



Poetry Ribbons

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Translating poetry through
alternative modalities



Inspiration

"I know that when I meet my own life in a great poem, I feel opened, clarified, confirmed somehow in what I sensed was true but had no words for. Anything that can do this is surely necessary for the fullness of a human life."

- Roger Housden, author

Upon engaging with a brilliantly written poem, we feel a sense of fulfillment. We become closer to the author's mind and point of view. We connect to ideas delivered by carefully written prose that widen our perspectives and even help us learn a little about ourselves.

Project Overview

How can we more effectively represent translated poems?

All communication is translation. Any act of language is an interpretation of our ideas. Specifically, translators must reconstruct ideas from one language to another. Translations are often thought of as a bridge from one idea to another, connecting gaps in language and culture.

Valuable meaning is lost in the act of translating poetry from one language to another. For example, nearly every word used in a poem has alternative words that could have been used. Also, changes in syntax or poem structure potentially cause differences in translated works.

Other modes of communication besides the written word can be used to bring underlying layers of meaning to the surface. For example, the cadence of words as they are

spoken aloud – the hard or softness of words, or tone – may reveal underlying intricate meanings.

Poems, like ribbons:

- Have a flowing/fluid quality, especially when read aloud
- Portray different feelings (textures), emotions (colors), and mood (contexts)

Exploring this metaphor, Poetry Ribbons will be a system that translates poetry as it is read line by line, through alternative modalities. The system will promote the exploration of poetic meaning in varying languages and methods.



End goals

Develop a system for mobile devices that provides a multi-modal translation of poetry

- Visualization and/or sonification of poetry
- Translations (if they exist) and synonyms to words
- The system will utilize an API to interact with a database of poetry and supplementary resources

Provide an engaging experience that heightens understanding of poetic material

- Bolster student understanding of works

Measures of Success

1. The system successfully provides:

- Visualization of a poem's content
- An easy to use method of reading through translation(s) of a poem

2. An API is built or extended for working with poetry and related material

3. Positive user feedback/criticism

Major milestones

Learn background knowledge,
Refine project plan

Research users,
gather data about practices and goals

Planning: construction of mental models and project requirements

Sketching and interface design.
Design of interactions

Prototype development (high fidelity)

Quality assurance (testing)

2 weeks
1/13- 1/27

2 weeks
1/27-2/10

2 weeks
2/10-2/24

2 weeks
2/24-3/10

7 weeks
3/17-5/5

1 weeks
5/5-5/12



Constraints

- Copyrights
- Scalability
- Acquiring library of words, translations
- Acquiring poem readings, formatting sound
- Streamlining visualization and sonification methods

Competition

Poem viewer, ovii.oerc.ox.ac.uk/poemvis

- Displays phonetic units and attributes
- Indicates phonetic relations, features
- Displays word units and attributes
- Indicates repeated words

Criticisms:

