



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Approaching Classical Japanese Haiku Poetry through the Perspective of Ink Painting Art and Application to Teaching Foreign Literature for Literature Pedagogy Students at Dong Thap University

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the culture and literature of countries around the world is increasingly important in the current trend of international exchange and integration. Therefore, foreign literature disciplines, including Japanese literature, occupies an increasingly essential position in the curriculum of Dong Thap University. However, the perception and teaching of Japanese Haiku poems have long been challenged due to language barriers as well as cultural differences. In order for enhancing the quality of teaching Haiku poetry to Literature Pedagogy majors at Dong Thap University, the article presents a new approach towards classical Haiku poetry through the perspective of ink painting art (aka painting art). With the aim of observing the beauty of Japanese literature and culture, the study analyzes the causes and some specific manifestations of the similarities between Japanese ink painting art and classical Haiku poetry in terms of artistic methods. The root cause lies in the influence of Zen, as a cultural characteristic of the Japanese spirit, and the specific manifestations include the technique of empty spaces in ink painting art, and the empty poetic strategy in classical Haiku poetry, the features of the conception scenery and the moment characteristic in both Oriental art genres.

1. INTRODUCTION

Classical Haiku poetry and ink painting art as the brilliant achievements of medieval Japanese culture, have created a bold Japanese cultural identity with the unique beauty, and at the same time, also helped Japanese culture to blend in the great flow of mystical Oriental culture with numerous similarities with regional cultures. Japanese classical Haiku poetry and ink painting art possess various common features in terms of aesthetic approach, expression method, and in artistic interpreting technique. The questions is, what creates the similar characteristics between the two originally different art forms in terms of expression? This phenomenon can be explained with many reasons, but the influence of Zen Buddhism should be mentioned first as the most fundamental and important cause. The second reason is the duality in Japanese culture, which both welcomes foreign elements and maintains local traditions, leading to the birth of the combined art between Haiku poetry (the indigenous art and culture) and ink painting art (cultural and artistic elements imported from China).

Comparing and contrasting the Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art contributes to clarifying a theoretical issue of Oriental art in general and of Japanese art culture in particular. It is the relationship between poetry and painting, which is regarded as two independent and qualitatively different branches of art by Western scholars, while in the East, poets and artists still acknowledge that “poetry and painting mutually support each other” or “Poetry is embedded in *paintings and poetry is painting in verse*”. Nevertheless, the assertion of artistic viewpoints still requires formal and comprehensive empirical data and research to examine the issue.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The most outstanding research work on the relationship between poetry and painting in terms of theory is entitled *Laocoon - an Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry* by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) which was

translated into English by Ellen Frothingham, first published in 1873 and republished in 1887. The author pointed out the core distinction between poetry and painting with the fact that poetry is the art of time and painting is the art of space. Lessing wrote: “*Objects, either existing next to each other, or consisting of so many components (possibly placed side by side), so, can all be called objects. Objects, therefore, with their visible properties, are the exclusive subjects of painting. Objects, which appear consecutively, or consist of several components consecutively in time, are called events/evolve unfold. Thus, evolution is the object of typical reflection of poetry*” (Gothold Ephraim Lessing, 1887, p.91).

Zhou Guang Qian (朱光潜) (1897-1986) - a researcher in China, in his study *Poetry and Painting* on Lessing's theory of “heterogeneous poetry” critically argued with the Lessing's view that with the peculiarities of Eastern poetry and paintings, the distinction between the art of time and the art of space is no longer clear-cut and evident. He highlighted the ability to overcome the barrier of material in poetry as well as in painting, so that painters can use color to speak up the messages and poets can use language to stimulate readers' perception of colour or shapes. Therefore, instead of not two separate art forms in the position of comparative correlation, poetry and paintings enjoy considerable intersections where co-existence thrives.

In addition to the two aforementioned works on the relationship between poetry and painting, there are numerous studies on art forms mainly focusing on the comparison in terms of forms between poetry, painting and others, typically, a number of works by some Russian researchers such as *Literature and Art Forms of Dimitrieva* (1967), *Koginov's Art Forms* (1963).

