Interacting with Korean Sijo Poetry Through Stereoscopic Reading

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Translation has never been an easy process, and even with the development of technology designed to simplify this process, it will likely remain impossible to make a “perfect” translation. Those unfamiliar with the process of translation often consider translations to be an exact reflection of the source text, but this could not be further from the truth. Every word in a translation is the result of the translator’s endless decisions to make the translation as close to the source text as possible, but the concept of “closeness” to the source text is subjective. Aspects such as the exact wording, form, connotation, imagery, etc. cannot all be conveyed simultaneously in a single translation; it is the unfortunate truth of the translation process. Therefore, choosing which aspects of the source text to maintain depends on the individual translator’s priorities. Aspects that do not match the translator’s priorities must be left behind and are lost to the translation process.

The effect of the subjectivity of the translation process is strong in the field of poetry translation. Not only does poetry include figurative language that depends on the interpretation of the individual readers, but the length and rhythm of poems are very intentional, contributing to the poem as a whole. There are many aspects, such as figurative language, meaning, and form,
that ideally should be maintained, but are difficult to render simultaneously in a single translation.¹

*Sijo* 시조 is a form of Korean poetry that has specific syllabic restrictions within each of the three lines of the poem.² While the poems may be brief, they contain dense amounts of meaning and figurative language. The field of *sijo* suffers from a lack of English language research and material, and the struggles presented when translating the poems reduce their accessibility to foreign audiences. To express the depth of meaning within the poem, one must often add more syllables in an English translation than were in the source text, breaking the poem’s form. The struggle to maintain both meaning and artistic form through a single translation is ever present in the field of *sijo* translation, as well as the impossibility of this task. As it is impossible to maintain both meaning and artistic form through a single translation, the use of multiple translations through the process of stereoscopic reading offers a solution to provide foreign readers with a deeper understanding of *sijo* poems.

The process of stereoscopic reading highlights different aspects of a piece by using multiple translations³ and the source text in the same space. When applied to *sijo*, stereoscopic reading provides insight into both the meaning and art form of the poems, which could not be achieved through a single translation. Stereoscopic reading was introduced by translator and professor⁴ Jo Anne Engelbert as a method of reading and teaching foreign language texts.⁵ I

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¹ This is not to say that figurative language, meaning, and form do not exist in other forms of literature, just that they can present themselves differently in poetry. For example, it is common in the field of poetry for lines to be short or broken, which is not the case in many forms of prose. It is given that there are many obstacles in translation, but these obstacles often present themselves slightly differently in each form of literature.

² As is the case with most art forms, there are always exceptions to these rules.

³ I will provide two translations to stereoscopically read within this paper, but one can use more than two.

⁴ *alpialdelapalabra*, “Jo Anne Engelbert: Esteban Moore Translations.”

⁵ Rose, *Translation and Literary Criticism: Translation as Analysis*, 90.
argue that the stereoscopic reading method is compatible with Korean sijo in a way that reveals the complexity of the poems on both linguistic and stylistic levels and allows for a deeper understanding of the poems than would be offered by a single translation.

Introduction to Sijo

Sijo is a form of Korean poetry that originated in the fourteenth century CE. The poems were originally sung to a melody, but currently are read without a paired melody in most cases. While some hanja 한자, or Chinese characters, are still utilized in both premodern and modern sijo, most poems primarily use hangul 한글, the phonetic script developed in the fifteenth century. Before the development of hangul, Chinese characters (hanja) were used to write the Korean language, and therefore Korean literature was primarily accessible to literate nobles. Hangul did not become the default script until long after its conception. In the late 19th century, a reform included in the Kabo edicts dictated that “All laws and edicts should have [pure Korean] as their base; one may attach a translation in [written Chinese] or mix [pure Korean and written Chinese] together.” Before the Kabo edicts, hangul was considered “a private, women’s [writing system] suitable for lower classes.” This may have been the case, but sijo, even when written majorly in hangul, was dominated by the noble class. Another form of poetry, saseol sijo 사설시조, was composed more commonly by lower classes, often as a form of revolt against the

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6 McCann, Early Korean Literature, 47.
7 Traulsen, “Han’gul Reform Movement in the Twentieth Century: Roman Pressure on Korean Writing,” 103.
9 Choe, “Form and Correspondence,” 76.
noble class. My arguments are limited to *sijo*, but it is important to understand that *saseol sijo* is a different form of poetry and that there are differences in the origins of the two forms.

*Sijo* poems generally consist of three lines. While there are always exceptions to the rules of any creative art style, the first two lines of a *sijo* poem typically have a syllable pattern of 3 syllables, 4 syllables, 3 or 4 syllables, and 4 syllables. The third line typically has a syllable pattern of 3 syllables, 5 syllables, 4 syllables, and 3 syllables. The first line sets up the situation or theme of the poem, the second line develops the situation or theme, and the third line concludes the poem with a “turn” of the situation or theme. The additional syllable in the third line allows Korean speakers to feel the “turn” through a noticeable shift in the rhythm of the poem. Regardless of the form restrictions of *sijo*, the poems contain full sentences at nearly, if not, all times. The poems mimic vernacular speech and provide, continue, and conclude a situation or theme within the three lines of the poem. *Sijo* consists of many qualities that were not in other forms of Korean poetry or song.

While this is a common way to understand the syllabic patterns in *sijo*, some find that the pattern should be viewed as more of a guideline than the strict form of the poem. David McCann, professor of Korean Literature at Harvard University, finds that “variation in syllable count is the rule, not the exception, in *sijo* verse.” He finds it more accurate to view the syllable counts in ranges, at lowest 2-3, and highest 4-7 syllable “groups.” Based on his studies, he provides ranges for each “group” of each of the three lines of the poem. Regardless of the exact number of

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10 Choe, 77.
11 Choe, 69.
12 Choe, 69.
13 Choe, 70.
14 Choe, 71.
16 McCann, 116.
syllables in a particular group or line, the number of syllables is deliberate and affects the readers of the poems. The syllables, as well as the pattern of accents in each line, contribute greatly to the rhythm of the poems.17

Even considering that variation is common in *sijo*, the base syllable pattern is what makes the form of *sijo* itself and is important to observe as a reflection of the social environment of its creation. Ikhwan Choe writes, “It follows that a conventional form qua conventional form cannot be discussed in terms of what it ‘contains,’ because it is yet to ‘contain’ anything. Whatever qualities such a form may possess, therefore, can only be made available for our understanding in terms of what ‘surrounds’ it, that is to say, in terms of the forces at work in the society and culture that caused it to exist.”18 He provides the example of the sonnet, a similarly restrictive form. The restrictions of the form of the sonnet have a “limiting influence on the range of possibilities allowed in the form,” but the insistence on using such a form reflects society’s need for the form at the time of its popularity.19 Therefore, the cultural conditions that led to the creation of poems with restrictions like *sijo* are not only reflected in the contents of the poems but in the essence of the form, as well, making it equally important to maintain in translation.

