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English Language Acquisition through English Poetry in ESL/EFL

I. Why has English Poetry been often left to one side in ESL/EFL classroom?

The range of English reading materials currently available to the students of ESL/EFL has been extended and varied. They are ranged from magazine essays, newspaper articles, journal writings, advertisements, brochures, technical instruction manuals, (business) letters or memorandums, biographies, reviews, health or science reports, travel writings, essays, stories, fictions (romances, horrors, adventures, etc.), (text) books, news scripts, and so on. However, "poetry [in particular]" has not been considered "as 'proper' material for foreign language learning" (Maley & Duff 6). There are various factors which have led English poetry "all too often left to one side" in ESL/EFL classroom (Maley & Moulding 134). First, it is due to "the utilitarian bias of the communicative approach" which has turned a side attention from any language material which seems not to have an immediate "practical purpose" (Maley & Duff 6), for example, to obtain reading skills or "practical language" which can be instantly used for acts of communication. Indeed, English poetry is still characterized as deviating from or distorting the norms of standard English language, "hav[ing] no practical function at all" (Selden 9-10; qtd. in Lazar 2). Hence, learning/teaching English poems is regarded by most ESL/EFL students/teachers as too specialized, too difficult, too 'unpractical,' an act which has little to do with a build-up of 'communicative' literacy (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Secondly, since selecting English poetry to teach in ESL/EFL has been made on the basis of its literary and historical value rather than its ELT value, teachers' lack of experiences and ideas about how to turn English poems into an effective ESL/EFL material (rather than a literary text for a critical analysis or a literary interpretation) accounts for such least weight given to English poetry in the ESL/EFL field. Thirdly, many learners have had unpleasant experiences with poetry, whether English or Korean/Japanese, in both L1 and L2 classrooms. It is because over the years learners have accumulated unpleasant and even awful memories of being forced to dissect a poem to analyze what it really means in terms of form, structure, and theme exactly as "They" does in the following poem:

Introduction to Poetry

--Billy Collins--

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide.

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem

waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.
(from *The Apple That Astonished Paris*, U of Arkansas, 1988)

- **Assignment 1: Read Collins' poem "Introduction to Poetry" and discuss about what you feel about your English poetry class**

As Milosz writes in his poem *Ars Poetica?*, "The purpose of poetry is to remind us / how difficult it is to remain just one person, / for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors, / and invisible guests come in and out at will" (ll. 29-32: qtd. In Gibbons 3-4). Like "them" in the following poem, learners should have been given the freedom to discover, to explore, to break down boundaries, to create their own worlds, to pull forth their deepest thoughts and feelings, and finally to express and exchange them in words or on paper in the supportive poetry classroom where entire class participates and where each learner feels safe allowing his/her own ideas, feelings, reactions, and poems to be communicated (Savren 17):¹

On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High

--D.C. Berry--

Before
I opened my mouth
I noticed them sitting there
as orderly as frozen fish
in a package.

Slowly water began to fill the room
though I did not notice it
till it reached
my ears

and then I heard the sounds
of fish in an aquarium
and I knew that though I had
tried to drown them
with my words
that they had only opened up
like gills for them
and let me in.

Together we swam around the room
like thirty tails whacking words
till the bell rang
puncturing
a hole in the door

where we all leaked out
They went to another class
I suppose and I home

Where Queen Elizabeth

¹ This part is indebted to *This Poem Knows You* (California Poets in the School Statewide Anthology 1984).

my cat met me
and licked my fins
till they were hands again. (cited from *Teaching Poetry in High School*, p. 11)

- **Assignment 2: How do you feel about the metaphoric image of students as frozen fish in a poetry class? Have you had the similar feeling or worse than it? How would like to describe your poetry class in a metaphor?**

Finally, the combined thrust of the structuralism, the functionalism, and the cognitive psychology has dominated ESL/EFL methodologies and approaches, and such thrust has overemphasized what Carter calls “the transactional uses of language (i.e. the transacting of information, goods and services)” (1997; 160). Its overemphasis on the form-focused literacy, task-oriented communicative exercises, vocabulary-grammar-translation lessons “at the expense of interactive uses . . . and creative uses [of language]” (Carter 160) has resulted in promoting English language materials which are loaded with psychologically meaningless information and facts that are hardly relevant to students’ lives (values, emotions, tastes, attitude, self-esteem, spirit, wish, interests, concerns, etc.). Traditional tests (including TOEFL, TOEIC, and college entrance exams) based on these materials have been highly inadequate for encouraging discourse-oriented, socio-cultural, affective, and humanistic aspects of language learning/teaching, which English literature including English poetry can afford efficiently.

II. English Poetry and Humanistic Approach in ESL/EFL

Indeed, among the recent developments of significance for ELT are affective sides of language learning/teaching from the humanistic approaches. As proved by humanistic learning models and theories compiled in Arnold’s edition (1999), they have facilitated both self-directed and collaborative language learning process, stretching their paradigm far beyond mere and strict language teaching into “life goals”:

In a language classroom which focuses on meaningful interaction, there is certainly room for dealing with affect. . . . In this context, Stevick (1998:166) speaks of bringing to language teaching a concern for ‘deeper aims,’ for ‘pursuing new “life goals,” not just for reaching certain “language goals”.’ . . . We need to be concerned with both their[learners’] cognitive and affective natures and needs. (Arnold & Brown 3)

Concerned with both cognitive and affective sides of language learning/teaching, this emerging paradigm, in turn, ushers in a primary shift in the current ESL/EFL theory and assessment:²the shift from transactional uses of language towards interactional uses of language, from transmission of knowledge towards an experiential, from learner-centered approach, from form-based learning to meaning-oriented acquisition, from artificial language activities towards actual, creative, subjective, and contextual speech acts, from extrinsic motivation towards intrinsic motivation, from product-oriented learning towards process-oriented learning, from objective functionalism towards discourse-oriented culture, from isolated learning towards collaborative learning, from achievement testing towards authentic assessment, from teacher-as-controller towards teacher-as-facilitator, from non-literary texts loaded with information or facts towards what Day calls ‘language learner’s literature,’ and finally, from controlled teaching towards heuristic learning and acquisition. Teaching/learning English through English poetry can be an excellent add to this shift. The relevance of English poetry as a component of the humanistic ELT is well argued, and ways to incorporate English poems into ESL/EFL lessons are well suggested by many theorists and practitioners in the field of TESOL.

The aim of this lecture is to help you make English poetry accessible to your students of ESL/EFL, so that their various experiences through activities for English poetry can be a useful part of t

² This part is indebted to Viljo Kohonen, “Authentic Assessment in Affective Foreign Language Education,” *Affect in Language Learning*, ed. Jane Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999): 279-294.

their overall English language learning. Many scholars have provided compelling arguments for using English poetry as both input and output in the English language process (Maley & Moulding, Maley & Duff, Lazar, Collie & Slater, etc.). They have also offered a wide variety of practical, innovative, and motivating classroom activities concerning English poetry: (see Maley & Moulding 137-39; Lazar Ch.6; Somers Chs. 6-7)