Classical Haiku poetry and ink painting art are brilliant achievements of medieval Japanese culture, which have created a strong Japanese cultural identity, made Japanese culture flourish with the unique beauty, and at the same time, also created manifold similarities between Japanese and regional cultures as a part of mystical Eastern culture. Classical Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art actually have many common features in terms of aesthetic approach, expression methods, and artistic experience techniques. The question is, what creates the similar characteristics between the two originally different art forms in terms of expression? This phenomenon can be explained with many reasons, but the influence of Zen Buddhism should be mentioned first as the most fundamental and important cause. Suzuki - a famous Japanese culturist - in his treatise entitled “*Zen and Japanese Culture*” published in 1958 in Tokyo - discovered and analyzed the profound relationship between Zen and Japanese culture. Suzuki Teitaro Daizetsu, in that very treatise, also mentioned two foreigners who recognized at the early time the influence of Zen in the spiritual life and personal cultivation of the Japanese, Charles Elliot - who had a profound understanding of Japanese Buddhism and George Sansom - an expert on Japanese history and culture. Furthermore, R. Blyth - a British research critic, was one of the first Westerners mentioning Zen when discussing the basis of Haiku aesthetics in four volumes of critical treatises on Haiku, published from 1949. Hokuseido Press republished the whole set in 1981 in Tokyo. In *Zen Art for Meditation*, published in 1873 with Tuttle Publishing, two authors Stewart W. Holmes and Chimyo Horioka systematized 15 Zen principles that influenced Haiku and ink painting art. Donna Mann and Carol Beehler, two co-authors and researchers of the work *Edo - Art in Japan 1615-1868* called such fusion art as the art of poetry-painting, which is an art form deeply influenced by Zen: “*Introduced into Japan from China in the 12th century, Zen became a powerful impetus for developing Sino-Japanese poetry and painting art*” (Pham et al., 2005, p.26). Joan Stanley-Baker (2000, p. 126) also pointed out: “*At about the end of the fourteenth century, in the reflection of the thought of hermit/ anchorite among the Zen masters in China and Korea, where literary achievement was taking the place of divine and divine quests, a form of poetry (Shigajiku) was created; There, the landscape paintings are supplemented with poems composed during the period when Zen literature was formed and developed.* That duality in Japanese art culture is also pointed out in the research work ‘*Ideals of the East - The Spirit of Japanese Art*’ by Professor Okakura Kakuzo, it is an art culture that is both entrenched with tradition indigenous system, and just ready to accept foreign elements: “*The poetry of the Yamato period, the music of Bugaku, which reflected the ideals of the Tang Dynasty in the rule of the Fujiwara aristocracy, are the sources of artistic inspirations and favorite sentiments to this day, same as Zen learning and Noh drama, which were the products of enlightenment by the Song Dynasty. This tendency has kept Japan as a true storage of the Asian spiritual values, even if, it (the studious tendency towards foreign cultural elements), at the same time, also enhanced Japan to the level of modern power*” (Okakura Kakuzo, 2016, p.4).

These early studies showed that in the field of Japanese studies, reading Haiku poetry and viewing ink painting art from Zen has almost become a worldwide trend, to the extent that Haiku and ink painting art are associated with Zen as a “default” concept for Western and American scholars. Stemming from the suggestions of our predecessors,

studying specifically the artistic strategies of classical Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art in the light of Zen are to be set as the focus of the research.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study examines the artistic works from poetics and reception aesthetics perspectives to exploit the expressive values of the techniques of Haiku poetry as well as the art of interpreting Haiku poetry. The following methods are selected in accordance with the research objects and field:

Comparative method: A comparison between Japanese and Chinese poetic works is drawn to shed light on the similarities and distinctive features of the Japanese poetic genre. Comparing the artistic characteristics of Haiku poems and ink painting art works, thereby showing the similarities and differences between these two art forms in classical Japanese art culture.

