Teaching English Poetry in a French Speaking Class:
A Way to Help the Learner Apprehend Language Distortion

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Introduction

For many critiques, the teaching of English poetry in general is a particular pedagogical activity which requires from the teachers and the learners special attitudes. According to Elizabeth Lund[1] the best way for the teacher to learn how to teach poetry is to learn how to write it himself. That way, he doesn't just learn about poetry, but he understands how a poem is created, layer upon layer, leap after leap. In doing so, the teacher sees firsthand that crafting a poem is about being open to what's around him and what's inside him. As well as the teacher, there is a great advantage for the students to learn poetry. Francis Kazemek[2]'s work on the usefulness of studying poetry balances "an intense appreciation for poetry with an in-formative, practical outlook both on how to present poetry in the classroom and on how such study can benefit students." As for George Gopen, "the study of poetry frees the mind to accept the approach of reasoning that law schools try to teach...Law students must know how to analyse language, to recognize ambiguity, and to develop consistency in interpretation."[3]

In a French speaking country, working on a poetical text written in English or any other foreign language may seem more ambitious, mainly when we have to deal with secondary school students. This can be explained not only by their defiencies in English grammar and vocabulary but also because they are prejudiced against poetry. Teaching under such conditions appears as a difficult task to overcome. To some extent, the teacher, to bypass this difficulty, feels like proposing prosaic texts more adapted to usual and communication type language. It is regrettable that such easy solutions overshadow the noble objectives of teaching a poem in English in a French speaking class.

Generally speaking, poetry and foreign language together teach the learner something different. More explicitly, on the one hand, a foreign language requires from the learner to accept and adopt not only a distinct linguistic code, but also new representations of the world. It also makes the learner discover mental processes different from what he is used

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[1] Elizabeth Lund. "Word Play 101: Helping Students Find the Poet Within" in www.csmonitor.com/atcsmonitor/specials/poetry/p-pteach.html. Article consulté le 31 mai 2009.

[2] Francis Kazemek. "Functional Literacy is not Enough: Adult Literacy as a Developmental Process", *Journal of Reading*, 28 (4), January 1985, pp. 332-335.

[3] George Gopen. "Rhyme and Reason: Why the Study of Poetry is the Best Preparation for the Study of Law", *College English*, 46 (4), April 1984, pp. 333-347.

to. On the other hand, poetry leads the learner to change his usual modes of communication and adopt a different rapport to language. With poetry, the learner has to mind meaningful repetitive sounds or images and ellipses. On this basis, teaching English poetry in a French speaking class may be viewed as a means to bring the students to accept the frustration of not being able to grasp everything in learning a foreign language. If we assume that poetry is a distorted language[4], how can we make it accessible to the learner? Furthermore, can learning a poetical text in an English course be helpful to the learner? Can poetry make the student become aware of the musical quality of the English language?

I.   The Study Context

The context of this study is a classroom in a secondary school in Bouaké. Located in the central region of Côte d'Ivoire, Bouaké is the second largest town of the country. The class level is "Terminale A." It is a class of thirty-six students; twenty-three males and thirteen females. The students form mixed groups and subsequently, the linguistic skills vary a lot. The majority of the students have a rather good level in English. However, most of them have much worry about grammar. Anyhow, all the students are motivated to increase their level. The English class is held by a young teacher who has accepted to grant us two hours for this three-month project out of the six hours per week inscribed on the time table.

To draw a parallel with the other languages taught to the students, we interviewed the French and Spanish teachers. According to them, the students are passive and timid during the French classes. Many of them do not dare to speak in front of their classmates, for either shyness or idleness. In Spanish, they give satisfaction to the teacher, though more effort is necessary. This comparison is made to apprehend the students' general attitude to languages. During the English courses, the students show more dynamism in the oral group sessions, answering questions spontaneously. But when it comes to the whole class, they show less enthusiasm. To correct this situation, the teacher calls them individually. The most challenging task is to make the students use solely English as a target language during the courses. They find it so difficult that they demand the translation of some unknown words instead of making do with the teacher's explanation in English or his mimic to help them understand the meanings. This is a good test because it allows the teacher to discover the

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[4] Our concern here is the didactic aspect. In fact, Cohen's works on *Structure du langage poétique* (1966) have concluded that poetry also uses language potentialities. So, "distorted language" refers to the way people conceive poetry as the common perception of poetry as a foreign language or a distant language. Although poetic language may seem disconcerting and violate syntax rules, it only draws its content from language resources.

students' resentment when he refuses to give them the translation in French. This experience shows that generally, most of the students are reluctant to this "one-way spoken language" rule. Indeed, the students have established a kind of frictional rapport with foreign language. They cannot stand the questioning and incomprehension stage prior to any language learning. It is striking that learners are always impatient and prefer quick understanding. So they feel frustrated when they do not have access to immediate intelligibility. Else, despite the fact that they have been learning English since the "class of 6$^{\text{ème}}$," they have the impression of not being equipped enough with the vocabulary they need to express themselves. The problem, then, boils down to this: as teachers, it is our responsibility to offer the students the opportunity to overcome this negative attitude toward language. For, language as well as poetry is a lifetime skill essential for them to learn. To involve the students in this process, some methodological approaches are important.