1. Researching on any cultural, literary, biographical, and historical information which can help student better make sense of the poem (non-literary texts + poetry)
2. Deducing meanings from the context
3. Completing a paraphrase of a poem (cloze-style)
4. Choosing the best paraphrase among a few
5. Predicting what's coming next after reading only one verse at a time
6. Improving on a given paraphrase (replacing, adding, or omitting words, images, etc.)
7. Ordering jumbled stanzas or lines in the correct sequence
8. Paraphrasing a poem into various prose versions or vice versa
9. Rewriting a part of a poem in one's own words and ideas to offer different messages
10. Filling an omitted word, phrase, or line in relation to its context
(a list of words, phrases, or lines can be provided)
11. Replacing images and figurative languages with other ones
12. Transforming a poem into 'everyday' style (dialogue, diary, speech, etc.)
13. Rewriting or improving the concluding lines with one's own ideas
14. Parodying an original poem as a model into a new poem
(noun-phrase poetry, one-word line poetry, etc.)
15. Re-writing a poem to show its reverse face
16. Answering questions which arise from 'problem lines' in a poem
(discussing any unfamiliar vocabularies, syntactic features, rhetorical devices, etc., correcting them, if possible, and comparing their effects on the overall meaning of the poem)
17. Decoding complicated lines (ambiguous meanings) in terms of everyday language
(Provided a few brief interpretations to select through group-work the most appropriate one)
18. Identifying the title of a poem among many
19. Arranging a poem jumbled into a prose style into another poem (while providing punctuation) and comparing it with its original one
20. Discussing similarities/differences between poems of the same subject or thesis
21. Writing a group-poem or an individual poem and exchanging it for a comment
22. Finding a poem in everyday life ('found poetry')
23. Discussing the attitude, mood, tone, gist, or narrator of a poem
24. Discussing the theme of a poem and writing out personal experiences related to the theme
25. Doing a creative role-play based on the theme, story, and subject of the poem
26. Altering a poem's point of view (i.e., from the 1st person point of view to the 3rd ppv)
27. Matching words to definitions, pictures, posters, or music (songs, classic, etc.)
28. Analyzing the stylistic device of repetition of key phrases and discussing how it contributes to the overall effect of the poem
29. Identifying, if any, any aural or musical qualities in the poem (rhyming, alliteration, meter)
30. Making a chant out of a poem or tuning a poem into a well-known song
31. Reading aloud poems (choral reading) and making a song, using a poem (group-work)
(line reading, two-part reading, multiple-part reading, antiphonal reading, etc.)
32. Citing a poem from memorization
33. Listening-to-a recorded poem-activities (clozing, comprehension check-ups, etc.)
34. Translating an English poem into Korean/Japanese or a Korean/Japanese poem into English
(individual or group work: compare and contrast various versions of a translated poem and select the most satisfactory one)
35. Explaining the story in the poem
36. Discussing the poet's (the narrator's) underlying cultural assumptions
37. Writing response-journals and exchanging them with classmates
38. Participating in on-line poetry discussion groups or on-line poetry competition

(on-line feedback and on-line publication)

39. Responding to poetry by performing (readers theater, improvisation, mime, dancing, etc.)

40. Doing poetry slams with the aid of props, costumes, prerecorded music or musical instruments,

and creative dramatics

41. Holding a poetry competition and an in-class poetry forum

These activities have been developed, tried, and tested by experienced teachers of English in their classrooms around the world (Bassnett & Grundy, McRae & Boardman, McRae & Pantaleoni, Maley & Moulding, Lazar, Maley & Duff, Collie & Slater, Eur, and Gower, if naming a few). Many practitioners have found them encouraging students not only to approach English language learning in a spirit of discovery of **meaning** but also to express their **self** (emotions and thoughts) freely. As humanist approaches prove (see Hansen, Arnold), this experience of exercising freely their imaginative and cognitive ability, while working with texts creatively, subjectively, and collaboratively, is very invaluable to enable them to improve their overall language & discourse competence. Hence, if English poetry as a language material is integrated with other forms of English language, it can better offer “a rich resource for input to language learning” (Maley & Duff 7).

III. The Benefits of Using English Poetry in English Language Acquisition: Theory

The benefits of including English poetry in teaching English language can be classified in terms of aesthetic, linguistic, pedagogical, and heuristic advantages:

1. The **themes** English poetry deals with are related to common areas of all human experiences, although the way they are treated differs to various extents in terms of culture. Carefully-selected English poems offer various themes which are relevant to the interests and concerns of learners as they provide them with “meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting new language” (Lazar 17). Hence, well suited for content-based approaches, English poetry can act as a powerful stimulus to the student’s own reflective thinking and emotions, which will elicit more expressions of opinions, reactions, and feelings for “more mature and fruitful group discussion” (Maley & Moulding 135). Thus, English poetry can be used as the basis for generating at once the student’s involvement and his/her subjective, creative, and meaningful responses. An understanding and explicating of the ways in which the themes are dealt with in English language can also help improve not only language awareness but also cultural awareness. (* see Hansen 222-24)
2. **Subject:** Most of current English language-teaching materials run the risk of trivializing content for the sake of highlighting the language. Being made to be “exposed to the surfeit of rapes, abortions, drugs and bombs,” learners are likely to lose interest in the act of reading itself (Maley & Duff 8), hence missing a chance for “the flow of reading” in which they can acquire a great deal of new vocabularies and sentence structures. Still worse, even important experiences such as love, death, life are frequently dealt with in terms of matter-of-facts (journalistic) manners, and therefore, they fail to provide learners with excellent opportunities not just to reflect their life but also to express their personal opinions, reactions and feelings. However, English poems touch upon non-trivial areas of human experience and heighten the student’s awareness of even the apparently trivial. Hence, they elicit a strong subjective investment in poem-centered activities, which, combined with group interactions, is a powerful motivational factor in language learning. (* see Hansen, pp. 217-22)
3. English poems expose par excellence learners to “fresh and unexpected” (hence, so-called ‘poetic’ or ‘creative’) “**uses of language**” in relation to vocabulary, syntax, semantics, morphology, structure, etc. (Lazar 15), which are beyond their fixed dimension only to embody multiple layers of meaning. In order to understand their specific effect (that of various ‘forms’) on the making of meaning, learners need to be actively and creatively involved in not only considering the ways in which this effect is achieved by departing from a norm of English but also explicating the ways in which

hich this specific style contributes to a build-up of a particular communicative effect in a particular context. By asking learners “to explore such sophisticated uses of language,” we are “encouraging them to think about the norms of language” (Lazar 18). An in-depth awareness of such creative facility with language can be a valuable ground for both understanding pragmatic functions of language uses and promoting creative play with English language in writing and speaking. The process of doing with language subjectively, creatively, and collaboratively plays an important role in not only defusing learners’ fear but also expanding and developing their confidence in using it in an actual situation:

The meanings conveyed in poems are usually expressed very economically. In order to retrieve these meanings and talk about them, it is necessary to expand and extend the words on the page. From a small language input one can generate a large and varied output. (Maley & Duff 12)

Such pragmatic and creative uses of English language already prevail in everyday language: advertisements, political speeches (or cartoons), comedies, talk shows, jokes, and even in everyday conversation. Furthermore, we also help learners develop their “abilities to infer meaning and to make interpretations” (Lazar 19) on the linguistic and contextual basis by developing their “sensitivity to the web of associations which link words to each other,” to “the weight and quality of words,” and finally to “the limitations of their use in everyday speech as compared with poetic language” (Maley & Duff 12). Since any language act (even plain language) positions language users in a creative interaction (or reaction to) with texts, an interpretation including the drawing of inference on what is produced by language is required on the part of language users. In Cater’s language, the experience of decoding poetic uses of language is “transferable to most language learning contexts in which meaning, because they are not always immediately transparent, have to be experienced, negotiated, or ‘read’ in the sense of interpreted between the lines” (155). This capacity gained from such experience “can then be transferred to other situations” as follows, where a creative and contextual interpretation needs to be made on the basis of “implicit or unstated evidence” (Lazar 19): fictions, editorials, defenses in court, playful speech, jokes, white lies, pretending statements, playing devil’s advocate, political slogans, riddles, metaphors, idioms, allusions, signs, suggestions, connotation, proverbs, contracts, etc. Finally, these capacities obtained from activities through English poetry can serve as a springboard for expanding learners’ communicative competence because English language is not always governed by rules; rather, it stretches beyond ordinary language uses “to achieve different communicative purposes” (Lazar 100). While reading and processing English poetry, learners learn how to “make use of certain interpretative strategies” which are contextual, creative, and subjective (Lazar 101) and use them functionally in an actual speech event. In Bassnett & Grundy’s language, when we teach English, we are not merely teaching language features, but we are teaching learners about what that language can function in a particular discourse and how they can understand and retrieve that function in an actual speech act (7).

