

Chapter 9

Haiku–Like Aesthetic Sentence Composition Through the Narrative Process

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetic sentences often behave freely from ordinary grammatical constraints; nevertheless, they maintain rich message transmitting power. This is apparently a mysterious language phenomenon, which dexterously gives full play to its strong narrative power on the reader's soul. In this chapter, the author takes haiku, classical Japanese short poetic sentence, as a model of aesthetic sentence. By using the concept of functional grammar and season-word ontology, the author tries to approach the secret of taciturn beauty in poetic sentences. The beauty of haiku exists in ellipses, suggestions, and eloquent mutism of 5-7-5 syllable short sentences. In this chapter, the author introduces the functional grammar as a device for explaining the meaning and construction of haiku. The functional grammar claims that every sentence is composed of two categories: kernel sentence and meta-sentence. The author tries to reveal the secrets of the aesthetic beauty of the ultimately simple sentence, haiku.

INTRODUCTION

Aesthetic sentences often behave freely from grammatical constraints. Poetic sentences, such as Haiku, in particular are often far beyond grammatical completeness while bringing an incredibly attractive power to human being's linguistic sensitivity.

Thus, the author can expect to obtain techniques for composing impressive sentences or delivering persuasive talks through a study on poetic sentence constructions. Though there are many genres or styles in poetic sentences, in this paper, the author takes haiku, classical Japanese short poetic sentence, as a typical example of a beautiful persuasive sentence. By using the functional grammar concept, the author tries to elucidate the secret of simple sentential beauty. The essence of the beauty of haiku often exists

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in ellipses, abbreviations, and suggestions: eloquent mutism. Various events and situations that tacitly suggest the deep emotions and feelings of writers are embedded in a very short and simple sentence, which is composed of 5-7-5 letters words or phrases.

Usually haiku never talks directly about the emotions or declarations of the writer's mind; it only suggests them by using simple words that describe the weather, plants, animal, climate, or scenic beauty. Haiku is always expecting and inviting readers' conjecture or imagination (Nitta, 2013).

Haiku is now moving out from the classical region of Japanese culture or literary arts and becoming an international model of sentential beauty. On these grounds, the author has taken haiku and its English translations as a poetic sentence corpus, which is using functional grammar to investigate the secret of beautiful and simple sentence constructions.

The main point of functional grammar is that it regards every sentence as composed of two types of sentences: kernel sentence and meta-sentence. Meta-sentences can be understood as a sentence structuring operator, while kernel sentences are simple structured, mono-predicate sentences. Kernel sentences have obvious translations of canonical forms, while meta-sentences represent the logical-semantic structure of sentences, which take kernel sentence(s) as their dominating variable(s). From meta-sentences, the author can draw a lot of useful semantic information.

The author shows typical examples of meta-sentences obtained from the haiku corpus. The author expects that through meta-sentences, the essence of the simple beauty of haiku can clearly extracted. This extracted essence will provide some hints for composing beautiful sentences together with fundamental language teaching methods.

BACKGROUND

Basics of Haiku

Haiku, the classical Japanese literary art, is now very popular among people of various classes and educational backgrounds. Lots of culture books provide guidelines for beginners composing Haiku. They provide some hints and lots of examples talking about mental snapshots, suggesting some deep and wide ideas by treating small parts of things, events, natural beauty, weather, etc. However, their explanations and discussion cannot go further than suggesting only some deep and fascinating features of Haiku. In many cases, some sense of frustration is left behind.

Herein, the author would like to present a very conscious informal introduction to Haiku. The origin of Haiku may be found in the Hokku (“発句”) of Renga (“連歌”). The representative author is Basho (“芭蕉”) in the mid-Edo era. In the Meiji era, Masaoka Shiki (“正岡子規”) completed the formal style and established the Haiku as an authoritative literary art. The definition is very simple, such as 5-7-5 phonetic character construction, usage of segmenting word (“切れ字” Kireji), and season word (“季語” Kigo). The candidate for the season word is given by Saijiki (“歳時記”), which is a kind of ontology describing human beings' ordinary lives in the coordinates of four seasons—a poetic date scale. Haiku and Tanka form two big parts of the mainstream of Japanese short poems.

People who live outside of Japan's ordinary circumstances may find it difficult to interpret and write Haiku. The author advises them to just neglect the formal definition of Haiku. Using three to five English phrases, you can write Haiku as short poetry. Let us try some Haiku.

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