**Difficulty of Translating Between English and Korean**

Differences between English and Korean begin on a structural level. The two languages have different sentence structures, English following an order of Subject-Verb-Object and Korean following an order of Subject-Object-Verb. The Korean language allows for a certain amount of flexibility in sentence structure, but a Korean sentence will almost always end with a

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17 McCann, 131.
18 Choe, “Form and Correspondence,” 68.
19 Choe, 68.
verb. For example, the English sentence “I-read-a book” would become “I-book-read.” The process of translating sentence structure becomes more complicated as the sentences get longer. Creative writing also tends to stretch the boundaries of language conventions, further complicating the translation process. Looking at a line from my own Korean language poem,

Hangul: 그 버스를 타는 너, 서툴게 널 따라가는 나

Romanization: geu beoseureul taneun neo, seotulge neol ttaraganeun na

Literal Translation: That /bus(object) /gets on /you,/ clumsily /you(object) /follows /I

English: You who gets on that bus, I who follows you clumsily.

As is shown in this example, almost all elements of the line of poetry are moved to a different location in the sentence when translated to English. In the Korean version, the actions are understood as the topic of comparison, as they come before and modify the subjects of each sentence particle. However, the subjects “you” and “I” become the main topic of comparison in the English translation. As the subjects are placed at the end of each sentence particle in the Korean version, readers would be unaware of the subject until the end, but the subject is revealed immediately in the English translation, leaving little mystery to the line. The need for translators to not only translate the words but also change the sentence structure makes the process more difficult and can make the resulting translation seem further from the original. On the other hand, leaving the translations in the sentence structure of the source text can make it difficult for a general audience to read and understand the translation.

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Many verb endings in Korean express tone and meaning, which is unlike English, where spoken inflection is often needed to clarify the speaker’s motivations. For example, Korean has a verb ending that implies mutual understanding, and another verb ending that implies the introduction of new information, “-janayo -잡아요” and “-geodeunyo -거든요” respectively. They are both often translated as “you know?” or “right?” when they have different meanings. To express the individual meanings of the verb endings in English, one would need to rely upon spoken inflection, while they are completely distinct in Korean. If one were to write “We have class tomorrow, you know?” in English, it could either imply mutual understanding or that new information is being introduced. This ambiguity is avoided in Korean.

Social hierarchy is not as important in the United States as it is in Korea. Korean has multiple levels of formal speech that depend on the relationship one has with the person they are speaking with. In her book, Routledge Course in Korean Translation, Jieun Kiaer shows six different ways that the speaker could express that it is raining depending both on their attitude towards the rain and their relationship with the “hearer.”21 Even such a simple phrase is influenced by the social hierarchy in Korea, and this applies to literature as well. The formality of a sentence not only contributes to its meaning and context, but to the rhythm of the sentence, as well. Endings that designate each level of formality both sound different and vary in length. Let us look at a brief example of the sentence “I will go to the store” (“I-store to-go-will” using the Korean sentence structure) using the three most common levels of formality:

21 Kiaer, 11.
High Formal: 저는 마트에 갈 것입니다. (*jeoneun mateue gal geosimnida*)

Formal: 저는 마트에 갈 거예요. (*jeoneon mateue gal geoyeyo*)

Informal: 나는 마트에 갈 거야. (*naneun mateue gal geoya*)

The sentence not only gets shorter as it loses formality, but the word used for “I” is also different. Similarly, the level of formality may require the use of a different word with the same meaning as one used when speaking in a lower form of speech. When speaking with someone at a similar or lower position than oneself, the word “meokda 먹다” would be used. However, when speaking to someone in a higher position than oneself, the more respectful form, “deusida 드시다,” would be used. Formal language is not regularly used in English, making it difficult to translate.

Beyond the multitude of lingual differences between Korean and English, cultural differences between Korean and English-speaking regions (in this case, The United States of America) also pose a problem. One case of cultural differences complicating translation is when the connotation, or “expressive meaning” of a word is different in each culture. Kiaer notes, “There may be a target-language word which has the same propositional meaning as the source-language word, but it may have a different expressive meaning. Sometimes a word is more emotionally loaded in the [target language] than the [source language].”22 This means that while the dictionary definition of a word may be the same

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22 Kiaer, 32.
between the two languages, its cultural meaning and the way it is interpreted by speakers of
one language differs both from that definition and the understanding that speakers of the
other language have of the same word. For example, in East Asia, white chrysanthemums
are used at funerals and are generally associated with death, but no such meaning is
associated with them in American culture. If white chrysanthemums were used in a piece of
Korean literature, for example, a Korean reader would understand that death is relevant in
the story. An American reader of a translation of this piece, however, would not understand
this implication without further research.

Furthermore, there are concepts in one culture that do not exist in another. For
example, there is the concept of “jeong 정” in Korean. It has been translated as “connection
or intimacy,”23 or “emotion,”24 none of which expresses the full meaning of jeong. Some
describe jeong as “a vital ethical force in invigorating Korean civil society and empowering
Korean citizenship.”25 Cathy Park Hong notes “I feel that jeong when I speak Korean with
my family or my relatives—or even when I hear it on the street. There’s just so much
meaning and nuance when I hear a word in Korean that gets lost when it’s translated. At the
same time, I associate a lot of pain that with the Korean language too[sic].”26 The concept
of jeong has a cultural-emotional depth that cannot be translated into another language. Not
only does it lack an exact equivalent in other languages,27 the “expressive meaning” can

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24 Park, “The Dynamic Characteristics of ‘Jeong’情: A New Perspective on the Korean Neo-Confucian Four-Seven
   Debate,” 663.
25 Park, 663.
27 This excludes languages such as Chinese and Japanese that use the character jeong is derived from, 情.
only be expressed with a lengthy explanation of the multiple historical and cultural aspects behind the word.

_Sijo_, being a form of poetry rather than prose, adds another level to the difficulty translators experience. Kiaer notes, “Translating poetry presents a particular challenge to translators, especially between East Asian Languages and English. This is because poetry is a multi-dimensional art form; it is concerned with not only the meanings of words but also with their form, wielding sound rhythm and structure to create additional layers of meaning through the formal qualities of the text.” The form of _sijo_ contains many elements that, ideally, should be preserved at the same time: syllable count, accents, vernacular speech, the storyline with a twist, and any other figurative language employed in the specific poem. However, as mentioned previously, preserving all of these elements is impossible. It is difficult to reach the delicate balance between “faithfulness” and the “naturalness” needed for poetry translations. The depth of the story may tempt translators to expand beyond the length of the original poem to express it in full, but this choice would not only take away from the form of _sijo_ but would likely be detrimental to other elements of the poem, as well. Choosing to focus entirely on any one element would lead to a similarly imbalanced result.