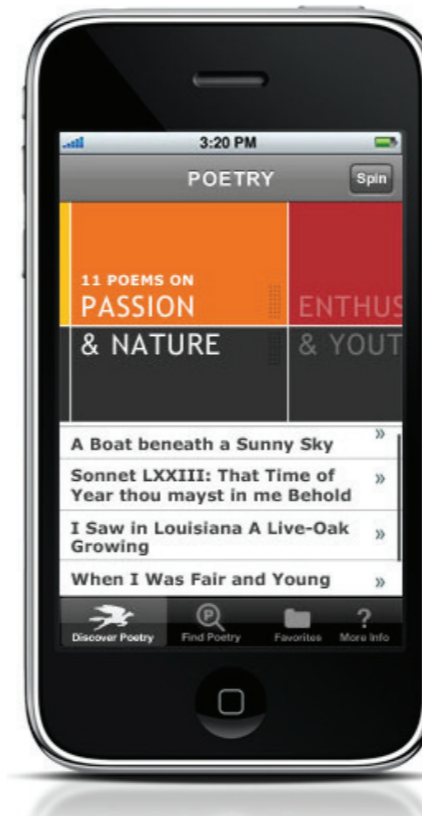
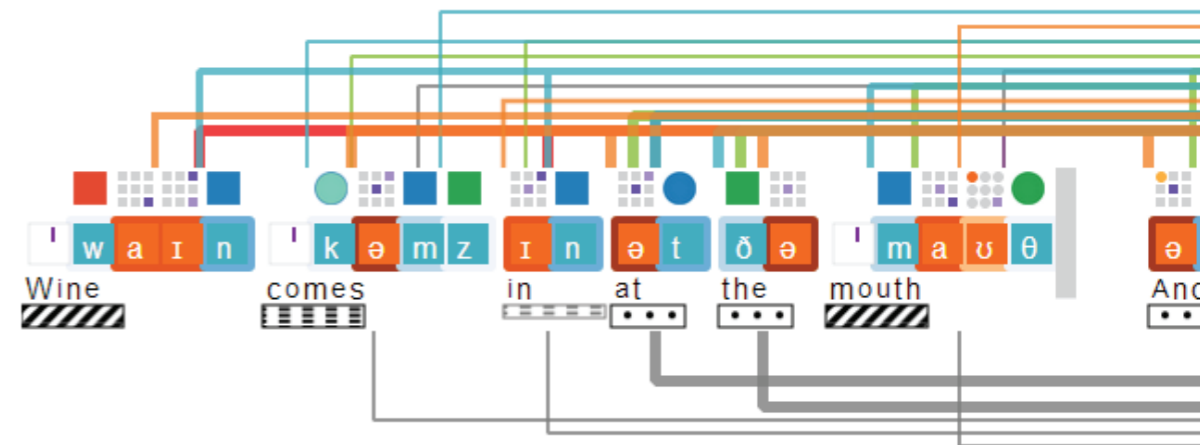
- Introduces cryptic system of poem dissection, hard to learn the language
- Geared towards the translator

Poetry Foundation

- Based on keywords: "passion," etc
- "Spin" interaction: animates and generates random poetry to read
- Easy to use

Criticisms

- Presents poetry as static text
- Reading interface doesn't provide added value



Competition

Poem Flow

- Allows poems to be read line by line
- Clutter free screen
- geolocation, social sharing



The Poetry App

- Provides audio/video of poems
- Poems are read aloud
- skeumorphic interface



Tools to be used

Database:

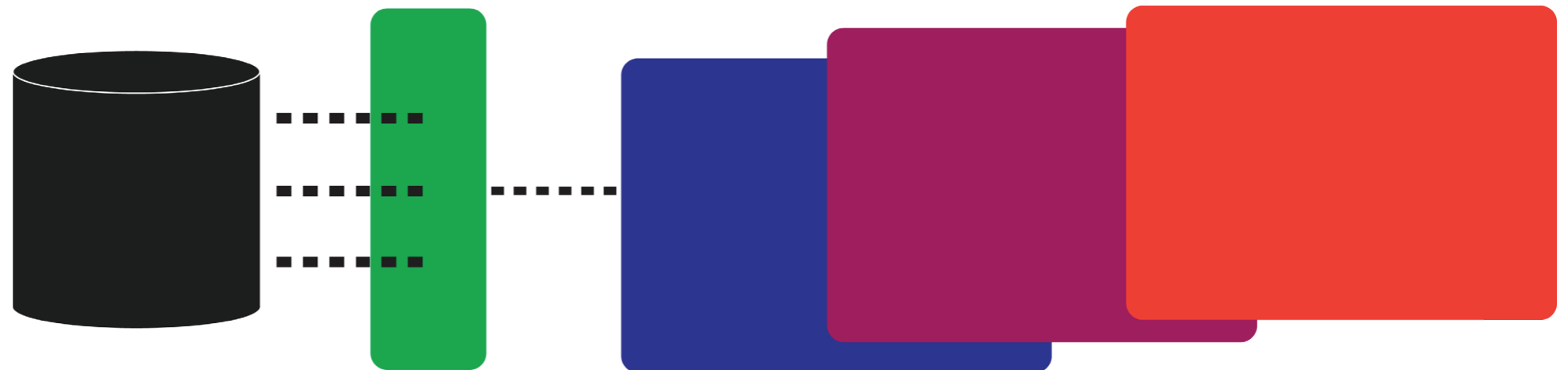
Build API with
Apigee (usergrid)

