



Familiarizing students with diverse types of rhythm in English poetry

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Abstract

Rhythm, which produces music in poetry, is one of the prominent elements of poetry. The rhythmic quality of poetry makes poems pleasing to perceive, appealing to recite and effortless to memorize. This rhythmic quality of poetry makes poetry different from other genres of literature. Most of the learners find rhythm tough and boring. The article writer has attempted to present several examples and analyses to remove its toughness and boringness. The principal objective of this article is to familiarize the readers with diverse types of rhythm in English poetry. A number of poetic lines from varied poems composed by various poets have been presented as a sample to discern the diverse types of rhythm in English poetry. Demonstration and analysis of poetic lines that highlight different types of rhythm in poetry are executed as a method for the study. The research design employed in this study is qualitative- descriptive in nature. This article is considered to be useful to those who are interested in studying and reciting English poetry. It is concluded that better understanding of the diverse types of rhythm in English poetry helps the readers comprehend and enjoy the musicality of poetry.

Keywords: poetry, rhythm, stress, syllable, teaching

1. Introduction

Rhythm is taught in poetry to the students of the bachelor and master levels at the campuses of Tribhuvan University, Nepal. Whenever I commence to teach rhythm to the students in my class, they feel uneasy. I notice them to be unwilling to learn rhythm, because they find it tough and boring. But they must study this because it is in their syllabus. They don't even know the rules of stress. Without knowing the syllable, stress and foot, it is quite impossible to understand rhythm. I always muse how I can make my students eager and interested in learning rhythm which demands much knowledge of linguistics, grammar and prosody. Therefore, I have attempted to provide the students with basic concepts of syllable, stress and foot by thinking that their understanding of these items will help them understand or learn rhythm in an easy way.

Poetry is a popular genre of literature. It is different from other genres because it is more musical, more imaginative and more figurative. There are different forms of poetry. Some of them are lyric, ballad, sonnet, elegy, ode, dramatic monologue, epic etc. Poetry is admired for its musicality. Johnson (1965) ^[10] defines poetry as the art of "uniting pleasure with truth by recalling imagination to the help of reason" (p.57). Hudson (2002) ^[8] considers poetry as an "interpretation of life through imagination and feelings" (P.80). Poetry is a musical thought for Carlyle (1956, p.317) ^[2]. Poetry is a type of literature in which sounds and meanings of language are combined to create ideas and feelings.

Teaching is a complex process. Jarvis (2002) ^[9] argues that the process of teaching involves "the trans-mission of knowledge/theory, or the teaching skills - it was an instrumentally rational activity" (p.40). Braskamp and Ory (1994) ^[1] highlight that "effective teaching is the creation of situations in which appropriate learning occurs; shaping those

situations is what successful teachers have learned to do effectively" (p.40). The writer as a researcher followed the discussion teaching method to teach rhythm to the students. A classroom discussion is an active teaching technique because it enables students to explore issues of interest, opinions, and ideas. However, it also leads to deeper levels of learning because in order to build on each other's ideas, the students must first listen and understand the contributions of others students in order to respond or add to it (Hadjioannou, 2007) ^[5].

This article involves several poetic lines of different poems composed by different poets. The given lines carry certain rhythmic characteristics. Such poetic lines are representatives that work as a sample based on the purposive sampling design. This article can be assumed to be significant to the students whose major subject is English poetry.

2. Review of the related literature

Review of the related literature includes syllable, word, stress, derivative of the word "rhythm", definition of rhythm, variety of rhythm and types of regular rhythm.

2.1 Syllable and Word

A syllable is a sequence of sounds in which the central element is a vowel and the marginal elements are consonants. A vowel is an obligatory element, whereas consonants are optional elements of a syllable. Crystal (2008)^[3] views a syllable as "a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word" (p.467). A line of verse has a certain number of syllables. A word is a sound or combination of sounds that expresses a meaning and forms an independent unit of grammar or vocabulary of a language. Crystal (2008) ^[3] defines a word as "a grammatical unit"

(p.522). A word may have one syllable, two syllables, three syllables, four syllables and so on. We can name the word according to the number of syllables it contains. If a word has two or more syllables, the primary stressed falls on a certain syllable, and other syllables generally remain unstressed in verse lines.