The variety of priorities held by translators was clear at a Korean and English Bilingual Poetry Reading held by the Korea Society in New York City in October of 2023. Three Korean poets and three translators were invited for a Bilingual Poetry

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31 Moon et al., Korean and English Bilingual Poetry Reading.
Reading and Q&A session. When the translators were asked which aspects of the original piece they prioritize over others, all three translators had different responses. The first translator, Jennie Jisun Kim, explained that she prioritizes “image” as an “intuitive sort of reaction to the poem” and the “texture” before focusing on other aspects of the poem, such as rhythm and syntax. Using an example in Kim’s translation of Kim Liyoun’s poem “Cleansed Abstraction,”

Hangul: 추상은 꿈 꿈 공간을 준다지만 너는 구체적인 창문을 필요를 했다

Romanization: chusangeun kkum kkul gongganeul jundajiman neoneun guchejeogin changmuneul piryoreul haetda

Translation: They say abstraction offers room to dream, but you yearn for a specific window

Kim’s focus on “image” can be seen through this translation. The original poem uses the word “piryohada 필요하다,” meaning “to need or be necessary,” but the translation uses the word “yearn,” expressing the deeper emotions in this line, which is felt through one’s “intuitive sort of reaction to the poem.” Readers and listeners get to feel the deeper emotions that are expressed through the image of a window in an imaginary space.32

Next, translator Eunice Lee noted having the exact opposite answer to Kim. She focuses on “sound and rhythm” first, as she finds poetry to be about sounds and what they “inspire in the listener or the reader.” After this, which she calls “the music,” she finds it to be less of an “intuitive response” and more “constructive,” looking for a certain

32 Moon et al.
“otherness” in the text and seeing where said “otherness takes [her].” Here is an excerpt from her translation of Kim Sono’s “Cine Kid”:

Hangul: 온 나라의 말로 된 대사와 단 하나의 소사

Romanization: on naraui mallo doen daesawa dan hanuai sosa

Translation: Lines delivered in all the world’s languages, a single narrative

This example shows how the rhythm of the original poem was maintained in her translation. When spoken by the poet, Kim Sono, they paused after “daesawa 대사와,” and the comma in the translation is at a similar spot, prompting a pause. The space used by each part of the line is also similar between the original poem and the translation, allowing the reader to feel the rhythm of the original poem.\(^\text{33}\)

The third translator, Soje, had different priorities than Kim and Lee. Soje tries to maintain the “spoken-ness” of the poem and the “spirit” of the speaker to make the poem sound like someone is speaking it. In this instance, Soje was also the English tutor of the poet they were translating, Moon Boyoung, so they had a particularly good understanding of the poet’s voice. Referring to Soje’s translation of Moon Boyoung’s “What it Means to Adjust,”

Hangul: 사람을 깜빡이는 데에 편균 0.4 초 걸린다. 너무 빠른 거 아니야?

\(^{33}\) Moon et al.
Romanization: *sarameun nuneul kkamppagineun dee pyeongyun 0.4 cho geollinda.*

*Neomu ppareun geo aniya?*

Translation: The average human takes .4 seconds to blink. Isn’t that too fast?

Soje maintains the juxtaposition in tone in the two lines of the poem. The first line is informative, while the second is colloquial. Through the preservation of colloquialism, the reader or listener can feel the “spoken-ness” of the poem, as if someone is speaking directly to them. The poem is written like a conversation, and it is equally conversational in the translation.\(^{34}\)

**Translation Methods**

Even though translation is an important medium to spread writing and culture across language borders, there is no one translation method that is “common practice” in the translation community. As was demonstrated at the Bilingual Poetry Reading, translators have their own priorities that they focus on when translating. For this discourse, I will be focusing on three translation methods: source-language-oriented translation (SLO), target-language-oriented translation (TLO), and documentary translation.

SLO translation strives to preserve the precise meaning and grammar of the original text. Jieun Kiaer notes that this method values “accuracy, formal equivalence, semantic translation, literal translation, foreignization, [and] alienation.”\(^{35}\) Both accuracy to the language and culture are priorities when writing an SLO translation. The processes of “foreignization” and “alienation,” the purposeful use of “foreign” concepts from the source culture that the reader

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\(^{34}\) Moon et al.

may be unfamiliar with\textsuperscript{36}, allow the reader to recognize that they are reading a foreign language text and encourage them to appreciate the source culture. “Foreignization” can be seen when translations include certain words romanized instead of translating them. For example, a translator may choose to include the concept of \textit{jeong} without translation, rendering it simply as “\textit{jeong}.” Translators make fewer additions to their translations, allowing the readers to form their own meaning of the piece. This process may be too “foreign” to the reader at times, however. Rendering of source language grammar into the target language may not make sense to the reader, and they may have difficulty understanding the deeper meanings of cultural concepts of the source language, such as white chrysanthemums.

TLO translation, in contrast to SLO translation, prioritizes “naturalness, dynamic equivalence, communication translation, free translation, domestication, [and] naturalization.”\textsuperscript{37} While SLO uses “foreignization” and “alienation,” TLO uses “domestication” and “naturalization,” which “involves adapting the translation texts to the dominant linguistic and aesthetic standards of the target culture, eliminating traces of ‘foreignness.’”\textsuperscript{38} The goal of this method is to express the general meaning to the reader while maintaining the artistic aspects of the source text. Rather than exact word choice, TLO strives to translate the figurative language, such as imagery, alliteration, rhyme, etc., that was in the source text. Figurative language often undergoes this “domestication” process to produce a translation that sounds like native English. However, elements of the source texts are lost in the “domestication” process. To best translate figurative language, the translator must first interpret the source text to understand the original

\textsuperscript{36} Mityagina and Volkova, “Localization in Translation Theory and Practice: Historical and Cultural View (the Case of Fictional Adaptation),” 2.
\textsuperscript{37} Kiaer, \textit{The Routledge Course in Korean Translation}, 27.
\textsuperscript{38} Mityagina and Volkova, “Localization in Translation Theory and Practice: Historical and Cultural View (the Case of Fictional Adaptation),” 2.
effect of the figurative language. The translator’s subjective interpretation is then utilized to translate the piece, preventing readers from making their own interpretations, and potentially changing the meaning of the piece.

Documentary translation, while not explicitly utilized in this study, is an important translation method to consider when investigating the motivation behind proposing stereoscopic reading as a translation method for *sijo*. In documentary translations, translators utilize footnotes and other areas of the page to explain the context of the reasoning behind their choices. The readers become immediately aware that they are reading a translation and begin to understand the subjectivity of the translation process. Documentary translation is well suited to *sijo*, as it allows the translators to present the depth of the poems and the complications they had to overcome, but it is not a popular method for non-academic translations. The comments on a documentary translation may take up more space than the translation itself, making the reading experience more onerous. It lacks marketability and is more commonly used in academia.