4. In relation to #3, making such sophisticated language uses of English poetry the basis for generating **group discussions** and activities is one of the most important benefits of including English poetry in teaching English language. Various collaborative (a whole-group or small-group) activities have been developed not only to increase learners’ awareness of certain linguistic features but also to stimulate their sense to different uses of English registers. While 1) identifying the ways in which a sentence is newly organized, a new punctuation is created, and new registers are made, 2) pinpointing in what way and why they are unusual, 3) contrasting and comparing them with more commonly accepted uses, and finally 4) commenting on how these creative uses of language contribute to the overall or particular meaning of the poem, learners come to be familiar with the norms or rules from which these creative uses of English language deviate in order to achieve a particular pragmatic communicative effect. In addition, as being participants rather than passive observers, learners have a better chance, in the language of Maley & Duff, to play with new sentences, to create new sentences, to pull them in various ways, to use old words in new ways, to test their elasticity, to explore their limits through a poetry writing workshop in the supportive classroom context (9):

Learners can not only observe and share the experience of what others have dared to do with t

he language . . . , but through interactive writing tasks they can also reach out for the limits of the possible themselves. In one sense, the writing of poetry is an ideal task for language learners because of its tolerance of 'error' (see Widdowson, 1982; qtd. in Maley & Duff 9)

5. Along with such benefit as explained in #4, facilitating and maintaining a harmonic and safe **class room environment** is another significant advantage that exploiting the creative uses of English language as encouraging group discussions can afford. As usual, even apparently 'simple' English poems are rich in suggestive, colorful, and associative words and expressions which "speak subtly different messages to different people": "Poems . . . offer both a public and a personal face" (Maley & Duff 9-10). Hence, nobody can claim himself/herself as a **sole** owner of the meanings embedded in the poem. Each learner's perception and interpretation of the meanings has his/her own validity, and each personal meaning found in the poem is shared, exchanged, negotiated, reinforced, valued, or loosened in the process of interacting freely, safely, funnily with others' findings. In this way, discussion is stimulated, and the teacher serves as a moderator. A safe learning community is created in which critical remarks and words of ridicule are greatly lowered "so that free communication can take place" among learners (Arnold & Brown 10). Thus, lessening or avoiding whatever might threaten learners' '*language ego*' (ibid.; 10), the fun discussion activities (small-group or a whole-group) through English poetry establish what Dufeu calls "a climate of acceptance," which will not only create, in turn, "an environment of mutual support and care" (qtd. in Arnold & Brown 12) but also "encourage all members (teacher included) to accept the challenges for their own learning" (Dornyei & Malderez 169). The activities also serve to set up "the tension necessary for a genuine exchange of ideas"(Maley & Duff 10), the interacting and negotiating of meanings in the classroom, which are the most valuable for an effective and authentic communication. Thus, "reducing . . . anxiety, increasing motivation, facilitating the development of positive attitudes toward learning and language learning, promoting self-esteem, as well as supporting different learning styles"(Crandall 227), the English poetry classroom shares essential characteristics of cooperative and humanistic learning:

. . . cooperative learning requires social interaction and negotiation of meaning among heterogeneous group members engaged in tasks in which all group members have both something to contribute to and learn from the other members. (Crandall 226)

. . . the second language class is a natural setting for being able to communicate in highly appealing ways. This is, while conversing in the target language students can share their hopes and dreams and their ambitions; their experiences, memories, desires; their interests, values and insights; their feelings, strength and much more. . . . It is truly getting to know others that we are truly able to like them. In such ways, self-esteem flourishes and grows. (qtd. in Moskowitz 178)

6. As well known, few language materials can give a better sense of the rhythms and melodies of a language than poetry. While stylistic features of the poem attracts readers' eyes, its **sound** appeals to their ears, and a marked rhyme or an emphatic rhythm tends to stick to their minds (Maley & Duff 10-11). If we assume that language learning needs to be processed through the co-ordinated system of what Krashen calls "conscious learning and unconscious acquisition," exposing learners to the sound patterns of English poetry can be assigned to promote their' unconscious acquisition of English by helping them to unconsciously absorb, memorize, retrieve language features (vocabularies, grammar, sentence patterns, expressions, etc.) they read in English poetry. Moreover, when considered from the fact that all speeches have their own sound patterns with variations in speed of delivery, loudness, pitch, tone, softness, or stress (Lazar 118), learners' exposure to the rich patterns of sound in poetry can be regarded as a best contribution to communicative competence. In fact, an awareness of sound patterns of a speech act can work as an excellent "guide to the structure of information in the spoken message" (Maley & Duff 11): "Some of the essential features of fluent speech—such as clarity of diction, phrasing, stress rhythm, control and variation of pace—flow naturally from the reading of poetry aloud" (Maley & Duff 12). Maley and Duff also adds that stress and rhythm--core elements of the everyday spoken English--are more likely to be retained "through exposure to poetry" which can also help develop a sensitivity to them (11). Given the fact that current communicative practices are too contrived and meaning-deprived to be natural an

d interesting (so no personal investment in the practices), reading aloud English poetry naturally in choral or individual form while considering its mood, attitude, tone, pace, theme can be an excellent experience of developing spoken English competence and confidence in it: "the fact that group performance masks imperfections adds to self-confidence" (Maley & Duff 12). Indeed, if learners are taught to fully enjoy and appreciate the rich patterns of sound in English poetry, they will become better aware of "how its [a poem's] stylistic features contribute to its meaning" while performing "movements, gestures, facial expressions and the changing qualities of voice" (Lazar 118). No doubt, developing intuitions as to the effect of stylistic features on the meaning is an important part of ESL/EFL.

7. If L2 learning through English poetry is very beneficial to ESL, learning how to read English poetry is very essential for maximizing such benefit. In regards to this, learning to **write English** poetry can be also an effective vehicle for developing English literacy in various reasons. Many people feel the need to quote or write poetry and use often (English) it as a way to express their feelings in birthday cards, wedding cards, anniversary cards, love letters, etc. As proved by the literacy program called "California Poets in the Schools 1984," English poetry workshop can be applied to ESL/EFL context as a great way of helping learners develop English literacy by encouraging "all words . . . all phrases, twists of syntax, sounds and syllables" (Harer 19). Learners have chances of putting words and sentences in peculiar or natural ways while playing with language and trusting in their own voices, images, and ideas without being afraid of being laughed at: "Nothing they say is wrong, but that some things are more acceptable than other" (Palmer 23). Thus, composing an English poetry, in group or individually, has to do with focusing on "creating an educated person vs. a trained one" (Kennedy, et al. 1), and in other words, what Perron calls "an organic education" in the ESL/EFL field: "Not just poets/teachers/students, we become humans talking to one another, curious, vulnerable, silly, contributing equally those personal visions through which we understand the world" (Gable 59). Making a story line, providing words and sentences, creating images from their experiences, imagining the proper progress of ideas, learners use the created English poem as a medium through which they can express themselves subjectively, creatively, contextually, and collaboratively. Finishing, revising, printing, publishing, reading loud to their peers, learners become an active user of English language rather than its passive consumer or imitator, expanding their communicative experiences in the English language. Stimulating their creativity through English poetry workshop also fits for "pursuing new "life goals," not just for reaching certain "language goals" (Arnold & Brown 3). Being a poet/a participant/a creator, a learner tends to be more active and responsible for his/her English learning.

To add another mysterious dimension and to give my students an idea of "audience" I explain to the class that we will copy the poems on lightweight paper, trim the edges, wrap them in plastic, tie them to two large helium balloons and let them go. I tell them that we don't know where these poems will land and we don't know who will read them. It might be years before they are found. In fact, they may never be found by a human. Perhaps the poems will land in a tree and a crow will find them and weave them into her nest. In this exercise I want my students to think about the unknown reader and also the idea that his/her poem is soaring or floating for an unknown length of time. I let them draw their own conclusions. . . . (cited from Mark Rodriguez, "For Every Poem You Write," *Forgotten Languages* Eds. Kennedy, Sarah, Peter Harris & Bernard Gershenson. California Poets in the Schools: Statewide Anthology

There are students who will always write for you because they're not afraid of their voices touching paper. These lucky ones have learned to trust themselves with their materials. They are like natural carpenters who, when given an ax, can march off into the forest and build something. The only problem with these students is that sometimes they try to build too perfectly, and the structures they create with words are like little fortresses that keep them locked on the outside. Very beautiful and closed. I challenge the "class poet" by suggesting that they build underground, dig deeper and go for the hidden perception, the unknown. Or I ask them to close their eyes and feel their way through the forest. This gentle "derangement of the senses" can be accomplished through free-writing, guided meditation, music, chant-poems etc. (cited from Katharine Harer, "No

tes on Teaching Poetry," *This Poem Knows You* [California Poets in the Schools, State wide Anthology, 1984])

