

## **Interpreting and Intercultural Communication Aspects of a Haiku-in-English Competition**

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In mid-2009 at Kochi University in Japan, a Haiku-in-English Competition was held. An extra dimension of this competition was that entrants also needed to write a Japanese-language explanation of their English-language haiku in Japanese. Haiku genre was chosen because its form is a Japanese cultural artifact, and as such should already be schematically familiar to the majority of competition entrants who were Japanese. This was a spin-off from an activity in an English writing course. The focus of the research reported here is on haiku explanation texts, which are examined as introspective accounts of a haiku composition's language, content, and inspiration. In effect these were to be interpretations of discourse in one language presented in another language. Based on theme/rheme analyses of explanation texts, the utility and effectiveness of explanations were found to be partial. This can be partly explained by the novelty factor of having to explain one's haiku composition, which is better left to the controlled environment of the classroom.

Being short, haiku can be a utilitarian way to draw out linguistic and cross-cultural aspects of translation and interpretation from first to second language (L2) and also from second to first language (L1). This is an account of how these processes occurred both in the controlled learning environment of a university writing program in 2008 and 2009 and the uncontrolled context of a haiku-in-English competition in mid-2009.

The competition (run from May to July 2009) is the main focus later in this paper. However, its development, based on experiences in an English writing program for undergraduate International Communication students at Kochi University in 2008, also needs to be presented. The competition became a chance to explore how students would attend to making haiku in English and then what they would say given an opportunity to explain their haiku in their own language. Further, within the context of the university, this project was a chance for action research to try different ways to use haiku-in-English in both a controlled classroom environment and also the uncontrolled writing environment of a writing competition.

First the haiku poetry genre, Japanese haiku, English haiku, and haiku-in-English need to be explained. Following that, the controlled (lessons) and uncontrolled (competition) contexts are described. Then, findings from data analysis are presented. Finally, as a work in progress, issues relating to the development of a cross-cultural communication sense are discussed, which deserve further development and investigation.

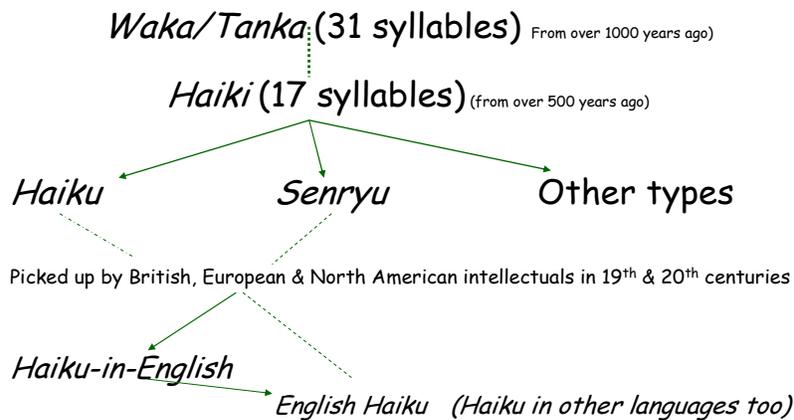


Figure 1. Schema Representing the Historical Development of Haiku-in-English  
(Source: Based partly on Haiku Society of America (2004) definitions).

### Background

#### *Haiku, Japanese Haiku, English Haiku, and Haiku-in-English*

Why haiku? Haiku are a Japanese cultural (literary) artifact familiar to the Japanese people taking part in the competition. Haiku are an essentially Japanese poetry genre, probably mistakenly called Japanese limericks in that they are shorter than limericks, tend to lack rhyme and tempo and are more reflective, descriptive, and even metaphysical rather than funny. They grew out of longer waka and tanka forms to become simpler (normally 17 syllables and nominally 5+7+5 or 5+5+7 syllables per line). Figure 1 maps their development from Japanese literary generic form to English.

Haiku are characterized by description reflecting a feeling, tone, or atmosphere usually centered around seasons. Since the late nineteenth century, a culture of writing haiku in English and other languages has developed, especially in the United States. Nowadays haiku are used in schools for English composition classes.

Many English haiku do away with syllable limitations, season imagery, and metaphor conventions, aiming instead to convey images or simply the poet's words. It should be noted now that English haiku are not the subject of this paper. Rather, the haiku compositions are simply required to fit a frame derived from the original Japanese syllable count. Also, the writers, being Japanese, presume that they may compose haiku similarly to how they would

compose Japanese haiku. In this sense, haiku-in-English may be taken to mean Japanese haiku in English.