Two examples of documentary translation are Edwin O. Reischauer’s translation of the thirteenth-century travelogue *Izayoi Nikki* and Chantal Wright’s experimental translation of the contemporary Japanese German language writer Tawada Yōko’s “Portrait of a Tongue.” In Reischauer’s translation, the footnotes often occupy more space on the page than the source text. There is more explanation and context for a short poem than there is content in the poem.³⁹ Wright approaches documentary translation in a different way than Reischauer does, by including not only context and explanations but also her thoughts on the source text. She wrote about what the text evoked in her mind, references to other Tawada pieces, as well as other

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³⁹ Reischauer, “The Izayoi Nikki (1277-1280).”
personal anecdotes that were tangentially related to the translated piece.40 When writing the book, Wright had already anticipated that “some will perceive [my experimental approach] as having gone too far, and others not far enough,” given the unconventionality of the project.41

Given the various pros and cons of these common translation methods, none of these methods can be called a “fix-all solution.” Stereoscopic reading presents a possible solution in that it provides the reader with multiple methods to optimize the reading experience. Where one translation is lacking, another can offer insight to fill in the blank. Stereoscopic reading is “a term coined by translator-educator Joanne Englebert [sic]… it means simply using both the original language and one (or more) translations while reading and teaching.”42 This process allows the reader to “intuit and reason out the interliminal,” or the space between the original piece and its translation.43 This interliminal is bound to exist, given the unavoidable faults of the translation process. Therefore, viewing multiple translations along with the source text allows the reader to see the interliminal and shorten it, using the information provided by another translation and the source text. Translator Marilyn Gaddis Rose advocates for stereoscopic reading as a method to “uncover” and then “translate” into one’s understanding the “interliminal richness,” and to “point out the harmony or disjunction among the texts.”44 The process of stereoscopic reading puts us in the mind space to objectively view the faults of the translations for the productive purpose of deepening our understanding of the original work.45

40 Wright, Yoko Tawada’s Portrait of a Tongue: An Experimental Translation.
41 Wright, 33.
42 Rose, Translation and Literary Criticism: Translation as Analysis, 90.
43 Rose, 90.
44 Rose, 54.
45 Rose, 53.
The stereoscopic method of reading texts has been utilized not only by Rose to observe translations of works such as Stendhal’s *La Chartreuse de Parme* and Flaubert’s *L’Education sentimentale*, but also by Eliot Weinberger in his book “Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei.” Weinberger compared multiple translations of Wang Wei’s poem “Lù zhái” to the original and broke down the differences in meaning or image within the translations similarly to how Rose did. Stereoscopic readings like these not only highlight the interliminal, but the effect that these choices have on the reader, as well.

The stereoscopic reading method will be applied to *sijo* similarly to how it was utilized in the prior examples in this study, showing the compatibility of this method with *sijo* and its potential when presenting *sijo* to a foreign audience. Given the multiple complications presented by the form of *sijo* when in translation, readers will be able to see both the form restrictions in an SLO translation and the artistic aspects in a TLO translation together. The interliminal will be visible and the source text will be provided as a basis for the translations. *Sijo*, being a very short medium, does not take up an unreasonable amount of space on the page when paired with multiple translations, allowing for a certain depth of meaning to be provided without the difficulties of documentary translation.

An example of stereoscopic reading in the Korean translation market is the online magazine, *Chogwa*, which publishes multiple translations of one poem in each issue. Readers can see the different choices translators made on the same topic, just as I encourage readers to do when reading *sijo* through stereoscopic reading. While there are more translations provided in

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46 Rose, 55.
each issue of the e-zine than are provided in this study, the existence of such an e-zine proves that this method can be presented to a general audience comfortably.48

**Introduction to Research Methodology**

To aid in the stereoscopic reading process, I present translations directly next to the original poems. The SLO translation is on the left, the original poem is in the middle, and the TLO translation is on the right. The pieces have been ordered thusly for two primary reasons: to avoid selection bias and to easily view which section of the original poem each translation is referencing at any time. While I will be presenting in-depth comparisons of the translations, I encourage readers to read the translations as stand-alone pieces before comparing them. The differences between the translations are not being presented as an advanced form of “spot the difference,” but rather to observe what effect the choices of each translator had on the final product. Such comparisons would not be provided if the poems were to be formally published using stereoscopic reading.

The names of the *sijo* authors will be included in the footnotes, but not all translators are named directly. A majority of the original *sijo* poems and TLO translations were found on the Sejong Culture Society website, which unfortunately did not include the names of the translators in most cases.49 I wrote all of the provided SLO translations, focusing primarily on meaning and syllable count in all cases as a form of “control group.” While such a “control group” cannot be guaranteed in all cases of stereoscopic reading, it was necessary in many cases to write my own

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48 Soje, Che, and Moon, “Chogwa.”
49 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
translations as multiple translations of a single *sijo* poem were not always readily available, so I extended this need to all of the examples.

It is important to note that Korean punctuation has changed over time. Unlike Japan, Korea developed various forms of punctuation even before the introduction of Western-style punctuation. For example, there is the “*gorit-jeom* 고릿점,” which “was used as a phrase or sentence mark based on where it is placed in a sentence.”

The “gorit-jeom” was used from around the 8th century to the 15th century, pre-dating the examples used in this discourse. Western punctuation marks were introduced later through Japan, and the first example of Western punctuation being used in Korean writing is from 1896. As Korea has a history with punctuation, I understand the punctuation, or lack thereof, in each poem to be intentional and maintain it in my SLO translations. I also comment on additions of punctuation in TLO translations for this same reason.

Although *sijo*, originating in the 14th century, is not the most common form of Korean poetry today, contemporary *sijo* do exist. Therefore, I provide four examples of pre-modern poems and four examples of modern poems, as the issues found when translating *sijo* are not exclusive to pre-modern *sijo*. Each poem is labeled “P” for “pre-modern” or “M” for “modern,” followed by its number in the order of its presentation.

**Pre-modern Examples**

**P1:**

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51 Lee, 32.
52 Lee, 36.
Dear dark blue stream don’t boast about easy passing through green hills
Once gone to the blue sea to come again will be strenuous
As the bright moon fills empty hills how about taking a rest

Jade Green Stream, don’t boast so proud of your easy passing through these blue hills.
Once you have reached the broad sea to return again will be hard.
While the Bright Moon fills these empty hills, why not pause? Then go on, if you will.

The first difference between these two translations is in the beginning of the first line. McCann begins his translations with “Jade Green Stream,” capitalizing all three words which helps the reader interpret it as a proper noun. My translation, however, starts with “Dear dark blue stream.” Both of these come from the word “byeokgyesuya 벽계수야.” The word “byeok 벽” refers to the color “blue,” but as there is no word specifically for “green” in Korean, words meaning “blue” also have the potential to mean “green.” The context is often important when deciding how to translate such a word into English. McCann’s use of “Jade Green” in his translation adds depth to the imagery of the poem, which sijo are generally known for. The SLO translation focuses on the connotation of “byeok” being a deep blue but utilizes “dark” instead of “deep” to avoid being misunderstood as a marker for the physical depth of the stream. The method that each translation uses to refer to the stream is also different. The original poem has the vocative particle “야 야” attached to the word for stream, which is used in Korean to address

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54 McCann, *Early Korean Literature*, 56.
people one is close to of similar or younger age, a direct address. An imitation of direct address is in McCann’s translation through the capitalization of the stream, which causes the reader to feel that the stream is being called by its name. The SLO translation renders the direct address into the word “Dear,” which maintains the expression of direct address explicitly.

