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CONTEMPORARY TANKA POETRY VIEWED
FROM A DIFFERENT MIRROR OF REFLECTIVE
THOUGHT FOR ENGLISH
AS SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT: The art of poetic expression can only be expressed through the emotions and feelings of an individual in well-defined recognizable forms throughout the centuries of worldwide literary records of accomplishments. There are many literary ranges to express oneself in endearing ways that fuel our sentiments and define our human experiences in various and meaningful ways. Most notable are the evocative and romantic poetic writings of William Shakespeare's 154 love sonnets (1609) to the simple, yet stirring moment-to-moment *haiku* writings of Matsuo Basho's journey from the northern parts of Japan in the spring of 1689. While there may be culturally appropriate manners in which these poetic renderings have made a recognizable impact on our literary worlds today, the *tanka* poetic form after the Meiji period starting in 1868 had revived the older form of its ancient "*waka*" lyrical roots to a contemporary reflection of modern dialogue in mirroring today's conscious viewpoints of the world around us.

This paper will provide ways in teaching *tanka* poetry to Japanese university students, and how the whole language approach can enhance the English learning process. Specifically, there will be a section on general teaching methodologies in which Japanese students can rely on their own wealth of knowledge to express themselves succinctly when describing their views of life in a reflective, contemplative manner. In order to establish the importance of

As a Nikkei-American, this article about tanka poetry is dedicated to my Japanese mother who taught me the elegance of its poetic reach from Japan to America in the world of literature.

teaching English through functional *tanka* form, there will be room for discussion about the relationship between language and thoughts from a cognitive perspective that may be acceptable in many ESL classrooms for Japanese university students.

Throughout this paper, each section will provide discussion questions for instructors to have in order to elicit further evaluation of various topics to promote an exchange on this ongoing narrative for English language teaching in Japan as well as in other countries. Having the opportunity to consider various teaching methods, and in being part of a sharing teaching community, this paper hopes to provide a platform for more dialogue among ESL advocates. For those who see the merits of integrating the cognitive whole language approach to communicative teaching for language learners, *tanka* poetry lessons may provide another way to heighten student involvement and motivation in class.

KEYWORDS: cognitive approach, creativity, English as a Second Language (ESL), haiku, literacy model, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), *tanka*, whole language approach.

INTRODUCTION

Literary ideas that flow from one's inspiration and penned in our own languages can be best described by the famous writer Oscar Wilde who once said, "Form is everything. It is the secret of life." Another way to describe how good writing can stand the test of time was offered by the insights of French Russian experimental writer Nathalie Sarraute. He had compared most literary writings to a relay race, in that, the 'baton of innovation was passing from one generation to the another.'

In comparison and contrast to well-known literary works, the Japanese poetic beginnings stem from the ancient works of hundreds of poets who were emperors of the royal court to the village commoner compiled in the *Man'yoshu* (The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves) during the 7th century. This form of Japanese poetry developed even further during the 8th and 10th century in the *Kokinshu* (Collection of Ancient and Modern Poetry). These works were compiled to establish the elementary roots of *tanka* poetry, the 31-syllabic form.

These short-formed poetic works have also been passed down through the generations as a classic and noteworthy form, and as part of a contemporary literary genre in the western world. With the writer's intended choice of words structured in this very simple form, these poetic works have, indeed, evolved over the ages with such grace, wit and insight.

Even in our high-energy rush of daily modern living, these ancient poetic *haiku* or *tanka* forms are a consistent mainstay of literary expressions today. Moreover, Japanese poetic forms allow a writer to express how one can reflect upon our relationships with each other and with our immediate environmental surroundings. Other early examples of Japanese lyric poetry are verses that can be found in the first records of the Japanese historical annals in the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) in 712 C.E. Specifically, the *Kojiki* is a well-preserved tome of mythological stories describing the creation of an island nation that connects this literary product with the Japanese race of people. With respect to the bulk of these great literary works, it is the simple structure and free form of Japanese verses that allow the creativity to come into fruition in the celebration of nature, and emotional longings of love as well. In sum, the Japanese poetic expressions represent the social values that reinforce the themes relating to loyalty and the meaning of family and friendship that is *not* confined to a special talent, but open us up to spontaneous expression.