The method of typology: Based on a sound theoretical basis on the relationship between the two art forms, literature and painting, from the standpoints of Eastern and Western scholars, the study employs analytical and typological processes to point out the distinctive features between classical Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art.

Interdisciplinary method: The research proposes and verifies the feasibility and effectiveness of approaching Haiku poetry from the perspective of another art form - painting, thereby discovering the subtle yet profound aesthetic beauty of specific Haiku poetry works, to enhance the quality of teaching and researching this poetic form.

Social-historical method: Placing artworks in the flow of history and corresponding epochs, pointing out external factors that have influenced and contributed to shaping the artistic characteristics of the poetry-painting genre.

Document analysis method: In specific cases, the art works are thoroughly analysed to withdraw the generalisations of the characteristics of Haiku poetry and ink painting art.

In addition, survey and statistics analysis are also conducted as the supportive methods to systematize and quantify the selected works and their artistic characteristics.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From applying the above methods, the scientific results obtained are as follows:

Three factors are identified as essential in the relationship between classical Haiku poetry and Japanese ink paintings art including: the technique of the empty space (kongbbai, 空白), ‘conception scenery’ feature (yì jìng, 意境) and the ‘moment’ characteristics (kei kokuu, けいこく, 頃刻). Accordingly, the paper discusses and analyses the similarities between Haiku poetry and ink painting art.

The scientific values of the research is presenting a new approach towards classical Haiku poetry from the perspective of classical ink painting art, aiming to explore the common spirit of the two art forms: Zen spirit in the flow of Japanese culture in order to propose suitable methods of teaching classical Haiku poetry content to Literature Pedagogy students at Dong Thap University.

4.1. Concept of Zen artistic strategy

The concept of art content and form was systematically introduced by Hegel. In his Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, he emphasized the holistic nature of these two aspects in an artwork: “*In art, as in all other fields, the truth and solidity of content must be based primarily on one thing: this content shows itself to be identical with form*” (Hegel, 2008, p.). Thus, the form here is understood as the form of the content, the form is presented because there is content. There cannot be a form separated from the content.

Also, in an important statement about art form: “Without understanding the new form of vision, it is impossible to properly understand what was first realized and discovered in life through that form. *Art form, properly understood, does not give form to an already existing and found content, but rather a form that allows the content to be found and recognized for the first time*” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.34). Bakhtin’s idea was very consistent with the understanding of the form of Zen art. The reason is that Zen art is not an art form used to express a pre-existing content, a template that has been molded in perception and in thought. In fact, the art of Zen is a way of discovering new dimensions in the mind from the seemingly simple things in life. The form in Zen art is just the journey for the author and the art observer to cruise together to reach the infinite creative treasure within their own selves.

The Zen art method is the way in which the Zen artist, whether a poet or a painter, uses to perfect the form of a work whose content emphasizes direct inner awareness and life’s reality. With such characteristics, the Zen art method has its own imprints. Those imprints are expressed through specific techniques such as: the empty space in the painting, the emptiness poetic tactics in the poem, the moment characteristics and the conception scenery in the poem as well as in the painting. Possessing those features, an artwork, whether with or without Zen ideas and themes in Buddhism, still exudes Zen theme, Zen theory and Zen taste.

4.2. Similarities between Zen Art Methods in Japanese Classical Haiku poems and ink painting art

4.2.1. Similarities between the empty space technique and the poetic emptiness

The empty space is the space that the painter leaves unpainted or colourless on the painting. This technique carries both expressive values as well as ideological significance in Japanese ink painting art.

The poetic emptiness refers to the internal and external void of a Haiku poem. The external void is created with the minimum brevity of the poem, forcing the reader to employ their imagination, knowledge, experience and feelings to interpret what is not presented in the poem. The inner void is the space created by the “incoherence” between words and images appearing in the poem, forcing the reader to “connect” them through association techniques.