8. English stretches, shortens, blends, and often drops sounds. These subtle features are required to acquire for fluency but very hard for a student of ESL/EFL to comprehend until he/she is properly trained to perceive the language in natural conversation. ESL/EFL learners should be aware of the difference between the written word and its spoken form. Class activities such as pronunciation and listening exercises through **poem songs** are particularly useful in developing listening comprehension skills. Young and teenage students like to listen to pop songs and enjoy, at their own pace and individually, repeating them until they learn them by heart. Once they are familiar with the material, they tend to progress from a mere imitation to using it when engaged in a dialogue with others. This enables them to move from the formal structure of language to an informal improvisation, using what they learn by heart unconsciously (including rhythm, stress, length, etc.). Presenting English poetry into chants is another way of developing spoken language skills. (cited from Carolyn Graham)

Given that the affective side of language learning contributes in a significant way to enriching learners' language learning, what I am offering now as a range/sample of suggestions and ideas about how to use English poetry as an effective language material provides a way of integrating a humanistic approach into both language learning process and language classroom, the approach which is characterized by holistic, heuristic, cooperative and interactional activities in their relation to such factors as self-esteem, autonomy, and motivation. In the language of Maley & Duff, "It is my hope that the readers will look upon them as the starting-point rather than the finishing-point of a useful and exciting exploration of language. I should be glad to hear from anyone who would like to suggest ideas that have not included in this lecture, or variations on the ideas suggested here" (Maley & Duff 16).

IV. Ideas and Activities: A Few Examples Among Hundreds of Activities

- **Assignment 3: Read the following poem and then, discuss about what the poem tells about the relation between form and meaning and how you feel about the poem's idea:**

Glass

Words of a poem should be glass
But glass so simple-subtle its shape
Is nothing but the shape of what it holds.

A glass spun for itself is empty,
Brittle, at best Venetian trinket.
Embossed glass hides the poem or its absence.

Words should be looked through, should be windows.
The best words were invisible.
The poem is the thing the poet thinks.

If the impossible were not
And if the glass, only the glass,
Could be removed, the poem would remain (Robert Francis, 1949)

1) Form: Read through the following section on "Closed Form & Open Form" and don't stay there for a long time. Our class is not studying about poetry but experiencing it. So this time, a mere understanding of the difference between open form and closed form is enough. That's it! Don't w

aste you time and energy on putting the section into your memory.

Closed Form & Open Form

Writing in closed form, a poet finds some sort of pattern such as that of a sonnet with its rime scheme and its fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. Poems in closed form look regular and symmetrical stanzas, striving for a kind of perfection--seeking to lodge words so securely in place that no word can be budged without a worsening. "Limitation makes for power" "The strength of the genie comes of his being confined in a bottle" (Richard Wolber): Compelled by some strict pattern to arrange and rearrange words, delete, and exchange them, poets must focus on them the keenest attention. Often they stand a chance of discovering words more meaningful than the ones they started out with. And at times, in obedience to a rime scheme, the poet says something quite unexpected. (Most poetry of the past is in closed form, exhibiting at least a pattern of rime or meter)

Poems in open form seek no final click. Rather, they view the writing of a poem as a process instead of a quest for an absolute. Free to use white space for emphasis, able to shorten or lengthen lines as the sense seems to require, the poet lets the poem discover its shape as it goes along, moving as water flows downhill, adjusting to its terrain, engulfing obstacles. (Poems after 1960s)

I Closed Form: Blank Verse, Stanza (heroic or closed couplet, tercet, terza rima, quatrain), Syllabic verse, Acrostic, Sonnet (Italian, Shakesperean--octave & sestet)

1) blank verse: the best-known one-line pattern for a poem in English with unrimed iambic pentameter (Shakespeare's plays; Milton's Paradise Lost, Tennyson's "Ulysses," etc.)

This Living Hand, Now Warm and Capable 1819?

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou wouldst wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calmed--see here it is--
I hold it toward you. (John Keats 1795-1821)

2) Stanza: Couplet, Tercet, Terza rima, Quatrain

i) Couplet: any pair of rimed lines that contain a complete thought.

- heroic or closed couplet: two rimed lines of iambic pentameter, the first ending in a light pause, the second more

heavily end-stopped:

- The poet may place a pair of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences side by side in agreement or similarity, forming a parallel, or in contrast and opposition, forming an antithesis.

Next at our altar stood a luckless pair,
Brought by strong passions and a warrant there:
By long rent cloak, hung loosely, strove the bride,
From every eye, what all perceived, to hide;
..... (George Crabbe)

ii) tercet: a group of three lines (usually rimed)

- terza rima: made of tercets linked together by the rime scheme a b a, b c b, c d c, d e d, e

f e, and so on.

iii) quatrain: a group of four lines (usually rimed)

- syllabic verse: the poet establishes a pattern of a certain number of syllables to a line as a way of escaping the tyranny of the iamb and of discovering less conventional rhythms.
- acrostic: poem in which the initial letter of each line, read downward, spells out a word or words--that named (and insulted) a well-known anthologist.

The Wood-Weasel 1944

emerges daintly, the skunk--
don't laugh--in sylvan black and white chipmunk
regalia. The inky thing
adaptively whited with glistening
goat-fur, is wood-warden. In his
ermined well-cuttlefish-inked wool, he is
determination's totem. Out-
lawed? His sweet face and powerful feet go about
in chieftain't coat of Chilkat cloth.
He is his own protection from the moth,

noble little warrior. That
otter-skin on it, the living pole-cat,
smothers anything that stings. Well,--
this same weasel's playful and his weasel
associates are too. Only
Wood-weasels shall associate with me. (Marianne Moore)
* Watson, Hildegard: The editor of The Dial

3) Sonnet (sonnetto: "little song"): Originally an Italian form, the sonnet owes much of its prestige to Petrarch(1304- 1374), who wrote in it of his love for the unattainable Laura. Fourteen lines with a mbic pentameter

i) Italian or Petrarchan sonnet: the rime scheme in its first eight lines (octave) is a b b a, a b b a
the rime scheme in the last six lines (sestet) is c d c d c d, c d e c d e, c d c c d c

* In the octave, the poet states a problem, and then, in the sestet, offers a resolution.

ii) English or Shakespearean sonnet: the rimes cohere in four clusters (three quatrains + one couplet)
a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g

- The English sonnet has three places where the procession of thought is likely turn in another direction. Within its frame, a poet may pursue one idea throughout the three quatrains and then in the couplet end with a surprise.

4) Epigram: a short poem ending in a witty or ingenious turn of thought, to which the rest of the composition intended to lead up. brevity + a final dash of wit.

I am his Highness' dog at Kew;
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you? (Alexander Pope 1688-1744; 1738)

This Englishwoman (1937)

This Englishwoman is so refined
She has no bosom and no behind.* (Stevie Smith 1902-1971) *behind = buttock

While paraphrasing, students work on vocabularies, syntax(grammar), patterns, tone, meanings, theme, etc, which can help them improve language skills (for an intermediate students of ESL/EFL)

Ex 1]

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

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.

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

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep. (Robert Frost 1923)

A man is on his way somewhere at nightfall. As he rides along the country road in the snow, he stops his horse to watch the woods. He knows who is the owner of the woods and where he lives. (He even seems to know who he would be in terms of personality and philosophy. The actual, legal owner of the woods is now in the village, not knowing the beauty of the woods filled up with snow.) The horse thinks it strange to stop in the snow and wonders why the man stops there in the coldest away from a farmhouse. (The horse does not (can't) see the mysterious beauty of the woods. What it desires is merely biological as opposed to philosophical). The horse gives its bells a shake. The horse seems to say, "hey, what's wrong with you?" There has been a deep silence, the silence broken only by the the sweep of light wind and downy flake. When the silence is completely broken by the bell sounds, the man awakens as if from a dream. Then, he reminds himself of his earthly duties and says he has a long way to go before he can sleep. Finally, he reminds once again himself of the unavoidable "fact" that he has a long way to go before he dies.