DESCRIBING THE BASIC HAIKU AND TANKA FORM

To make the distinction between the ancient *haiku* and *tanka* forms of poetry, the critical essence to create Japanese poetry requires a statement in reference to the seasons. The standard *haiku* form of the syllabic 5-7-5 intensifies and exalts the human experience in the brevity of a poet's choice of words. *Haiku* in its simplicity of form transmutes and resonates with the reader of images that can be identifiable by most lovers of the poetic verse. There is a strong sense of communion with nature, and this may best describe what *haiku* represents in its traditional form.

Imagine this scene where a young child has an outstretched hand of mixed water and sugar at a Canadian countryside Inn. Waiting patiently for a hum-

mingbird to drink from his little outstretched palm, there is sense of anticipation. Suddenly, a beautiful green/reddish hummingbird comes to him hesitantly at first, and eventually lands on the child's outstretched hand. There was a split second of time where the little hummingbird and the child felt a connection that may be akin to the feeling of trust between them. This hummingbird then drinks in the liquid food through its long, skinny beak in silence after resting its tiny feet on the child's steady, open palm. In breathless wonder and awe, the child watches this miracle of communion with this hummingbird without words, but through his senses. This was a species quite different from himself, but an incredible bond is created beyond words, and a sense of peace and respect between a human being and the animal world has been bridged in that momentary exchange of food and security. Upon the bright face of the young child, an incredulous hush of happiness emanated from his heart. For this young child had the privilege of being part of a natural world that very few experience in one's lifetime, and should he put this in writing, then this moment in time can be preserved for others to understand as well.

In this brief exchange and encounter between a young boy and the hummingbird, what words come to one's mind to explain this in 3 lines of a 5-7-5 syllabic *haiku* pattern? How can he capture the essence of this mutual exchange? Some words may come in a flash of inspiration or a bundle of adjectives that describe the feelings of the little boy on what this magical encounter may mean to him. Another way to develop the remnants of poetry would be to combine the imagery with the feelings of flight or temporary elation or wonder by feelings by the observer. In this way, *haiku* provides the poet to express that inspiration to extend outward in order to connect with others who may or may not have that same experience, but imagines it as if this could be our own. In this way, the *haiku* form teaches us to build a nest of vocabulary words and it is a perfect little basket that holds our encounters of the natural world to openly express ourselves to others. In this regard, *haiku* is *not* written in dark and riddled words or sentences, but peaks our curiosity with such openness to offer endless, and flexible ways for us to express ourselves to others.

THE FATHER OF HAIKU POETRY: MATSUO BASHO

Carrying a pack with his writing materials, the poet Matsuo Basho set out on a hike to the natural landscapes of northern Honshu in the spring of 1689. With his close disciple, Kawai Sora, he visited many famous places of significant literary, religious and military history. This was a trek that covered 1,985 kilometers or 1,232 miles which is roughly the distance from the southern tip of Florida to Connecticut.

His eight-month long journey started out from Edo (today's Tokyo) and at the end of the third month, he ended up as far north as Hiraizumi, in Rikuzen (Iwate). Then, Basho moved over to the Japan Sea where he and his companion, Sora went southwest along the coast, and eventually reached Tsuruga Port which is located north of Kyoto. After viewing the original capital of Japan in its splendor, he then made his way southeast, and finally ended his journey in the city of Ogaki (Gifu prefecture) arriving about the 21st day of the eighth month of travel.

In viewing the experiences that abounds from such encounters of people from all walks of life, Matsuo Basho first developed his generic methods of writing the poetic version, *haikai no renga*. This ancient *renga* form that was revised and polished over four years of his travel can be considered one of Japanese literary masterpieces known as the *Oku no Hosomichi* (Narrow Road to the Interior). At that time, Matsuo's work was also a mixture of both *haiku*-like prose that was called *haibun*. Through his re-worked genre of creation that was essentially a diary of his journey, Basho laid the foundation for *haiku* as it is known today.

The question one may asks here: Why did Basho make such a journey in the first place? One historical explanation by Takarai Kikaku (1661-1707) provided information about a great fire that struck the Edo area at the end of the year 1682. This great fire engulfed Basho's home, and had forced him to "submerge himself" in the tide of the Sumida river where he sought refuge from the all-consuming heat and to survive the smoke in this area. This disaster propelled Basho into the direction of the Buddhist assertion that life is like "a house on fire", and there is "no real fixed abode" in this world, and perhaps, this may

explain the endless wanderings of the poet, Basho. (Sato, Hiroaki 1996).