Both the empty space technique and the poetic emptiness root in the philosophy of emptiness. Meditation means nature void. Nature void is originally a concept of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy which claims that the objective world exists, but does not exist. Therefore, it is impossible to acknowledge the existence or non-existence of the world. The beliefs of the absolute existence or non-existence of the world are both ‘Antagnahadrsti’ - one-sided viewpoints. Thus, from the very beginning, “Khong” cannot be interpreted as “nothing”; “negative”; “absolute absence”, but as “emptiness”, because that emptiness refers to the blank space, but not nothingness. It transcends the duality between existence and non-existence.

In Haiku poetry, that idea of the emptiness was received and became an aesthetic concept. It is the conception of an immeasurable beauty, blossoming in a mind immaculate against greed, anger, and delusion. Such a mentality is indeed a poetic mind. To express this mentality, Haiku poetry has a unique method of using “spaces” in a poem, called “giant” or “ma” (間 or ま). Haiku poetry leaves many vast gaps: the space outside the poem due to minimal words (each poem has only 17 syllables, equivalent to about 10 words); space inside the poem due to the rule of omitting verbs, adjectives and adverbs, keeping only nouns; consequently, there is no connection between images, creating their rich symbolic meanings. Haiku poetry also reduces personal pronouns; deeply suppresses feelings and emotions; employs evocative allusions, etc. This verbal space has contributed to blurring the boundary caused by words between the reader and reality. The connection between “observer” and “object”, between the experiencer and the experienced thing must cease before things can be perceived “just as it be”. To do so, the cumbersomeness of the language barrier must be minimized. That insight is the understanding in single mindedness of Zen Buddhism, of which Haiku poetry is one of the most vivid manifestations. While the sketching brushstroke of Tang poetry is the curated way with a sophisticated brushstroke through thorough practice, that of Haiku poetry is rustic and simple with a sheer view: “... Also due to its brevity and humour, which are rarely possible to present a detailed picture, only the main features or important parts are brushstroke-sketches, the rest must be supplemented by the reader. Indeed, the humour is exactly the same as Haboku Sansui style, very close to the Japanese sentiment” (Chu, 2012, p.12).

That sketching brushstroke is close to Zen, because, from the point of view of Japanese Zen poets, Zen is the experience of everyday beauties. We can try to imbue a very beautiful poem by Yosa Buson (与謝蕪村) (1716-1784) to clearly see this sketching brushstroke, the spirit of this poetic emptiness in Haiku poetry:

“Nano hana ya
Tsuki wa higashi ni
Hi wa nishi ni”

The canola flowers
The moon in the east
The sun in the west.

(Yosa Buson, cited by Inoue Yasushi (2020, p.35))

Yosa Buson was a poet and painter whose poetry was rich in artistic colors. The poem opens a poetic afternoon reunion of the moon and the sun. Past, present and future coexist. A deep afternoon, a vast space, the shining yellow of the late sun, the gentle yellow of the new moon at the beginning of the day, pristine, petite yellow of canola flowers on green leaves. There were many details implied yet not explicitly described in the poem. With just a few words, the poem was not responsible for including the entire reality to which it evoked. Words are just like a door through which readers come and leave by themselves to that boundless reality of art and life.

Similarly, in art, in terms of ideology, the empty space is the clearest expression of Zen ideas: everything flows from emptiness and returns to nature void. The void in the picture serves as the source of creativity in the viewer. Emptiness also provokes the idea of infinity, the idea of change. If an artist paints a bamboo with roots, trunks, and

tops, then that bamboo lies within a limitation; but if there are only the trunk, branches, and leaves without its base and top, the void between the base and top is of great value in describing its growth. Likewise, a Dragon drawing in which its body is not fully displayed with a hidden part in the clouds, in the void of the picture would inspire viewers to visualise the transformation of the Dragon.

