

INSIGHT

A GENERATIVE EXPLANATION OF POETIC PROSODY:
DIFFERENCE AND INTERFACE BETWEEN
LINGUISTIC AND MUSICAL RHYTHM

Yinan Wu

Shanxi University, Taiyuan

ABSTRACT

Although both language and music are governed by the “Biological Principle of Rhythm” (Feng 2022), the roles of repetition and alternation in the two domains differ significantly. In language, repetition and alternation exist within abstract phonological structure, and the repetition of phonetic units serves only rhetorical purposes. In contrast, the repetition of musical units is obligatory to construct a perceivable and predictable periodicity. This paper introduces the concept of “tactus,” identifying it as the inner pulse in human rhythmic perception, which can serve as an interface between linguistic and musical rhythm. For music, sequences of tactus realize repetition, while alternation occurs between tactus and non-tactus positions. In poetry, grammatical prosodic units are mapped onto tactus positions to form the skeleton of poetic lines, whereas non-tactus positions accommodate non-branching prosodic constituents. Thus, the tactus-based framework defines the poetic meter generation as a process

Acknowledgments I would like to thank Professor Shengli Feng (冯胜利) for his pioneering researches and his inspiration on this paper. I am also grateful to Professor Huibin Zhuang (庄会彬), Professor Chi Wang (王迟), and the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments.

Yinan Wu (吴忆南) [wuyinan1997@yeah.net]; School of Chinese Language and Literature, Shanxi University, Taiyuan 030006, China.