

# The Prosody of Korean *Sijo* and Its Redevelopment in English

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## Abstract

*This work investigates the prosodic features of sijo with regard to parallelism and the cadence of its third line, as well as the modification of such features in English sijo. Contrary to the widely held belief that traditional sijo contain a specific syllabic or accentual metrical scheme, sijo prosody hinges on the parallelism of half lines. This parallel rhythm and the well-known cadence of the third line can be successfully adapted into English sijo. Such modifications of sijo prosody are possible because the sijo rhythm is either intuitively grasped by English sijo poets or specifically modified using the characteristics of English language and poetry. To revitalize sijo and realize its potential as an international literature, its prosody as well as its specific linguistic characteristics need to be understood. Grasping such aspects can help promote sijo as a meaningful global poetic genre that captures everyday thoughts and emotions in its colloquial rhythms.*

**Keywords:** *sijo*, English *sijo*, prosody, metrics, parallelism, Korean classical poetry

## Introduction

During the Joseon era (1392–1910), *sijo* enjoyed wide appeal across social classes, and it continues to be regarded as the most representative traditional Korean lyrical genre. With its undiminished vitality, *sijo* is the only classical poetic genre of Korea still being composed. The domain of this brief three-line verse form expanded in the 1990s when a new type of *sijo* began to be written in English. Around this time, Larry Gross published *Sijo West*, a medium for the practice of *sijo* in English.<sup>1</sup> In addition, collections of *sijo* in English were published by Kim Unsong (1995) and Elizabeth St. Jacques (1995), and a number of English poetry competitions began to include the *sijo* genre.<sup>2</sup>

*Sijo* written in English (hereafter, “English *sijo*”) is helping to broaden the *sijo* genre. Acceptance abroad and composition in languages other than English will ensure the continued evolution of *sijo*. However, issues arise concerning diversity of form because each language has its own methods for producing poetic rhythm and must therefore approximate the rhythmic features of *sijo* in ways that differ from Korean. Such adaptations at times provoke resistance from traditionalists, who argue that English *sijo* does not conform to traditional lineation and structure.<sup>3</sup> In light of the ongoing evolution of *sijo* and the attendant controversy, the development of English *sijo* thus merits closer examination.

This research investigates how English *sijo* modifies the formal features of *sijo*. Given the ongoing controversy regarding the formal structure of *sijo*, I will first examine the prosody of traditional *sijo* based on recent work in this area (J. Kim 2014). Misunderstandings on the form of *sijo* may result in the rejection of English *sijo* and thus interfere with the international revitalization of this traditional genre.

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1. The journal was first issued in 1996 and published four issues before it folded in 1999. However, Gross has maintained the website “Poetry in the WORDshop,” which includes *sijo*, as well as the Yahoo! discussion group “sijoforum.” See Park (2011).
  2. A number of these competitions are listed in St. Jacques (1995, 100).
  3. The author received this criticism from traditionalists regarding a presentation on English *sijo* at the Korean Sijo Association in 2015. See J. Kim (2015).

Two formal characteristics of *sijo* will be discussed to shed new light on its prosody and its redevelopment in English. The first concerns the structure of its first and second lines with regard to prosodic parallelism, and the second concerns the cadence of its third and final line. The first characteristic is related to claims on the phonetic aspects that constitute *sijo* rhythm, which is generally perceived by critics as either syllabic or accentual. I reexamine these claims and argue that parallelism is the dominant feature of *sijo* prosody, and then investigate how this parallel structure is transformed and embedded in English *sijo*. Regarding the cadence of the third line, which has received the most critical attention (Park 2011), I will analyze how it is realized in English *sijo*.

The English *sijo* pieces analyzed in this work were mostly drawn from David R. McCann's (2010) anthology. This volume was chosen because it is the most recent and contains diverse forms, including *sijo* sequences. Anthologies by Elizabeth St. Jacques (1995) and Kim Unsong (1995) are referenced as well.

## The Prosody of Sijo

*Sijo* consists of three lines. Each line is divided into two half lines, and each half line is subdivided into two segments. These divisions rely on the syntactic structures of subject (s), verb (v), and qualifier (q), as shown in the following example by Jeong Mong-ju (1338–1392), “Dansimga 丹心歌” (Song of Loyalty):

<i>i-mom-i</i> s (This body)	<i>juk-go-juk-eo</i> v (dies and dies) (and)	<i>il-baek-beon</i> q (a hundred times)	<i>go-chyeo-juk-eo</i> v (dies again) (and)
<i>baek-gol-i</i> s (my bones)	<i>jin-to-doe-eo</i> v (become dust) (and)	<i>neok-si-ra-do</i> s (my soul)	<i>i-kko-eop-go</i> v (disappears or not (but)
<i>nim-hyang-han</i> q (to my lord)	<i>il-pyeon-dan-sim</i> <i>-i-ya</i> s (my loyalty)	<i>ga-sil-jul-i</i> s (its perishing)	<i>i-sseu-rya</i> v (is possible?)