Toyo Sesshu (1420-1506) was considered the leading painter of ink painting - sumi-e (水墨) of his time. He was originally a monk and was exposed to Zen studies at an early age. Researchers believe that he started his painting career while studying at Shokokuji temple in Kyoto, so it can be said that the inspiration in his paintings rooted from inner Zen. Among the variety of genres he composed in his career, including portraits painting, landscape paintings, flower - and - bird paintings, etc., his landscape paintings are probably recognised as masterpieces. The most famous one is the painting Haboku Sansui (破墨山水). In this work, “he created forms that were barely conjured up, bathed in a hazy space” (Hoang & Luu, 2003, p.115). The picture showed a fainted mountain in the distance, painted in a very pale color. The boat on the water, the roof in the trees are just sketching brushstroke. The minimalism of the figure in the picture demonstrates the elimination of the rational thinking of Zen, as the foundation to open the horizon of intuition and speechlessness. Seen with the discerning eye of judgment, the picture was so blurry and hazy; but receiving intuitively, absorbing with the mind, everything becomes extremely pure and obvious. Haboku (破墨) is an important technique in Japanese ink landscape painting, which emphasizes the freedom to subtly change the shades of ink, created by boldness, lightness, density. It can be said that the key spirit of this technique is from within the shaping itself, escaping the limits of the image.

Genbitsutai (減筆体) is another painting technique in China and Japan, besides Haboku - (破墨) to explicitly express the spirit of Zen. Meditation spirit is preliminary, the initial mind that has not yet been influenced by the discriminating mind. That was the pure, innocent mind, free of evaluation and judgment when contacted with things and phenomena. From that initial mind, everything manifests, exposing its own nature in a rustic, original way. Reducing pen style (減筆体) is a way to express this initial heart in painting, when the artist does not try to use his efforts, to bring his skills and knowledge into art, but simply conveys mood and scenery through as few simple lines as possible. *“It can be said that among the characteristics of Japanese artistic talents, there is one feature originated from Southern Song painting, which is a form of expression called “one corner style” (一角) of the illustrious painter Ma Vien 馬遠 (1175-1225). Japanese painters who were once psychologically influenced by his painting combined it with the technique of “brushstroke reduction” (genbitsutai 減筆体), their traditional expression in order for reducing the brushstrokes and drawinglines on silk or paper drawings. Both ways were consistent with the spirit of Zen Buddhism”* (Suzuki, 2019, pp.34).

In the last years of the twentieth century, French philosophy professor Françoise Jullien studied the similarities between painting and poetry based on Chinese thoughts and aesthetics. In his work entitled ‘A discussion on the paleness’, the similarity is stated to be “the paleness”. Françoise Jullien believed that, in Oriental art, poetry and painting themselves have their own ways of implementing the common aesthetic idea of the paleness: the soundless, tasteless, invisible. Françoise Jullien presented a typical example of the paleness style in painting, the painter Nghe Toan 倪瓚 (1301-1374): *“This artist spent most of his life just drawing one landscape: a few trees by the river, a surface of water, rolling hills, a deserted hut (...) One can only notice that, in this artist's career, he always tended to the simple, the naked (...) The paleness of the landscape painted did not only correspond to an artistic effect. It was also an expression of wisdom, pale life was an ideal”* (Francois Jullien, 2003, p.34). And in a way, the paleness style in painting is an expression of Zen spirit, because that creative style comes from a unified view, seeing everything with body and mind as a unified whole: *“Colors confuse the eye, bewilder the human mind, therefore, paintings do not need blue, red, yellow but only a deep color of discreetly black ink to preserve the unity and integrity of creation”* (Hoang & Luu, 2003, p.44). Thus, it can be said: *“Painters regard painting as a religious practice, like practicing Zen. One must keep a pure spiritual force in order to directly grasp the spirit of creation, to discover the magic of the entire universe in a flash”* (Hoang & Luu, 2003, p.44).

From the philosophy of nature void of Zen culture, both Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art have their own unique ways of implementing them into art, that is, the technique of the empty space in ink painting art and the poetic emptiness in Haiku poetry. Both of these two features are reflected consistently in the author's perception of space and time to specific expressions of form in the work, creating specific aesthetic values. And this is also a unique intersection between two genres belonging to two very close art forms in the overall integration of Oriental culture.