The two translations address personifying the stream in different ways. In the SLO translation, beyond the original address of “Dear,” the stream is never explicitly referenced as the subject of the poem. The subject of each clause is only implied, both to maintain syllable count and to maintain the lack of an explicit subject found in the original poem. Implied subjects are common in Korean, but they are not common in English, potentially confusing the reader. The TLO translation refers to the stream as “you” throughout the poem, which, while not accurate to the original poem, adds more clarity to the translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>TLO Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear dark blue stream don’t boast about easy passing through green hills</td>
<td>Jade Green Stream, don’t boast so proud of your easy passing through these blue hills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once gone to the blue sea to come again will be strenuous</td>
<td>Once you have reached the broad sea to return again will be hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the bright moon fills empty hills how about taking a rest</td>
<td>While the Bright Moon fills these empty hills, why not pause? Then go on, if you will.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first line, the color word used to describe the hills differs between the translations. McCann calls them “blue,” while I call them “green.” Similar to the word “byeok,” the word both translations are referencing, “cheong 청” is in the middle of the blue-green spectrum. It is often associated with the freshness and clearness of nature. I use “green” in my translation both due to its general association with hills and grass and due to syllable restrictions. McCann’s use
of “blue” adds imagery of the night that is continued throughout the piece when the moon is added to the scene of the poem but does not express the full nuance of “cheong,” either.

Another noticeable difference is in the last line of the translations. Both encourage a “rest” or “pause,” but the TLO translation adds another clause of “then go on, if you will.” The source of this is likely the verb “swieogada 쉬어가다,” meaning “to rest and leave,” the first action followed directly by the second. The syllable restrictions imposed on the SLO translation made it difficult to include the later part of this verb beyond the implication of the rest being short. While the way the SLO translation renders this verb may be lacking, the TLO translation expands slightly beyond the meaning of the verb.

It is also important to note that there is no punctuation in the original poem. The TLO translation, however, includes three commas, a question mark, and punctuation ending each line of the translated poem. While the included punctuation follows general English literary standards, whereby each full sentence of poetry ends with a period, it alters the rhythm and does not maintain the original form. To maintain the form of the original poem, such as punctuation and syllable count, the SLO translation sacrifices rhythm and ease in readability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>Original Poem</th>
<th>TLO Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slicing clear through the midriff of this endless winter solstice night</td>
<td>동지달 기나긴 밤을 한 허리를 벌혀 내여</td>
<td>I will break the back of this long, midwinter night, Folding it double, cold beneath my spring quilt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
57 While this is how “동지달” is spelled on the Sejong Culture Society website, it is more accurate to spell it as “동짓달” and will be referenced as so in my commentary.
As it is placed like rising smoke under spring breeze blanket
To be spread out ever slowly on the fateful night when my beloved returns

춘풍 이불 아래 서리허리 넣었다가
구비구비 퍼리라

That I may draw out the night, should my love return.

In this example, the SLO translation is noticeably longer than the TLO translation. To match the syllable count in the original poem, I had to rely on longer words, which overcomplicated the language of the poem at times. One instance of this is my choice of “midriff” over “back.” The combination of syllable restrictions and the word “heori 허리,” meaning “lower back or waist,” led to this choice. McCann’s choice of the word “back” flows better but misses a small aspect of the meaning of the word. The word “midriff,” however, overcomplicates the imagery, losing clarity.

There is a notable difference in the translations of the word “dongjitdal 동짓달,” which means “the moon marking the end of the eleventh lunar month.” This phase of the moon has great significance in East Asia, where they use lunar calendars alongside Gregorian calendars to this day. I rendered this as a “winter solstice moon” to show the multiple aspects of celestial significance. “Dongjitdal” is rendered in the TLO translation as “midwinter moon.” While a non-East Asian reader would be more comfortable visualizing a “midwinter moon” rather than a “winter solstice moon,” both the specificity and underlying cultural significance are completely lost.

The TLO translation does not reflect the mimetic words found within the poem. Mimetic words, or words that imitate movement, are very common in the Korean language, but almost
non-existent in English. The mimetic words in this poem are “seoriheori 서리허리” and “gubigubi 구비구비.” “Seoriheori” represents the coiling of smoke or steam or any sort of coiling motion. “Gubigubi” represents a sort of meandering or zig-zag motion. Neither of the mimetic words is represented in the TLO translation. I tried to render these mimetic words in my SLO translation through “like rising smoke” and “ever slowly,” but neither offers the full effect. In the context of the poem, “like rising smoke” does not make sense. Korean-speaking readers of the original poem would know that “seoriheori” represents the coiling motion of smoke, but it is unclear in my SLO translation that I am referring to the motion or how it modifies the rest of the poem. Rendering “gubigubi” as “ever slowly” does not begin to describe a meandering or zig-zag motion. My goal in rendering it as “ever slowly” was to express the slowness of meandering but was unable to express the meandering motion itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>TLO Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slicing clear through the midriff of this endless winter solstice night</td>
<td>I will break the back of this long, midwinter night,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As it is placed like rising smoke under spring breeze blanket</td>
<td>Folding it double, cold beneath my spring quilt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be spread out ever slowly on the fateful night when my beloved returns</td>
<td>That I may draw out the night, should my love return.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The addition of multiple commas and periods in the TLO translation changes the rhythm of the poem. However, the lack of punctuation found in the SLO translation may negatively affect the readability by leaving clauses unseparated, potentially causing confusion.

It is also important to note that there is almost no mention of the subject of the poem in the SLO translation, while the TLO translation uses the personal pronoun “I.” The original poem

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never explicitly states the subject and relies upon the implication that the poem was written in the first person. In most situations, I was able to maintain the lack of an explicit subject in my translation, but it became unavoidable in the last line when referring to “my love,” which is also in the TLO translation. The translation “my love” is based on the word “nim 님,” which is used when referring to someone who is greatly honored or loved in this context, but also can be attached to professional titles as an honorific. Given the syllable count of the line, such a concept was difficult to render without using personal pronouns. The TLO translation inserts personal pronouns in other locations as well, which adds a level of clarity that was not in the original.

P3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>Original Poem59</th>
<th>TLO Translation60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If traces remained along the road traveled in my dreams</td>
<td>꿈에 다니는 길이 자죄 곧 나령이면</td>
<td>If on the pathways of dreams a footprint could leave a mark,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even the stone path outside my love’s window would likely wear down</td>
<td>널이 집 창 밖에 석로이라도 닭으려면마는</td>
<td>The road by your window though rough with rocks, would soon wear smooth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But as no traces are left on dream roads I am left to grieve</td>
<td>꿈길이 자죄 없으니 그를 솔허하노라</td>
<td>But in dreams paths take no footprints. I mourn the more for that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, the TLO translation lacks the clarity of the SLO translation. An example of this is in the first line, which is rendered as “pathway of dreams” and “road traveled in my dreams” respectively. The original wording, “kkueme danineun giri 꿈에 다니는 길이,” translates directly to “in dream/commuting/road.” The meaning of “dream” is ambiguous in the

59 Lee Myeonghan (1595-1645), “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
60 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
TLO translation. It has the potential to mean both dreams experienced when sleeping and future aspirations. The SLO translation clarifies the meaning of “dream” by adding personal pronouns. Unlike previous examples, the SLO version added words that were not in the original poem and the TLO version lacks clarity.