Each line of this *sijo* constitutes a main clause divided into two subordinate clauses, and each subordinate clause contains two phrases. In this way, a line of *sijo* has a grammatical structure containing a clause, subordinate clauses, and phrases or words. This structure comprises a fixed formal rule in *sijo*. As Gross observes in “Like Haiku,” this form is also observed in English *sijo*:

To achieve the rolling, musical quality so characteristic of *sijo*, each half-line [*sic*] is further divided into two parts averaging 3–5 syllables each. Look at Elizabeth’s “Even Now.” Notice that each line [meaning a half line of *sijo*] usually divides into 2 phrases or word groups (“just us two / in the photograph”) (Gross 2015).

Unlike its lineation, the metrical form of *sijo* has long been controversial. The two most influential theories are *eumsuyul* (syllabic metrics) and *eumboyul* (accentual metrics). The first generation of early twentieth-century *sijo* scholars attempted to develop a syllabic model of *sijo*. The so-called *gibonhyeong* (normative form) of *sijo* was introduced by Yi Gwang-su (1928) and further developed by Jo Yun-je (1948). Its syllabic scheme is as follows: line 1: 3·4·3(4)·4 / line 2: 3·4·3(4)·4 / line 3: 3·5·4·3. This was a formal approach, considering that the Korean language has no other prosodic characteristics, such as accents or tones. However, *sijo* pieces that follow the syllabic model are very rare, and for this reason, many scholars began to lean toward *eumboyul*, or accentual metrics (B. Jeong 1954; D. Jo 1996; H. Kim 1977; McCann 1976; Seong 1986).

*Eumbo* in *eumboyul* corresponds to each of the four fundamental segments in a line, as shown in the *sijo* example above. *Eumbo* was initially regarded as equivalent to “foot” in English poetry. However, unlike the foot in English poetry, an *eumbo* rarely contains any phonological features that characterize its form. In English poetry, the pattern of accented and unaccented syllables constructs the pattern of the foot. By contrast, an *eumbo* is composed of a varying number of syllables ranging from two to six and does not share any other prosodic features with other *eumbo*. The Korean language is not accentual, durational, or tonal—only syllabic—so its poetic units cannot be explained in terms of the prosody of the English foot.

*Eumbo* later came to be defined as different from the English foot and was interpreted, instead, as a segment divided for grammatical or prosodic reasons (D. Jo 1996; H. Kim 1977). However, confusion regarding the *eumbo* and the English foot persists and continues to cause misunderstanding. An *eumbo* is principally a grammatical unit that does not have a standardized temporal value. It can be appropriately conceptualized as related to the prosodic term “colon.” The colon is considered “a cohesive, sequential stretch of the verse line characterized by syntactic affinity or connectedness utilized for metric purposes” (Lotz 1972, 11). It is a syntactic and prosodic unit divided by a caesura, which is “used to refer to a pause occurring within the line created by the syntax” (Attridge 1982, 8).<sup>4</sup>

*Eumbo*, as a syntactic colon, and *eumsu*, or syllabicity, construct the rhythm of *sijo*. However, this rhythm is achieved through a more relaxed metrical scheme based on the parallelism between half lines rather than a rigid meter. In previous research, the parallel rhythm of *sijo* is described as follows: “The number of syllables of the first colon is less than that of the second colon in a half line, except the last half line, where the rule is reversed” (J. Kim 2014, 81). This structure can be schematized as “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon (except the last half line which reverses this rule)” (J. Kim 2014, 81). The relative syllabicity in a *sijo* half line can also be found in the so-called *gibonhyeong* (normative form) of *sijo*, which, as mentioned above, was assumed to consist of the 3-4-3(4)-4 / 3-4-3(4)-4 / 3-5-4-3 syllabic scheme. However, the syllabic pattern of “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon” is more obvious when the syllabic difference between the cola in a half line is larger, as shown in the following:

<i>Sak-pung-eun</i>	<i>na-mu-keut-e-</i>	<i>myeong-wol-eun</i>	<i>nun-sok-e-chan-de</i>
	<i>bul-go</i>		
(The north wind)	(moans amid the bare boughs)	(and) (the moon)	(shines coldly on the snow)

This famous *sijo* line by Kim Jong-seo (1383–1453) has a syllabic scheme of

4. For further explanation of caesura and colon, see Hoffman (1991) and Preminger and Brogan (1993).

3-6-3-5. Here, the second and fourth cola are about twice the length of the first and third cola. These cola are not equal, as the advocates for *eumboyul* insist, but conform to the prosodic rule of “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon,” as mentioned above. According to Kim Jin-hee’s (2014) study of 300 *sijo* poems from Shim Jae-wan’s collection, *Yeokdae sijo jeonseo* (The Anthology of *Sijo* of All Times), approximately 99 percent of traditional *sijo* poems conform to this form. This finding shows that the parallelism formula can explain the metrical schema of *sijo*.

