Plotting Poetry 2025

Transforming Poetic Thought into Waka:

How to Pack the Skeleton into a 31-Syllable Closet

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Project Goals

- Reverse-engineer modern interpretations into waka
- Identify compression patterns for poetic thought
- Explore constraints and expression in 31-mora form

Basics of WAKA

Japanese Song (Poem)

- WA → Japanese / Japanese style
- KA → Song

Early Established Waka

- The Man'yoshu: est. around 7-8th century in Chinese notation.
- The Kokinshu: est. ca. 905 in Japanese notation.

Style and Rhetorics

- Include only 31 syllables with 5,7,5,7,7 sounds
- Express natural views and emotions in a simple sentence.
- Use of rhetorics to create a poetic atmosphere:
  - Pun (kakekotoba),
  - Pillow words (makurakotoba), and
  - Introductory words (jo-kotoba)

Poetic Rules may include:

- Omission of grammatical elements
- Inversion of word order
- Symbolic substitutionk
- Nominalization
- Manipulation of ambiguity
- Compression of meaning
- Expansion of meaning
- Reinterpretation of context

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Material

- A) Kokinshu: a collection of 1000 waka poems
- B) Modern Japanese translations: 10 sets of translations

Parallel corpus of 1000 waka and 10 modern Japanese translations

Computer programms

- Align waka with contemporary paraphrases
- Use phrase gloss and structured data
- Analyze rule types and transformation limits

Challenges

- Literal vs. interpretive gaps
- Compression loss in reverse mapping
- Ambiguity in source expressions

Toward a Model

- Create typology of transformation rules
- Visualize linguistic constraints
- Evaluate poetic fidelity and transformation cost

Methods

- Using a parallel corpus of waka and modern Japanese translations
- Align waka with contemporary paraphrases
- Use phrase gloss and structured data
- Analyze rule types and transformation limits
- Identify compression patterns for poetic thought

Steps

1. Calculating of the frequency of the conversion patterns
2. Clustering of the conversion patterns:
    - Grammatical, Lexical, Structural, Rhetorical etc.
3. Modeling of the conversion patterns:
    - Rule based, Statistical based etc.

Results

- Identify and classify poetic strategies
- Analyze how poetic thought is transfigured
- Uncover underlying rules (overt and covert)
- Explore the implications of compression
- Simulate the transformation process:

Discussion

- Explore poetic compression in modern Japanese
- Analyze constraints in poetic expression
- Discuss implications for translation and interpretation
- Consider cultural and linguistic factors

Conclusion

- Waka as a lens for poetic thought
- Compression as a creative constraint
- Future research directions
- Implications for translation studies

Conclusion

- Content of the work is impressive
- Author's skill is impressive as well