Within the first and third lines, there is a notable difference in how the mark left by the subject of the poem on the road/path is rendered. The SLO translation uses the word “traces,” while the TLO translation uses the word “footprint.” They are both based on the word “jachoe 자초,” meaning “a mark or trace.” The SLO translation renders this literally, but the TLO translation formally connects the marks to “footprints.” While “footprints” make sense given the context of the poem, the reader is not allowed the interpretive flexibility that “traces” gives.

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<tr>
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<th>TLO Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If traces remained along the road traveled in my dreams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If on the pathways of dreams a footprint could leave a mark,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The road by your window though rough with rocks, would soon wear smooth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But in dreams paths take no footprints. I mourn the more for that.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another case of an implication being made explicit with the TLO translation is in the second line of the translation. “Seongno 석로,” meaning “stone road,” is rendered as “the road… rough with rocks.” The road is never described as “rough” within the original poem, and it is questionable if it is implied. It adds imagery to the poem and highlights the desperation of the speaker to see their love, but it discourages individual interpretation by the readers. Also in this line is the word “nim,” which we saw earlier in P2. I translate it as “my love” once again in my SLO poem but it becomes “you” in the TLO translation. “Nim” is a direct address, as is the word
“you,” but “you” lacks the sense of honor and love that is in “nim.” The sense of honor and love becomes implied by the tone and story presented by the TLO translation, which is built by making what was implicit in the original poem explicit.

The TLO translation also adds punctuation that is not in the original poem, splitting the last line of the poem into two distinct sentences with a period. The causational aspect in the original, represented by “-euni -으니,” is lost entirely. The sadness felt by the subject and the lack of a mark being left on the road are explicitly connected in the original poem but get interrupted by the added period in the TLO translation. Due to the general cadence of Korean, the reader would likely pause at that point when reading the original poem, but the causation is sacrificed for the rhythm.

P4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>Original Poem61</th>
<th>TLO Translation62</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As the reflection on the water sinks a monk crosses the bridge</td>
<td>물 아래 그림자 지니 다리위에 중이 간다</td>
<td>A shadow strikes the water below: a monk passes by on the bridge,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay right over there you monk let me ask you where you are going</td>
<td>저 중아 게 있거라 너 가는 데 물어보자</td>
<td>“Stay awhile, reverend sir, let me ask you where you go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He pointed me to the white cloud with his hand and left without a word</td>
<td>손으로 흰구름 가르치고 말 아니코 가더라</td>
<td>He points his staff at the white clouds and keeps on his way without turning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of formality of the poem is rendered differently in the two translations. In the TLO translation, the monk is referred to formally as “reverend sir,” but the original poem uses

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61 Chung Chul (1536-1593), “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
62 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
the lowest form of speech when speaking to the monk. Even the word for “monk” used throughout the poem, “jung 종,” is somewhat derogatory. I rendered the low formality of the statement as “you monk” to emulate the rudeness of using informal language to a stranger. The TLO translation makes this line much more formal than it is. Furthermore, the addition of the word “reverend” adds a Christian\(^{63}\) undertone that is nonexistent in the original poem. The poem refers to Buddhist monks, not Christian clergymen.

The third line of the translations also differs greatly. The SLO translation expresses the image of the monk pointing to clouds with his hand and leaving silently. However, the image expressed in the TLO translation was that of a monk pointing with a staff and not turning around. With all due respect to the translator, this line of the TLO translation strays greatly from the original poem. The original poem specifies both that the monk used his hand, “soneuro 손으로” and that there was a lack of words, “mal aniko 말 아니코.” There is no reference to a staff nor turning around. The imagery of the original poem is altered through this decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>TLO Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As the reflection on the water sinks a monk crosses the bridge</td>
<td>A shadow strikes the water below: a monk passes by on the bridge, “Stay awhile, reverend sir, let me ask you where you go.”</td>
</tr>
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<td>Stay right over there you monk let me ask you where you are going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He pointed me to the white cloud with his hand and left without a word</td>
<td>He points his staff at the white clouds and keeps on his way without turning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^{63}\) The word “reverend” may also be associated with other Western religions but is rarely associated with Buddhism unless the text was domesticated in translation.
The punctuation in the TLO translation is different from the original poem. Rather than a simple addition of periods or commas as we have seen in previous examples, there is also the addition of a colon and quotation marks. As colons can have multiple meanings, such as introducing dialogue or a list, their application in this translation would depend on the reader’s interpretation, forcing them to interpret something that was not in the original poem. The quotation marks are implied in the original poem, as is seen in the direct address through the vocative particle “아,” which is the form of the vocative particle “ya” used in P1 applied to words ending in consonants. Readers of the original text would know that the vocative particle indicates the speaker is calling out to someone, but quotation marks are not explicitly used. In my SLO translation, the lack of quotation marks leaves the reader to infer that dialogue is occurring through the vague signals of direct address, though they may be left with a feeling of whiplash and confusion when faced with the sudden change into unmarked dialogue.

Modern Examples

M1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>Original Poem64</th>
<th>TLO Translation65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Wave</td>
<td>파도</td>
<td>WAVES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While looking at Buddhist scriptures until late</td>
<td>밤늦도록 불경을 보다가</td>
<td>Reading the sutras deep into the night,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>밤하늘을 바라보다가</td>
<td>I look up at the dark night sky,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While I was gazing at the night sky</td>
<td>멀바다 울음소리를</td>
<td>Listen, all alone, to the cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>홀로 듣노라면</td>
<td>of the distant sea-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When alone you hear the cries of the distant sea</td>
<td>천경 그 만이 모두</td>
<td>The 1,000 sutras, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10,000 treatises,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64 Cho, Jeongmyeoleul Wihayeol, 183.
The myriad of talks of the heavenly book are waves in the wind. 바람에 이는 파도란다 all just waves blown in the wind

The differences begin in the translations of the title. “Pado 파도,” meaning “a wave” in the context of water, was translated to “The Wave” and “WAVES.” In my SLO translation, I focus on the syllable count of the title to maintain the rules I have been applying to all SLO translations. The title “WAVES” pluralizes “pado” when it was not originally plural. In Korean, the particle “-deul 들” is added to pluralize a noun, unless it is otherwise implied in the sentence. “-Deul” is not in the original title and there is little context to imply plurality, but it can be argued that translating “pado” as “WAVES” takes away the confusion of whether the poem is about a wave in the ocean or a wave of the hand. “Pado” is also implicitly translated to (water) “waves” at the end of both translations, so the use of “WAVES” in the title would not feel particularly out of place to a lay reader.