Parallelism in literary studies generally refers to grammatical parallelism, but in a larger sense, it also refers to phonological correspondence. Jakobson (1981, 117) analyzed parallelism at “the grammatical, semantic, and phonemic levels.” Regardless of whether it is phonological or syntactical, a structure in which elements correspond to one another with almost identical components is a form of parallelism. In *sijo*, a half line that has the structure of “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon” parallels another half line with the same prosodic structure, and the repetition of these structured half lines produces the regular rhythm of *sijo*. In this respect, the rhythm of *sijo* can be understood as a form of parallelism.

To understand the consistent but flexible rhythm of *sijo*, it is crucial to know that one of the most important rhythmic rules of *sijo* concerns the prosodic parallelism between the half lines and that the four cola and their syllabic structure only acquire significance in relation to this parallelism. Understanding the significance of parallelism in *sijo* prosody is also important for composing *sijo* in English. Such understanding will help keep English *sijo* poets from merely counting syllables or needlessly maintaining the same length of four cola, providing them with a proper way to realize *sijo* rhythm in English. In fact, many English *sijo* poets intuitively internalize the parallel rhythm of *sijo* and actualize it in conjunction with the English poetic tradition. The following section will examine this phenomenon.

## Prosodic Parallelism in English *Sijo*

### *Tradition of English Poetry and Accentual Arrangements of English Sijo*

The prosodic features of *sijo* share common characteristics with English accentual poetry: both contain a parallel rhythm between half lines, each of which is subdivided into two cola for syntactic and prosodic reasons. Although the typical English verse is accentual syllabic, it has a long tradition of accentual prosody, which is looser than accentual syllabic metrics and is based on the parallel structure between half lines. This tradition is found in Old English poetry of the tenth century, and still exerts influence on contemporary English verses. For example:

Wōdon pa wǣlwulfas, for wǣtere ne mūrnon<sup>5</sup> (“Battle of Maldon”)  
 O whēre have you bēen, Lord Rēndal my sōn (Lord Rendal)  
 Jāck and Jīll, went ūp the hīll (Jack and Jill)  
 Whēn I was a child, I spāke as a child, (II Corinthians)

These excerpts derive, respectively, from Old English poetry, a sixteenth-century ballad, a nursery rhyme, and the King James Bible. These verses do not consist of feet of a fixed number of syllables but are composed of four cola, each of which contains one accented syllable and an unfixd number of unaccented syllables. These verses do not contain a metrical pattern formed by the regular recurrence of the same number of syllables; rather, the two half lines of the same prosodic structure form a pair to construct the poetic rhythm. These prosodic features of accentual English poetry, which contain four cola and parallel half lines based on a looser and relative phonological rule, are similar to those of *sijo*. Drawing on this tradition, writing *sijo* in English using parallel structure and accentual arrangements seems to have been a natural development, as shown by McCann’s “Lost”:<sup>6</sup>

5. This line translates: “Wolves of war, unmindful of ocean.” These examples are cited from Duffell (2008, 51–68). With regard to the following explanation of accentuated English verse, see Duffell (2008, 51–68) and Fussell (1979, 42–44). I use the symbol “-” to signify the accent.

6. All of McCann’s cited poems are from McCann (2010).

Wärm   oāk woods <sup>7</sup>	(1.2)
too dēep for us   to pēnētrate,	(4.4)
We linger   instēad	(3.2)
in the grāceful   perīphery	(4.4)

These are lines 1–4 of the poem. *Sijo* translated into or composed in English are often arranged in six lines, and the lines are syntactically grouped into three sections, commonly corresponding to three sentences. In this structure, a line of English *sijo* corresponds to a half line of Korean *sijo*. For convenience, when comparing *sijo* in English with *sijo* in Korean, a line of *sijo* translated or composed in English will be referred to as a “half line,” whereas two paired lines connected syntactically will be called a “line.”

As with Korean *sijo*, each half line of the English *sijo* quoted above is divided into two grammatical cola, and the half line of this structure comprises a pair. However, what makes a half line of this English *sijo* correspond to another half line rhythmically is the accentual arrangement, unlike in Korean *sijo*, in which the syllabic arrangement between the cola is important. As shown above, constructing a rhythmic pair through accentual arrangement is an English poetic tradition. Based on this tradition, poets writing in English can easily adapt to the *sijo* form.