Table 1: Name of the Words According to the Number of Syllables they contain

Word	Number of Syllables	Name of the Word
Cat	1	Monosyllabic word
Motion	2	Disyllabic word
Photograph	3	Trisyllabic word
Democracy	4	Tetrasyllabic word
Electricity	5	Pentasyllabic word
Economically	6	Sexasyllabic word
Enthusiastically	7	Heptasyllabic word

2.2 Stress

Hockett (1958) views English to be “characterized by what has been called stress-timed rhythm” (p.52). Stress is an extra force used while pronouncing a syllable or word. Crystal

(2008) [3] states that the stress refers to “the degree of force used in pronouncing a syllable” (p.454). Wales (2001) [14] takes stress as “the prominence given to, and perceive in, certain syllables in words” (p.369).The words having two or more syllables are stressed more on a certain syllable than the other syllables. It means the stressed syllable is to be pronounced more emphatically. There are two classes of words: major word class and minor word class. Nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, demonstratives and interrogatives belong to the major word class. Such words are basically stressed. Pronouns, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, auxiliary verbs and determiners which belong to the minor word class are not normally stressed. There are various rules, exceptions and conditions in employing the stress in English language. Poets can exploit three kinds of stress in their poetry. They are: Grammatical Stress, Emphatic Stress and Poetical stress.

2.2.1 Normal or Grammatical Stress

It follows the rules of stress as mentioned in grammar. The grammatical rules of stress are given below:

Table 2: Stressed and Unstressed Words in General

Stressed Words	Unstressed Words
1. Nouns: dog, cat, pen, book etc.	Pronouns: he, she, it etc.
2. Main verbs: eat, go, sleep etc.	Auxiliary verbs: is,, am, are etc.
3. Adjectives: good, bad, red etc.	Articles: a, an, the etc.
4. Adverbs: well, quite, yet etc.	Prepositions: at, in, on etc.
5. Demonstrative pronouns: this, that, these etc.	Relative pronouns: who, whom, which etc.
6. Interrogatives pronouns: what, when, where etc.	Conjunctions: and, but, or etc.
7. Interjections: oh!, ha!, ouch! Etc.	Determiners: any, some, few etc.

Table 3: Stressed and Unstressed Be- Verb

Stressed (Be- verb)	Unstressed (Be-verb)
1. To introduce a question: Are you reading a letter?	1. Before a main verb: She is reading a story.
2. Final position pronoun +be: I know where he is.	2. Be +noun / adj He is a driver. He is kind.
	3. Final position noun +be I know where Maya is.

Table 4: Stressed and Unstressed Have- Verb

Stressed (Have- verb)	Unstressed (Have-verb)
1. As a main verb: He has a nice journey. I have an eal. She had a good meal.	1. As an auxiliary verb: She has eaten bread.She has seen a lion. They had gone.
	2. To show possession I have a bus.

Table 5: Stressed and Unstressed Do – Verb

Stressed (Do- verb)	Unstressed (Do-verb)
1. As a main verb: She did it. He does it. We do it.	1. As an auxiliary verb: We do not eat meat. She does not go there. He did not sing well.
2. To show emphasis: I do love Rita. I did write a letter. He does come here.	

Table 6: Conditions of Using Stressed Prepositions and Auxiliary Verbs

Stressed Prepositions	Stressed Auxiliary Verbs
1. In a phrasal verb: Take off, put on, etc.	1. To introduce a yes-no question: Did she meet you? Can you play ball? Are you reading an essay?
2. If a preposition occurs as a last word of a sentence. Who are you looking at?	2. When a main verb is omitted: Yes, she can. Yes, he is. Yes, we have.
	3. With the contracted form of not : You don’t know her. She hasn’t eaten bread. He won’t swim.

General Rules of Plural Syllabic Word Stress

1. **The primary stress falls on the root words**
speaker be`side re`newal
2. **The stress falls on the syllable just before the following endings in the words**
En: `burden `garden
On: `botton `lesson
Tain: `certain `curtain
Ent: `agent `patient
Ant: `distant `reluctant
Ence: `absence `patience
Ion: `action di`vision
Ious: `precious am`bitious
Cial: `social bene`ficial
Ic: `comic eco`nomic
Ica: `comical eco`nomical
Ics: `physics mathe`matics
Ple: `couple `people
Age: `passage `village
Et: `basket `pocket
Ow: `fellow `follow
Ward: `backward `forward
Meter: ther`mometer di`ameter
Ed (pronounced as /id /): `wicked `needed `wanted
3. **The stress falls on the first syllable in the words with the following endings**
Able: `bearable `syllable
Ible: `edible `sensible
Let: `booklet `tablet
Ture: `culture `literature
Ise: `advertise
Ize: `finalize `centralize
Yse: `analyse
Ism: `criticism `mechanism
4. **Polysyllabic words ending in "y" and "ive" carry the stress on the third syllable from the last**
Gratify `simplify de`mocracy con`servative `talkative
5. **The following suffixes carry the stress in the words**
Tine: rou`tine
Ten: can`teen
Toon: car`toon
Gar: ci`gar
Zaar: ba`zaar
Self: my`self our`selves
Ever: what`ever
After: here`after
Out: through`out
6. **The words beginning with "a" pronounced as /e / carry the stress on the second syllable**
A`bove a`gain a`board
7. **Two syllabic verbs carry the stress on the second syllable.**
A`buse ab`sorb be`lieve se`lect con`ceal
Note: Two syllabic verbs ending in ow, er, rry, ue and en carry the stress on the first syllable.
`follow `order `carry `worry `argue `darken `open
8. **Two syllabic nouns and adjectives carry the stress on the first syllable.**
Easy `happy `milky `letter `sugar `brother