Despite some books about haiku, especially haiku writing in English, relevant academic literature seems scant before the current century. Haiku appear in Jack Kerouac's novel, *The Dharma Burns* (1986). In later work, he advised "a real haiku's got to be as simple as porridge and yet make you see the real thing . . ." (Pop, 2006, para. 6). Regarding form, Kerouac thought haiku in English and other western languages did not have to fit 17 syllables or conform to "other poetic tricks . . . just three short lines that say a good deal" (Pop, 2006, para. 8). This approach has informed and inspired a lot of writers of haiku in English for their own sake to the extent that even translations of Japanese haiku become free from many form constraints. Higginson (1985) gives a detailed account of development of haiku genre in and outside of Japan. Yet, it would seem that no strict rules regarding form is the orthodoxy of haiku written in English. This is reinforced by a Japanese commentator's voice warning against "spending too much time counting syllables rather than enhancing our observation" (Shirane, 1999, as cited in Roberts, 2005, p. 203). Shirane's rationale is simple: that English should not try to replicate the rules that apply to the Japanese language. Rather the essence of the subject is primary.

In this vein of explicating and reflecting on observation, Smith (2003) advocates haiku as a tool for developing young students' literacy skills and literary awareness. She says, "Those sweet 17 syllables can provide opportunity for students to practice old-fashioned, pencil, scratch-out revision in a short, manageable piece of writing" (p. 20). In a nutshell, here is the initial rationale for the form which haiku in the current competition were supposed to take, with an emphasis on "short" and "manageable."

On composition, Henderson (2004, p. 188) presents four general rules for translated haiku based on Japanese archetypes, including:

- wariness of syllabification based on Japanese norms (discussed below);
- reference to seasons is not always direct;
- focus on one event;
- happening in present time.

Revision of haiku is advised by Reichhold (2002), who works with a set of 84 rules (of which fewer than 10 refer to form and language choice; rather she seems to see the sensibility of a composition as paramount). Haiku-in-English in the recent competition have rules only regarding syllable number and form, but for reasons not related to literary composition.

#### *Writing Haiku in English in Lessons and in the Competition*

In the writing course—and competition—writers had to work within a 16- to 18-syllable frame. This was partly to maintain some similarity to haiku composition in Japanese and partly to pressure entrants to think about how to manipulate English to fit the syllable parameters. The main purpose was pedagogical—to show how, at the point of discourse or text composition, Japanese and English have different phonological, syntactic, and stylistic