Regardless of the speculation of why Basho did these types of wanderings in the last ten years of his life, this does not adequately explain his constant visits to certain places in Japan. According to translations of Basho's spring and autumn passages by Hiroaki Sato in *Basho's Narrow Road*, he states a philosophical conclusion that life can be based on two goals: one is a spiritual endeavor and the other was the practicality of moving from a place because he had no real physical home.

In focusing on the spiritual quest as the essence of Basho's form of *haiku* or *renga*, many scholars have said that his writings have produced a 'poetic truth' that did not alienate anyone from its true meaning bestowed on his choice of words. As an example in Basho's earlier works, he wrote:

<i>kare-eda ni</i>	on a barren branch
<i>karasu no tomarikeri</i>	a raven has perched---
<i>aki no kure</i>	autumn dusk

Basho had first published this poem in 1680, and later revised this to its present form, and this was the basis of his sequential form of *renga* (linked verse) or the *hokku* that is represented by the opening verse followed by a response or comment about the poetic topic. Later on, Basho published his most well-known poem as follows:

<i>furuike ya</i>	old pond
<i>kawazu tobikomu</i>	a frog leaps in
<i>mizu no oto</i>	water's sound

Traditionally, frogs were being represented as a subject for Japanese poetry and can be found even now. This poetic form can be decreed as the standard *haiku* model even today. Basho's concerns for good poetry was a serious concern, and he was part of a tradition that established the connection between the poet and his or her experience.

In this sense, Basho relays what is important for the poet in having a deep unity of perception to the actual inspiration. He described this experience as such: "Learn of the pine from the pine; learn of the bamboo from the bamboo." Further, Basho's disciples explain that what makes a poem genuine is that the poet must capture the spontaneous feeling that comes from the object viewed of itself. Basho clearly states the following:

"looking at an object is not enough to produce the deep seeing that begins inspiration, and "do not let a hair's breadth separate yourself from the subject. Speak your mind directly; go to it without wandering thoughts."

In other words, the poet's responsibility lies in locating the core of that perceived object's vibrational essence, and that *essence* must resonate with you through your words. Most importantly, Basho's truth seeking are the words that serve as a medium of the life force emanating from a given observed object. Thus, giving that object a "living breathing organic presence."

Accordingly, Basho relays that "this type of poetry occurs at two stages simultaneously as one." For Basho's literary record, his journey had marked a path for followers of his artful poetry into the 21st century and beyond. For the contemporary poet, it is the transparency of what a poet feels, senses or views into the inner life of that object, and this is the ideal of the Basho-School of poetry in which such *haiku* poets strive to obtain as a goal-driven philosophy.

THE TANKA AS AN EXPANDED FORM OF HAIKU

During the 13th century in Japan, the poetic form of *renga* provided the style centered on this 5-7-5-7-7 syllable *tanka* that was split into two parts: 5-7-5 and the later couplet of 7-7. This form of poetry was a way in which Japanese poets can turn poetry creation into a group game. This group game was played in having one person create the first part of the 5-7-5 *haiku* form. Upon hearing the first part, another person then prepares a response that comprises the last 7-7 syllables as a verse response to the initial poetic inspiration. One thing to note is that most Japanese words end in one of five vowels (a-e-i-o-u). Since this is

the case, the rhyming of poetic endings was *not* an ideal way to create *haiku* and/or *tanka* poetry. Instead, there was another device that was utilized by the Japanese that is the alternation of five-and-seven-syllable lines creating a uniquely Japanese poetry through rhythm and cadence.

Upon further analysis of general *tanka* poetry, most contain at least two images. The first image is taken from one's natural surroundings, and the second which may precede, follow or be part of the first image has a meditative complement in its reference relating to a natural occurrence. There is a creative space for a mirrored view of that slice of life for a *tanka* poet whereby there is almost a dreamlike effect that is close to reality. One can likened this comparison to a person who is holding two mirrors simultaneously in his hands. To illustrate this metaphor: one mirror shows the exact scene of nature, and the other one shows an image of a person looking at that same image from a third person perspective. One might consider that there is a metaphysical component in describing the intent of a *tanka* poet, and this seems to be the general regard and respect for talented poets over time. In comparison to the *haiku* poet, the second mirror does not exist as the 5-7-5 pattern of a *haiku* poem as it just shows a particular occurrence of nature as it is truly shown to us. Any form of alteration or intent imposed on the intended and chosen words to describe what had transpired in the poet's perspective viewpoint is added in the last couplet.