In the excerpt above by McCann, each colon is stressed once to create a pair, although the number of syllables differs. For example, the first half line, “Wärm | oāk woods,” consists of two cola of one and two syllables each, but the cola can be considered parallel in terms of stress. This paired structure repeats in the next half line, “too dēep for us | to pēnētrate,” making the half lines rhythmically parallel. Thus, the first and second half lines construct a pair with two beats each, although they consist of different numbers of syllables—three and eight, respectively.

At times, a half line of English *sijo* contains unbalanced cola, conforming to the Korean *sijo* schema, “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon.” Consider, for example, McCann’s “Tree to the Wind”:

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7. I use the vertical bars inside the lines to signify the divisions between cola.



Cōme, | I wānt you in mē  
 wīnd, | whīspered the trēe.  
 Fill | my brānches and lēaves,  
 wēave | arōund my trūnk.

In this excerpt, a half line is divided into two cola by its grammatical structure and punctuation.<sup>8</sup> In this case, however, the second colon is stressed twice whereas the former is stressed only once, unlike the *sijo* “Lost” cited above. In this way, the half lines of English *sijo* can also contain an imbalanced line structure. This structure might be considered inappropriate if the cola are understood as similar to feet, which are temporally equal. However, as I emphasized earlier, the cola of a *sijo* line need not be the same length as the metrical feet. The important aspect in the rhythm of *sijo* is the parallelism between the half lines, not the temporal equivalence of the cola. This parallel rhythm can be achieved in English *sijo* through accentual arrangements. Understanding this point is crucial for realizing the flexible *sijo* rhythm in English.

### *Syllabic Arrangements of English Sijo and Their Limits*

Although many English *sijo* poets construct parallel structures through accentual configurations, there are those who pay more attention to syllabic arrangements. The following translation by James S. Gale (1863–1937) shows how well syllabicity was established by the time the *sijo* genre was first introduced to English readers:<sup>9</sup>

That pōnderous		wēighted iron bar,	(4-4)
I'll spīn out thīn		in trēads so fār	(4-4)
To rēach the sūn,		and fāsten ōn,	(4-4)
And tīe him īn,		before hē's gōne;	(4-4)

8. This scansion is possible considering the rhythmic scheme of *sijo*, which is more obvious in the first and second half lines, in which punctuation is used. It is not so distinct in the third and fourth half lines, which do not use punctuation.

9. See *The Korean Repository*, vol. 2 (April 1895). For more on Gale's translation of *sijo*, see Shin (2013).

That pārents		who are grōwing grāy	(3·5)
May nōt get ōld		anōther dāy.	(4·4)

(Anonymous)

Here, Gale attempts to arrange the number of syllables of each colon exactly as in the original *sijo*, which is included in *Namhun taepyeongga* 南薰太平歌 (Songs of the Reign of Peace):<sup>10</sup>

<i>man-geun-soe-reul</i>   <i>neu-ryeo-nae-ya</i>    <i>gil-ge-gil-ge</i>   <i>no-heul-kko-wa</i>	(4·4·4·4)
<i>gu-man-jang-cheon</i>   <i>ga-neun-hae-reul</i>    <i>mae-u-ri-ra</i>   <i>syu-i-syu-i</i>	(4·4·4·4)
<i>buk-dang-e</i>   <i>hak-bal-ssang-chin-i</i>    <i>deo-dui-neul-ge</i>   ( <i>ha-ri-i-da</i> )	(3·5·4·(4))

However, the syllabic arrangement in the English *sijo* produces different effects compared with the Korean version. The difference is due to the influence of the accent (or stress),<sup>11</sup> which is a crucial factor in English prosody. Influenced by accents, phrases with the same number of syllables can create different rhythmic patterns in English poetry. For example, the first half line of the above-quoted translation by Gale is divided into two cola of four syllables each. However, each colon can produce a different rhythm according to the number and location of stress units. In the first colon of the first half line, the primary, or word, accents fall only on the “pon” of “ponderous,” whereas in the second, they fall on “weighted” and “iron.” The location of stress is also different. The rhythm of the former colon, “That pōnderous,” starting with an unstressed syllable, is close to iambic, whereas that of the latter, “wēighted iron bar,” is trochaic. Compared with the first half line, the other half lines present a more regular

10. An anthology of *sijo* published in 1863. Given the musical conventions of the time, every *sijo* in this book lacks a final colon, so I completed the last colon as shown in the parentheses.

11. The term “accent” is used as a synonym for “stress.” In the study of prosody, these terms are often used interchangeably. See Allen (1978, xxiv), Fussell (1979, 41), and Lotz (1972, 13–14).

rhythm, achieved through syllabic arrangement as well as accentual stress, which creates the iambic rhythm.