9. **Three syllabic nouns and adjectives carry the stress on the first syllable.**
Acrobat `photograph `fortunate
10. **Three syllabic verbs ending in "ate" carry the stress on the first syllable.**
decorate `educate `dominate `formulate
11. **The words (more than three syllables) ending in "ate" carry the stress on the second syllable.**
Com`municate e`radicate cer`tificate par`ticipate
12. **Three syllabic verbs carry the stress on the second syllable.**
Con`tinue de`termine de`molish
13. **The stress lies on the first syllable in the compound words.**
Breakfast `football `grandfather
14. **The stress takes place on the syllable with the following suffixes.**
Ere: se`vere sin`cere
Eer: car`eer engi`neer
Ier: cash`ier
Ee: absen`tee deg`ree
Oon: bal`loon after`noon
Oo: bam`boo sham`poo kanga`roo
15. **The stress falls on the first syllable in the two syllabic words with the pronunciation / æ, e, a, ʌ, ɒ / in the first syllable and / ə / in the second syllable.**
/ æ + ə / ɪ / = `cancel `damage
/ e + ə / ɪ / = `mental `envy
/ a + ə / ɪ / = `pardon `carpet
/ ʌ + ə / ɪ / = `double `publish
/ ɒ + ə / ɪ / = `moral `office

2.2.2 Emphatic Stress

Such a stress is used to give emphasis on a particular word:

—
He killed a rat. (Not anyone else but “He”)

—
He **killed** a rat. (He did nothing but “killed”)

—
He killed a **a** rat. (Not two, three or other but only “one”.)

—
He killed a **rat**. (Not a tiger, lion or other but “rat”.)

2.2.3 Poetical Stress

Poets frequently use the poetical stress which is a regular system of accent to establish the basic rhythm in a poem:

— u — u — u —

Tyger ! Tyger! Burning bright

— u — u — u —

In the forests of the night.”

In the above line “in” and “of” are given the poetical stress to make the line regular and rhythmical.

2.3 Metrical Foot

The fixed pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse forms a metrical unit which is called foot. Kirszner and Mandell (1991) view foot as “a group of syllables with a

fixed pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables” (p.691). Simpson (2004) defines foot as “the basic unit of analysis and it refers to the span of stressed and unstressed syllables that forms a rhythmical pattern” (p.15). A foot is named on the basis of the nature and number of syllables it contains in a verse line. Feet are composed of two syllables called disyllabic feet and of three syllables called trisyllabic feet in English poetry.

Table 7: Disyllabic Feet

S.N.	Nature of Foot	Name of Foot (Noun)	Name of Foot (Adjective)	Nature of Melody
1.	___	Spondee	Spondaic	DUM_DUM
2.	u u	Pyrrhic	Pyrrhic	da_da
3.	__ u	Trochee	Trochaic	DUM_da
4.	u _	Iamb	Iambic	da_DUM

Table 8: Tri-syllabic Feet

S.N.	Nature of Foot	Name of Foot (Noun)	Name of Foot (Adjective)	Nature of Melody
1.	___	Molossus	Molossic	DUM-DUM-DUM
2.	u u u	Tibrach	Tibrachic	da-da-da
3.	___ u	Antibacchius	Antibacchaic	DUM-DUM-da
4.	u u _	Anapest	Anapestic	da-da-DUM
5.	__ u u	Dactyl	Dactylic	DUM-da-da
6.	u ___	Bacchius	Bacchaic	da- DUM-DUM
7.	__ u _	Amphimacer/Cretic	Cretic	DUM-da-DUM
8.	u _ u	Amphibrach	Amphibrachic	da-DUM-da

Note: u stands for the unstressed syllable and __ stands for the stressed syllable. “DUM” refers to the loud sound, whereas “da” indicates the low sound.