[various versions are possible]

- **Assignment 5: Paraphrase the following poem and exchange yours with others: See the differences/similarities. (for Advanced students)**

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will rise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will rise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core. (W. B. Yeats, 1892)

3) Translation (Individual or Group Work): This exercise is concerned with the process of interlingual and intercultural transfer. In fact, everyone translates in various situations, personal or public. We all adjust our linguistic register in accordance with the situations in which we find ourselves. We use language with our close friends that we do not use in formal situations. We make these sorts of adjustments every moment and every day without realizing. It is when we come to interlingual translation that we start to think about the processes of transfer from one linguistic system into another, and in learning another language it is very important to be aware of those processes. We not only need to be able to translate, but we need to know how to do it. Translation is both dynamic and inevitable. There are no "right" or "wrong" ways in translation. So I want to get you away from the notion of translation that sees "faithfulness" as good and anything less than that as bad. For there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Translation is a way of discovering and even creating meanings. Languages and cultures are different, and by accepting that idea of difference we can move creatively and subjectively between languages and cultures without trying to force one linguistic system into the strait-jacket of another. It is real fun!

● **Assignment 6: Follow the direction**

1. Select whatever poems you enjoy reading. (short poems are preferred)
2. Discuss about the content of the poems under reading in terms of subject, theme, tone, etc.
3. Write it in a prose form as literally as possible. Do not make any stylistic adjustments, simply translate the text as close to word for word as possible.
4. Turn the prose form into an acceptable poem.
5. Share the finished version of each text with your peer group members.

4) English Poetry Workshop including Prodyzing: Making a story line, providing words and sentences, creating images from their experiences, imagining the proper progress of ideas, learners use the created English poem as a medium through which they can express themselves subjectively, creatively, contextually, and collaboratively. Finishing, revising, printing, publishing, reading loud to their peers, learners become an active user of English language rather than its passive consumer or imitator, expanding their communicative experiences in the English language. Stimulating their creativity through English poetry workshop also fits for "pursuing new "life goals," not just for reaching certain "language goals" (Arnold & Brown 3). Being a poet/a participant/a creator, a learner tends to be more active and responsible for his/her English learning. When learners create their own poem, they come to be more sensitive to English and learn how to love English poetry.

Poetry Workshop

- I. Ten-minute Group Work (Include at least one metaphoric line or metaphor):
 - 1) Write a line of poetry that seems to be an opening line (try out an opening line).
 - 2) Be prepared to explain why your line is a first line rather than a line that might function equally well in a different context,
 - 3) to describe the poem you envision following your line in terms of ideas.

- 4) Then be prepared to give your line away. Following these steps,
- 5) read the line to your peers and discuss its possibilities--get suggestions about what sort of poem they see burgeoning from that opening line, and why: these suggestions constitute their bids.
- 6) Then the author of the line agrees to give it--no strings attached and forever--to the peer whose suggestion, enthusiasm, or oddball approach most please her/him.
- 7) The peer write down the suggested line.
- 8) repeat 4), 5), 6), and 7) until you complete a poem.
- 9) Be prepared to read it aloud to the class.
- 9) **Hand it in after the class through email:** doseon@mail.korea.ac.kr

II. Write a ten-line poem. The poem must include a proverb, adage, or metaphor, of familiar phrase (examples: she is a brick house, between the devil and the deep blue sea, one foot in the grave, a stitch in time saves nine, don't count your chickens before they hatch, some day my prince will come, the whole nine yards, a needle in a haystack) that you have changed in some way, as well as five of the following words: You have 20 minutes.

cliff, needle, voice, whirl

blackberry, cloud, mother, lick

* **Parody:** the original poem doesn't have to be a difficult one for parodying

[parody poem]

Flowing of the Well

--to Maggie Anderson--

The well is the deep teal fancy
of the September sky and it dreams a heir
to God. Its water is its own
mirror, reflecting everything but itself
and irresistible continuum.
The deepest phenomenon of emanation in dream,
the water embraces what comes before it, and
swirls, awake as a worm in a cocoon and feeding
whatever has roots as a nipple for an infant,
stony, and verdant basins hung vertically,
in darkness within light with the waving face,
as if saying love to the wind. (by Do-Seon Eur)

[original poem]

Anderson, Maggie. "Flying." *Cold Comfort*.
Pittsburgh, Pa: U of Pittsburgh P, 1986: 37.

The corn is the enormous yellow dirigible
of the August fields and it dreams fair
weather. Its husk is its own green life

raft, sliding past clouds and irrelevant gravity. The largest phenomenon of food in dream, corn hugs the air, dives and pirouettes, slick as melted butter, silk tassels flattened back, wind in the ears.

5) Poetry songs and Chanting: Many familiar poems began life as songs. Shakespeare studded his plays with songs, and many of his contemporaries wrote verse to fit existing tunes. Some poets composed both words and music. Some poets who were not composers printed their work in madrigal books for others to set to music. In the seventeenth century, however, poetry and song seem to have fallen away from each other.

Most poems are more memorable than most ordinary speech, and when music is combined with poetry the result can be more memorable still.

1. Let's not drink. Let's just sit here and look at each other. Or put a kiss inside my goblet and I won't want anything to drink.
2. Drink to me only with your eyes, and I'll pledge my love to you with my eyes;
Or leave a kiss within the goblet, that's all I'll want to drink.
3. Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine. (Ben Jonson 1573?-1637?: "To Celia")

DRINK to me ON-ly WITH thine EYES,
And I will PLEDGE with MINE;
OR LEAVE a KISS but IN the CUP,
And I'LL not ASK for WINE.

Unlike many poems we read on the printed page, songs tend to be written in language simple enough to understand on first reading. This immediate clarity is essential to rap. In most rap-songs, the singer talks or recites at top speed, dazzling us with long, rhythmic, four-stress lines that end in rimes. Rap began on city streets in the game of "signifying," in which two poets aim rimed insults at each other. (Runc DMC, Grandmaster Flash, L.L. Cool J, Fat Boys)

Not all popular songs are so plainspoken: Bob Dylan, Sting, Bono, Elivs Costello, Michelle Shocked, and others have written complicated lyrics full of strange, dreamlike imagery and poetic contents.

Ex] Song and Poetry: Singing and Saying

The Rose

Some say love it is a river that drowns the tender reed.
Some say love it is a razor that leaves your soul to bleed.
Some say love it is a hunger an endless aching need.
I say love it is a flower and you its only seed.
It's the heart afraid of breaking that never learns to dance.
It's the dream afraid of waking that never takes the chance.
It's the one who won't be taken who cannot seem to give
And the soul afraid of dying that never learns to live.
When the night has been too lonely and the road has been too long,
Then to think that love is only for the lucky and the strong,
Just remember in the winter far beneath the bitter snow lies the seed
That with the sun's love in the spring becomes the rose. (Bette Midler)

As Tears Go by

It is the evening of the day.
I sit and watch the children play.
Smiling faces I can see,
But not for me.

I sit and watch as tears go by.
My riches can't buy everything.
I want to hear the children sing.
All I hear is the sound of rain
falling on the ground.

I sit and watch as tears go by.
It is the evening of the day.

I sit and watch the children play.
Doing things I used to do they think are new.

I sit and watch as tears go by. (Rolling Stones)

Richard Cory, With Apologies to E. A. Robinson

They say that Richard Cory owns
One half of this old town,
With elliptical connections
To spread his wealth around.
Born into Society,
A banker's only child,
He had everything a man could want:
Power, grace and style.

But I, I work in his factory
And I curse the life I'm living
And I curse my poverty
And I wish that I could be
Oh I wish that I could be
Oh I wish that I could be
Richard Cory.

The papers print his picture
Almost everywhere he goes;
Richard Cory at the opera,
Richard Cory at a show
And the rumor of his party
And the orgies on his yacht--
Oh he surely must be happy
With everything he's got. (Refrain)

He freely gave to charity,
He had the common touch,
And they were grateful for his patronage
And they thanked him very much,
So my mind was filled with wonder
When the evening headlines read:
"Richard Cory went home last night

And put a bullet through his head." (Refrain)
(Paul Simon; Simon & Garfunkel on Sounds of Silence 1966)

Love me Tender, Love me True

Elvis Presley

Love me tender, love me sweet.
Never let me go.
You have made my life complete.
And I love you so.
Love me tender, love me true.
All my dreams fulfil.
For, my daring, I love you.
And I always will.