II.   Methodological Approaches

As far as the methodological approaches are concerned, our proposition will take into account two aspects: the pragmatic and the cognitive approaches. Far from being contradictory as they may appear, both approaches are complementary. The pragmatic approach refers to the notion of "practice" and the cognitive reveals the "thought" aspect. In fact, the general objective of the project is to infuse intellectual vividness into the students. It is known that "practice makes perfect," i.e. we learn more and better by practising. The experimentation phase alone cannot help integrate knowledge. It is necessary then to come back to the cognitive operation at stake in the exercise in order to apprehend the related notion and be able to memorise it. As for the binomial teaching and poetry, the first point to note is that the students should be confronted with a poem. Secondly, they should be put in a situation of a poem exploration by the means of targeted researches, and finally, they should be given the opportunity to react on written or oral poetry. In any case, the following three questions must be elucidated. First, which skill[5] better copes with the language exercise through the use of poetical aids? Secondly, what kind of attractive activity can be put at stake to have the learners take an active part in the production of English language? Finally, how far can the contact with poetry help the students better apprehend English language?[6]

III.   The Part of Poetry in Language Learning

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[5] We understand skill here as the linguistic savoir-faire, oral and written comprehension or expression.
[6] It may seem complex to answer this question definitely as this aspect may be dealt with in the long term.

The choice of poetry partakes in the above frictional rapport in language learning. In other words, the linguistic objective here is to have the learner improve his relationship with foreign language through poetical exploration and imagination. From this experience, poetry appears as a means to view language not only as a simple communication tool, but also in a different way. This new rapport with language through poetry is to revive a great love for language learning. In short, the introduction of poetry into the English class aims at having the students prefer more the language learning. It should also help the students leave the feeling of frustration in case they cannot express themselves at ease. Moreover, the study of poetry should prepare the learner to accept the part of unintelligibility of language learning. Thus, the question of the effective confrontation with the text is to be raised. How far can the learner be permitted to have personal relation with the text, which is, by the way, an appropriate element leading to the questioning and listening units? In fact, the reading unit brings together face to face, the reader and the text. This is qualified by Laurent Jenny as a risky solitary confrontation[7]. Hence, it is important for the learners to tackle the text, not only individually, but also collectively. It is also a good opportunity for the teacher to elude a univocal and fixed explanation of text and propose a framework of text reading. This collective reading can then allow the learners to shift from the oral session to a written collective report. Else, as far as the teacher is concerned, there is another question about the choice between written aid and language teaching. In fact, what first may worry the teacher is to choose between poetry motivation and language motivation through poetry. Nevertheless, is the question worth being raised as far as both seem interwoven? We can therefore put forward that poetry should not only be implemented in order to study a notion or an aspect of English language. To re-establish the facts, it is necessary to wonder whether it is possible to "comment a poetical text" without betraying its inexpressibility or not.

Even, more than these paradoxes, it is important to point out that the class time constraints may lead us to select some priorities. It may be noted that the common objective of an English lesson is to reinforce the students' linguistic skills. The fact remains that it isn't worth studying a poem only on the basis of its literary aspects or its cultural impact. Finally, the elected priority is the literary approach. We shall come back to the question of literary approach later, but let us point out at this stage that this approach should be put within the

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[7] Laurent Jenny, «Ecrire à l'école: jeux et enjeux» in *Aimer/enseigner la poésie*, Association française des enseignants de français (A.F.E.F.), 1990, p.20.

students' capability while poetry is integrated in their comprehension field. In the same way, some activities such as literary representations and locations, the floor taking and poetry writing are at stake. In doing so, we intend to solicit all the skills in written or oral session, comprehension and expression. In short, we expect that teachers as well as learners should "play the game of an English course according to the rules".

Let us now examine what is understood by "literary approach". Without dwelling on the details, we note however, that it is not easy to agree upon a definition of poetry and the way of reading it. Indeed, after discovering the extremes of the historical and biographical and contextual criticism, after noting the errors of the structural analyses which consider a text only under its formal aspect, we must now question if it is advisable to distinguish the content and form of a poetical text. It seems obvious that both take part in the construction of the meaning. Therefore, both are useful and this double dimension is essential. This also is Maria Laudano's point of view:

> It is also believed that teachers should read and discuss students'
> work letting language study grow naturally out of their work.
> Encourage and praise and remember that what's important is the
> quality of writing not the quantity of errors.[8]

We are of the opinion that these are the common textual processes at the disposal of the teacher. He should first apprehend the poetical text himself and try his own comment and check his personal "listening." Then, he should always link content and form. To be sure of reaching his objectives, the teacher will organise questioning and listening sessions in class.