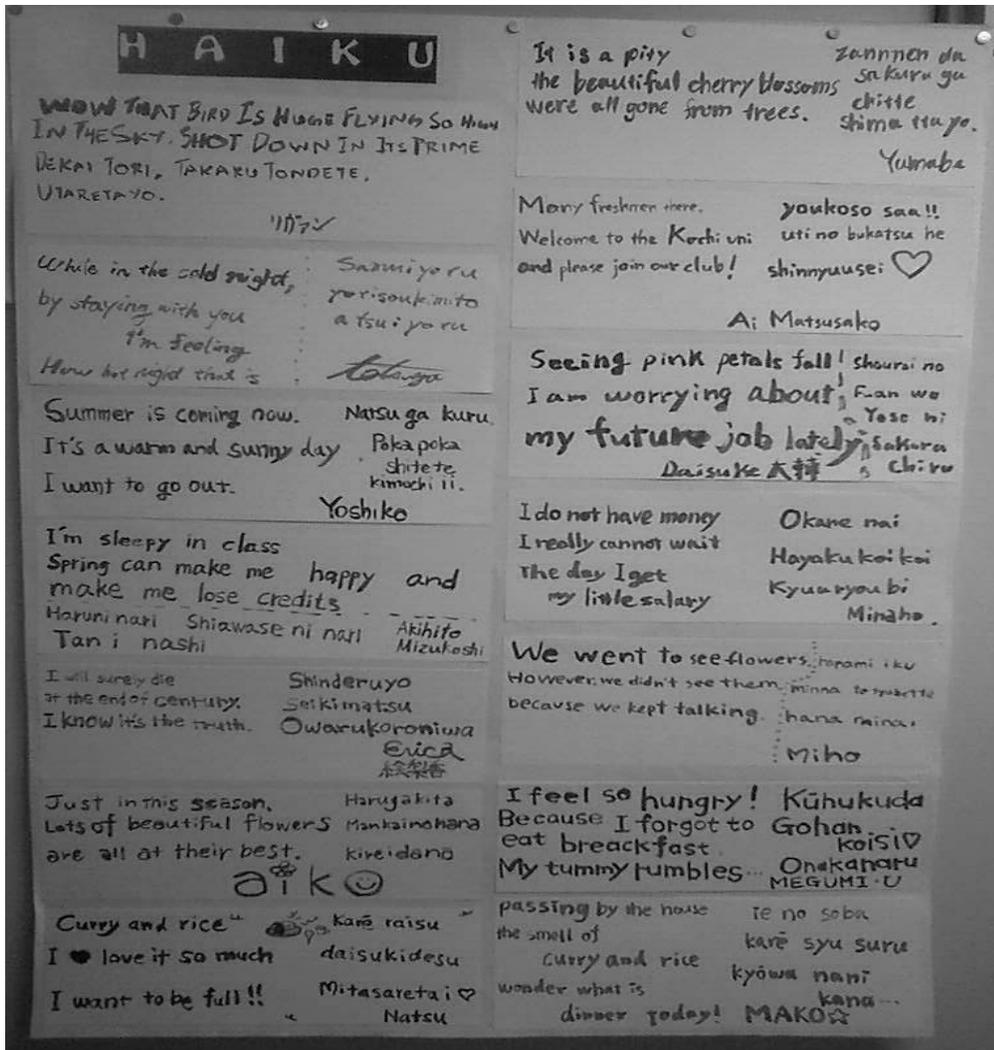


Figure 2. Selected Haiku in English and Japanese translation on display, June 2008.

text composition, Japanese and English have different phonological, syntactic and stylistic assumptions. These in turn affect the language form, which then affects the semantics in the discourse. Reichhold (2002) makes an observation that English tends to be more succinct quality than Japanese within a frame with a given number of syllables. Further, if writers (i.e., students) were to engage in conveying meaning appropriately through English and in Japanese, they needed to be aware of essential different assumptions carried along with either language.

Figure 2 shows students' haiku from 2008 English writing course as a poster. Though it is unclear in the haiku which were composed—the Japanese or the English—and which were translated, this is evidence that Japanese students are able to render haiku in English appropriately within a 16- to 18-syllable frame.

The following sections detail how haiku-in-English came to occur, and the evolving rationale to hold the competition developing through delivery of the English writing course in 2008.

### *Haiku-In-English in Writing Course Lessons*

In the 2008 course, students had to present their own haiku in English and in Japanese, and also explain it briefly in English. At the time, it was not possible to record these explanations either in writing or audio-visually (though I had done this in Australia in 2003 with a similar multilingual English writing class of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and German students). However, I became interested in writers' explanations of haiku as first-person interpretations of their own work. At the same time, for different reasons (e.g., as a non-curricular university activity) the Haiku-In-English Competition developed.

Originally, in the writing course, making haiku in English was used as a way to demonstrate first-hand how literal translation from a first language is not an appropriate way to write in a second language, mainly due to differences in syntax and semantic representation. It was important to dispel this habit before the students began composition of longer texts in English. But translation was still common. As a way to get around this, students were asked to give verbal accounts of their language choices. These became de facto in-class explanations of the haiku, and included cultural assumptions and themes as well as language forms. In fact, students were more forthcoming with cultural aspects than language aspects. These explanations were given when students were presenting their haiku aloud in front of the class. It became clear that students were interpreting their own compositions for their peers. In the first instance it would seem that interpreting haiku about Japanese student environments and life for Japanese students was a redundant exercise, but in fact students were producing the same discourse through an alternative genre to haiku: as an explanation.

Besides the haiku, students were explaining what they wanted to say in their compositions:

- at greater length;
- with information ordered in a different way, as to fit the structure of a different genre;
- in a different language when explained in Japanese.

In effect, important elements of intercultural communication were taking place: interpretation and representation of meaning in a clearer more appropriate form. In the context of the lessons, this was significant for assessment of students' learning: if they could convey accurately aspects of what they had written back in their L1, there was evidence of successful L2 mental processing and probably learning.

High interest developed among students when they were asked to write their choices of favorite haiku for exhibition outside of class. It was from this point that a haiku translation competition as an extra-curricular activity began to develop.

#### *Writing Haiku-In-English as a Competition*

There are numerous English haiku competitions in and outside of Japan, as any simple internet search can list. However, in Japan, it seemed that translating Japanese-language haiku into English would be a likely source of competition entries, not to mention plagiarism which would rob the exercise of genuine artistic or real intellectual integrity. Initially, as an anti-plagiarism device, it was conceived to have a haiku-explanation component. It seemed that explaining the haiku in the same language would be unconstructive, as it seemed to beg repetition of the haiku itself simply as a longer text. Then, it was conceived that this could give the competition additional integrity as a holistic expression of both the actual haiku-in-English and also the inspiration and composition process. From a data-collection perspective, explanations could potentially be used as individuals' introspective or retrospective accounts of their own work. However, in order to avoid repetition of the haiku itself and to get closer to a writer's own sense of their own work, soliciting explanations in a writer's own mother language seemed workable.