The grammar in the first stanza of the poem greatly differs between the two translations. Both lines of the stanza have the clausal conjunctive “-daga 다가,” which has the underlying meaning of transition and expresses a shift in action or state. The SLO translation consistently translates “-daga” to “while,” but the TLO translation does not express it clearly. “-Daga” is only vaguely represented through “reading.” The repetition of the original poem, which arguably emulates the hitting of waves on the shore, is thus lost. Due to the demands of English grammar, the transition is expressed at the beginning of the line rather than the end, but still contributes to

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66 I refer to the “lines” of this poem in particular as “stanzas” because this poem includes spaces between the “lines,” making them closer to a “stanza.” The other poems do not have these spaces; therefore, they are referred to as “lines.”
the wave-like rhythm of the piece achieved through repetition, nonetheless. The word “while” may not fully convey the indication of a shift in action or state but allows the actions to flow into each other. The use of a complete sentence in the TLO translation makes more grammatical sense than the subordinate clauses in the first stanza of the SLO translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
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<td>The Wave</td>
<td>WAVES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While looking at Buddhist scriptures until late</td>
<td>Reading the sutras deep into the night, I look up at the dark night sky,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While I was gazing at the night sky</td>
<td>Listen, all alone, to the cry of the distant sea-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When alone you hear the cries of the distant sea</td>
<td>The 1,000 sutras, the 10,000 treatises, all just waves blown in the wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The myriad of talks of the heavenly book are waves in the wind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The translations also differ in the way they refer to religious texts. The TLO translation refers to them as “sutras” and “treatises,” while the SLO translation uses the words “Buddhist scriptures” and “heavenly book.” When translating this poem, I used the literal meanings of the terms “bulgyeong 불경” and “cheongyeong 천경,” “Buddhist scriptures” and “book of heavens/sky” respectively. As there are multiple types of Buddhist texts, the term “bulgyeong,” cannot be generalized as “sutras.” The length of these direct translations caused other words to be sacrificed to match the strict syllable restrictions.

The translations use different subjects as well. Both translations use the personal pronoun “I” once, although it is only implied in the original poem. My SLO translation includes “you,” which is not in either the original or the TLO translation. The purpose of adding “you” was to emulate the generalized nature of the experience being described. While the TLO translation
does not include “you,” the second line begins with the command “Listen,” which may imply a second party. However, one may argue that the subject of the original poem is not “I.” The lack of personal pronouns led me to interpret the poem to be about a generalized experience, but it is equally possible that it is describing the experience of a specific person.

The TLO translation includes the additional punctuation of a dash and multiple commas that are not in the original poem. At times, the added punctuation simulates the rhythm of the original poem, like when commas are placed at the end of the lines in the first stanza causing a natural pause similar to what is in the original poem. However, at other times, the punctuation was added in locations where there was no natural pause. An example of this is in the last section, “The 1,000 sutras, the 10,000 treatises.”

M2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>Original Poem67</th>
<th>TLO Translation68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two or so seagulls fly in circles over the distant ocean.</td>
<td>아득한 바다 위에 갈매기 두엇 날아 돈다.</td>
<td>Up above the shimmering sea two or three seagulls are hovering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They write poems like rolling waves. It is a foreign country’s script.</td>
<td>너훌너훌 시를 쓴다. 모르는 나라 글자다.</td>
<td>Rolling, wheeling, they write a poem. I do not know the alphabet they use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the heart of the endless sky I will write a poem with them.</td>
<td>널따란 하늘 복판에 나도 같이 시를 쓴다.</td>
<td>On the broad expanse of sky I will write a poem too.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first noticeable difference between these translations is how the body of water is described. It is rendered as the “distant ocean” and the “shimmering sea” in the SLO and TLO translations, respectively. The difference between “ocean” and “sea” is negligible, but the

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68 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
adjectives used to describe the body of water make a greater difference. “Distant” and “shimmering” have a vast gap in meaning and imagery. The source word is “adeukhan 아득한,” meaning “to be distant, remote, far off, or hazy.” Even if the meaning “hazy” was intended by the poet, “shimmering” strays too far from this meaning. “Shimmering” offers positive and bright imagery, while none of the definitions of “adeukhan” have this positive connotation.

The next difference is in the rendering of a mimetic word in the poem, “neohulleohul 너훌너훌.” “Neohulleohul” represents the movement and flow of waves. Given the restrictions on punctuation in my SLO translation, I chose to translate it as “like rolling waves,” while the freedom to use punctuation in the TLO translation allowed for “rolling, wheeling.” The TLO translation better represents this mimetic word in a way that both seems natural in English and has a similar effect to mimetic words. The SLO translation lacks clarity in how “like rolling waves” modifies “they write poems.” It is unclear whether the simile describes the seagull’s writing poems, describes the poems themselves, or if it personifies the waves to be capable of writing poems as well. It is also important to note that these “poem(s)” were pluralized in the SLO translation to meet the syllable count when they were not originally pluralized.

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<tr>
<td>In the heart of the endless sky I will write a poem with them.</td>
<td>On the broad expanse of sky I will write a poem too.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the last line, the location of the action differs. The SLO translation refers to the location as “in the heart of the…sky” compared to “on the…sky” as found in the TLO translation. These are translations of the word “bokpane 복판에” meaning “in the middle or center” of something. In the SLO translation, I chose the word heart. Not only does it mean “center” in this context, but it also has a lower syllable count. The use of “on” in the TLO translation only delivers a portion of the meaning of the phrase and has the potential to be confused to mean “about.”

It is important to note that only two commas are added to the TLO translation. The addition is particularly effective in the case of the previously mentioned mimetic word because it reflects the rhythm of the mimetic word itself. In the case of the SLO translation, the presence of punctuation in the original poem makes the translation easier to read, as the clauses are separated and there are rhythmic pauses that are not only implied by a line break.

M3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO Translation</th>
<th>Original Poem69</th>
<th>TLO Translation70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As I blow my warm breath to cleanly polish the glass window</td>
<td>내가 입김을 불어 유리창을 닦아내면</td>
<td>While I wash the window, blowing my breath on it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bird flies across the sky and cleanly polishes it</td>
<td>새 한 마리 날아가며 하늘을 닦아낸다</td>
<td>A bird flies and wipes the sky clean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May magnolias visit tomorrow and polish tinted clouds</td>
<td>내일은 목견꽃 찾아와 구름 빛도 닦으리</td>
<td>Tomorrow, the magnolia will be out and clean the colors from the clouds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
A very important difference to note between these two translations is the rendering of the verb “dakkda 닦다.” In the SLO translation, it is consistently rendered as the verb “polish.” However, in the TLO translation, it is rendered using three separate verbs, “wash,” “wipe,” and “clean” in that order. The repetition found in the original poem is completely removed from the TLO translation. While the chosen English verbs fit well in their respective contexts, especially when compared to the consistent use of “polish,” it is not accurate to the repetition found in the original poem.

The final line of the TLO translation is easier to read than that of the SLO translation. In my SLO translation, I had to remove many important details that would improve the flow of the line and help make it more grammatically coherent in English. The syllable count and the meaning of each part of the phrase were my priorities, therefore I allowed the flow and grammar to suffer through the removal of these details. The TLO translation has this flow and is grammatically coherent, but still lacks certain details from the original line. One detail that they are both lacking is “chajawa 찾아와” meaning “to come and find” something or someone. They use the words “visit” or “be out” to express this meaning, instead.

The TLO translation adds punctuation that was not originally present. A comma is added where there is not a natural rhythm break in the original poem. The improved flow can be attributed to this addition of punctuation at many points in the poem, as the additional punctuation helps the translation fit English literary conventions.

