

# “Haiku” in English Education: Based on the Presenter’s Writing of *Sunshine*™

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## 1. Introduction

In the symposium, I made a presentation as writer of ‘The *Haiku*’ (Kono, 1997) in the TM (=Teacher’s Manual) of *Sunshine 2*, an authorized junior high school English textbook used in the 1990s. First, I presented a contrastive analysis of the syllabic and rhythmic structures of *haiku* (=Japanese *haiku*) and haiku (=English haiku). Then based on the analysis, I discussed how to translate haiku into *haiku*, and vice versa, adding a *tanka* work of my own and its English translation as an example of another type of short verse. Finally, I offered five suggestions for the composition of short verse, mainly haiku, and its teaching.

## 2. Japanese *Haiku* and English Haiku in School Education

For the past two decades, haiku has been adopted in many authorized junior and senior high school English textbooks, as the Ministry of Education Courses of Study have proposed the introduction of the life and culture of the Japanese, as well as those of the peoples of the world, as teaching materials. Now that haiku has become an internationally accepted form of poetry, it would be a good idea to encourage Japanese high school students to convey our culture all over the world through haiku with collaboration between Japanese and English language teachers. Why don’t we refer to Sato, H. (1987), and Sato, K. (1987 & 1991)?

## 3. Rhythms of Japanese and English

While Japanese has syllable-timed rhythm, English rhythm is stress-timed. Below is a contrastive analysis of an English utterance and its Japanese equivalent in terms of their rhythmic structures. Refer to Kono (2002: 96) and Roach (2000: 134-135).

||Háikū ĩs thĕ |shórtĕst |póĕm ĩn thĕ |wórlđ. ||

||は|い|く|は|せ|か|い|で|い|ち|ば|ん|み|じ|か|い|し|です。||

The English utterance comprises 4 stressed (´) syllables, each of which, together with its

following unstressed (˘) syllable(s), composes a unit of rhythm called “foot.” All the 4 feet tend to occur at regular time-intervals, irrespective of the number of intervening unstressed syllables. The foot is the unit of English isochrony.

On the other hand, the unit of rhythm in Japanese is the syllable. In other words, the syllable is the unit of Japanese isochrony. The fact that the example Japanese sentence given above is divided into 19 *kana*, or syllabic letters, means that it could be uttered on 19 beats, or time-intervals.

#### 4. Rhythm of Japanese *Haiku*

I have just defined Japanese syllable-timed rhythm as one-syllable-one-beat rhythm, but Bekku (1977) and Kawamoto (1991) claim that the rhythm of *haiku* and *tanka* inherent in Japanese people is composed of 4 beats with two syllables as one beat. According to their theory, one of Basho’s most famous haiku could be analyzed as below.

|| ふ る | い け | や — | — — | か わ | ず — | と び | こ む |  
み ず | の — | お と | — — ||

The two-syllables-one-beat theory is persuasive enough, considering the brevity of one syllable caused by the simplicity of the syllabic structure of Japanese. The theory, at any rate, does not change the fact that the basic rhythm of Japanese is formed by the isochrony of each syllable of the language. Though the rhythm of *haiku* and *tanka* has traditionally been regarded as composed of 5 or 7 syllables in a line, the theory claims that every line comprises 8 syllables (4 beats) including silent syllables. This seems to explain why a hypermetric *haiku* or *tanka* does not always break down the inherent rhythm of traditional Japanese short verse.

#### 5. Syllables of English *Haiku*

We can find two types of English haiku: (A) 5-7-5 syllables type, and (B) free short verse type irrespective of the number of syllables. As discussed in 3 and 4, there is a fundamental difference between English syllables and Japanese ones in terms of the rhythmic structures of the two languages. Because of that, an English syllable tends to convey more information than a Japanese one. It seems to make little sense to stick to type A haiku, though many American elementary school children are encouraged to do so for the purpose of studying syllabic structures (Sato, K., 1991: 179-195). Further discussion on this issue will be made in 6.

## 6. Discussion on Short Verse Composition

Let me discuss English and Japanese short verse composition, based on two haiku works and their Japanese translations, as well as on my own *tanka* work and its English version. This discussion is a development from my brief comments on the works (1) and (2) below in Kono (1997). Let the common basis for the contrast between the English and Japanese versions be “4 beats×3 lines.”

- |                                                                                                                |                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1)   Fróg ~   pónđ ~   ' ~   ' Ā  <br>  léaf ~   fálls ~   ín ~   ' Wíth-  <br>  óút ä   sóund. ~   ' ~   ' ~ | かわ   ず —   いけ   — —  <br>ひ と   は —   ち り   お つ  <br>お と   も —   な く   — —   <br>蛙池一葉散り落つ音も無く |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The above is one of the best haiku works in the JAL-sponsored US-Canada Children’s Haiku Contest 1990 with my translation in Japanese (Kono, 1997: 186). As you see, the original is written in type B, or type shorter than 5-7-5 syllables. Thanks to that, probably, I found it very easy to translate it into a fixed-form Japanese *haiku*. As a result, the first and last lines of both the English and Japanese versions include one or two silent beats, which sound like *yoin* (余韻), or lingering tones.