Rationale for this lies in Gee's (1986) concepts of Primary Discourse (what people grow up with, at home, etc.) and Secondary Discourse (discourses that people enter into in contexts remote from their primary discourse cultures and communities). In other words, after engaging in mental processing for writing something personally and culturally familiar in a L2 (i.e., English), competition entrants were required to return to their L1 to account for the sense, meaning, and form of their haiku.

Some piloting of the competition entries was done. Despite explicit directions to write haiku in English and explanations in Japanese, of five writers, three wrote all in English, one made haiku and explanation all bilingual, and one wrote the haiku in English and Japanese but a Japanese explanation! Extra feedback comments included no clear understanding of the purpose of the explanation. In lieu of this, the explanation component was downplayed in the competition. However, the original (i.e., haiku-in-English and explanation-in-Japanese) format was maintained.

#### *Evaluating Haiku and their Explanations—Judging in the Competition*

Judging of the haiku-in-English was conducted by three judges: an English native speaker, a Japanese native speaker, and a non-native speaker of English and Japanese, who all had been living in Japan for over 15 years and engaged in teaching and translating in Kochi University's Department of International Studies.

Judging took place in two stages: first the haiku-in-English, and second, in the case of tied scores, the quality of the explanations was scored. Criteria for judging are presented in Figure 3.

<b>Summary Version of Haiku-in-English Competition Judging Guidelines</b>			
<b>A. First Round: The HAIKU</b>			
<b>1 Is the haiku in English?</b> (Maximum 3 points)			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>2 How is the quality of the haiku?</b> (Maximum (3+3+3+3) 12 points)			
<b>a. Can you see what inspires the haiku, and does the haiku inspire you?</b>			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>b. Are the contents clear and understandable, not just in the language but in what you understand in the language?</b>			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>c. Is the language appropriate and accurate (correct and suitable) and have different aspects of language been used for literary effect?</b>			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>d. What is your overall impression of the haiku?</b>			
Unsatisfactory (0 points)	A little good (1 point)	Generally good (2 points)	Meritorious (3 points)
<b>B. Second Round: The EXPANATION</b> [if necessary] (Maximum (3+3+3+1) 10 points)			
<b>1 Inspiration</b>			
<b>Does the writer explain how he or she came to think of the haiku, what he or she was thinking about or feeling, etc.?</b>			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>2 Contents</b>			
<b>Does the writer say what the haiku is about, or what different things in the haiku (ie images, suggestions, metaphor, ambiguity, etc.) are or are about?</b>			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>3 Language</b>			
<b>Does the writer explain anything about the language (words, grammar, style, structure, etc.)?</b>			
No (0 points)	A little (1 point)	Generally (2 points)	Yes (3 points)
<b>4 Overall Impression</b>			
<b>Would you like to give the explanation an extra point?</b>			
No (0 points)	Yes (1 point)		

*Figure 3.* Criteria as Guidelines for Judging in the Kochi University Haiku-in-English Competition 2009.

In Figure 3, Section B1, evaluation criteria are identifiable:

- *inspiration*: the cultural milieu in which the haiku is written, including cultural assumptions and sense;
- *contents*: what was actually written, clarity of the text, how intellectually reasonable, how aesthetic and appropriate;
- *language*: accuracy and appropriateness of language including skill in manipulating English lexis (vocabulary, expressions) and syntax (grammar, morphology).

As can be seen, judges were to look for how competition entrants explained their haiku regarding each criterion.

As mentioned, judging was done by English and Japanese native speakers and a non-native speaker of both languages. This was for the purpose of fairness in the competition by giving equitable balance to how haiku and explanations would be read and understood. This factor applies also in the research aspect of the competition—a way to negate lingua-cultural bias. In other words, it was decided to examine the choices of explanations by judges of different language backgrounds to try to find what could be considered reasonable and appropriate interpretations.