SLO Translation

TLO Translation
As I blow my warm breath to cleanly polish
the glass window
A bird flies across the sky and cleanly
polishes it
May magnolias visit tomorrow and polish
tinted clouds

While I wash the window, blowing my breath
on it,
A bird flies and wipes the sky clean.
Tomorrow, the magnolia will be out and clean
the colors from the clouds.

The tenses used in the final line are different. The TLO translation uses future tense,
reflecting an aspect of the meaning of the verb ending “-euri 오리,” which implies a guess of
what will happen. The guessing aspect is not reflected in the TLO translation, whose final line
displays certainty. The SLO translation does not fully reflect this meaning either. Due to the
complexity of the final line, I chose to allocate more syllables to capturing the image of the
“magnolias polishing the tinted clouds”, rather than the meaning of the verb ending. Beyond the
image of the flowers themselves, I only used the word “may,” and otherwise could not afford to
add a direct article to make more grammatical sense. In this case, the SLO translation was forced
to neglect a grammatical form to maintain the literal meaning of the line and the syllable count.

M4:

SLO Translation
The moonlight seeping over the edges is delicate
And one or two paulownia blooms drift down without a sound
As I go to leave my feet stop and I turn to look again

Original Poem
담머리 넘어드는 달빛은 은은하고
한두 개 소리 없이 내려지는 오동꽃을 가려다 발을 멈추고 다시 돌아보노라

TLO Translation
Misty moonlight spills over the top of the wall
One or two paulownia blooms silently drop
My feet hesitate to go; I turn and look back

72 “The Sejong Culture Society Sijo Samples.”
In this example, many differences are created by the SLO translation “telling” as compared to the TLO translation “implying.” An example of this is in the use of “delicate” and “misty” to describe the moonlight. These translations both originate from the word “euneunhago 은은하고,” meaning “gentle, soft, or subdued.” The SLO translation expresses the meaning directly, while the TLO translation only implies it through the word “misty.” While “misty” influences the imagery of the poem, turning a night into a foggy or “misty” night, it is not fully accurate to the meaning of the word. It is questionable if “mist” directly implies “gentleness” or “softness.”

The use of “without a sound” as compared to “silently” is another example of this. The original poem explicitly says “without a sound.” (“sori eopsi 소리 없이”) which is translated directly in the SLO translation. “Silently” has the same meaning as “without a sound” through the implication of no sound when there is silence. With such a negligible difference in meaning, I am curious as to why the exact meaning was not used. The word “silently” did not have any notable effect on the imagery of the poem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>The moonlight seeping over the edges is delicate</td>
<td>Misty moonlight spills over the top of the wall</td>
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<td>And one or two paulownia blooms drift down without a sound</td>
<td>One or two paulownia blooms silently drop</td>
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<tr>
<td>As I go to leave my feet stop and I turn to look again</td>
<td>My feet hesitate to go; I turn and look back</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Another example of “telling” compared to “implying” is in the third line, where the phrases “my feet stop” and “my feet hesitate to go” are used. As in the previous examples, the source word, “meomchugo 멈추고,” meaning “to stop,” is rendered directly in the SLO translation. The TLO translation’s use of “hesitate” adds a layer of emotion to the piece that was arguably implied by the feet “stopping.” Whether the choice to favor implication over accuracy was helpful would depend on the individual reader’s experience. The translator may have had other motivations when translating this piece, such as creating the even meter in the translation, but I will not speculate on the exact reasoning for this choice.

There was only one addition of punctuation in the TLO translation. A semi-colon was added to the last line in between the clauses “feet stopping/hesitating” and “looking back.” The original poem uses the clausal conjunctive “-go -고,” meaning “and,” to connect the clauses. This is rendered exactly in the SLO translation, but the use of a semi-colon in the TLO translation breaks up connected clauses in a way that implies a disconnect between them.

Conclusion

In all eight examples provided, neither the SLO translation nor the TLO translation was able to illuminate the entire meaning and artistic choices of the original poems. Each translator had to sacrifice certain aspects of the original poem to maintain the aspects that they prioritized. The SLO translations tended to sacrifice readability to maintain syllabic restrictions. For example, many grammatical sacrifices were made in the final line of M3. A clearer form of this line would be “Would the magnolia blossoms come to visit tomorrow and polish the light of the clouds too,” but this had to be shortened to “May magnolias visit tomorrow and polish tinted clouds.” Articles like “the” and “a/an” are crucial in English sentences, but do not exist in
Korean, making it difficult to include them in my SLO translations without having to sacrifice another aspect of the poem. SLO translations of sijo are expected to include the full depth of meaning of the poems within such a small space, which is an impossible task.

TLO translations tended to ignore certain meanings and forms to maintain the aspects prioritized by the translators. For example, the final line of P4 alters the actions taken by the monk shown in the poem. The original line translates directly to “with hand/white cloud/teach and/word/to not do/left,” but it was translated to “He points his staff at the white clouds and keeps on his way without turning.” While I cannot speculate on the priorities of this translator, considering the content of their translation, it is clear that they felt that changing the imagery and meaning of the poem was the best choice to translate the piece. Regardless of the reasoning behind the sacrifices in both SLO and TLO translations, this critical view of sijo translations has proven that sijo poems cannot be translated comprehensively through a single translation.

Stereoscopic reading accentuates the deficiencies in translations and consecutively corrects them in the same process. Readers of translations in general tend to be unaware of the problems of translation, causing them to believe that what they see on the page is a perfect reflection of the original work. Through stereoscopic reading, however, the reader is reminded that they are reading a translation, and an imperfect translation at that, allowing them to deepen their understanding of the piece through the acceptance of the flaws in each translation and access to the original piece.

Stereoscopic reading is a helpful tool for presenting translated texts in general, but in the context of this research, I propose that stereoscopic reading should be used regularly when presenting translations of Korean literature. While this paper focuses on its use in the presentation of sijo, the stereoscopic reading method has proven to be compatible with the
Korean language to allow for more meaningful interactions with translations of Korean literature, *sijo* only being a single form of it. With further research, there is potential for a wider application of stereoscopic reading to other forms of Korean literature. The purpose of translation is to spread literature over language borders, but the deficiencies of stand-alone translations prevent readers from interacting with the full complexity of the text. As Korean translation, especially *sijo* translation, is a growing field, readers must have the opportunity to have a meaningful interaction with the piece to properly represent the artistic value of Korean literature.

The translation process has its limitations; it would be near, if not impossible, to maintain every aspect of a poem within a single translation. While that is the “unfortunate truth” that I have proposed in this paper, it does not mean that it is impossible to interact with the full complexity of a foreign language text without being fluent in the source language. Stereoscopic reading allows readers to get into the weeds of both the translations and the original work to come to their own conclusions about the meaning and impact of the piece. This approach may push against the expectation of “instant gratification” in our fast-paced society, but art in and of itself is a similar act of rebellion, and this culture should not make art inaccessible to readers lacking the knowledge of foreign languages.
Bibliography

https://perma.cc/XN4C-RZKW.