Accents also change the duration of syllables in English. In Korean, a syllable corresponds to a letter and has almost the same duration as any other,<sup>12</sup> whereas in English, a syllable can be shorter or longer depending on the stress. Thus, a syllabic arrangement without consideration for accents can have a limited meaning in English.

In fact, adhering to the syllabic structure of *sijo*, as in Gale's translation, could have negative effects when achieving the rhythm of *sijo*. Adhering to 3-4 or 4-4 syllabic patterns<sup>13</sup> causes English *sijo* to sound longer and contain more semantic content than Korean *sijo*. This phenomenon is due to the linguistic differences between Korean and English. In Korean, a word is usually followed by postpositions or ending morphemes, which only have grammatical functions, and thus compounded phrases with substantial semantic and grammatical components comprise at least two syllables and have three or four syllables in common (B. Jeong 1954). In contrast, many substantial words in English consist of less than two syllables each. For this reason, a half line of English *sijo* with seven or eight syllables often contains more semantic content than its Korean equivalent, as seen in McCann's "Early Summer":

They sây the trêes | this time of yêar (4.4)

are mōstly still, | by whîch they mēan (3.4)

the wînds don't mōve | them mûch, the lîmbs (4.4)

stîr but slîghtly, | lēaves not at âll. (4.4)

This strânge pēace! | Ônly the squîrrel (3.5)

knōws no difference, | nēver stōps. (5.3)

This English *sijo* follows the commonly used syllabic scheme of Korean *sijo*—namely, 3-4 or 4-4. However, the work contains many substantial words

12. Syllables can have different lengths in Korean, but such cases are limited to certain dialects or homonyms.

13. These are the most frequent syllabic patterns in a half line of *sijo*. *Sijo* was introduced to English readers with these syllabic patterns, with the numbers of syllables per line or the whole piece. See K. Kim (1996, 77–78) and St. Jacques (1995, 12).

composed of one or two syllables, and thus presents more semantic content than a typical Korean *sijo*.<sup>14</sup> This work likewise takes longer to recite because its underlying meter approximates an iambic tetrameter, a common line scheme in English poetry. Thus, the four accented syllables sound longer than the other parts. With four beats, these half lines resemble the lines of Korean *sijo* rather than its half lines, making this English *sijo* twice the length of a typical Korean *sijo*. In this respect, adhering to the syllabic schemes of *sijo* is not a proper way to realize the rhythm of *sijo* in English. Instead, creating a parallel rhythm between the two half lines by arranging accents is more effective and natural, given the characteristics of English language and poetry.

I do not claim, however, that English *sijo* should contain fewer syllables than Korean *sijo*.<sup>15</sup> My point, rather, concerns the importance of accents when composing English *sijo*. With regard to extended lineation, lines containing more words than usual are occasionally found in Korean *sijo*, as in the following:

A dog's barking | at the door  
 prompted me | to go out,  
 but my lover / didn't come, | only the moon / full at the garden  
 and the sound / of falling leaves | at a gust / of wind.  
 Oh that dog | you deceived me  
 barking in vain | at the falling leaves.<sup>16</sup>  
 (Anonymous)

The second sentence of this translated *sijo* is especially long. Each of its four

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14. For example, the first phrase, "They say," corresponds to *geu-deul-eun mal-han-da* in Korean. In this case, the phrase with two syllables in English becomes six syllables in Korean.

15. Kim Sung Kyu argued that English *sijo* should have a "3-Line Structure of 3-3, 3-3 and 2-3-2 Accented Beat," referring to English haiku, which can be composed of three lines of 2, 3, and 2 accented beats, respectively, rather than 17 syllables, as in Japanese haiku. See Kim Sung Kyu, "How Many Characters Should Be Used in English *Sijo*?" Weblog of Kim Sung Kyu, entry posted April 13, 2010, [http://blog.daum.net/\\_blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0NKhI&artid=159&artid=159&categoryId=4&regdt=20100413182001](http://blog.daum.net/_blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0NKhI&artid=159&artid=159&categoryId=4&regdt=20100413182001).

16. The original text appears as work #1765 in Shim (1972).

cola, marked by vertical lines, is syntactically subdivided into two components, as indicated by the slashes. However, lengthening half lines in this way does not disturb the rhythm of *sijo*, so long as the half lines comprise parallel pairs. In the original text, the long second line has a 5-7-5-7 syllabic scheme, which conforms to the prosodic rule of “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon.” This example can be compared to the long half lines of McCann’s “Early Summer” discussed above. Many English *sijo* poems contain long half lines that form a kind of tetrameter, as with “Early Summer,” but these lines do not disturb the *sijo* rhythm.

Within the boundaries of the parallel structure of the half lines, Korean and English *sijo* both have rhythmic freedom. Their lines can be longer or shorter and have greater or fewer accents, and their cola can be balanced or unbalanced. This rhythmic freedom can only be realized by noting that the parallelism of the half lines is the pivotal factor in *sijo* prosody and that focusing on accents rather than syllables can help achieve the parallel rhythm of *sijo* in English.