#### Haiku-In-English: Composition and Explanation

##### *Explanations of Haiku as Translations or as Interpretation*

*Translation, interpretation, and interpreting* are different in regards to terminology: whereas translation is understood to focus more on re-encoding discourse as language text from one language into a different target language, interpreting is the practice of re-encoding discourse into a culturally appropriate form in the target language which is appropriate in the culture of the context of the target language. Interpretation can be understood as the process of interpreting, while an interpretation is an understanding of the meaning from a given cultural or ideological standpoint. To return to interpreting, the notion of *sense* is important. Salama-Carr (2008) sees sense being:

Composed of an explicit part (what is actually written or spoken) and an implicit part (what is unsaid but nevertheless meant by the author and understood by the listener/reader, the latter not to be confused with the author's intention). Full comprehension of sense depends on the existence of a sufficient level of shared knowledge between interlocutors. (p. 145)

In the current research context, a limitation in the relevance of this view is that interpreting is seen as an approach to translation. However the Japanese-language explanations of haiku-in-English are meant to be explanations about the haiku texts rather

than translations of them. Still, haiku explanations become less accessible if the sense of the haiku cannot be conveyed or understood.

Regarding *shared cultural knowledge* between writer and reader, where there is a gap, common sense dictates two options: adjustment/substitution, or ignoring the point to be interpreted. On this point, Baker (1992) suggests the advantage of *cultural* equivalence “replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target language item which does not have the same propositional meaning” (p 30). As an example, Higashino (2001) considers how the Japanese “shiro tab” (actually, “footwear”) becomes conveyed as “white gloves” being a culturally equivalent expression in English in a translation of a Japanese-language novel.

Such substitution can work effectively to overcome this limitation, but these approaches are for simple translation of actual language and discourse. Instead, in the competition, explaining what was in the haiku (i.e., contents and language) and how they came to be written (i.e., inspiration) was sought. This becomes clearer in analysis of explanations in winning entries selected by the judges. The identical texts of haiku and explanations of the five top entries plus commentary are reproduced later in Table 1. Translations of Entries 22 and 72 are shown later in Table 3.

### *Explaining Haiku-in-English*

Translation issues sprang up early. In contrast to the multilingual ESL class in Sydney in 2003, where English was the lingua franca of the institution and the community, at Kochi University Japanese is the lingua franca. However, in both Sydney and in Kochi University, extra aspects of translation needed to be highlighted. These included translating the sense in a haiku in one language into understandable terms in another culture in which the same assumed sense may not exist. Here lies crossover into the interpreting field and its inseparable link with translation processes.

However the place of interpretation became noticeably different at Kochi University. This is due to four factors:

1. Different lingua franca prevail in the university and the community (Japanese).
2. Haiku could be composed in Japanese in the first instance and then translated to English. Alternatively, they could be written in English in the first instance. These are two quite different types of literacy event (Barton, 1994; Brice Heath, 1982; Gee, 1986) (i.e., an event in which certain literacy skills are used, in this case writing in Japanese compounded with translation into English on the one hand; simply writing in English on the other). In class it is possible to control the language of composition. However, in the context of the competition, the composition event is done by individual writers in an undisclosed way. In other words, in the competition we cannot really know how entrants made their English haiku. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a proportion of the English haiku would have involved at least partial translation of original Japanese.

3. Translation is perhaps the most extensive and pervasive practice involving foreign languages in Japan. In learning institutions, translation from the L2 into Japanese is most common. In short, English translation is normal and even second nature for many Japanese. This is likely to be true for people engaging in a literacy event in another language for the first time, such as writing a haiku in English.
4. Translation from Japanese, in which haiku are a native cultural artifact, into English would necessitate some interpretation in order to make the English version appropriate or coherent, or both.

### Method

#### *Exploratory and Action Research Agendas*

As mentioned earlier, the Haiku-in-English Competition was a context for exploratory and action research. Specifically, haiku explanation data was sought in order to explore how students entering the competition would explain their haiku compositions. As action research, the haiku-in-English competition project was part of a reflective process articulated by the action research cycle first developed by Kurt Lewin (see Kolb, 1984) and developed by others. The research model best fitting the research reported here is presented in Figure 4.

The action research agenda was to assess if and how the uncontrolled writing of haiku-in-English could compare with controlled writing in lessons as a way to have students use and manipulate English within the frame of a familiar Japanese literary cultural artifact.

The way to gauge this was to analyze explanation texts for their value as accounts of the inspiration, contents, and language form in the haikus. Findings would then be used to influence further planning and in competitions and lessons.

#### *Haiku Explanation Data*

In the first instance, appropriate explanations in the entrants' L1 (i.e., Japanese) were required. In order to demonstrate this to entrants in the month prior to the close of entries, workshops were held using adapted materials from the writing course, but were attended only spasmodically. Also provided, on the reverse side of each entry form, was a model haiku written in English and a model explanation in Japanese.

#### *Explanation Text Analysis*

Explanations to be analyzed were planned to be from the top meritorious group of entries as decided by the independent judges. Whatever the results, it was predicted that usable explanation texts would eventuate and they did. Then theme/rheme analysis (explained later) of appropriate explanation texts was used as a way to assess how writers of haiku explanations were actually explaining their haiku.