Hello

Lionel Richie

I've been alone with you inside my head
And in my dreams I've kissed your lips
A thousand times.
I sometimes see you pass outside my door.
Hello, is it me you're looking for?
I can see it in your eyes.
I can see it in your smile.
You're all I've ever wanted,
And *my arms are open wide*
Cause you know just what to say,
And you know just what to do.
And I want to tell you so much
I love you.

Good-Bye

--Jessica--

I can see the pain living in your eyes
And I know how hard you try.
You deserve to have so much more.
I can feel your hurt and I sympathize
And I'll never criticize
All you ever meant to my life.
I don't want to let you down.
I don't want to lead you on.
I don't want to hold you
back from where you might belong.

You would never ask me why
My heart is so disguised.
But I just can't live a lie any more.
I would rather hurt myself
Than to ever make you cry.
But there's nothing left to
Say but good-bye.

Without You

-- Mariah Carey --

No, I can't forget this evening
Or your face as you were leaving.
But I guess that's just the way the story goes.
You always smile, but in your eyes
Your sorrow shows.
Yes, it shows.

No, I can't forget tomorrow
When I think of all my sorrow.
When I had you there, but then I let you go,
And now it's only fair that I should let you know
What you should know.

I can't live if living is without you.
I can't live.
I can't give anymore.
I can't live if living is without you.
I can't give.
I can't give anymore.

Tears in Heaven

-- Eric Clapton --

Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?
Would you be the same if I saw you in heaven?
I must be strong, and (I'll) carry on
Cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.
Would you hold my hand if I saw you in heaven?
Would you help me stand if I saw you in heaven?
I'll find my way through night and day
Cause I know I just can't stay here in heaven.

You Light up my Life

So many nights I'd sit by my window,
Waiting for someone to sing me his song.
So many dreams I kept deep inside me,
Along in the dark,
But now you've come along,
And you light up my life.
You give me hope to carry on.
You light up my days and fill my nights with

h g

*Time can bring you down. Time can bend your knees.
Time can break the heart.*

Have your begging, please. Begging, please.

Beyond the door there's peace I'm sure,

And I know *there'll be no more tears in heaven.*

Rolling at sea, a drift on the waters,

Could it be finally I'm turning for home,

Finally, a chance to say,

"Hey, I love you" never again to be all alone.

It can't be wrong when it feels so right,

Cause you, you light up my life.

- **Visit also our homepage:** www://shinbiro.com/~eepoetry
- **Assignment 7:** Write a short study of a lyric by a recent popular song-writer. Show why you believe the song-writer's work deserves the name of poetry. Or write or Find out a story with poetic devices and turn it into a rap. (cited from X. J. Kennedy, *Literature*: 604-619)

6) Contrasting: This exercise is to help students think about the meaning of each word in the poem providing an opposite word. There are various responses. For example, the opposites of *man* in a poem can be *woman*, *boy*, *animal*, and *god*, depending on the context in which it happens. It is a good idea to display the various results on the board and discuss about them. Work individually or in pairs on the following poems and circle words you can provide opposites for and write the opposite on the text. Compare and contrast your results with other groups' and then discuss about what differences you find through this exercise:

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)

Howard Nemerov (b. 1920)

My Papa's Waltz

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt. (1948)

The Snow Globe

A long time ago, when I was a child,
They left my light on while I went to sleep,
As though they would have wanted me beguiled
By brightness if at all; dark was too deep.

And they left me one toy, a village white
With the fresh snow and silently in glass
Frozen forever. But if you shook it,
The snow would rise up in the rounded space

And from the limits of the universe
Snow itself down again. O world of white,
First home of dream! Now that I have my dead,
I want so cold an emblem to rehearse
How many of them have gone from the world's light,
As I have gone, too, from my snowy bed. (1955)

D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)—this poem for the most advanced students

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;

Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cozy parlor, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appaionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past. (1918)

7) Making Meaning: A Closing Game: This exercise aims to lead learners towards making their own interpretations, making use of certain contextual readings. While making decisions about what would go in the blanks (or the blank lines), they come to experiment with the different effects which different decisions will bring about. In so doing, they have a better chance to use language functionally, contextually, subjectively, and even creatively, which are important elements in fluent speech. Compare your version with the original one and see the cultural differences/similarities. (The following poems are from *Ten-Second Rainshowers*)

An April Day

Here I am in April
When the trees and grass
Are both green. I'm sitting
Here in the shade with dirt.

The Wind

The wind I can't see
but I feel and hear
and it must be a spirit
for when it passes
I see trees

_____. (Nello Caramat; Grade 5)

Lazy Days

_With my fishing I sink my problems.
With my hook I catch my joys.
This is the _____ that
You search tirelessly for.
No clock is here to count you time,
No person to disturb you,
Just a fishing pole and a riverbank,

_____.
(Matt White; Grade 7)

Today

Today the sun shines
_____ down hard, making it warm
but chilly, with the cool
breeze that comes from
nowhere; at this time of
the year, spring and winter

_____.
(Matt Miller; Grade 10)

Four-Leaf Clover

I can remember
When I need you,
Four leaf clover,
When my heart was in love.
I was counting on you
To give me some luck

Leave Me Alone

The girls leave me alone
because _____
I go in the forest
and give crumbs to the birds,
then I try to open my lips
but they are frozen shut.

For him to notice me.
You never came through
So _____

(Susan Quijano; Grade 9)

My Comfort

For the thousandth time
I look in the mirror
And I see someone with beauty
Lots of people say I'm not
But who cares what
They think
I know I'm beautiful
And as long as I wake up
Every day and see it
I'll be happy with myself
And each time I turn
A different age, I'll wake up
With _____
(Falon Lipeford; Grade 6)
0)

Loving

I have a crush on a girl.
But everybody says I am
A _____. So I am not going
To ask her out. Because she
Might _____.
Oh, I get a chill even thinking
About her. Maybe if I send her
Some _____, she will know
How much I care. Or if
I send her some _____
To show her how much I
Think she is pretty.
(Gerry Morales; Grade 5)

(Stephanie Byrne; Grade 3)

I Saw Myself

I think I am in love
For I am drawing violets.
I feel this joy within my soul.
And yesterday I saw myself in the river
And for the first time
I _____.
(Karen Navarez; Grade 4)

Chasing the Light

If I were a moth
I'd fly to the light

It is the only light
I know that
will never singe
my delicate wings. (Liz Flynn; Grade 1)

8) Figurative Language (I): Simile & Metaphor: In an actual conversation or writing, you sometimes feel like to speak nonsense as a humor or to say less than or beyond what you mean, “or the opposite of what you mean, or something other than what you mean.” Figurative language cannot be taken literally only. As Robert Frost writes, “Poetry provides the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another” (qtd. in & indebted to Perrine 58). In addition, learners often find it difficult and uncomfortable to understand multiple ambiguities as witnessed in editorials, essays, fictions, political speeches, jokes, and even in everyday conversation. Working on metaphorical language and its figurative meanings in English poetry can help them reduce such difficulty a lot.

The Guitarist Tunes up

With what attentive courtesy he bent
Over his instrument;
Not as a lordly conqueror who could

Command both wire and wood,
But as a man with a loved woman might,
Inquiring with delight
What slight essential things she had to say
Before they started, he and she, to play.
(Frances Cornford 1886-1960)

- **Assignment 8: Read the following poem and discuss about what message about “life” the author tries to imply by means of the figurative term “hound”**

The Hound

Life the hound
Equivocal
Comes at a bound
Either to rend me
Or to befriend me.
I cannot tell
The hound's intent
Till he has sprung
At my bare hand
With teeth or tongue.
Meanwhile I stand
And wait the event. (Robert Francis 1901-)

[what word would go in the blanks?]

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful--
The eye of a little god, four cornered.
Most of time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am . A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rise toward her day after day, like a terrible fish. (Sylvia Plath 1932-1963)

- **Assignment 9: Exercise: Clozing in Figurative Language (I): Simile & Metaphor**

Who Am I?

Oh, My Love Is like a Red, Red Rose

I am like a gate
without a name.
I am like stars making something.
I wish
I could be like other children,
but I am just a dud.
I want to be
like _____ that have names.
(Jacob Mayes; Grade 4)

Oh, my love is like a red, red rose
That's newly _____ in June;
My love is like the _____
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonny lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas _____.

