in this field. However, taking a closer look at the EFL and the Austrian English classroom in particular showed that the teaching of poetry is still often neglected or rather taught following a more traditional method. I examined the teaching of literature in general and presented the three main models. The paper then moved on to specifically consider the teaching of poetry in the EFL classroom more closely. I showed that it can be very difficult to define poetry but also provided examples of how to object any prejudices against its teaching. The reasons for the teaching of poems were, thus, presented and examined critically. I presented and compared the three approaches to teaching poetry, the language-based approach, the stylistics approach and the content-based approach, on which the lessons developed in Part Two of this thesis were based. Next, the Austrian English classroom and especially the implications of the Austrian curriculum and the Common European Frame of Reference on the teaching of poetry were examined. In the end of Part One I considered the teacher's role focusing on the changes that were brought about by the communicative approach to language teaching. This was also taken up in the feedback sheet and it could be seen that the students' opinion, in general, confirmed that in an interactive, learner-centred classroom it is important that the teacher takes a step back and supports the students in their learning process.

In the second part of this thesis practical ways of how poems can be integrated into the classroom were suggested. I reflected on the planning of the lessons and shortly presented the schools, in which two of them were taught. The thesis then moved on to the four lesson plans that were developed based on the extensive theory discussed before. The results of the feedback of the two sequences proved the success of teaching poetry following an interactive, student-centred approach. They suggest that similar outcomes can be expected from the other designed lessons, "I

wandered lonely as a cloud” and “This is Just to Say”, as well as lessons in general that adhere to this concept.

To conclude, this diploma thesis tried to present the teaching of poetry from a modern, rather unconventional perspective and showed that – when taught following an interactive approach – it can actually be quite instructive as well as motivating for the learners. This could be proven by the students’ quite positive feedback, their motivation and, in general, the success of the lessons. However, the poems chosen present only a very small number of those that would be appropriate and could be used in the Austrian EFL classroom. As I could actually only perform two of the four designed plans in a higher secondary class, it would be interesting to teach the others as well and later on to develop even more lessons in order to make more variation possible. The reader should note that the plans are still work in progress. To sum up, in designing and teaching these student-centred lessons the diploma thesis aimed at deliberately promoting the teaching of poetry following an interactive approach in the English as a Foreign Language classroom.

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APPENDIX

Lesson plan 1 – Working with song lyrics

Level according to the CEFR: B1 – B2

rough time frame	procedure	interaction format	skills	materials	notes
2'	1) Introduction of lesson aim: Working with song lyrics	T → S		1 song text per S	- make sure all S have got at least one song text - T should have some spare ones
5'	2) Why this song? - <u>in pairs:</u> What do I like about it? - report to class	S → S plenum	speaking	- -	- T gives instructions - emotional aspect - connect to the S interests and personal life - collect feedback from a few S
9'	3) Looking at content <u>in pairs:</u> - agree on 1 song - analyse song according to study questions	S → S	speaking reading (writing)	1 song text per pair, Handout 1	- T gives instructions & hands out handout - in pairs, S choose 1 of the 2 songs - they analyse it together according to the guiding questions and take notes
5' 10'	4) Looking at language - T presents an example (compares lyrics to poetry) - T introduces some specific features <u>in fours:</u> - analyse song looking for specific features & design poster	T → S S → S → S	listening speaking reading (writing)	OH / PPT: example text 1 song text, poster, Handout 1 (back)	- T presents a song text as an example looking at content & language - T clearly establishes connection to poetry - T gives instructions (turn round handout) - 2 pairs get together to form groups of 4 - 1 song, analyse it - T hands out posters - create a poster with all necessary info on it
15'	5) Poster presentation	S → S → S	speaking	posters	- groups present their findings (content + language) - T may ask additional questions: Why this song? Did you expect this? Have you ever thought about it?
4'	6) Reflection	plenum	speaking		Do you often think about the meaning of songs? Has this analysis shown you some new aspects? etc.

Handout 1 – Working with song lyrics – Content analysis

With your partner, closely look at your song and try to answer these questions.
Take notes.

Study questions:

1. What is the **topic** of the song? What is the song about?
2. Which **emotional response** does the song provoke?
3. Could you think of an **alternative title** for the song?
4. For which **audience** was the song written? Who is most likely to listen it?
5. What does the song (indirectly) tell you about contemporary **society**? What can your **learn from it**?
6. Do you think the **message** of the song is **relevant today**? Where (school, town, world) may it be relevant? If not, why not?