An illustrated example of *tanka* poetry differs between these traditional Japanese poetic forms. The *tanka* written by *Ki-no-Tsurayuki* (870 – 945), a court noble and one of the scholars of the *Kokinshu* is as follows:

<i>Hana no ka ni</i>	Winds passing
<i>koromo wa fukaku</i>	through the shaded grove
<i>narinikeri</i>	weigh down
<i>ko-no-shita kage no</i>	my robe with
<i>kaze no ma na ma mi</i>	the scent of blossoms.

When reading the translated lines of these delicate poetic renderings, one can see how the poet dwells on the location of the speaker who is experiencing "the

wind passing through a shaded grove” and the occurrence of how the “scent of blossoms” had been weighed down by its subtle fragrance. This fragrant scent becomes deeply embedded into his robe. Thus, there is an interweaving of these elements composed in this tanka poem that connects the poet’s observation to be felt or imagined by the reader of the poet. In a meditative state of the poet, the wearer of the robe explains what he felt at the moment in time when wind and the drift of a scent had settled onto him in a deep, sentient way. Upon its reading, one can visualize the image of such a robe on a person under the shaded grove, and how this robe-wearing person and the touch of such winds carrying the scent of blossoms, and had come together without any coaxing or invitation. In so doing, this natural occurrence had enmeshed itself with the wearer of that robe as one entity. There is no separation of the wearer of that robe, and the robe that was weighed down by the scent of those blossoms. As a literary bonus, we can also appreciate the seasonal image of spring as well.

Upon further analysis, there may be other interpretations from this particular *tanka* poem, but in comparison to the 3-lined *haiku* to this extended 5-7-5-7-7-*tanka*, the allowance of the poetic venture can be explored more fully. *Tanka* poetry can bring the reader to this realization within the second couplet to define the experience more expansively. Moreover, it can separate us from the universal viewpoint to a more intimate, personal one.

THE PROCESS OF TEACHING THROUGH WHOLE LANGUAGE LEARNING

As a second language instructor, the teaching experience evolves over time, and in its development, the discussions may center on theory and research to the fundamental question, “how can we use literature and writing in ready-made activities that can foster a high level of learning among ESL students?” Many are initially struck with the realization that this question can be answered in multiple ways, depending on the beliefs and goals reflected in a teacher’s own teaching philosophy. In terms of one’s belief, it is best categorized in the following manner:

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BELIEFS	GOALS
Everyone can learn given the educational opportunity.	Learning expectations for target proficiency skills
Reading is a good way to isolate the contextual meaning within text.	Providing reading material for students that help them develop strategies that utilize semantics and syntax through translation work.
Each student must be motivated to read, write, listen and speak out on the targeted language for their own learning purposes.	Words of encouragement by teachers can foster a better learning environment without overt criticism, and the foster the need for student to self-correct whenever possible.
Each student has varied language experiences and should be respect for them.	Provide opportunities for students to interact meaningfully with the text and with each other.
Each student may learn through a trial and error learning process.	Encourage and congratulate each student for approximations and risk-taking leaps of faith in their natural abilities.
Independent work or self-study must be meaningful and relevant to course-work.	Developing literature extension activities beyond the classroom that includes creative, visual and performing arts.
Teachers require ongoing support.	Encourage in-service daily support, and in providing instructors with opportunities for professional growth and interaction each year.

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list of applied beliefs and goals, but in the process of developing teaching material for *tanka* poetry, this may help to establish parameters from the process orientation to a more product-oriented result by respecting the individual growth of a student. At the same time, the organization of ways to foster some sense of refinement and mastery in their level of English proficiency skills is important to realize as a language instructor.

CONTEXTS FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION

In 1991, the United States Congress created a set of educational goals which states as follows: "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." One might ask,

"In what way does this particular American initiative provide for language instructors in Japan or other countries?" The answer to this question relates to the aspects for literacy instruction that can be examined and reviewed among colleagues in pinpointing a set of standards for a given departmental curriculum. Based on the responses in a survey given to fifteen hundred adults, there are four themes of purposes for language and literacy learning that had emerged as follows:

- Informational Access: this applies to job resources so that adults can orient themselves in the world.
- Voice: the ability to communicate and express ideas and opinions with confidence, and that they will be heard, respected and taken into account;
- Independent Action: developing the ability to be able to solve problems and make decisions on one's own, and thus, acting independently without having to rely on others for assistance or coaching.
- Bridge to the Future: having the ability to keep up with the changing world through language and communication skills that allow positive growth and understanding new ideas, concepts and informational exchange.