### (2) (Original)

- |                                                                                                                                 |                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Líke ä   frésh ~   spríng ~   bréeze, Thě  <br>  chíldrén òn   bícýclēs   ' ~   ' ~  <br>  Ríde ä-   lóng thě   strēet. ~   ' ~ | ① さわやかな<br>春風のように<br>自転車の<br>子ら道の辺を<br>駆け抜けて行く |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|

### (Shorter Version)

- |                                                                                                              |                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Spríng ~   bréeze, ~   ' ~   ' Thě  <br>  kíds òn   bíkes ~   ' ~   ' ~  <br>  Ríde ä-   lóng. ~   ' ~   ' ~ | ② ペダル漕ぐ<br>子ら春風と<br>なりて過ぐ<br>③ 春風や<br>自転車の子ら<br>駆け抜ける |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|

The original English version is one of the best haiku works in the Children’s Haiku Contest in Canada in 1990 (Kono, 1997: 194-195). Let me explain how I worked on my

translations.

- ① This is an almost literal verse translation of the original version, which, as you see, is written in type A, or 5-7-5 syllables type. Surprisingly, I spontaneously got what appeared to be a *tanka*. A haiku of type A seems to convey almost as much information as a *tanka*.
- ② This is not exactly a translated version, but a *haiku* of my own composition. I composed it, inspired by the message of the original English version.
- ③ This is a shortened version of ①. What I deleted to shorten the *tanka*-form version into a fixed-form *haiku* are: さわやかな, ように, 道の辺を, and 行く. The concept behind the deletion is *yojo* (余情), or implied lyricism, which means “the emotion or lyricism behind the verbal expressions.” It is supposed to be a key concept of short verse composition. A composer is not supposed to explain his/her emotion directly, but to describe a scene or an action so as to let a reader of the work appreciate the lyricism behind it.

Based on ③, I got an English version of type B, or type shorter than 5-7-5 syllables. This type appears to give a reader more *yoin*, or lingering tones, and thus more *yojo*, or implied lyricism, which should be a key concept of English haiku as well. Further discussion on this issue will be made in 7.

- |                         |        |
|-------------------------|--------|
| (3) “I love Canberra,   | キャンベラは |
| My beautiful hometown,” | 美しい街と  |
| Says Tom smiling,       | 語りたる   |
| .....                   | 愛郷少年   |
| His student days over,  | トムの笑顔よ |
| Here in snowy Akita.    | .....  |

Let me add a *tanka* work of my own and its English translation as an example of another type of short verse. I composed the work as a gift to Tom, an exchange student to a high school in Akita going back home in Australia. Trying to translate the original into a type A *tanka*, I surprisingly got what appeared to be a haiku, as you see in the first three lines of the English version above. Just as in the case of (2) ①, but in the opposite direction, a Japanese *tanka* could convey almost as much information as an English haiku of type A.

When I happened to get what appeared to be a haiku instead of a *tanka*, I thought I was lucky enough to include a *kotobagaki* (詞書), or foreword, inside the last two lines of the *tanka*

work, instead of adding it before the work. Later, however, I thought I should have made the first three lines into a type B five-line tanka and the last two into another one. I should say putting too much information into an English haiku or tanka is against the key concept of implied lyricism.

## 7. Discussion on Short Verse Teaching

In 6, I suggested that in the composition of an English haiku or tanka a type B should be preferred, stating it appears to give a reader more *yoin*, or lingering tones, which is associated with *yojo*, or implied lyricism, a key concept of short verse. What, then, is the implication of my suggestion to the teaching of short verse? Should you apply it directly to your English classroom, especially at junior or senior high school level?

I should say no. It would be advisable for you to have some knowledge of the prosody of English and Japanese, both in terms of phonetics and poetics, but in the actual teaching of English haiku and tanka to your students, all you should tell them might be:

Don't explain your emotions!

Just describe concisely the scene or action that has impressed you!

Write in as few words as possible without sticking to the 5-7-5(-7-7) syllable pattern.

Try to feel rhythm in your works.

Your students may find it difficult to feel rhythm in the works they try to compose. What should you do, then? Alongside composition work, it would be a good idea to give them chances to appreciate and try poem recitation in appropriate rhythms and tones. Why don't you enjoy it together with your students? After all, verse started as oral literature.

## 8. Conclusion

Here are five suggestions I offered as summary of my discussion on the composition of short verse, mainly haiku, and its teaching.

- (1) If you are to express a similar message in both haiku (English version) and *haiku* (Japanese version) in the 5-7-5 syllable pattern, you may think haiku conveys more information than *haiku* because of the difference of the rhythmic and syllabic structures of English and Japanese.
- (2) As a result of (1), you might spontaneously get what appears to be a (Japanese) *tanka* if you were to make a literal translation of a haiku into its *haiku* equivalent; conversely you might get what appears to be a(n) (English) haiku if you were to make a literal translation of a

*tanka* into its *tanka* equivalent.

- (3) In the translation of *haiku* into haiku or in the composition of haiku, you would feel it more appropriate to subdue your emotion in fewer words without sticking to the 5-7-5 syllable pattern, respecting “implied lyricism,” a key concept of *haiku* and of short verse in general.
- (4) According to (3), you are expected to encourage Japanese students to try composing haiku in concise verbal expressions in their usually assumed process from “*haiku* composition” to “translation into haiku.”
- (5) It would also be a good idea for you to appreciate and try poem recitation in appropriate rhythms and tones together with your students.

Finally, let me refer to some limitations in my presentation and the present report on it. When I wrote this report, I made some additions and revisions to the presentation, but I am afraid there may still remain a number of parts which need further proof and discussion. I also know my suggestions for teaching short verse need to be tested in practical classroom settings. I expect both academics and classroom teachers to give me comments and suggestions on my present paper.

## References

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