Figure 4. The Action Research Cycle  
(Source: *Children as Community Researchers*, 2009)

#### *Data Collection*

At the end of June 2009, 87 entries were collected, copies made, names removed for anonymity purposes, and supplied to judges. In the first instance, only haiku were judged independently by the three judges. As it turned out, there were two tied scores, requiring the five top-scoring entries to have the explanations of their haiku judged. The texts of these five entries are reproduced as received in Table 1, in descending order from winner to fifth place.

#### Results

##### *Competition Results*

Of 87 entries, 75 were by people identifiable as Japanese native speakers or from Japanese culture, 2 were non-Japanese, and 10 gave no details. Sixty-seven entrants were aged between 16 and 20 years of age, and 10 were between ages 21 and 23.

Regarding explanations, only a minority of entrants (43) wrote them in Japanese, and of these only 31 were long enough to be usable (i.e., more than one clause). However, 27 entrants wrote usable explanations in English and Japanese. Thus out of 87 entrants, 58 provided usable explanation data for analysis, including bilingual explanations.

Competition judges selected five haiku entries which scored markedly higher than the rest. Of these, only Entries 72 and 22 were usable as data for the current research, because they did not have the interference of an additional English version, as in Entries 48 and 49. Analyses and English translations of Entries 72 and 22 are provided later in Table 3.

Table 1

*Judges' Selections of Best Haiku and Explanations, plus Comments on Usability as Data for Analysis Research on Interpretation Aspects* (Source: Kochi University Haiku-in-English Competition 2009 entries)

	Haiku and Explanations	Commentary
72	<p><i>Melancholy rain is changed to happy rain by a new umbrella</i></p> <p>あめのひは いつも きぶんが しずみが ちだったが、 あたらしいかさを かったことで ぎやくに あめが たのしいものに かわった。 [amenohiwa itsumo kibun shizumiga chidattaga, atarashiikasawo kattakotode gyakuni amega tanoshiimononi kawatta.]</p>	<p><b>Usable</b> Japanese explanation. filling out explicitly many details of the inspiration and relevant content of the haiku</p>
49	<p><i>It's almost winter The leaves of the maple tree become embarrassed</i></p> <p>紅葉している楓の葉が まるで顔が 赤くなっているようだから。 <i>Because the leaf of a maple turning red is a circle and a face seems to turn red</i> [kouyoushiteirukaedenohaga marudekaoga akakunatteiruyoudakara.]</p>	<p>Filling out explicitly many details of the inspiration and relevant content of the haiku</p>
48	<p><i>In rainy season, the sky is about to cry as if it were my heart.</i></p> <p>梅雨(夏)の 季節の 俳句です。一人々の心は よく 梅雨の季節に ひどい雨や じめじめした気候のせいで 悲しくなります <i>This haiku is about summer. In summer of rainy season, people's heart often sad because of heavy rain and damp weather. So, I express it.</i> [tsuyu(natsu)no kisetsuno haiku desu. hitoritorinokokorowa yokutsuyunokisetsuni hidoiameya jimejimeshitakikounoseide kanashiku narimasu.]</p>	<p>Bilingual explanation, but a succinct orientation to the general theme ("summer") and offering details of inspiration and relevant content of the haiku. Interestingly the explanation refers to experience of general "people," whereas haiku refers to the writer ("my") individually. Final explicit comment, that the haiku is a response to the particular inspiration, gives the explanation an image of completion</p>
40	<p><i>In rainy season clouds pile up on each other just like my laundry</i></p> <p><i>This haiku is about rainy season. In rainy season, people are put out because the laundry has piled up.</i></p>	<p>English-only explanation (not usable). Succinct orientation to the general theme ("rainy season"), but explanation seems skewed from actual content of the haiku.</p>

22	<i>Under the roof I only hear the sound of rain like a hard drumroll</i>	<b>Usable</b> Japanese explanation, yet is so succinct that it reads more as a translation than interpretive comment on content or inspiration.
	屋根の下 聞こえてくるのは 雨の 音だけ。まるで 激しいドラムロールの様に [yanenoshita kikoerunowa ameno otodake. marude hageshiidorumuro-ruyouni.]	

(NB. Numbers refer to recorded competition entry numbers; phonetic rendering of Japanese in italicized roman script underneath original explanation text; Japanese particle は is represented as “*wa*” for accurate English-style phonemic representation.)

