

英詩・・・英語スピーキングの教材として

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of poetry in an English conversation class and outlines the steps on how a poem may be selected and utilized to illustrate the rhyme, rhythm, and cadence of English. It is the writer's conviction that learning a poem is not only worthwhile but an important component in providing a feel for English that is often lacking in the conversation classroom. Selection of an appropriate and iconic poem (Robert Frost's Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening) for instruction is discussed and a step-by-step process of how a specific poem is dealt with is offered to demonstrate the possibilities of teaching / learning important concepts in English such as rhyme, syllables, and meter.

はじめに

英語の会話クラスの教材に詩を使用するにあたり、英語独特の韻やリズム、そして抑揚を解説するのに相応しい詩の選び方、並びにそれらの解説手法を検証する。詩を学ぶことはそれ自体有益であるばかりではなく、会話のクラスにおいて忘れられがちな「英語の感覚」を提供するのに欠かせない要素であると筆者は確信している。以上の主旨に相応しい詩（ロバートフロストの「雪のゆうべ森のそばにたたずんで」）の妥当性を論じると同時に、英語の重要な概念である韻や音節、韻律を、詩によって教え得る可能性を示すために、選択した詩をどのように活かしたのかを報告するものである。

Introduction

This paper will outline the rationale for using poetry for teaching English, considerations of selecting a poem to use, and suggestions and methods on using poetry.

Why use poetry?

Text in a conversation class can be varied (e.g., realia, business letters, casual emails, dialogs, reading selections). However, according to Maley and Duff (1989) literature and poetry have been regarded as impractical for foreign language learning lacking the utilitarianism of a dialog in a communicative approach. This view persists despite the contrivances of many communicative dialogs and the obvious place rhyme and cadence in poetry have in native-speakers' lives. Rhyme and meter are

features of children's nursery rhymes and lullabies. Mother Goose rhymes and Dr. Seuss stories are enduringly popular with children and are rife with various rhyme schemes and sophisticated meter (appendix 1).

Themes of poetry (death, love, nature, beauty, etc.) are common areas of human experience. Aspects of poetic convention (rhyme, rhythm, repetition, alliteration, etc.) are also universals in speech. Poems emphasize the rhythm and melody of languages. Phrasing, variation of pace, stress are naturally occurring. It can be argued that people usually do not speak in iambic pentameter unless they are characters in a Shakespeare play, but the value of poetry need not be so literal. In foreign language learning, the sound patterns of English poetry facilitates what Krashen calls "conscious learning and unconscious acquisition" of English.

Poems expose unexpected and creative uses of language with condensed expressions that require unpacking and interpretation. Poetry is the metaphor of everyday speech in what Pinker (1997) refers to as pedestrian poetry, the pervasive use of metaphor to frame how we deal with abstractions. Relationships are thought of in terms of health (e.g., A healthy relationship; The marriage is dead), arguments in terms of war (e.g., His position was indefensible; We won the argument), virtue is up (e.g., He is high-minded). We think in terms of metaphor; poetry is the distillate of our thoughts.

Creative expression combined with the limits of form may be especially appealing to students as an introduction to writing and language expression.

Students who don't like writing essays may like poetry, with its dearth of fixed rules and its kinship with rap. For these students, poetry can become a gateway to other forms of writing. It can help teach skills that come in handy with other kinds of writing—like precise, economical diction, for example. When Carl Sandburg writes, "The fog comes/on little cat feet," in just six words, he endows a natural phenomenon with character, a pace, and a spirit. All forms of writing benefits from the powerful and concise phrases found in poems (Simmons, 2014).

Selecting a poem

When choosing an appropriate poem for the class a teacher must consider poem length, the motivation and interests of the students, level of difficulty, the time available, modernity, and type of poem, e.g., rhymed, free verse, acrostic. The selected poem should also be one the teacher enjoys; passion will be apparent and hopefully transmitted to the students.

The goal of teaching a poem in my English conversation class is consciousness raising of stress, rhythm (meter), and rhyme in English; recitation of a poem with an opportunity to focus on the pronunciation of selected phonemes; and an introduction of the cultural background of the poem and poet. Therefore a somewhat well-known poem with clear, unexceptional rules regarding meter and rhyme scheme is necessary. A relatively contemporary poem in which vocabulary and syntax are more familiar to

students is preferable. And a poem that is short enough to be memorized but with enough contextual details to develop a narrative is ideal.

Some of the poems I have used in various classes are listed in the chart below.