Picture: <http://fernandarebello.com/category/entretenimento/musica/>, 29 December 2015

Working with song lyrics – Formal analysis

1.) In your group, agree on **1 song**. Look at the lyrics and try to find some **specific features** of the structure or the language used. Underline / Circle / Colour them. The questions below might help you.

Here are some features you can look for in your song lyrics:

rhythm – a strong regular repeated pattern of sounds

alliteration – the use of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words that are close together, as in *sing a song of sixpence*

anaphora – two lines start with the same word or sequence of words

onomatopoeia – the use of words whose sound suggests the sense (*buzz, hiss*)

simile – a word or phrase that compares something to something else, using the words like or as, for example *a face like a mask* or *as white as snow*

metaphor – a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar, for example *She has a heart of stone*

hyperbole – a way of speaking or writing that makes something sound better, more exciting, more dangerous, etc. than it really is (*mile-high ice-cream cones*)

Guiding questions:

How is the song **structured** (e.g. refrain, verse, development of message)?

Does the **rhythm** of the song intensify the meaning?

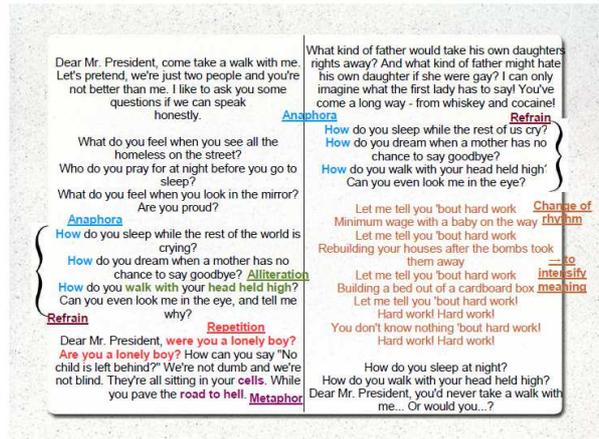
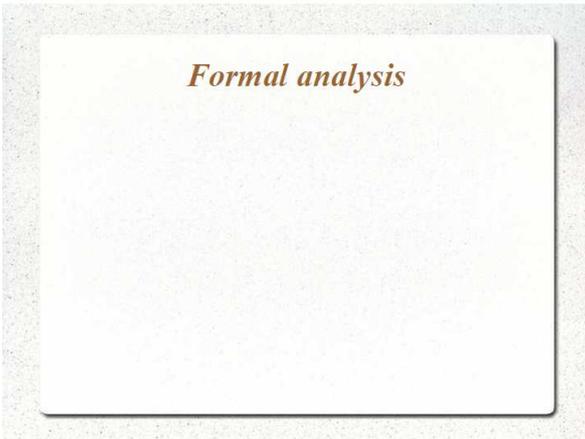
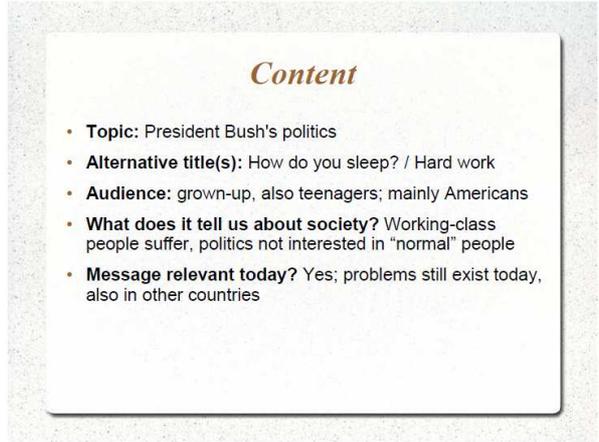
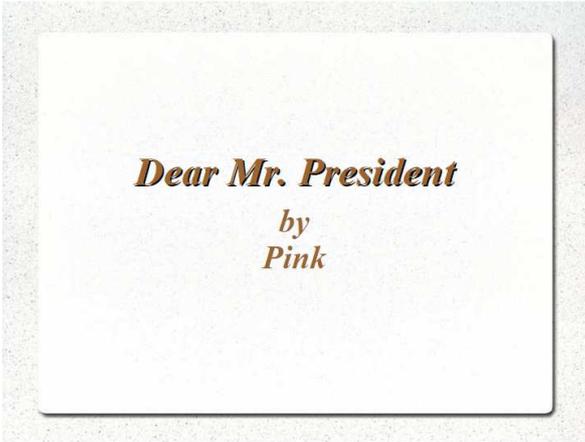
Does the singer use **metaphors** to describe his/her feelings?

Does the writer of the song use **repetitions** of words or ideas, e.g. refrains?

2.) Design a **poster** using the song text and prepare a short **presentation**. Later on your group should be able to tell your classmates everything you found out about the lyrics, e.g.