Interface:

HTML/CSS

Javascript

- ThreeAudio.js
 - SoundJS
 - Web Audio API
- Processing



Database

Poem audio, words
stored here

API

Provides methods
to retrieve stored
poem and audio

Javascript

Makes function calls
to API to retrieve
data

JS libraries

Processes retrieved
data:
- Converts sound
into format process-
able by visualization
model
- Creates temporary
storage for poem
text and metadata

GUI

Displays poem text
and sound visuals
and plays audio for
retrieved poem.

How do people read?

Morphemes

Packets of meaning we assemble into words



Words

Combine to form patterns



Patterns

Form to combine phrases, sentences, idioms



Feature vs Context Driven reading

Context Driven	Feature Driven
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Top-down, context dependent	Bottom-up
Read whole sentences/gist first then work down into words and characters	Context free
Slower	ability to recognize basic features

Is the methodology for reading poems in other languages	Faster
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Target Audience



College Students who like poetry

LOCATION: UT Dallas, University of North Texas

AGE: 18 - 30

PROFESSION: College student

Initial assumptions

A College Student

Who likes poetry

A potentially inquisitive person, yet not always enthusiastic about the cryptic nature of poetry. The student may become interested in the multi-modal approach and interactions possible. May enjoy using tools for exploration or poetry's meaning.

Questions a student could ask:

- How can I better understand poetry?
- Why do I care about poetry?
- How does poetry help me in life?
- How can I relate?



What can students get out of this?

- Deeper understanding of translated works
- Appreciation of other cultures
- Empathy
- Self fulfillment

Testing Methodology

Live Poetry Reading

Andrea Gibson and five UT Dallas students performed that night at The PUB at The University of Texas at Dallas. Before the performance, surveys were passed out to a majority of the participants and some individuals were interviewed about their interest in poetry.

Features of the live performance:

- Group dynamics
- Emotional reaction from the audience: laughing, crying, applause
- Jarring when others (employees, non-watches) talk and break the immersion of the experience



Testing Methodology

Live Poetry Reading

In-person interviews

- Read poetry very often
- Enjoyed getting meaning out of the experience
- Like the tactile experience of interacting with a book
- sitting by a window is a positive experience

Goals:

- Get some personal/individual meaning from the experience
- the poetry must be relatable
- visualize where an author is coming from

Interesting points:

- One interviewee had proposed using a poem to their fiance



Testing Methodology

Voluntary Surveys

Three surveys given:

- Habits and tools survey
- motivation and priorities survey
- revised motivation and priorities survey

Poetry Reading

- Don't read poetry very often
- Enjoyed getting meaning out of the physical experience of live poetry
- When reading, enjoy quiet, comfortable environments

Creating Poetry Class

- Mostly intermediate to expert level poetry readers
- Take the issue of meaning lost from translation seriously

Poetry and You

Name: _____

Major: _____

Classification (freshman, etc): _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Types of poetry you like to read:

What kinds of genres do you like to read?

What subject matter to you most connect with?

The how you read poetry:

What puts you into the mood to read poetry?

Describe the environment you read poetry in a sentence or more

When you read poetry, do you:

Reread sections of the poetry? Why or why not?

If you are watching/listening to a performance, do you look up the verses to the poem?

Which medium do you normally use to read poetry (circle any)?