Some suggested activities: Casey at the Bat, with its regular meter and rhyme and clear narrative structure, is suited to ordering stanza by stanza. Each of the 13 stanzas is printed on different colored paper or with different fonts; further, cut each stanza into lines. Based on the rhyme scheme and story, students reassemble the poem. Jaberwocky (featured in Lewis Carroll’s Through the Looking-Glass), famous for the nonsense words it employs, is an ideal way to identify parts of speech of unknown words in context. The sonnet in which Romeo and Juliet first speak to each other is a good introduction to Shakespeare and the use of metaphor. Emily Dickinson’s poem provides a universal theme cleverly expressed as well as interesting biographical material of the poet that may especially appeal to women. Another universal theme of choices made in life (with the narrator opting for the “road less traveled by”) in the iconic The Road Not Taken may be attractive to the nonconformist yen of young people.

Poem	Length	Meter	Rhyme Scheme	Narrative Theme	Vocabulary
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (Robert Frost)	16 lines / 4 stanzas (quatrains)	iambic tetrameter	AABA BBCB CCDC DDDD	taking time to watch woods & pulled away by obligations	short and simple high-frequency words
The Road Not Taken (Robert Frost)	20 lines / 4 stanzas (quintains or pentastiches)	loose iambic tetrameter	ABAAB CDCCD EFEEF GHGGH	choice at fork in road	some archaic difficult words e.g., “trodden”
Because I Could Not Stop for Death (E. Dickinson)	24 lines / 6 stanza (quatrains)	alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter	irregular rhyme	death personified	some low- frequency words
Romeo and Juliet sonnet Act I Scene 5 (Shakespeare)	14 line sonnet	loose iambic pentameter	ABAB CDCD EFEF GG	boy wants to kiss girl	archaic words and religious metaphors

Poem	Length	Meter	Rhyme Scheme	Narrative Theme	Vocabulary
Jaberwocky (Lewis Carroll)	28 lines / 7 stanzas (quatrains)	iambic tetrameter last line in each stanza iambic trimeter	stanzas with either ABAB or ABCB pattern with some internal rhyme	Father tells son about monster which son kills	nonsense words
Casey at the Bat (Ernest L. Thayer)	52 lines / 13 stanzas (quatrains)	iambic heptameter	each quatrain is AABB pattern	baseball hero strikes out	some difficult words; baseball idioms

However, there are features of these poems that make them less than ideal for an introduction of poetry in an English conversation class: The Road Not Taken has loose iambic tetrameter with lines ranging from eight to ten syllables, and Because I Could Not Stop for Death has an irregular rhyme scheme. The sonnet in Act I Scene 5 of Romeo and Juliet and Jaberwocky have vocabulary that is archaic or nonsensical. Casey at the Bat is too long to be recited easily and would require considerable time to be analyzed sufficiently.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is a suitable selection and fulfills the criteria mentioned above: It conforms perfectly with rules of rhyme and meter, the vocabulary is simple and mostly high frequency, and its relative brevity allows the features of English poetry to be economically and unambiguously introduced. One of Robert Frost's most popular and well-known poems, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, with the famous repetition of its last two lines, has been referenced numerous times in popular culture. Furthermore, Robert Frost (1874-1963) is in the pantheon of American poets, popular within his lifetime, and contemporary enough to make recordings of his readings available.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is a poem well-suited for the teaching/learning goals of getting a feel for the "music" of English--rhythm and rhyme; providing a text to recite, thus internalizing it while focusing on pronunciation of targeted phonemes; and introducing the students to a beloved poem and a well-known American poet.

What I do

Overview: I introduce and explain the first stanza of the poem at the beginning of the semester. I review the stanza by randomly calling on students to recite lines at the end of each class. I introduce a new stanza every few weeks. Toward the end of the semester I analyze the poem, briefly give biographical information on Robert Frost, and ask the students to recite the entire poem.

An information-based approach (teacher-centered) is used to introduce the poem and the terms necessary to facilitate understanding. Responses are elicited from students, but otherwise students receive explanation from the teacher. This minimizes class time spent on this activity and also assumes students have acquired some literary competence in L1. I write the first stanza on the blackboard plus the following linguistic terms:

syllable

vowel

consonant

stress

rhyme

These otherwise low frequency words are high frequency when explaining language and are therefore worthwhile. They are also essential concepts in understanding poetry and the different rhythm or “music” of English contrasted with Japanese. I explain each term, give examples, and then apply the information to the first stanza.

Because each individual kana character in the Japanese syllabary (typically CV, consonant + vowel) equals one syllable, students may not be aware of what a syllable actually is and how to recognize syllables in alphabetic languages.

An acknowledgement of the technical inaccuracies of the aforementioned is in order. I choose not to differentiate between syllable and mora at this time, nor do I recognize the Japanese orthographic representation of geminate consonants or nasal codas, in which more than one symbol may be used or our simplistic definition of syllable may be challenged. Our goal is consciousness raising, and a precise exposition is too unnecessarily time-consuming for this purpose.