### *Analysis of Two Appropriate Explanations*

This section takes two appropriate explanation texts and seeks to identify characteristics of appropriate explanations in as far as they should act as commentary on the haiku-in-English, their inspiration, contents, and language. First, the analytical approach—theme/rheme analysis—is introduced and justified before analysis is presented and discussed.

*Theme/rheme analysis.* A straight-forward way to deconstruct informational content in written discourse is provided by systemic functional linguistics. It is through applying concepts of theme and rheme that forensic sense of intended meaning in writer’s discourse can be made. In a clause, *theme* is a starting point and incorporates known information (normally up to but not including the verb), whereas *rheme* includes the rest (Butler, 2003; Halliday, 1985, 1994). Butler (2003) notes that:

The Theme can be realized in different ways in different languages: in English, it is indicated by being put in first position in the clause; on the other hand it is claimed to be marked by the postposition *wa* [in Japanese]. (p. 114)

Butler (2003), citing Halliday (1994), also notes that theme is defined functionally, not positionally. In this sense, a *wa*-segment from a Japanese clause may occur elsewhere besides the start. This notwithstanding, the theme/rheme structure concurs with Rutherford’s (1987) observation of the sequential order of information in sentences, which of course can vary according to syntax rules of different languages. Another affective factor is what a writer/speaker may decide to say first, next, and even last.

It is on this point that theme/rheme deconstruction may shed light on pragmatic features of what writers of haiku explanations actually say. Mentioning pragmatics draws in notions of deixis (reference), presupposition (assumptions of understanding by the speaker/writer), and implicature (suggested or implied reference or meaning on the basis of assumed knowledge, contextual familiarity, and referents in the discourse itself) (see Brown & Yule, 1983, pp. 28-33). This is easily seen in declarative mood texts such as the haiku explanations.

An example from a Japanese-language history and geography textbook (from Mizuno, n.d., Example 31) shows how theme/rheme may vary from Japanese to English. Mizuno



Table 2  
*Theme/Rheme Deconstruction of Examples i and ii*

	Theme	Rheme	Comments
i. Japanese	日本列島は nipponrettoo wa <i>Japanese archipelago-WA</i>	気候の地域差が顕著である kikoo no tiikisa ga kenchode aru <i>conspicuous be</i>	Unmarked themes in English & Japanese with just an agent without any qualifying adjectives or extra information. Theme in Japanese L1 differs literally from English L2.
English	<i>The Japanese climate</i>	<i>differs greatly region to region</i>	
ii. Japanese	日本の大部分の地域で最もよい季節は nippon no daibubun no tiiki de mottomoyoi kisetu wa <i>Japan-NO almost all parts-DE best season-WA</i>	春と秋で haru to aki de <i>spring and autumn be</i>	Marked theme in English and Japanese being extra information orientating the main message in the rheme. Japanese unmarked theme not identified by <i>wa</i> .
English	<i>In almost all parts of Japan</i>	<i>the best seasons are spring and autumn</i>	

*Theme/Rheme Analysis of Two Japanese-Language Explanations of Haiku-in-English.* Table 3 presents theme/rheme analyses of Entries 22 and 72, respectively. The most noticeable feature is the explanation of Entry 22 being a de facto Japanese translation of the haiku, while Entry 72 detail is more an interpretation or commentary being longer with more.

Table 3

*Theme/Rheme Analysis of the Explanations of Haiku-in-English Entries 22 and 72*

<p><b>Haiku No. 22</b> Under the roof I only hear the sound of rain like a hard drumroll. Explanation: 屋根の下 聞こえてくるのは 雨の音だけ。まるで 激しいドラムロールの様に [ yanenoshita kikoerunowa ameno otodake. marude hageshiidorumuro-ruyouni.]</p>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Rhemes</b>
<p>i. 屋根の下 聞こえてくるのは yanenoshita kikoerunoWA <i>roof's underneath (come to be) hearing WA</i> ii. まるで maruDE <i>(all) around DE</i></p>	<p>i. 雨の音だけ。 ameno otodake. <i>Rain's sound only.</i> ii. 激しいドラムロールの様に hageshiidorumuro-ruyouni <i>violent drumroll's seeming (like)</i></p>
<p>i. <i>underneath the roof what (I) come to hear</i> ii. <i>all around.</i></p>	<p>i. <i>is the sound of rain.</i> ii. <i>seems like a violent drum-roll</i></p>
<p><b>Haiku No. 72</b> Melancholy rain is changed to happy rain by a new umbrella. Explanation: あめのひは いつも きぶんが しずみが ちだったが、 あたらしいかさを かったことで ぎやくに あめが たのしいものにかわった。 [amenohiwa itsumo kibun shizumiga chidattaga, atarashiikasawo kattakotode gyakuni amega tanoshiimononi kawatta].</p>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Rhemes</b>
<p>i. あめのひは amenohiWA <i>rainy day(s) WA</i> ii. あたらしいかさを かったことで atarashiikasawo kattakotoDE</p>	<p>i. いつも きぶんが しずみが ちだったが、 itsumo kibun shizumiga chidattaga, <i>always feelings depression GA[emphasis postposition] tending (to) GA .</i> ii. ぎやくに あめが たのしいものに</p>