- topic of the song
- alternative title
- audience
- relevance of the message
- structure of the song
- specific features used (& their effects)
- anything else you found interesting

Power Point Presentation – Presenting an example



Lesson plan 2 – “I wandered lonely as a cloud” by William Wordsworth

Level according to the CEFR: B1 – B2

rough time frame	procedure	inter-action format	skills	materials	notes
1'	1) Introduction				- introduce topic of lesson: poem “I wandered lonely as a cloud” / “Daffodils”
10'	2) Guessing further content - T slowly reveals 1 stanza after the other <u>in pairs:</u> - S discuss how the poem will continue & if they expected this (~2 minutes per stanza) - report to class	T → S S → S plenum	reading speaking speaking	OH / PPT	- T only reveals 1 st stanza of the poem (others are covered) - S are asked to talk to their partners about how the poem will continue - T reveals 2 nd stanza - Is that what you expected? Discuss again - same process till the end of the poem - in the end, some impressions are gathered in class (also: which stanza surprised you most?)
15'	3) Analyse poem in threes: - analyse poem according to study questions - report to class	S → S → S plenum	speaking writing speaking	poem, Handout 2 ex. 1, pens	- T gives instructions - groups are formed (counting from 1 to 3) - T hands out poem & handout - the S analyse the poem together according to the study questions and take notes - ask for uncertainties & compare answers
15' 7'	4) Work with poem in threes: - work with the poem, do active exercises - present outcomes	S → S → S plenum	writing speaking speaking	Handout 2 ex. 2, pens black-board	- T gives instructions (turn round Handout 3) - same groups - the S work with the poem doing some active writing exercises - some S are asked to present their work to the class - some comparisons can be written on the blackboard and discussed in class
2'	5) End lesson - round off whole lesson	plenum	speaking		- ask S what they liked most about the poem & if they found it difficult to analyse / work with it. Also: What makes it a good poem?

Overhead – “I wandered lonely as a cloud” by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.



Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

“I wandered lonely as a cloud” by William Wordsworth

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That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
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In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.



Handout 2 – “I wandered lonely as a cloud”

1.) In your group, closely look at the poem “I wandered lonely as a cloud” and answer the following questions.

Take notes.

Study questions:

1. Underline all the **positive words** in the poem. What can you see?
2. What **feelings and themes** can you find in the poem in general?
3. What does the lyrical I do in lines 1 to 19? List the **actions** / verbs:

4. In contrast to this, what does the lyrical I **not do** in line 17-18? Why do you think so?
5. Why does Wordsworth talk about “**A poet**” in line 15 and “**I**” in line 16? Is there a difference between them?
6. Where is the main **turning point** in the poem?
Which effect does it have?



2.) In your group, do the following exercises. Be creative!

1. Try to come up with some other **comparisons**. Think of as many as possible. How would they **affect the meaning** of the poem?

I wandered *lonely as a cloud*

I wandered _____

I wandered _____

I wandered _____

I wandered _____

2. Try to **sum up the whole poem** in a few sentences. Start like this:

The poem moves from _____ to _____

3. “I wandered lonely as a cloud” is about a powerful personal experience. Have you ever had a **happy memory** that you sometimes think about? **Describe it!** (Tell your colleagues at first, then write the text individually.)

Lesson plan 3 – “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams

Level according to the CEFR: B2

rough time frame	procedure	inter-action format	skills	materials	notes
1'	1) Start lesson	T → S			- the usual formalities
5'	2) Poem in note formalities - the poem is presented in form of a note <u>in pairs:</u> - discussion - report to class	S, S, S S → S plenum	reading speaking speaking	OH / PPT	- the T presents “This is Just to Say” in note form to the S (via OH or PPT) - S are asked to read the text silently - T instructs the S to discuss the questions (on OH/PPT) with their neighbour (question 4 still covered) - opinions are gathered
8'	3) As a poem - S write the message as a poem & give it a title - compare with neighbour - report to class	S, S, S S → S plenum	writing speaking speaking	OH / PPT, paper, own poem	- T reveals 4 th question & gives instructions: take out paper, try to write the message as a poem and give it a title (individually) - S compare their results with their neighbours - some feedback is collected: you and your neighbour similar results? some titles, etc.
10'	4) The “real” poem - S read poem <u>in threes:</u> - analyse poem according to study questions - compare answers	S, S, S S → S → S plenum	reading speaking writing speaking	Handout 3 ex. 1	- T gives instructions - S get together in groups of three - T hands out handout - S read the poem - S analyse the poem - answers are compared, discuss nature of poetry
16'	5) Work with poem - listen to Williams reading the poem: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcTfsG-k_58 <u>in threes:</u> - S do the exercises	S, S, S S → S → S	listening speaking writing	Audio Handout 3 ex. 2, posters	- S listen to Williams reading his poem (twice) - T gives instructions (turn round handout) & hands out posters - S do exercises
8'	5.1) Poster presentation - S present their poems	plenum	listening speaking	posters tape	- groups present poems - posters are put up around classroom
2'	6) End lesson	plenum	speaking		- round off lesson, stress unusual character of poem