4.2.2. ‘Moment’ characteristic in classic Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art

According to the oldest concept in Buddhist philosophy, moment is a ‘sat na’ - the smallest unit of time. Poetically speaking, artistic time is not quite similar to physical time, so the concept of moment is not fully understood in terms of duration. The moment is understood as a completely timeless look, a non-opposite look between what is and what will be, a ‘resting at peace’ with present reality. In such a state poetry arose, in such a state painting was born.

The intersection between Zen and Haiku poetry of Matsuo Basho 松尾芭蕉 (1644-1694) has been proven by many researchers. That encounter was evident primarily in the way of observing at and depicting nature in poetry. That look was intuitive and Haiku poetry was poetry of the moment. In the moment when the poet perceives reality through the dances of Zen and life, breathing with the breath of heaven and earth, immersing in such a way that there could be no separation between the poet's ego and the poet's self with the present reality. Then poetry was Zen because inherently in the moment of enlightenment, Zen acknowledges a reality as it is, rather than perceiving reality through the filter of the ego, with the superposition of experiences and the prejudices of innumerable differences. The innocence of mind encounters the novelty of things and phenomena and thus returns to the origin of the religion. Once, on Mountain Kurokami with his companion Sora, Basho wrote of that moment:

“Shibaraku wa
Taki ni komoru ya
Ge no hajime”

For just a moment
I'm cloistered behind the falls—
the start of summer.

(Matsuo Basho, cited by Ueda (2018, p.141))

If with Tang poetry, we can peel off each layer of symbolic meaning hidden behind a few outlines, with Haiku poetry, the whole must be understood once for all, usually through a small detail with the timeless moment of enlightenment. The painting ‘Lu son’ painted in poetry by Ly Bach in the poem ‘Vong Lu Son revealed’ was sketched by omitting a lot of details. Neither trees nor rocks are painted, and the whole picture consists of only the sun, clouds, and waterfalls on a purple smokey background:

The water went straight down three thousand yards
Thought the Milky way slipped out of the clouds
(Li Bai, cited by Ho (2002, p.119))

But it is worth noting here that the poet's vision has a partial movement. Move the eye from above to below: “water flies straight down”, then throw the look up even higher: “*Milky way slipped out of the clouds*”. Meanwhile, with Issa, the entire mountain was revealed in a single view: The mountain is far / in the eye / dragonfly. As with Matsuo Basho, the whole of autumn was attested in the moment when the crow perched on a branch:

“Kareeda ni
Karasu no tomarikeri
Aki no kure”

On a bare branch
A crow has alighted
Autumn evening.

(Matsuo Basho, cited by Ueda (2018, p.70))

Like Haiku poetry, ink painting art have a distinctive sense of time and space. Ink painting art does not use clairvoyance like Western paintings, for the artist's point of view when recreating the art world on a painting was not a fixed point of view. Artists looked at paintings from many different standpoints in space and in time as well. Because the scene in the picture is not a mere reproduction of the real scene, yet the *conception scenery*. In the mental realm, space and time are united and what the artist painted is his own mind.

4.2.3. *The conception scenery technique in classic Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art*

The scenery is objective reality, but the conception scenery can be understood as the inner space expressing the unity between thought and the scene, “*the idea within scenery, the scenery within ideas*”. The boundary between subject and object here is blurred. In both painting art and Haiku poetry permeates that non-differentiation between subject and, transforming the artistic space in poetry into spiritual space.

Around the beginning of 1686, Matsuo Bashō (松尾芭蕉, 1644-1694) wrote a poem that supposedly marked the official debut of Haiku poetry genre. It was a poem full of spirituality:

“Furu ike ya
Kawazu tobikomu
Mizu no oto”

Old pond...
a frog jumps in
water’s sound.