The Japanese poetry form haiku is composed of three phrases totaling 17 syllables in a 5, 7, 5 construction. I explain that the 5/7/5 are not merely kana but syllables and that haiku can be written in languages other than Japanese. Presented are a haiku in Japanese, a romanized form to elucidate the CV character of Japanese syllables, and an English translation/approximation that follows the rules of the haiku poetry form.

ラジオ聞く	ra ji o ki ku	The radio's on
よく聞こえない	yo ku ki ko e na i	But I can't hear very well
蝉が鳴く	se mi ga na ku	Cicada singing

Syllables in the English example are delineated to show that it conforms to the syllabic rules of haiku (e.g., But / I / can't / hear / ve/ry / well). At this point it may be necessary to offer simple definitions of vowel and consonant [Vowels are sounds made with the mouth open without limiting air flow. Consonants are sounds made by forcing air through a limited passage, building up air

pressure and suddenly releasing it, or having air flow through the nose] and, building upon this, of syllable [Every separate and distinct vowel sound].

Illustrated: I write a few words on the blackboard, say each word emphasizing each separate vowel sound, and elicit from students the number of syllables. As answers are given, I write an interpunct to show the division of syllables and number each syllable.

a f•f o r d
1 2

w a•t e r•f a l l
1 2 3

v i l•l a g e
1 2

c o n•t e n t
1 2

p h o•t o•g r a p h
1 2 3

p h o•t o g r a•p h e r
1 2 3 4

I then ask students how many syllables are in each line of the first stanza of the poem and elicit eight.

Whose / woods / these / are / I / think / I / know 8
His / house / is / in/ the / vil/lage / though 8
He / will / not / see / me / stop/ping / here 8
To / watch / his / woods / fill / up / with / snow 8

Japanese is a syllable-timed language and English is a stress-timed language with significant prosodic implications. To clarify I use my given name as an example. In Japanese it is transliterated:

Katakana: Jonathan jo na sa n ジョ ナ サ ン

Each of the four syllables has approximately equal time, about one fourth the duration of the total utterance. The syllables are also equally loud. I contrast this with the three-syllable English pronunciation:

IPA: /'dʒɑ nə θən/

The stressed first syllable /'dʒɑ/ is louder and at least twice as long in duration as either the second or third syllables which are shorter and softer. I also acquaint the students with vowel reduction (i.e., schwa / ə /) in the unstressed syllables. So a simple definition of stress for our purposes thus far [the emphasis--loudness and length--given to a syllable].

Next I give an example of interference that might naturally occur when a native English speaker applies stress-timed rules to Japanese, a syllable-timed language.

かまくら ka ma ku ra /,kæ mə 'kær ə/

The first and third syllables receive secondary and primary stress respectively like in the word population /ˌpɒp.jəˈleɪ.jən/. The second and fourth syllables are unstressed and subject to vowel reduction. Students may be familiar with such an accent and now have an explanation of why it occurs--interference from L1. Similarly, Japanese speakers may impose aspects of Japanese onto English production. Students then identify the stressed syllables of the words previously divided into syllables, with an example of meaning changing with stress, and the impact of stress on syllabic realization.

a f•f o r d

1 2

w a•t e r•f a l l

1 2 3

v i l•l a g e

1 2

c o n•t e n t

1 2

something contained

c o n•t e n t

1 2

satisfied

p h o•t o•g r a p h

1 2 3

p h o•t o g•r a•p h e r

1 2 3 4

I explain the poem's iambic tetrameter and point out that the first-syllable stress of village and stopping (the only multisyllabic words in the first stanza) must align with the rhythmic structure of the poem, in this case duh-DUH times four or (x / x / x / x /) for each line.

Whose **woods** these **are** I **think** I **know**

His **house** is **in** the **village** **though**

He **will** not **see** me **stopping** **here**

To **watch** his **woods** fill **up** with **snow**

Rhyme simply defined [Words that share the same last sound], I illustrate with several monosyllabic examples of a shared final /u/ and include homophones to emphasize that orthography and meaning are inconsequential: blue blew, you ewe, to two too, zoo, new knew, grew, who, shoe, queue, view, coup coo.

I write a few monosyllabic words on the blackboard that are easy to rhyme (three, cat, white, red, king, and cut). Students are divided into groups of three or four and write a list of rhymes for their assigned word. Representatives of the groups write their rhymes under the corresponding word. The words are reviewed and errors are discussed. I then use some of words to write simple four-line poems to provide examples of different rhyme schemes.