My violin's soft music
makes me feel relaxed.
It's like travelling in my dad's truck
from busy Virginia to flat, warm Kansas.
(Tondra Seibring; Grade 8)

Till a' the sea gand dry, my dear,
And the rocks _____ wi' the sun;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only love!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my love
Though it were ten thousand mile.
(Robert Burns 1759-1796; 1788)

The Pathway

I see a long path
in the dark woods.
If I go on it
all the leaves
on the trees
will _____ me.
(John Lipfert; Grade 4)

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Rainshowers

Rainshowers
last forever, seconds
at a time, and
almost like _____
which is long
at heart.
(Mike Davis; Grade 8)

Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
(William Shakespeare; 1564-1616; 1609)

Girls are like _____; they
swim into minds with
open feathers.
(James Deloatch; Grade 7)

Exercise: Rewrite the following figurative Language into Plain language

1. Think of the storm roaming the sky uneasily
like a dog looking for a place to sleep in,
listen to it growling. --Elizabeth Bishop-- "Little Exercise"
2. . . . the hounds of spring are on winter's trace . . .
--Algernon C. Swinburne-- "Atlanta in Calydon"

3. To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower, . . . --William Blake-- "To See a World in a Grain of Sand"
4. Her presence was a roomful of flowers,
Her absence is an empty bed. --Li Bo--
5. . . . When I kissed her paper cheek
I thought of the snake,/ of his quick motion. --Ruth Whitman-- "Castoff Skin"
6. "Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all - --Emily Dickinson--
7. You fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye --Margaret Atwood-- "You Fit into Me"
8. One morning our teacher read
a long story.
When it was over, our teacher
looked like a book. --Georgina Bruer, Grade 3--
9. When my mom died
I was like the winter --James Powell, Grade 8--

- **Assignment 10: A Group Work:** Choose two short poems including a children's poem rich in figurative language. Rewrite the poems, taking for your model Howard Moss's deliberately bepiddling version of William Shakespeare's sonnet, "Shall I Compare thee to a summer's day?" Eliminate every figure of speech. Turn the poem into language as flat and unsuggestive as possible. Just ignore any rime or rhythm in the originals. You may have several versions in process. Then, in a paragraph, indicate lines in your revised version that seem worsened. In conclusion, sum up what your barbaric rewrite tells you about the nature of poetry. Hand in your assignment via email: doseon@mail.korea.ac.kr

- **Assignment 11: Exercise: Clozing in Figurative Language (I): Personification**

A Bad Day

I overslept and missed my train,
slipped on the sidewalk
in the pouring rain,
sprained my ankle,
broke my glasses,
lost my keys,
got stuck in the elevator,
it wouldn't go,
kicked it twice and stubbed my toe,
bought a pen that didn't write,
took it back and had a fight,
went home angry,
locked the door,

More Bad Luck

The bread was stale,
like _____.
It was four days old.
The milk was sour
like _____.
The butter was rancid
like _____.
The steak was tough
like _____.
The service was dreadful
like _____.
The waiter was rough
like _____.

crawled into bed,
couldn't take any more.
(qtd. in Jazz Chants; 21)

My bill was huge
like _____.
His tip was small
like _____.
I'm sorry I went to that place at all.
(adapted from Jazz Chants; 21)

Well, He Eats Like a Pig

Well, he eats like a pig,

he can't get enough.
He works like
he looks real tough.
He smoke like _____,
four packs a day.
He sleeps like _____,
what more can I say?

He drinks like _____,
scotch on the rocks.
When he gets real mad,
he hardly talks.
He cries like _____
when he's feeling sad.
He's the dearest friend
I've ever had.
(qtd. in Jazz Chants; 77)

The _____ comes
On little cat feet.
It sits looking
Over harbor and city
On silent haunches
And then moves on.
(Carl Sandburg)

I love walking through _____, feeling
it touches my unawaken skin. I feel it as my
self because it hides something in and behind
it. I like the way in which it melts like
icecream on my palm.

[prose] I come back to a small fishing, where I grew up. I'm covering the whole village with my grey coat silently, and looking at a girl who I loved with all my heart. She is shedding tears. But nobody can't notice it because of my grey coat. I am embracing her, and I hope it will last forever. Suddenly, beaming sunlights scatter grey coat.

a dog; a chimney; a log; a fish; a baby:

Fog

● Assignment 12: Exercise: Clozing through Personification (II)

Title?: _____

_____ talks like
a broken heart a
cold and lonely storm, the night's
starry sky
a yellow bot moistened air
a way to say
a cozy cottage on a peak
or to remember
a rosy red flower bed in a garden
of air
or
a watching a volcano
erupt
(Emerald Light; 3^d Grade)

Title?: _____

_____ look like the life
of the invisible
_____ smell like the person
who own them.
They sound like silence.
They taste like air.
_____ feel like you're
being watched and followed.
(Danita Coss; 4th Grade)

Title?: _____

_____ Looks like the
River flowing by, it is
The wind blowing
Hard. A tent up and away,
Silver sparkling gray, blood
Seeming to fade. I think of the
World going round, and a bridge
Falling down. At noon it would
ady.
Rise and at down again it will
Die. Pieces of grass rolling down
A hill and coming back up like as
If there was some kind of will.
(Michelle Orellana; 5th grade)

Coyote at the Reservation

Coyote walks lonely
in Kaibeto, Arizona
on the hot sand,
it is hot as _____.
Now it is midnight.
Coyote walks to a hogan
and taps on the wood.
“Come in,” said the Navajo 1

Coyote did not come in.
The Navajo lady felt terrified.

Coyote felt something
In his heart
Coyote suddenly disappeared
into the night air
like a ghost.
(Stephanie Howard’ 5th Grade)

My Friend is My _____

My friend is stupid so they say but I know
o train
He’s smart I’ve been in my mind . . .
My friend is as simple as the Pharoah’s tomb
My friend is as complicated as treading a needle
My friend is cynical, rude, angered, deadly
He’s the kindest person I know . . .
My friend is my _____.

CHRIS

Ch in my name sounds like a choo-choo
rushing to the next pick-up
Then the R comes growling r-r-r-r-r-
like a mad machine going crazy.
The IS comes quickly with an i-s-s-s-s-s-s
for a wonderful kiss.
(Christopher Finley; 5th Grade)

9) Images: According to Arnold, images are “strongly connected to the emotional side of life, and thus can help to achieve learner engagement and greater assimilation of the language” (260). Since English words we are learning are presented with “many associations and images – visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, pleasant, unpleasant . . .,” when used properly in relation to meaning, images can have a positive effect on language acquisition (Arnold 264). Given that “experience come to us largely through the senses” (Perrine 46), communication frequently tends to rely on sense impressions, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, organic, etc. For example, expressions about touch such as hardness, softness, wetness, heat or cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue, tension, sound, smell are recurrently found in everyday conversation. Understanding images can also help learners understand the flow of ideas, which is culturally specific.

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
_____ on a wet, black bough.
(Ezra Pound 1885-1972; 1916)

Exercise: Striking my bare foot against the comb in the bedroom, now cold and motionless but associated with the living wife (perhaps worn in her hair), I feel a shock as if I had touched her corpse: Write these statements into a short poem with 3 lines.

The Winter Evening Settles down

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six O'clock.
The burnt-out ends of _____ days.
And now a _____ shower wraps
The scraps
Of _____ leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A _____ cab-horse steams and stamps.
And the lighting of the lamps.
921)
(T. S. Eliot 1888-1965; 1917)

The Great Figure

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure 5
in gold
on a red
firetruck
moving tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the _____ city.
(W. C. Williams 1883-1963; 1

Waiting for the _____

Breeze sent a wrinkling darkness
Across the bay. I knelt
Beneath an upturned boat,
And, moment by moment, felt

The sand at my feet grow colder,
The damp air chill and spread.
Then the first raindrops sounded
On the hull above my head.
(Timothy Steele; 1986)

The piercing chill I feel:
my dead wife's comb, in our bedroom,
under my heel. . . . (Taniquichi Buson)
k.

Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout

Down valley a smoke haze
Three days heat, after five days rain
Pitch glows on the fir-cones
Across rocks and meadows
Swarms of new flies.