Written/paper

Written/computer

Written/tablet

Oral/recorded video

Oral/live

Oral/recorded audio

Other _____

What you prefer about translated poetry (poetry translated into English from another language):

Compared to poetry in your native language, how often do you read poetry that has been translated and/or in a language you are not familiar with?

Why do you think this is?

Which medium do you prefer to consume translated poetry (circle any)?

Written/paper

Written/computer

Written/tablet

Oral/recorded audio

Oral/recorded video

Oral/live

Other _____

When you read translated poetry, do you refer to the poetry in its original language as you read?

What do you think is the value of reading translated poetry?

Habits

How do college students read poetry?

What?

Popular poets Byron, Frost, Shel Silverstein, Edgar Allan Poe

Where?

Home, isolated spaces

When?

Nighttime, sometimes afternoon

Why?

To relax, to be stimulated emotionally

How?

Books and computer dominantly, tablet secondarily



Overview of Student Archetypes

Light Poetry Readers

Headline	Read poetry on a whim when intellectually inspired or need to relax.
Quote	<i>"I don't read poetry often, and usually only read/watch on the computer."</i>
Goals	Effortlessly access and read poetry Find meaning in poetry Catharsis, sympathy, moving experience Explore different perspectives
Summary	<i>Reads poetry at nighttime, alone, at home Expert level is novice to intermediate Never reads translated poetry Reads when they feel sad, nostalgic, relaxed Comfortable with reading a translation without in the original version</i>

Heavy Poetry Readers

	<i>Read poetry often, usually to be stimulated emotionally or intellectually.</i>
	<i>"I like reading poetry often, but usually only printed books in English."</i>
	Find meaning in poetry Catharsis, sympathy moving experience Connect to an idea <i>Explore different perspectives</i>
	<i>Reads poetry at nighttime, alone, at home Expert level is intermediate to advanced Reads translated poetry on a rare occasion Reads dark, romantic, involved subject Slightly uneasy about reading a translation without the original version</i>

Student Archetypes



Light Poetry Readers

Location: UT Dallas, University of North Texas
Age: 18 - 30
Profession: College student

"I don't read poetry often, and usually only read/watch on the computer."

Language & Culture

Dominantly English-speaking

Knowledge of the Domain

Don't often read poetry, especially translated poetry.

Education, Intellectual Abilities, and Skills of the User

Graduated high school with some college education. Took core courses in English, but not necessarily poetry reading classes.

Fatigue Factors or Physical Limitations

Read poetry at night in the home, perhaps before bed.

Acceptance of Change

Many read poetry via tablets and computers. Some read via paper, others watch live performances.

Environment of Use

Home environment dominantly. Quiet, sometimes by the window.

Attitude and Expectations

Positive, expect to understand and connect with poetry's content. Want to relax.

Motivational (Mandatory vs. Discretionary Users)

Read poetry on their own time - need for inspiration, emotional connection, sadness

Key Activities (or Tasks)

Reading, rereading, looking up items for translation or clarity

End Goals/Experience Goals

Want to make a connection, be exposed to a new perspective, emotionally connect with the subject matter in a genuine way.

Student Archetypes



Heavy Poetry Readers

Location: UT Dallas, University of North Texas

Age: 18 - 30

Profession: College student

"I like reading poetry often, but usually only printed books in English."

Language & Culture

Dominantly English-speaking

Knowledge of the Domain

Don't often read translated poetry, but are familiar with reading poetry.

Education, Intellectual Abilities, and Skills of the User

Graduated high school, attended core classes in English and may have taken Poetry classes. Intellectual, skilled and adept at reading poetry.

Fatigue Factors or Physical Limitations

Often read at nighttime, after a day of school or work.

Acceptance of Change

Some read poetry via paper, others via tablets and computers

Environment of Use

Home environment dominantly. Quiet, sometimes by the window.