I am the king	A	I have a cat	A	His name is Ted	A
I like to sing	A	My cat is white	B	He's hungry but	B
And drink tea	B	And he is fat	A	I gave him a nut	B
Under a tree	B	He doesn't bite	B	So now he is fed	A

Time permitting, I opt to take rhyme schemes to a more sophisticated level by introducing song lyrics. Popular songs are authentic models of language and often good examples of poetic text. Regarding the first verse of All My Loving by Paul McCartney (1963), the first two lines form a couplet with an example of the two-syllable rhyme kiss you/miss you:

Close your eyes and I'll <u>kiss you</u>	A
Tomorrow I'll <u>miss you</u>	A

The third line is melodically different, has eight syllables (longer than the two couplets), and ends with a different rhyme:

Remember I'll always be <u>true</u>	B
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The fourth and fifth lines form another couplet with the syllables way/day:

And then while I'm <u>away</u>	C
I'll write home every <u>day</u>	C

And the verse ends with a melody echoing the third line and matching it in syllables and rhyme, true/you:

And I'll send all my loving to <u>you</u>	B
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With this example we have a rhyming pattern that matches meter and melody. A benefit of using song lyrics, especially of songs the students like and know, is that they facilitate memorization and unselfconscious mimicry of pronunciation and intonation.

With the concept of rhyming schemes understood, students can identify the rhyme pattern of the first stanza.

Whose woods these are I think I <u>know</u>	A
His house is in the village <u>though</u>	A
He will not see me stopping <u>here</u>	B
To watch his woods fill up with <u>snow</u>	A

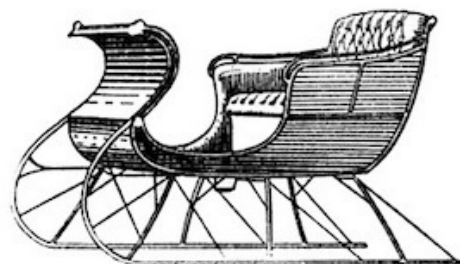
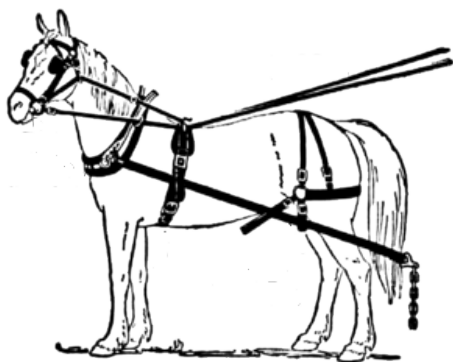
When the second stanza is introduced, students will discover a chain rhyme; the third line rhyme is carried over to the next stanza. A review of the syllabic constraints and meter of the poem is also provided with the introduction of each additional stanza.

My little horse must think it queer	B	8 syllables
To stop without a farmhouse near	B	8 syllables
Between the woods and frozen lake	C	8 syllables
The darkest evening of the year	B	8 syllables

A language-based approach is employed to review the poem as text. Difficult vocabulary is covered. In my experience lexical items to spend time on are:

woods	dual plural / singular
queer	<i>strange</i> and its slang meaning <i>homosexual</i>
farmhouse	<i>house on a farm</i>
harness	along with the concept of harness bells
sweep	(noun) <i>steady moving force</i>
downy	<i>soft</i> (cf. the name of a fabric softener)
flake	<i>snow</i>
promises	in this case <i>appointments</i> or <i>things to do</i>
miles	in this case <i>a long way</i>

The concept of a harness and sleigh can be made quickly clear with a drawing on the blackboard or an illustration.



The idea of harness bells or sleigh bells can be reinforced with the chorus of the well-known song Jingle Bells (originally titled The One Horse Open Sleigh) by James Pierpont (1857).

Jingle bells, Jingle bells,
Jingle all the way;
Oh! what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh.

A paraphrastic-approach attempts to preserve the essential meaning of the text while rewording the poem in simpler language. I assign stronger students the task of paraphrasing the stanzas to their peers in groups. This is challenging for the stronger students while allowing weaker students greater comprehension.

Finally a stylistic-approach is utilized to discuss the language used, the repetition of the last two lines, and feeling this conveys. I remind students that these last two lines are quite famous and have had a considerable cultural impact. I play a recording of Robert Frost reading Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, and students are asked to notice the phrasing and timing of the poet.

Conclusion

With a relatively small investment in time, students are able to memorize and understand a culturally significant poem. The importance of rhyme and rhythm in English has been highlighted, and by internalizing the poem, students are provided a mnemonic for the feel and music of English.

References

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Appendix 1

Old Mother Goose,
When she wanted to wander,
Would ride through the air
On a very fine gander.
Jack's mother came in,
And caught the goose soon,
And mounting its back,
Flew up to the moon.

[From I. Opie and P. Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1951, 2nd ed., 1997), pp. 88-90.]

Do you like green eggs and ham?

I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

I do not like green eggs and ham.

Would you like them here or there?

I would not like them here or there.

I would not like them anywhere.

I do not like green eggs and ham.

I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

[From Dr. Seuss (Random House) 1960.]