Moreover, the six-line format of English *sijo* is a useful tool for creating the parallel structure. English *sijo* pieces are often composed in a six-line format, as shown in the examples above. This format has been criticized as a departure from the *sijo* form, which was originally arranged in three lines. However, the six-line format can also be understood as a way to effectively represent the parallel rhythm of *sijo* between the half lines. With this format, the English *sijo* can highlight the parallelism between the half lines and authentically achieve the flexible rhythm of *sijo* using different line lengths and their various structures, while also reflecting its own poetic tradition.

### **The Cadence of the Third Line**

Another crucial factor in *sijo* prosody is the rhythmic feature of the third and final line. As mentioned above, the rhythmic pattern is reversed from “the first colon  $\leq$  the second colon” to “the first colon  $\geq$  the second colon” in the last half line. The final line is differentiated rhythmically in other ways as well. Its first colon follows a strict syllabic rule, and its second colon consists

of more syllables than normal. These rhythmic features of the final line have received a great deal of attention. The first colon, which should be limited to three syllables, is often an exclamation announcing the beginning of a coda, whereas the following and longer second colon conveys intense poetic meaning. This heightened poetic tension diminishes in the last half line with a rhythmic decrescendo (Y. Jo 1948; H. Kim 1977).

However, the significance of the rhythmic features of the last line in English *sijo* is not easy to capture because of the linguistic differences between Korean and English. Thus, English *sijo* often neglects the syllabic rule and only aims to express a type of “twist’ by means of a surprise in meaning, sound, tone, or other device” (St. Jacques 1995, 12). Nevertheless, the question remains: How can English *sijo* realize the differential rhythm of the third line with this vague concept of the “twist,” which ranges from poetic meaning to sound and tone?<sup>17</sup> Given this difficulty, English *sijo* has been criticized for failing to realize the rhythm of the last line (M. Park 2011, 87). Thus, the legitimacy of English *sijo* has been questioned, as it cannot follow the strict criteria of the genre.

Nonetheless, English *sijo* has found ways to reflect the rhythmic features of the third line. These methods are syntactic, semantic, and metrical. Although the Korean metrical arrangement is difficult, English *sijo* deploys other syntactic and semantic devices, at times attempting metrical arrangement. As the syntactic and semantic features of the third line play an important role in Korean *sijo*, they should not be ignored. To examine this further, consider the following examples of traditional *sijo*:

The green hills—how can it be  
     that they are green eternally?  
 Flowing streams—how can it be;  
     night and day do they never stand still?  
 We also, we can never stop,  
     we shall grow green eternally.  
 (Yi Hwang; translated by Richard Rutt)

17. The “twist” in the cadence of the third line usually refers to a semantic turn. See K. Kim (1996, 77–78), Lee (1981, xxii), McCann (2010, 8), and Rutt (1998, 11).

Alas, what have I done?  
 Didn't I know how I would yearn?  
 Had I but bid him stay,  
     how could he have gone? But stubborn  
 I sent him away,  
     and now such longing learn!

(Hwang Jin-I; translated by David McCann)

Moonlight white on white pear blossoms,  
     the Milky Way in the Third Watch:  
 the cuckoo couldn't know  
     that spring suffuses the branch,  
 but love, too, is like a sickness;  
     I cannot sleep tonight.

(Yi Jo-nyeon)<sup>18</sup>

These *sijo* maintain the three-syllable rule of the first colon of the third line in their original form. Each of the cola contains three syllables: *u-ri-do* (“We also”) in the first piece, *bo-nae-go* (“I sent him away”) in the second, and *da-jeong-do* (“but love, too”) in the third. They also contain the typical syntactic aspects of the third line—specifically, the sentence-ending structures or conjunctive clauses. In the first *sijo* by Yi Hwang (1502–1571), the first and second lines comprise a parallel pair, and a new sentence begins at the third line. Meanwhile, in the second and third *sijo* by Hwang Jin-i (sixteenth century) and Yi Jo-nyeon (1269–1343), respectively, the third line runs on from the second. Beginning the third line with a new sentence, as shown in Yi Hwang’s *sijo*, or with a conjunctive clause, as shown in Yi Jo-nyeon’s work, coincides with the typical syntactic structures of the third line. In contrast, the run-on line structure shown in Hwang Jin-i’s work seldom occurs in traditional *sijo*, thus making unique this sixteenth-century work by one of the most famous female entertainers of her time, Hwang Jin-i.

The first colon of the third line in these *sijo* pieces is semantically significant. In Yi Hwang’s *sijo*, it is composed of a formulaic phrase, *u-ri-do*

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18. For this piece, I modified Kevin O’Rourke’s translation (2002) to reflect the original structure.