(Stein 1997, p. 7)

This survey sets the tone for a more active national literacy summit in the United States that resulted in a call to action agenda that relates as follows:

By 2010, a system of high quality adult literacy, language and lifelong learning services will help adults in every community in making measurable gains toward achieving their goals as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners (National Literacy Summit 2002)

In outlining and setting forth the belief and goals, these survey results serve as a tenable means to obtain such literacy learning. The program set forth here

has given us multiple models to choose from in terms of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). In this way, the instructor has a variety of palettes to paint the kind of picture in his or her mind as to what would be a viable method of teaching within departmental standards. For purposes of discussion within this paper, the transmission of knowledge from a host of programs was broadly-based for which students can learn facts, concepts and skills as part of procedural knowledge in a guided method of sequenced practice that will be reviewed.

LITERACY MODEL AND THE APPROACH FOR COGNITIVE LEARNING

The teaching of language structures is as old as language teaching itself. The early techniques such as grammar translation to contemporary textbooks organized by verb tense and language form appear in most curricula to a lesser or greater extent. According to one study though, the *ESL Literacy Model* establishes the functions of reading and writing skill development.

How does this differ from other basic models? While most models focus mainly on the basics such as vocabulary, pronunciation, language functionality, and interactive strategies with native speakers of the given language, the *Literacy Model* allows the student to decode by repetitive practice in order to automate the learning of new communication skills. In this way, the instructor provides students with the opportunity to engage with print, media and visually-oriented material as well as other activities that allow each student to utilize his or her creativity. This is aligned with the "participatory approach" as proposed by Paulo Freirian, (a Brazilian educator who helped to initiate, develop and implement national literacy campaigns in developing countries). The tenets for this methodology have garnered a learner community. In his classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freirian has most ESL educators to agree on these three basics:

1. Use of generative words and themes drawn from learner's experiences.
2. The notion of teachers as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowl-

edge.

3. Use of "problem-posing," a technique in which learners look at pictures or objects to discuss their situation and in exploring solutions to problems encoded within the given situational context.

In the evaluation of the basic functionality and practicality of the *Literacy Model* per se, the way for a participatory approach between the instructor as a facilitator of learning, and how newfound knowledge can be translated and transferred to the minds of Japanese university students is the ideal goal. Moreover, the drawing on themes and generative words that describe a learner's experience through *tanka* poetry may provide a platform for ESL learning to take place through repetitive practice under non-critical guidance by an instructor.

Most importantly, the development of such a task-based syllabus within a given ESL curriculum would be left under the instructor's discretion and belief systems that would eventually evolve into a generative process-goal orientation. This is where a student would be recognized for his or her personal achievement rather than a standardized level of rigid testing, and the memorization of random vocabulary words and idiomatic phrases without contextual cues as a means to the end.

INTRODUCING OUR CREATIVE MIND

Cognitive science may be a relatively new field that has emerged in the mid-1950's by many psychologists and linguists. This also includes the establishment of artificial intelligence as well. The cross-disciplinary contributions from psychology, psycholinguistics, neuroscience, multiple intelligences, and cognitive anthropology, provide a shared focus in the research centers on the workings of the human mind. This is quite complex, and in short, language learning and grammar instruction will be discussed from an information-processing perspective for second language acquisition (SLA).

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WHAT IS THE USEFULNESS FOR A COGNITIVE APPROACH?

In review of various approaches, and especially as this relates to second language acquisition, the researcher, Ellis (1998) notes that the study of cognition in language learning deals with "mental representations and information processing". Thus, such language acquisition seeks to develop functional and neurobiological connections to the learning process. This, in turn, ultimately results in the emergence of knowledge that becomes integrated into the learning experience. While the usefulness may not be fully covered by the communicative approach to language directly, it can be noted that the exploration of how our mind works leads to uncovering and distinguishing language learning from an unconscious process. This can be seen in how children learn their first language without the formality of rules, forms or vocabulary, but through interacting and observing how adults communicate with each other as models to emulate through practice and repetition. In this way, the object of study is through experience on a meaningful level. Therefore, many ESL instructors consider a compromise between the hardline extremes of structure-based curriculum to one that is teacher-led with an stronger emphasis on group work and no focus on linguistics at all.