<i>new umbrella WO [accusative] bought DE</i>	かわった。 gyakuni amega tanoshiimononi kawatta <i>opposite (in)to rain GA happy thing (in)to changed</i>
<b>i.</b> <i>on rainy days</i> <b>ii.</b> <i>on buying a new umbrella</i>	<b>i.</b> <i>although there is always a tendency to get depressed.</i> <b>ii.</b> <i>the rain changes into a happy thing.</i>

It is notable that in both cases, there are marked themes. This is significant in that the writers seemed to prefer to convey orientation towards the context of their haiku first and provide extra relevant detail later. In Entry 22 it is unsurprising that this construction matches that of the original haiku. But in Entry 72 this is not the case. This suggests that the writer of the explanation of Entry 72 orients the reader to the context (あめのひは~amenohiWA~ On rainy days ~) clearly marked with “WA”. This contrasts with “Melancholy~” in the haiku, which, as is an unmarked theme with no specific relation to the action (i.e., having or obtaining a new umbrella).

### Discussion

#### *Utility of Theme/Rheme Analysis*

Though not conclusive, the analysis of these two haiku-in-English explanations above raises some interesting points. The main thrust was to use theme/rheme analysis to examine what the writer selected to convey first as known or shared knowledge. If affirmative evidence were forthcoming, it would suggest that explanation texts contained the kind of reference or conveyance of sense. This would in effect be interpretation. This was possible for Entry 72. The presence of marked themes (specifically functioning as orientation to the context of the haiku) helps the reader to make sense of the haiku.

The explanation of Entry 22 was in fact close to a literal translation. Dutifully, the theme and rheme in the explanation text correspond to the order of information in the original haiku. But translation texts do not always have the same order of information as their original texts. Consequently, for Entry 22, theme/rheme analysis is not as useful as for Entry 72.

Instead of syntax, attention to maintaining reference to the same semantic content retains some of the sense of the original text’s literary integrity. In other words, analyzing semantic referents (i.e., words, images, nuance, etc.) may be more forthcoming than examining only what information comes first. Theme/rheme analysis works best when the structural form of language is not the object of the analysis. This is the main limitation of this analytical approach.

*Utility of Explanations of Haiku-in-English in the Competition*

One clear finding is that most explanations were unsatisfactory in providing sufficient accounts of inspiration for, contents of, and language in the haiku. This was despite five orientation workshops and providing dedicated written materials. Further, in a competition format, the explanation component could justifiably be excluded: it was found to be too novel, too unfamiliar to work well, and basically too much trouble for entrants and judges, as well as the competition coordinator trying to demonstrate what was required.

Consequently, a more controlled environment, such as in a classroom-based course, would be more conducive to introduction to haiku explanations. Substituting translation for explanation in subsequent competitions, or running more orthodox haiku competitions with no explanation or translation required, would make for a smoother, more “fun” extra-curricular activity.

*Implications of the Current Research*

Regarding the two exploratory research questions mentioned before, contents of entrants’ explanations did not explain their choices of language, semantics, or writing about anything of cultural significance. However, theme/rheme analysis showed the potential and likelihood for entrants to give some orientation to the context of their haiku without undue elaboration. In this sense, entrants seemed concerned only with their texts per se, not as any kind of artifact to be “shown” to someone outside of their culture. In fact, 23 out of the 87 entrants made translations of all or part of their haiku in lieu of explanations. But there were 58 usable explanations in Japanese and/or English.

As action research, the competition produced some directions for future work. Regarding language pedagogy, it seems better to keep the complex haiku-in-English-plus-Japanese-explanation in the more controlled and structured classroom environment, rather than in a competition which is supposed to be fun. Further, participants need far more orientation, scaffolding, and practice, say, with common set haiku before venturing out on their own.

Setting, for instance, a classic Japanese haiku would objectify the poetry genre explicitly as a cultural artifact at the outset. The need to explain or interpret this for people outside of Japanese culture would offset the novelty aspect of the explanation component—a clear and valid context and purpose at least for an interpretative approach to translating it if not for simply explaining it.

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