2.3.1 Implication of Metrical Feet in English Poetry

The iambic foot that generates music through a light syllable followed by a stressed syllable in each foot of poetic lines intensifies seriousness in a poem. It leads the readers or listeners to the sense of meditation or reflection. The light or unstressed syllable produces soft, mild or short sound(s), whereas the stressed syllable produces loud, strong or long sound(s). The trochaic foot that creates music through a stressed syllable followed by a light syllable in each foot of poetic lines is common in children’s rhymes. This foot is exploited for growing ideas in the readers. The dactylic foot that produces music through a stressed syllable followed by two light syllables in each foot is exploited in elegiac poetry in English poetry, but in heroic verse form in Greek and Latin. The spondaic foot that generates music through two stressed syllables in the first two feet of the poetic lines indicates a low motion of music. It reinforces sadness and seriousness in poems. The anapestic foot which creates music by two light syllables followed by a stressed syllable in each foot of a line has a rapid motion of sound. It creates a rolling feeling in the poem. The pyrrhic foot which creates music through two light syllables in the second and fourth feet of poetic lines is generally exploited in funny poems. The amphibrachic foot that produces music through a light syllable, a stressed syllable and a light syllable in each foot is generally found in ballads and light verses.

2.4 Rhythm

The word “rhythm” is derived from the Greek word “*rhythmos*”, which means “measured motion”. Measured motion implies the regular occurrence of the pattern of high sound and low sound perceived while reciting the verse lines. Rhythm is a literary device which demonstrates a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables particularly in a verse form. The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables which creates a pleasing and melodious flow of sounds in a prose or verse line is called rhythm. The fixed pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse forms a metrical unit which is called foot. A foot is named on the basis of the nature and number of syllables it contains in a verse line. Meter / rhythm depend on foot. Cuddon (1999) ^[4] defines rhythm as “the movement or sense of movement communicated by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables and by the duration of the syllables” (p.753). Wales (2001) ^[14] considers rhythm as “the perceptual pattern of accented and unaccented syllables in a language” (p.348). Harmon (2009) ^[6] views “presence of rhythmic pattern provides the reader /audience with both pleasure and heightened emotional response in both prose and verse” (p.452). Crystal (2008) ^[3] considers rhythm as “The perceived regularity of prominent units in speech” (p.417).

2.4.1 Varieties of Rhythm

There are primarily two varieties of rhythm in English Poetry. They are: regular rhythm and irregular rhythm.

2.4.1.1 Regular Rhythm

Regular rhythm is such a rhythm that is created by the regular appearance of stressed and unstressed syllables. If the rhythm comes regularly in a line, it is called the regular rhythm. There are five types of regular rhythm:

2.4.1.1.1 Falling Rhythm

It occurs when the stress pattern is thrown backward in a line of verse so that it falls on the first syllable of the feet. The trochee (u) and the dactyl (_ u u) are two basic feet in the falling rhythm.

2.4.1.1.2 Rising Rhythm

It occurs when the stress pattern is thrown forward in a line so that it falls on the last syllable of the feet. The iambic (u _) and the anapestic (u u _) feet are the basic feet in the rising rhythm.

2.4.1.1.3 Rocking Rhythm

It occurs when a stressed syllable comes between two unstressed syllables in a line. An amphibrachic foot is the basic foot in the sprung rhythm.

2.4.1.1.4 Running Rhythm

It is also called a common rhythm. It denotes rhythm measured by two or three syllables and each foot has one main stress and the remaining one or two syllables are unstressed. Such unstressed syllables are called the slack. Iambic, trochaic, dactylic, anapestic and amphibrachic feet are the basic feet in the running rhythm.

2.4.1.1.5 Sprung Rhythm

It is a poetic rhythm in which the number of stressed syllables is equal, but the number of unstressed syllables varies in poetic lines.

2.4.1.2 Irregular Rhythm

If the rhythm comes irregularly in a line, it is called the irregular rhythm. It is created by the random appearance of stressed and unstressed syllables.

3. Teaching Learning Activities

Teaching learning activities involves the demonstration and analysis of the poetic lines in order to familiarize the students with the different types of rhythm.

Demonstration No.1

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.
(Thomas Gray: Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables

u _ u _ u _ u _ u _

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

Analysis

In this poetic line, an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable in each foot in a regular way. Therefore, it belongs to the regular rhythm. Each metrical foot is disyllabic one in which the second syllable is more prominent than the first one. This poetic line retains the rising rhythm, because the last syllable in each foot is stressed.

Meter of the Poetic Line: Iambic Pentameter

Demonstration No. 2

And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea. (Byron: The Destruction of Sennacherib)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables:

u u — u u — u u — u u —

And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea.