(“We also”), which facilitates the synthesis of the poetic subject matter. This type of formulaic phrase was often used in traditional *sijo* (Lee 2002, 69). In Yi Hwang’s *sijo*, it helps unify the metaphors in the first and second lines. In the third line, it becomes clear that the “green hills” of the first line and the “flowing streams” of the second line refer to the endless devotion to learning. Meanwhile, in the *sijo* by Hwang Jin-i and Yi Jo-nyeon, the first colon of the third line presents the counter theme. In Hwang Jin-i’s *sijo*, it reveals the speaker’s action of *bo-nae-go* (“I sent him away”) and connects to the following cola, conveying the theme of ironic emotions between lovers. In Yi Jo-nyeon’s work, the first colon, *da-jeong-do* (“but love, too”) expresses the theme of sentimentality, and the third line discloses that all the natural objects mentioned in the first and second lines, which the speaker appears to describe with indifference, in fact produce unbearable sentimentality in the speaker’s heart.

As discussed above, the “first colon of the third line” (hereafter, FCTL) of each of these traditional *sijo* poems reveals prosodic, syntactic, and semantic characteristics. Although linguistic differences impede the application of these features in English *sijo*, at least one of them, and occasionally most of them, can be found in English *sijo*, as in McCann’s “Rage”:

All my life, or just this far,  
     I’ve lived fearful of such outbursts  
 as broke the stern silences  
     of carefully built interchange.  
 What I meant! The pitiful dream of days  
     so still no harm was ever done.  
 The governor’s transfer of funds,  
     to say nothing of its purpose,  
 is read by some as a cry  
     for help, bail-out, tough position.  
 Twenty-two, the one who beat, burned, and pissed  
     his girlfriend’s son-a monster!  
  
 The governor’s no monster,  
     whatever else he may well be.



Quite undone by the pressures  
     of office, his fear of Heights;  
 bought a girl, used her for an hour,  
     hoping, or not, to get caught.

Flung a book down on the floor  
     right by the cat, I was so mad  
 at what he'd done, the mess; broken  
     sand dollars from the beach in Maine.

*Flung down, mess*, and most of all, so mad:  
 I try but can't grasp such rage.

He beat the child with a belt  
     until the blood stained the floor.

He burned the child's genitals  
     with a cigarette, and then  
 where he sat in the warm water  
     of the bath tub, pissed his head.

Violent, predatory,  
     given to bursts of pure rage,  
 specimens such as I am  
     should be locked up, just put away.

Let me sit alone in the dark  
     forever. Out? When I'm dead.

Extracting the FCTL in each *sijo* of this sequence reveals the following:

“What I meant!” (1st)      “Twenty-two” (2nd)      “bought a girl” (3rd)  
 “*Flung down, mess*”<sup>19</sup> (4th)      “where he sat” (5th)      “Let me sit” (6th)

Most of these phrases are syntactically or semantically differentiated from the other parts. In this *sijo* sequence, the first, second, fourth, and sixth stanzas<sup>20</sup> have a sentence-ending structure in the second line; a new sentence,

19. In the original text, this phrase is written in italics, probably to indicate the division of cola.

20. Each *sijo* in this sequence can be referred to as a stanza.

accompanied by a change in tone, begins with the third line. This pattern is similar to the case in Yi Hwang's *sijo* cited above. The fifth stanza also contains a syntactic change in its FCTL, which is linked with the second line by the conjunction "then." The third stanza, however, has a run-on line between its second and third lines, but its FCTL, "bought a girl," reveals that the problem is semantic. Here, an unexpected semantic turn occurs, disclosing a high-ranking official's inappropriate behavior. This type of semantic significance is also found in the FCTL of the fourth and first stanzas. In the fourth stanza, the theme of rage is conveyed by the expression "Flung down, mess," whereas the first stanza contains similar formulaic *sijo* expressions. The expression "What I meant!" in this stanza calls the reader's attention to the unification of the poetic theme, comparable to the use of exclamations or conventional expressions in traditional Korean *sijo*, such as *eojeubeo*.

As this example shows, English *sijo* can differentiate the FCTL using syntactic and semantic devices. Another typical example showing this aspect is the frequent use in English *sijo* of conjunctions such as "but" or exclamations such as "oh" in the FCTL. Such expressions are the devices that syntactically and semantically differentiate the FCTL in English *sijo*. For example, among the 75 *sijo* in St. Jacques's (1995) anthology, 16 have "but," three use "yet," and nine contain "oh" in their FCTLs.