Overhead – William Carlos Williams

This is just to say I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox and which you were probably saving for breakfast. Forgive me, they were delicious, so sweet and so cold.

1. Who do you think wrote the message, and to whom? Why?
 2. Where would you expect to find this message?
 3. What is the meaning of the message? Could it be expressed in fewer words? How would you say it?
-
4. Do you think this message could be a poem?
Try writing it as a poem & give it a title.

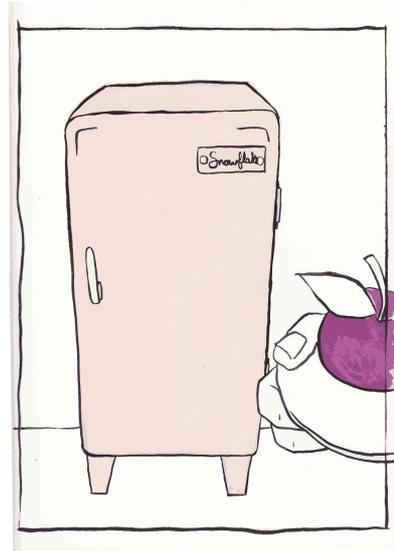
Handout 3 – “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams

This is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold



1.) In your group, closely look at the poem “This is Just to Say” and answer the following questions. Take notes.

1. **Compare** the poem to your **own version**. What similarities / differences can you find?
2. Does the **title** of the poem surprise you? What is its effect?
3. Which effect do the **short lines** and the **missing punctuation** have?
4. Do you think “This is Just to Say” is a **poem**? Discuss.
If yes, what makes the text a poem?

Lesson plan 4 – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson

Level according to the CEFR: B2

rough time frame	procedure	inter-action format	skills	materials	notes
1'	1) Start lesson	T → S			- start lesson: about a poem “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”
8'	2) Headings - S read poem - <u>in pairs</u> : find a heading (3 minutes) - report to class	S, S, S S → S plenum	reading speaking speaking	Handout 4: poem black-board, chalk	- T gives instructions & hands out handout - First, S read poem on their own (should not ask vocabulary → general meaning) - S come up with a suitable title for the poem with their partner - collect some titles (on blackboard)
3'	3) Background information - poem - Emily Dickinson	T → S	listening	OH / PPT	- T provides the S with some background information - reveals “real” title (linking back to 2)) - Dickinson’s life for further analysis
12'	4) Formal analysis - S get together in groups of 3 or 4 <u>in threes/fours</u> : - analyse poem according to study questions (~6 minutes) - report to class	S → S → S plenum	speaking reading speaking	poem Handout 5	- T gives instructions - S get together in their groups using Handout 5 (numbers 1-4 on it) for the formation - T hands out handout - S analyse poem - ask for uncertainties & collect some answers
20'	5) Content analysis station work: - 4 different stations with posters and questions (4 minutes per station)	S → S → S	speaking reading	pens / pencils, posters	- T gives instructions (tell S to take something to write with them) - T distributes posters for station work (each group gets 1 poster and start at this station) - S have 4 minutes per station, then T claps & S walk to the next one
6'	5.1) Presentation of findings	plenum	speaking	1 poster per group	- when the S have finished their last station (= the 4 th), each group presents the collected findings for the poster they are at to the others

Handout 4 – A poem by Emily Dickinson

1

Title: _____

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone –

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –



Handout 4 – A poem by Emily Dickinson

2

Title: _____

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
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Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
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Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –



Picture: <http://vinhanley.com/2015/09/30/an-overview-of-the-poetry-of-emily-dickinson/>, 5 January 2016

Handout 4 – A poem by Emily Dickinson

3

Title: _____

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
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Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
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When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone –

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –



Handout 4 – A poem by Emily Dickinson

4

Title: _____

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone –

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me –
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Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –



Picture: <http://vinhanley.com/2015/09/30/an-overview-of-the-poetry-of-emily-dickinson/>, 5 January 2016

Overhead – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass”

“*A narrow Fellow in the Grass*” **published**
in *The Springfield Republican* between
1858 and 1868

- without Dickinson’s knowledge (sister-in-law)
 - some edits (punctuation),
title “The Snake”
- Dickinson’s poems have no title,
numbers & 1st line

Dickinson: 1830 – 1886

During childhood: reading, nature, religion
hobbies: reading, her garden

1861 – 1865: most **creative and
productive period**

Handout 5 – “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” – Formal analysis

In your group, closely look at the poem “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” by Emily Dickinson and try to answer these questions. Take notes.