Analysis

In this poetic line, two unstressed syllables are followed by a stressed syllable in each foot in a regular way. Therefore, it belongs to the regular rhythm. Each metrical foot is trisyllabic one in which the third syllable is more prominent than the first two syllables. This poetic line retains the rising rhythm, because the last syllable in each foot is stressed.

Meter of the poetic line: Anapestic tetrameter

Demonstration No. 3

Tell me not in mournful numbers. (Longfellow: A Psalm of Life)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables

—u — u — u—u

Tell me not in mournful numbers

Analysis

In this poetic line, a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable in each foot in a regular way. Therefore, it belongs to the regular rhythm. Each metrical foot is disyllabic one in which the first syllable is more prominent than the second one. This poetic line retains the falling rhythm, because the last syllable in each foot is unstressed or light.

Meter of the Poetic Line: Trochaic Tetrameter

Demonstration No. 4

Eve with her basket was (Hodgson: Eve)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables

— u u — u u

Eve with her basket was

Analysis

In this poetic line, one stressed syllables is followed by two stressed syllables in each foot in a regular way. Therefore, it belongs to the regular rhythm. Each metrical foot is trisyllabic one in which the second and third syllables are less prominent than the first syllable. This poetic line retains the falling rhythm, because the last syllable in each foot is unstressed.

Meter of the Poetic Line: Dactylic Dimeter

Demonstration No. 5

Beginning is ending. (Sharma: Beginning)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables:

u — u u — u

Beginning is ending.

Analysis

In this poetic line, a stressed syllable comes between two unstressed syllables in each foot in a regular way. Therefore, it belongs to the regular rhythm. Each metrical foot is trisyllabic one in which the second syllable is more prominent than the first and third syllables. This poetic line retains the rocking rhythm, because the second syllable in each foot is stressed, while the first and third syllables are unstressed.

Meter of the Poetic Line: Amphibrachic Dimeter.

Demonstration No. 6

She walks in beauty like the night. (Keats: She Walks in Beauty like the Night)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables:

u — u—u —u —

She walks in beauty like the night

Analysis

In this poetic line, an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable in each foot in a regular way. Therefore, it

belongs to the regular rhythm. Each metrical foot is disyllabic one in which the second syllable is more prominent than the first one. This poetic line retains the rising rhythm, because the last syllable in each foot is stressed. In other way, one syllable is stressed and another syllable in each foot is unstressed. Such rhythm is also called the running rhythm.

Meter of the Poetic Line: Iambic Tetrameter

Demonstration No. 7

One two

Buckle my shoe. (Nursery Rhyme)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables

— —
One two

— u —
Buckle my shoe.

Analysis

In these poetic lines, the number of stressed syllables is the same with the irregular number of unstressed syllables. It is called sprung rhythm.

Meter of the Poetic Line: First line in spondaic monometer & second line in cretic monometer.

Demonstration No. 8

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness (John Keats: To Autumn)

Pattern of stressed / unstressed syllables

_ u u _ u _ u _ u u

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness

Analysis

This poetic line has the irregular rhythm. It is created by the random appearance of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Meter of the Poetic Line: Irregular metrical feet

Almost all good poets who work in meters introduce metrical variations into their poems to prevent the poems from becoming monotonous due to the same music in the whole poem. The simple way to understand this is to see the variations as substitutions of a different sort of foot for the inverse lines

4. Sound and Function of Rhythm

Rhythm in English poetry is produced through the variations between stressed and unstressed syllables in verse lines. The flow of high sound and low sound gives birth to a pleasant assertion. The repeated use of rhythmical patterns of such accent produces rhythmical effect which sounds pleasant to the mind as well as to the soul. In speech, rhythm is used unconsciously to create identifiable patterns. Rhythm mesmerizes the audience and readers alike by giving musical effect to a speech or a literary piece.

5. The Importance of Rhythm

Rhythm plays a significant role in poetry. It forms poetry more musical and more emotional. Such musicality and emotionality provide the readers pleasure that is one of the main motives of poetry. Poetry usually retains regular rhythms that set a pattern, making it easier to remember for recitation. These rhythms are especially enjoyable, because they reflect the natural movement of the human body. That's why poems with regular rhythms are often set to music for marching and dancing, amplifying the effect of the beat. Rhythm deepens the meanings of poetry and heightens imaginative faculty in the audience or readers.

6. Conclusion

Rhythm is essential to poetry. The presence of rhythmic patterns heightens emotional response and often confers the reader a sense of balance. It is necessary to understand rhythm to understand the musicality of poetry. Rhythm creates a natural effect within poetry and gives the poem its effect and flow.

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