(Matsuo Basho, cited by Suzuki (2019, p.248))

There appears only two images in the poem, but the two simplest images of nature and life: the old pond and the frog. However, the sound of water, created from the harmony between the frog and the old pond, at the end of the poem seems like a sound that resonates in people’s hearts. Seemingly, there was a vibe to beauty that was creatively expressed here, even though that thrill may just stem from something primitive, petite and very familiar in ordinary life. The poem perfectly presents the poet’s spiritual state even without direct depiction, the state of being completely absorbed into the scene; the old pond, the frog, the sound of the water symbolizes the movement and stillness of the landscape but at the same time, the movement and stillness of the mind.

Haiku poetry in particular and Oriental classical poetry in general put more weight on ideas than mere words. There has long been belief in Chinese culture: “*the idea goes beyond the word*”, “*the word is for the idea; once the idea is perceived, the words may be forgotten*”. The same was true of Japanese or Chinese ink painting art; the form was reduced to a minimum so that the expressive power of the idea was maximized.

The problem in question here is how beauty can manifest itself in those small, ordinary things when appearing in Haiku poetry. In terms of aesthetic principles, the presence of beauty is limitless. If beauty can be achieved in elegant and pure things such as the moon, apricot flowers, conifers, chrysanthemums, or in elaborate and splendid things such as the luxurious architecture and royal palaces, it can also be embedded in shells, snails, dragonfly wings or an anonymous blade of grass. It’s the look and feel of the author that discover beauty wherever it was, in whatever exists. In other words, it was the “conception” of the poet that creates value to the simple words of poetry and the rustic images of painting.

The Zen ink painters often select very ordinary and real-life themes for their works, in order to express the Zen spirit. In the painting *Kaeru yo Kagyuu* (蛙与蜗牛) (cited by Joan Stanley-Baker (2000, p.184)) painted by Zen master Gibon Sengai (仙厓 義梵, 1750-1837), the subject of the work is too little, insignificant animals: a frog and a snail. The Frog is drawn from the front and the Snail is crawling across the frog. Both animals are drawn with a few quick, free strokes. The spirit of *wabi* (侘び) manifests itself in the combination of sacred thought and petty realities in the painting. “*There were seven Kanji written in harmony on the picture. They mean: Take all three Buddhas in one swallow. The sight of the absolute perfection in all things themselves: the frog, the snail, and the swallow. The petty insignificance of the frog, which was implicitly sacred, was a popular Buddhist theme*” (Joan Stanley-Baker, 2000, p.183).



Figure 1. *Kaeru yo Kagyuu* (蛙与蜗牛) (cited by Joan Stanley-Baker, 2000, p.184)

The resonance between poetry and painting, then, is first of all, a resonance of the idea. A painting can be inspired by a poetic idea and conversely, a poem can be inspired by a painting. In other words, if the flow of thought is the

heart of the artistic space, then when that flow run through the world of words, it becomes a poem, and through the world of images and colors, it becomes a picture. There is no limit to the flow.

In the spirit of interdependence and continuity of Japanese Buddhism, a picture was a poem without words; a poem was a picture that painted with words in the immediate moment of reality, so that moment was reborn in the infinity of the flow of life. Only in Haiku poetry but not any other poetic genres can this feature be easily found.

4.3. Applying the approach of interpreting Haiku poetry through the perspective of Japanese ink painting art to enhance the quality of teaching foreign literature to Literature Pedagogy majors in Dong Thap University

4.3.1. Difficulties in interpreting Haiku poetry

There are three major challenges in interpreting Haiku poetry with Literature Pedagogy students, Dong Thap University as follows:

First, Haiku poetry was an extremely short in form. The minimum number of words is a huge obstacle to penetrate the artistic world of the poem. Approaching a Haiku poem in the traditional way, i.e. analyzing the words to grasp an understanding of the content (topic, thought, theme, main inspiration) becomes difficult. Thus, it is necessary to devise a distinctive interpreting method with this poetic form in support of the traditional approach.