Study questions:

1. Can you identify some **stylistic devices**? Highlight them in the poem!

simile – explicit comparison, “like” or “as”
metaphor – implicit comparison of unlike terms, “a heart of stone”
metonymy – implicit comparison of like terms, “throne” for “king”
onomatopoeia – words that suggest the sense, “buzz” or “hiss”
alliteration – same sound at the beginning of words, “sing a song”
anaphora – two lines start with the same word
parallelism – repeated syntactical similarities (sentence level)
hyperbole – exaggeration, “mile-high ice-cream cones”

Which effect do they have?

2. The **dashes** are a typical feature of Dickinson’s poetry. Do they influence the way you read the poem? If so, how?
3. Emily Dickinson uses **capital letters** quite often in her poems. Do you find this rather unconventional capitalisation distracting? Why do you think Dickinson does this?
4. In the poem, various **images of movement** are created. How is this effect achieved? Which words are used?

Poster 1

**What do you think the “narrow Fellow” is?
Can you find evidence for your assumption in the text?**

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone –

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –

Poster 2

**Who is the speaker? Find evidence in the text!
Does this surprise you? Is there still a feminine sensibility?**

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
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Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –

Poster 3

**Is the speaker's relationship with nature rather positive or negative?
Would you describe the experience as terrifying, delightful or both?**

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn –
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –
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Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
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Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –

Poster 4

In your opinion, what is the poem about most: nature, the relationship between man and nature, the “narrow Fellow”, the “I” or something else? Give reasons!

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have met Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –
A spotted shaft is seen –
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre
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Several of Nature’s People
I know, and they know me –
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –

Feedback Sheet

Please answer the questions truthfully (either in English or in German).
You don't have to answer a question if you don't want to.

1) How much did you like this poetry lesson in general?   

2) Did you like anything in particular?

3) Was there anything you did not like?

4) How could the lesson be improved? Do you have any suggestions?

5) Which roles did the teacher take on during the lesson (e.g. instructor, advisor, supporter, entertainer, organiser, ...)? Did you like that?

6) This is just to say ...

Thank you very much for your help!



English abstract

This diploma thesis examines the interactive teaching of poetry in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Based on the assumption that poetry is often neglected in Austrian classes and that if it is taught, rather traditional methods are applied, the thesis tries to present poetry from an unconventional perspective. After a discussion about the theoretical background, which forms the foundation for the second, more practical part, suggestions of how to implement poetry into the classroom are demonstrated. Therefore, four concrete lesson plans and additional material were designed focusing on interactive activities and student involvement. The reflections of the two teaching periods prove not only the success of this approach and suggest that similar results can be expected from the other lessons but also that students' enthusiasm for poetry can be aroused. The findings of this diploma thesis hence support an increase in the usage of poetry in the EFL classroom based on an interactive approach to teaching.

German abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit untersucht das interaktive Unterrichten von Lyrik in Klassen, in denen Englisch als Fremdsprache unterrichtet wird. Basierend auf der Annahme, dass Gedichte in österreichischen Schulstunden oft vernachlässigt werden und dass, wenn sie unterrichtet werden, eher traditionellere Methoden angewendet werden, versucht diese Arbeit, Dichtung von einer unkonventionellen Perspektive zu betrachten. Nach einer Diskussion über den theoretischen Hintergrund, welche die Basis für den zweiten, praktischen Teil bildet, werden Vorschläge zur Implementierung von Gedichten in der Klasse demonstriert. Dazu wurden vier konkrete Stundenpläne und zusätzliche Materialien, welche auf interaktive Aktivitäten und Schüler/innenbeteiligung fokussiert sind, entworfen. Die Reflexionen der zwei Unterrichtseinheiten beweisen nicht nur den Erfolg dieses Ansatzes und lassen darauf schließen, dass ähnliche Ergebnisse von den anderen Stunden erwartet werden können, sondern auch dass die Begeisterung der Schüler/innen für Dichtung geweckt werden kann. Die Ergebnisse dieser Diplomarbeit unterstützen daher eine Zunahme in der Verwendung von Gedichten im Englischunterricht basierend auf einem interaktiven Ansatz des Unterrichts.