Based on other researchers with regard to the position on the dimension for language learning, it is *not* limited to a merely subconscious level of information processing. Others have suggested that there may be two types of classroom activities: *meaning-focused* which refers to a pure form of communicative practices, and the *form-focused* one referring to common practices in the way language forms as used in discourse. (DeKeyser 1998; and also see Rutherford and Sharwood Smith 1998).

The *meaning-focused* communicative activities provide learners with comprehensible input and opportunities to improve and correct their own input through interaction with others that had been demonstrated repeatedly. To compare, the *form-focused* activities mainly emphasize the features of a grammar point that aids the student to develop a sense of accuracy. Such *form-focused* instruction has been found to be effective in developing the learner's ability to use grammar forms communicatively with regulated frequency. Thus, in relat-

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ing this practice to the *tanka* and/or *haiku* forms of poetry, these two classroom activities may be utilized in this way to heightened the levels of second language acquisition. This can be done from either an independent study vantage point or within a shared group setting that supplements and expands into the collaborative learning scenario.

THE BRAIN CONNECTIVITY TO LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

Fossil evidence indicates that the left side of the brain known as the Broca's area has been associated with language. Many scientists believe that the capacity for symbolic construction and language use developed over time as the brain increased in size and complexity. As per Pinker's research (1994), he had suggested that the linkage to consciousness and our ability to use language can be determined by Darwinian natural selection. The debate over this topic of natural selection can be discussed in these four main viewpoints in the relationship between language and our thoughts.

Briefly, the four views can be described in the following manner:

- (1) According to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (See Carroll 1956), there is a notion that both thought and language are determined by culture. For example, culturally determined phenomena such as the time of events or the color or shape of objects might become especially important for grammar learning in a given language, and this can be extended to our thought processes as well. Though this may be in theory as being linguistically deterministic, relevant research strongly suggests that Chinese and/or Japanese ESL learners might avoid using articles since their language lacks this grammar form. In this regard, instructors should become more aware of learners' culturally determined rhetorical patterns when teaching academic writing courses.
- (2) The second view has been proposed by the child psychologist, Piaget (1967) whereby cognitive development of an infant occurs in clearly defined stages in a natural manner, and precedes language learning. In view of this natural occurrence among infants, Piaget research supposes

that language forms such as nouns have a predisposed understanding; however, this central focus on investigation has *not* been verified with raw data.

- (3) The third theory is the rationalist concept of innate mental structures, and views language and cognition as being separate and unrelated. According to Pinker's language research (1994), he suggests that language is an innate, human specific ability that is *not* dependent on the cognitive processes. Supposedly, there is some kind of ready-made template that already exists in the mind, and there is an universal ready-made grammar that needs minimum input for activation to occur. Thus, children are genetically equipped to acquire language in infancy, and there is an instinctual mechanism that doesn't require an extensive exposure to language forms. Therefore, the common feature of all languages include the universal forms such as nouns, verbs, and certain word order rules and this can be invoked naturally among humans.
- (4) The last view centers on the idea of social interaction as a major component in developing language capacity. Vygotsky [1934] (1962) held that thought and language were initially separate, but later became interdependent during acts of communication since meaning is created through human interaction. Although, empirical evidence is still lacking for this sociocultural position, the formation of "communities of practice" in the second/foreign language classrooms in the collaborative sense promotes proficiency gains based on Donato and McCormick's findings (1994, p. 454). There are other researchers who see that the language socialization approach is cued by cultural context, and not necessarily an innate structure as suggested by the other viewpoints.

While this cognitive perspective provides some insight, the general empirical support for all four positions between language and thought can be described as mere suppositions. A noted psychologist, Trevor Harley (1995) observes that the relationship between language and thought is most likely a complex phe-

nomenon. Based on this reasoning, the capacity for language learning can be mediated by cognitive development from infancy to even adulthood, but expressive structures and vocabulary may rely on social interaction and cultural-specific concepts.