Secondly, it was necessary to understand the general cultural background in the flow of Japanese ideological culture to interpret Haiku poetry. Zen culture hold prominent role in Japanese cultural background. The key for learners to acquire Zen culture's thinking and feeling approaches is the art of Zen painting, that is, the ink painting art.

Thirdly, the thinking of the Oriental people in general and the Japanese in particular in the medieval period was one towards the integration and synthesis. Thinking here includes artistic thinking. Therefore, it will be extremely difficult to understand a Haiku poem as an independent poetic art. It's advisable to look at it as a fusion work between various elements of painting and words for students to fully grasp its core and deepest values.

In light of the three aforementioned issues, there is an urgent need to renovate the method of teaching Haiku poetry for students of Literature Pedagogy, Dong Thap University. One of the innovative elements that the author proposes is to incorporate a painting perspective into the process of studying a Haiku poem, in the aim of the effective acquisition of this form of poetry.

4.3.2. Mapping the process of teaching Haiku poetry for Literature Pedagogy majors, Dong Thap University adopting painting perspective

Based on the similarities in many aspects between Haiku poetry and Japanese ink painting art as well as the difficulties in interpreting works of Haiku poem, as analyzed above, the authors propose the methods of teaching, learning and researching Haiku poetry for Literature Pedagogy students, Dong Thap University by connecting literary works with ink painting art.

To be specific, the process of teaching a Haiku poem can follow the following 4 steps:

Table 1. The process of teaching Haiku poem

Steps	Detailed activities
Imbruing the conception scenery	A painting with the same concept as the studied Haiku poem is presented to students to evoke emotions through visual impressions
Connecting the imbued scenery with words	Students make associations using the feelings elicited from the painting to connect meanings between words and images of the poem
Finding similarities in the expressive techniques of the Haiku poem and the painting	Identifying the technique of the empty space and moment characteristic in the painting, thereby, understanding this expressive technique in the Haiku poem
Identifying aesthetic sensibility in both poetic and painting works	Practicing perceiving the aesthetic sense of Haiku poems from visual impressions to linguistic impressions

The four-step process of interpreting a classic Haiku poem as mentioned above involves comparing and contrasting with paintings, forming experiential thinking and empathic intuition for Haiku poetry in readers. The theoretical basis of the process is the similarities between poetry and painting in Eastern cultures in the aim of solving practical problems in the process of studying classical Haiku poetry.

5. CONCLUSION

Zen is originally a dominant cultural and spiritual element in Japanese daily life activities, including artistic creation. Therefore, it would be biased to approach this issue only through abstract and rational concepts, excluding its artistic expressions. In Western theories, poetry and painting are considered two independent art forms with distinctive natures, while in the East, poets and painters still assert that “*poetry and painting mutually support each*

other” or “*Painting were inspired by poeting and poetry were painting that spoke*”. The difference in perception originates in the difference in the global and specific thinking of the East and the West. As analyzed above, the spirit of Zen can be seen as the intersection of two genres in these two art branches: Haiku poetry and ink painting art, which creates a way of “*non-drawing painting style*” with such brushstrokes as splashed-ink painting (Haboku), splashed-ink (Hatsuboku) and reducing brush strokes (Genbitsutai). The spirit of Zen shapes the two core features of Haiku poetry: ‘moment’ characteristics and the empty space. Therefore, learning Zen is the method of understanding Haiku poetry and ink paintings art. It can also be said that profound understanding about Haiku poetry and ink paintings art would guarantee the understanding of Zen enlightenment. After identifying the above specific expressions, the study also proposes new methods of teaching classical Haiku poetry for students majoring in Literature Pedagogy, Dong Thap University, towards promoting the active initiative and creativity of learners in the spirit of cultural integration and interdisciplinary research methods: Guiding students to study Haiku poetry from the perspective of typology, so that, there can be further and more insightful findings, not only in terms of expressions, but also in an aesthetic sensing and experiential techniques (感 驗) for this form of poetry.

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