Attitude and Expectations

Positive, expect to understand and connect with poetry's content

Motivational (Mandatory vs. Discretionary Users)

Read poetry on their own time - need for inspiration, emotional connection, sadness

Key Activities (or Tasks)

Reading, rereading, looking up items for translation or clarity

End Goals/Experience Goals

Want to learn from other cultures, gain a new non-English perspective, a window into another world. Gain access to ideas and things not available before, opening the mind.

“What is the value of translated poetry?”

“Gaining the beauty and meaning behind another individual’s work. Sometimes the most beautify and significant poems to us is written in another language and *we’ll never realize that poem because we can’t understand that other language.* People tend to read what’s convenient and easily accessible.”

“It opens your mind”

“English poetry is not the only poetry worth reading.”

“Language is social. Reading translations allows for a window into another world.”

“Learn about art in another language—gets a non-english perspective. Usually non-American too which is important”

“The most important thing I believe is the meaning. The poems should try to maintain their original meanings or go as close as possible to the original meaning.”

“It introduces a person to other cultures, ideas, and things that person may never have through of before being introduced.”

“It gives access to things/ideas you would have never have before. Also, sometimes the translators add something to it that can even enhance the experience (although that usually isn’t the case)”

"Why do you not read translated poetry?"

"I've never sought out to expose myself to poetry in another language, or I haven't known that some of the poems were translated to begin with."

"Wouldn't really know what to look for on my own"

"So much of art is cultured and disconnected from English"

"I am not studying another language at this time "

"Just guessing... because every language is taken

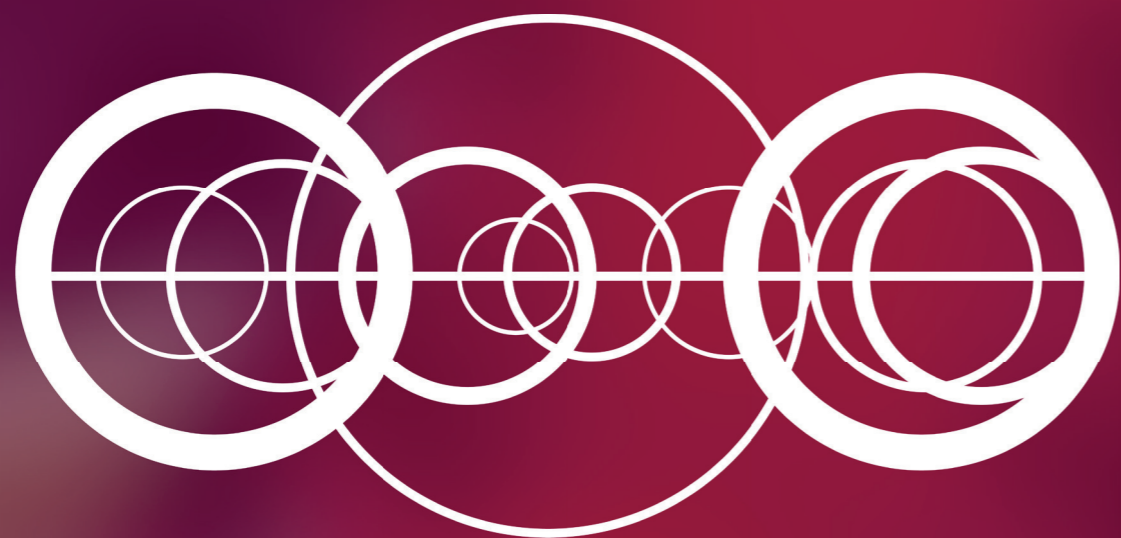
differently and means things differently"

"I never look it up to read"

"I'm cautious of the translation; what if its lost meaning, rhythm, etc"

"It is less often included in collections, but perhaps also

Possible visualizations



Fragrance

Odor

Perfume

Smell

Scent



Possible interaction



For conceptual purposes only, not a plan for the final product