Further, the *sijo* sequence quoted above also contains a syllabic arrangement. Each FCTL in this sequence is composed of three syllables, and the second cola of the last lines tend to be longer than each of the other cola. As mentioned earlier, given the characteristics of the English language, syllabic arrangement alone is not significant in English *sijo*. However, if accompanied by other features, it gains significance. In the above sequence, each FCTL is also differentiated syntactically or semantically, and the second cola of the last lines generally contain more accents as well as more syllables than each of the other cola.

As discussed, English *sijo* achieves the cadence of the third line by way of syntactic, semantic, or metrical factors. In fact, English *sijo* often uses more than two of these elements in their FCTLs, and in some cases use all of the three, as shown in the *sijo* sequence by McCann. In English *sijo*, however, the semantic factor is more pervasive, whereas metrical and syntactic

factors are incidental. This pattern is opposite that of Korean *sijo* owing to the linguistic characteristics and literary customs of each language. Syllabic arrangement is not meaningful by itself in English, and English poets often use run-on lines. Thus, semantics is more important in English *sijo*. On the contrary, in Korean *sijo*, thematically important expressions are often located in the second colon of the final line, and consequently, the semantic importance of the first colon is incidental.

Deploying three syllables in the first colon should not be judged as a decisive factor in realizing the cadence of the third line in English *sijo*. It is only one external factor. Other syntactic and semantic factors need to be considered. English *sijo* can grasp the essential rhythm of the third line if it deploys any number of the three factors effectively, albeit at the expense of the other factors according to the poet's linguistic and literary considerations.

The effect of the cadence of the third line in *sijo* can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, it enables the poetic theme to be summarized; on the other hand, it highlights the poetic theme through an unexpected semantic turn. The distinctiveness of the FCTL draws the reader's attention and often reveals the poetic theme simply but intensely. This device is crucial in *sijo* poetics: it enables *sijo* poets to convey easily and profoundly their thoughts and feelings on everyday life. This outcome is what McCann's *sijo* sequence cited above also achieves.

The above *sijo* sequence expresses rage, an emotion that is seldom found in traditional *sijo* but pervasive in modern times. The poet expresses his rage powerfully through the intrinsic cadence of the third line, which produces poetic tension as well as resolution. It enables the poetic theme to rise and fall in a sequence and thus exemplify an uncontrollable eruption of "rage." Through this structure, the poet reveals events that provoke his rage and highlights his anger, but then he modulates this emotion before the final eruption of sentiment. This example of English *sijo* superbly shows the subtle modulation of the cadence of the third line.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the prosody of *sijo*, especially with regard to parallelism, and examined how it is modified in English *sijo*. The prosodic features of *sijo* are controversial. On the one hand, *sijo* is understood as syllabic, but on the other hand, it is accentual. As many scholars and poets have pointed out, the metrical scheme of *sijo* is not fixed, which makes it difficult to describe it in purely syllabic or accentual terms. Rather, *sijo* prosody is best explained in terms of parallelism, in which both syllabicity and accentual units achieve poetic effects. As I have shown, the prosodic parallelism of comparably structured half lines constitutes the rhythm of *sijo*.

This parallel rhythm is also reflected in English *sijo*. In early translations, English *sijo* emphasized the number of syllables. However, syllables have different meanings in English than in Korean, because in English, the accent plays a more fundamental role than the syllable in constructing poetic rhythm. For this reason, accentual parallelism is more important than syllabic structure in creating the rhythm of English *sijo*. In this article, I presented examples showing how accentual arrangement contributes to the construction of parallel rhythms between two comparable lines of English *sijo*.

The cadence of the third line in English *sijo* was also investigated. *Sijo* has an especially intricate cadence in its third line. To inform the coda, exceptionally strict syllabic arrangements are composed to form three syllables in the first colon, more than five syllables in the second colon, and a prosodic reversal in the final half line. To achieve such effects, English *sijo* employ a semantic and syntactic turn for the first colon of the last line, although the traditional three-syllable structure is maintained in certain pieces. I presented an example of an English *sijo* sequence that intermittently amplifies emotions, displaying an exquisite command of the cadence of the third line, which is an authentic *sijo* device used to express poetic tension and resolution.

For its colloquial rhythm based on parallelism and the cadence of the third line, *sijo* is a useful tool for capturing quotidian thoughts and emotions. Traditionally, it was a song composed using colloquial language and

rhythm that conveyed everyday feelings, rather than a fine art created with painstaking elaboration. English *sijo*, which achieves the colloquial rhythm of *sijo* through parallelism and the cadence of the third line, can also serve as a useful tool for expressing the diverse aspects and stray thoughts of everyday modern life. These aspects were not discussed in detail in this article, and they will be investigated in a subsequent study, along with the rich rhetorical tradition of *sijo* and its reception in English. The potential of *sijo*, including English *sijo*, as a poetry of everyday life should not be limited due to misunderstandings about *sijo* prosody or the linguistic differences between Korean and English.

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