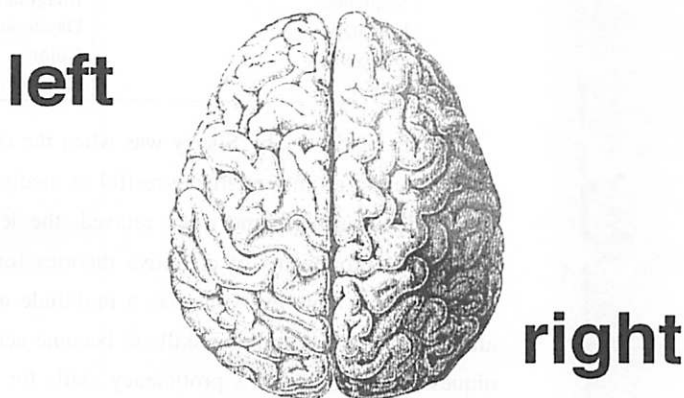
Today's cognitive theories now treat language learning within the context of general skills development, and not just an "autonomous mental organ", but rather a complex mosaic of cognitive and social processes that are linked through communicative activities (Tomasello 1998). In review of these various theoretical perspectives, there seems to be *no* single correlation to language acquisition. Specifically, the barriers to second language acquisition do *not* exist nor does one singular teaching methodology or approach provide an automatic answer to second language learning for students. In sum, this was relayed by both Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) who had observed and provided this recommendation for all instructors in this teaching field for second language learners as hereby follows:

A[n] integrated view that assembles components from various disparate sources in both theory and practice ...then attempts to piece them together in a complex pattern, is precisely what practitioners need in order to allow them the freedom to interpret these patterns for their own purposes and from their own point of view (1994, p. 218).

TEACHING STRATEGIES THROUGH COGNITION

In view of the complexity in our cognitive processes, the nature of second language teaching can be simplified by a thorough self-analysis of an instructor's beliefs and goals within a given curriculum. As modern research suggests through various interpretations of mental and psychological cognition, the traditional instructional settings that have developed over time can be supplemented by unique design concepts based on the instructor's creative mindset. In view of this type of teaching strategies, the most important point can be raised in providing an atmosphere of informational exchange among and between students with the instructor. Rather than being the main fulcrum to balance between

grammatical structures, syntax, and vocabulary-building exercises, the instructor can be more of a moderator or facilitator to provide communicative interplay and interaction for students learning a second language.



THE RIGHT/LEFT SIDES OF THE BRAIN DISCOVERY

In the 1950s and 1960s, Professor Roger Sperry was investigating brainwave functions. Upon his exploration, Sperry and his colleagues asked volunteers to perform different mental tasks ranging from adding and subtracting in their heads, reading poetry, reciting memorized lines, doodling, looking at different colors, drawing cubes, and analyzing logical problems as well as daydreaming. The main hypothesis by Sperry was that brain waves would be different based on various activities, but the most important discovery was the amazing revelation on how the brain divides each activity very distinctly into the 'left brain cortex' and 'right brain cortex'. This brain research recognizes how our cognitive abilities perform and could play a part in learning second language acquisition as it relates to poetry. The whole human brain can be divided in dominant divisions of labor as follows:

LEFT BRAIN

RIGHT BRAIN

Words	Rhythm
Logic	Spatial Awareness
Numbers	Dimension
Sequence	Imagination
Linearity	Daydreaming
Analysis	Color
Lists	Holistic Awareness

Another discovery by Sperry was when the right cortex was active, the left side tended to go into relatively restful or meditative state. Similarly, when the right side would become more relaxed, the left side was activated. In this regard, the proponents of cognitive theories for language learning may have some merit in how everyone has a multitude and range of intelligences that allows for creative thinking skills to become activated through repetitive techniques. Thus, a student's proficiency skills for language acquisition can take place at any given stage as long as there is a holistic awareness on the part of the poet in allowing his or her poem to unfold. Based on Sperry's research, the neural pathways toward creativity can be funneled from our connected right to left or from left to right sides of our brain at will. In the acknowledgement of being able to assess our cognitive sources for inspiration, the process of writing poetry can be actualized and prompted by students to enjoy their own creative process in a natural way. (See website for more information).