I cannot remember things I once read
A few friends, but they are in cities.
Drinking cold snow-water from a tin cup
Looking down for miles
Through high still air. (Gary Snyder; 1959)

A Sensual, For Ezra Pound

A girl is feeding / grapes to three leopards.
The leopards are black. / The grapes are also black.

Blue Black.
And the girl is _____.
Like ripening grapes,
her _____, her small _____,
lean lightly into the air.
(Emanuel di Pasquale; 1989)

10) Composing Your own Poem:

i) "Focusing on the First Line": Lanston Hughes's "Children": This can be done individually, in p

airs, or in a small group. With large class it is best to work in small group of 4-5 students. Each group tries to fill the blanks with its own ideas and words and compares its versions with other's during a general round-up. Suggestions are written up for a whole-class discussion. (This section is indebted to Gillian Lazar 109-110)

Children always
 Children never
 Old people always
 Old people never

[ex: an original poem in which each line begins with the same words]

Fear is total darkness
 Fear is like a fuse going out
 Fear is like a doll.
 Fear is a bolt of lightning
 Fear is a star that you can't see
 Fear is frightening (Marion Mackles, 6th grade; qtd. in Koch 53)

[Complete the poem using the words in the box below]

Heads	ones	morning	is	only	old	ears	sleep	are	eyes
-------	------	---------	----	------	-----	------	-------	-----	------

Children

Children at night
 Children never wake up
 When comes.
 the old ones wake up.
 Old Trouble always awake.

Children can't see over their
 Children can't hear beyond their
 Children can't know outside of their

The old ones see.
 The ones hear.
 The old know.
 The old ones old. (part of Laura Riding, "Gorgotten Children")

ii) "Thin Poem Writing": Create your own poem with short lines. It is fun!

This Is Just to Say

I have eaten
 the plums
 that were in
 the icebox
 and which
 you were probably
 saving
 for breakfast

On the other
 Side of the
 Window in
 School lies
 The playground
 And how I long
 To be on the
 Other side
 Of the
 Window

(Tommy Kennedy, 6th grade; Koch 124)

Forgive me
 they were delicious
 so sweet
 and so cold (William Carlos Williams)

iii) "Noun Phrase Poem": Create your own poem with one word lines and enjoy it is fun!

Love

The Bird

To a Bird

sex	sky	Bird,
mouth	clouds	Why
touch	wings	Are
dream	gray	You
wink	up	Flying
smile	down	to
peek	flap	the Sky
rose	flip	to
feels	(Mackles, 6 th grade; 111)	the Sky?
good (author unknown, 6 th grade; Koch 119)		(A Korean;
6 th Grade)		

iv) Found Poetry: This exercise helps students either shape a piece of free verse from everyday language or find out a poetry-like short passage from any magazine, newspaper, advertisement, essay, etc.

From West Monroe, L.A.

Matilda Crabtree, 14, was
 Shot and killed by
 Her father when she jumped
 From a closet and yelled
 "Boo" to scare her parents.
 Last words:
 "I love you, Daddy."
 (exerpted from a newspaper)

Snoopy

Snoopy
 grew up more
 in the company
 of humans
 than dogs, which
 probably
 accounts for
 the fact that
 he's much more
 human than
 canine. (cited from an Ad.)

Timing is Essential

Everybody tells us you can go any where.
 But nobody tells us the tide's coming.
 There is no arguing over that.
 Too late, all is water around us.
 And we can go no where.
 "Let's not forget – time"
 (from A Timex watch Ad.)

11) Split Poem Activity and Jazz Chanting: Split a poem into two parts, one with odd numbered lines and the other with even numbered lines and jumble them into two columns. Then ask students to listen to the recorded poem twice and arrange the lines in correct order. Use shorter and easier poems for the beginners and intermediates:

Column A

1. Give pearls away and rubies
n vain;
3. And I am two-and-twenty,
5. When I was one-and-twenty
y free."
7. 'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
ss rue."
9. When I was one-and-twenty,
gain,
11. "Give crowns and pounds and guineas
'tis true.
13. But I was one-and-twenty,
me.
15. "The heart out of the bosom

Column B

2. Was never given i
4. I heard a wise man say,
6. But keep your fanc
8. And sold for endle
10. I heard him say a
12. And oh, 'tis true,
14. No use to talk to
16. But not your heart away;

12) Comprehension Check-Ups: An Example from a SAT English Test: Read the poem answer the questions (individually or in groups) based on the poem and exchange yours with others and then discuss about the differences:

Fable

-- Stephen Crane --

In heaven
Some little blades of grass
Stood before God.
“What did you do?”
Then all save one of the little blades
Began eagerly to relate
The merits of their lives.
This one stayed a small way behind,
Ashamed.
Presently, God said,
“And what did *you* do?”
The little blade answered, “O my Lord,
Memory is bitter to me,
For if I did good deeds
I know not of them.”
Then God, in all his splendor,
Arose from his throne,
“O best little blade of grass” he said.

1. It can be inferred that the speaker(s) in line 4 is/are
 - (a) an angel
 - (b) St. Peter
 - (c) The blade of grass
 - (d) God
 - (e) The one little blade of grass
2. God’s attitude toward the little blade of grass may best be described as
 - (a) condescending
 - (b) neutral
 - (c) admiring
 - (d) disdainful
 - (e) morally superior
3. What is the effect of lines 16-17 in relation to the rest of the poem?
 - (a) They reveal God’s egotism
 - (b) They heighten anticipation of the last line
 - (c) They shift the narrative voice
 - (d) They echo the last lines of the first stanza
 - (e) They reveal the poet’s true feeling
4. God’s attitude toward the blades of grass as a group is
 - (a) shameful
 - (b) neutral
 - (c) disgusted
 - (d) disapproving
 - (e) melancholy

5. The main idea of the poem is that
- it is better to do nothing than too much
 - it is better to forget if you have done something wrong
 - it is better to be modest than to be boastful
 - it is better to keep your problems to yourself
 - if you need to tell your bad deeds to someone, you are not worthy of respect
6. The word “presently”(line 10) means which of the following in the context of the poem?
- At this time
 - In a little while
 - At once
- I only
 - II only
 - I and III only
 - II and III only
 - I, II, and III
7. It can be inferred that the small blade was “ashamed”(line 9) because
- it was smaller than the others
 - it was disgusted with the other blades of grass
 - it didn't feel worthy of God's attention
 - it was bitter and lonely
 - it thought its acts greater than the others' acts

Appendix 1: How to Select Proper English Poems for ESL/EFL learners: (I am still working on it)

- poems that are worthy of attention and that could give good experiences;
- some element in them that children would be excited by and connect with their own feelings
- avoid poems of unfamiliar words and difficult syntax, allusions to unfamiliar things; students learned new words and new conceptions in order to play a new game, or got enable them to understand science fiction in comics or on TV, so why not for poetry which they liked just as much? (I doubt)
- avoid poems whose meaning will remain obscure to children
- a poem's length
- poems that use the words children really use when they speak
- poems whose subjects are secrets, noises, colors, names of rivers, wishes, dreams, girls, love, troubles, lies, funny things, a strange and beautiful place, full of wonderful sounds, human/animal conversation
- joke poems
- story-telling & reading-aloud poems
- poetry which gives fresh vision to common things and experiences; it can appeal to the intellect as well as to the emotions, as it extends and enriches meaning in everyday life.
- poems that keep in mind the typical interests and concerns of childhood: relationships with friends and family, the outdoors, daily routines, play, animals, and ordinary everyday things such as safety pins or socks;
- poems that show a fresh view of something with which a child is likely to be familiar and which appeal to the mind through the senses.
- poems that relate to the emotions and experiences of the younger ages.
- subjects that delight girls may bore boys and vice versa; words that set one child to laughing with

ll

leave others in silence; level of achievement, socioeconomic factors play a big part in the sort of response a poem may meet; poems that all generations enjoy will not be necessarily meaningful to the next.

Appendix 2: Using on-line children's poetry web-sites in ESL/EFL Classroom: (I am still working on it. I will put it on on-line use through the homepage. Please visit the homepage later (<http://www.shinbiro.com/~eepoetry>))

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* *authors unreferenced in "Works Cited" are from Arnold's edition*