TANKA AS A FOCAL POINT OF INSTRUCTION

Through task-based goals within the classroom and in understanding our capacity to learn from our natural cognitive processes, the allowance for each student to be more aware of *form-meaning* relationships through the *tanka* and/or *haiku* poetry approach make a meaningful connection between thought and language formation. The extended couplet within the poetic framework of *tanka's* 5-7-5-7-7 form allows for a reference in various ways such as time, place, person, thing or voice. In this way, the poet can link that connectivity to a source of inspiration based on either real-time observations or from memory recall.

The *haiku*, on the other hand, may be constrained in writing only in the present tense. While in comparison, the last couplet of a *tanka* can move freely from the past or present and even to the future and back again. In this regard, there is no restraint as one can move from fantasy to reality within the realm of that person's imagination and creativity. By being able to switch from a momentary glimpse or in witnessing something that may be other worldly viewpoints, the author of such works can thread the memories with emotion that speaks to us more directly and with the impact of thought and images.

SEVERAL TECHNIQUES FOR WRITING TANKA

According to Jane Reichhold in her book, *Writing and Enjoying Haiku* which is a hands-on guide to writing Japanese poetry, there are many examples for an instructor to consider in utilizing during lesson planning for writing coursework. If one were to decide on changing from one perspective to another within a *tanka* syllabic 7-7 couplet, then a described scene can be enlarged exponentially in this manner by switching the persona in the following way:

In seven years
the body replaces itself
how is it
I know in every cell
the hour we first met

Part of this poem reads as if one person does or thinks one thing, and in the next section, another person provides us with a different opinion altogether. If the first half of the poem is written in a detached language of a *haiku* style, then the couplet can also be written to express your own opinion. In this way, this form best represents a classic style of *tanka*.

Another example relates to a technique that changes things within the *tanka* poem and provides the reader with associations and comparisons of things within *haiku* as follows:

only in the pres-
nove freely from
s regard, there is
realm of that per-
m a momentary
viewpoints, the
hat speaks to us

ing *Haiku* which
examples for an
writing course-
o another within
larged exponen-
ray:

ing, and in the
n altogether. If
aiku style, then
n this way, this

ithin the *tanka*
sons of things

Reading the will
she was so careful
yet so little left
even her houseplants
have lost their leaves

Finally, the last two examples of a *tanka* can utilize parallels between human feelings and things so that the action of the object reveals the poet's emotional state of being. Here is the example as follows:

Your letter
left me at sea to know
where we are going
puzzled the paper folded
a boat set adrift

In comparison, the parallel of movements between things can give rise to dissimilar actions or things in this way:

A wet road
flowing into sky at the top
of the hill
twin lights appear to descend
a friend is coming to visit

While there are myriads of ways in which a *tanka* poem can be expressed by a student, the most important point would be is to let such creativity flow naturally and even on an instinctual level of emotion or feelings. In consideration of the *tanka* form, the reader can be captivated by the sensitivity that bridges the personal experience into an universal one. Thus, the hummingbird that flies onto our hand for a taste of syrup serves up a lasting image that elucidates our communion with nature that can be expressed through Japanese poetry.

IN CONCLUSORY THOUGHT

The opportunity to express emotions or opinions in *tanka* has a distinct advantage over the more succinctly worded *haiku*. For traditional Japanese poetry, the translated *tanka* written by Saigyō in the twelfth century relays his journey to the northern part of Japan as he stops to rest and recites his thoughts in this manner:

Beside the roadway
a flowing of clear water
in a willow's shade
I thought for just a short while
to linger and take a rest.

Fifty years later, Buson visited the same spot and wrote this *haiku* poem in comparison to Saigyō's *tanka* in the following example:

The willow leaves fall
and the clear water has gone
stones life everyone.

The feelings one can get from these two poetic expressions of the same place is that although, there is a sense of sadness, *both* poetic expressions are different in this way. The subjective *tanka* makes the reader connect more with the writer than the objective *haiku* version on a personal level. In view of the literary traditions of western poetry, the concentrated form and meaning within the Japanese poetry can provide students the techniques and strategies to improve their level of second language proficiencies through repetitive and practiced assignments for language learning. More importantly, the creative expression is part of all of us on a cognitive level, but the most gratifying gift of this type of learning becomes a more personalized and meaningful one for each student in his or her exploration of the moments that capture one's imagination. In the whole sum of human experiences, it is the feelings and emotions that elevate

our spirits into the magical world of self-discovery and natural expressions in a mindful manner. Through the beauty of Japanese poetry, this can be defined through our unique perspectives to share with others in meaningful and expressive forms.

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