IV. Practical Sessions Outline

The objective drawn from the sessions is double. On the one hand, to help the learners apprehend appropriately the concept of poem, we decide to give concrete answers to their positive questionings on poetry. With this end in view, a more objective means such as the questionnaire[9] is proposed to them. Filling in the questionnaire puts them in an advantageous situation of a written comprehension exercise which consists in answering questions. On the other hand, we think that having the French speaking learners catch some

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[8] Maria DiPalma Laudano. *Teaching Poetry in New Formats: To Intermediate Grade Students*. New York: Sacred Heart University, 1981, p. 7.
[9] A sample of a questionnaire sheet is on an annex page.

English poetic rules is enriching. To achieve this, it is necessary to put in parallel English poetry and French poetry. In fact, we teach them that French poetry insists much on the syllabic stress and uses rhymes at most. On the contrary, English poetry puts emphasis on accents and alliterations. The specificity of English poetry should be asserted to permit the learners to clearly identify the difference, mainly, as far as the prosodic aspect of the poem is concerned. When most of the learners are invited to compare poetry and music, they don't see any similarity because they find poetry boring. For them, "poetry is not the same as music because music uses a lot of instruments whereas poetry only uses language". Considering this fact, their opinion should be adjusted. It is necessary to precise to them that poetry also uses instruments variously according to the type of poem, the theme, the period, and the language. From the stylistic comparison, it is distinctly stated that language being a system of representations and cultural signs, the study of an English poem is not similar to the study of a French poem. We thus note that practicability is necessarily required in our experimentation. So, transparent plastic sheets (see the table below) are used to reveal the particularities of French poetry and English poetry while the students are requested to voice out the English verses. The French poetry is characterized by the use of alexandrine verses and syllables. The English poetry's characteristics are the accents and the musical patterns. This is a practical example with the slogan used in a milk advertisement: "Drinka pinta milka day" (that is to say metrically: / x / x / x /), which is ordinarily read as "Drink a pint of milk a day". Here, it is important to specify accented and non-accented syllables. In the above verse, we can notice four accents or four feet. The teacher might take the opportunity to recall some stylistic phrases common to both languages. More practically, the below comparative table details the differences between French poetry and English poetry as far as the poetic form is concerned:

POETIC FORM

	French Poetry	English Poetry
Meter/Prosody	Syllabic	Accentual
Foot	One syllable	One stressed syllable A unit of (usually) two or three syllables that contains one strong stress.
Notation		Stressed (/) and unstressed (x)
Example:	Les fleurs du mal: 4 syllables > 4 feet	Leaves of Grass : / x / 2 stresses> 2 feet
Most common foot		Iamb/iambic foot x /

used		
Widespread metrical scheme	Alexandrine	Iambic pentameter/blank verse x / x / x / x / x /
Example :	Baudelaire «Le poète est semblable au prince des nuées»	Shakespeare "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." x / x / x / x / x /
		"To be or not to be: that is the question" x / x / x / Ë / x x /x
Poetic devices	Enjambement Rime: plate/croisée Allitération/assonance Parallélisme Anaphore Métaphore/comparaison Métonymie/synecdoque	Enjambment/run-on-line Rhyme : couplet rhymes/alternate rhymes Alliteration/assonance Parallelism Anaphora Metaphor/simile Metonymy/synecdoche

While French poetry was influenced by Latin verse and its syllabic meter, English poetry was influenced by Saxon language and its accentual rhythm; that's why it mostly uses accentual meter. One foot corresponds to one syllable in French while in English it often consists of one stressed syllable. The examples of the French poem: "Les fleurs du mal" and the English poem: "Leaves of Grass" are given to concretely show the different poetic forms. The four syllables of the French phrase are considered to be four feet, whereas from the three syllables of the English phrase, only the two stressed are taken into account as feet. Moreover, the iambic foot is the most commonly used foot in English poetry since it corresponds to the rhythm of ordinary speech while the alexandrine is privileged in French poetry as shown in the verses of Baudelaire and Shakespeare. Finally, it is to be noted that the poetic devices are common in the poetry of both languages.

Before giving out the questionnaires to the students, the study of a poem is proposed. The poem studied here is entitled "Peace 1986"[10] by Desmond Egan. This study aims at sharpening the students' perception of English poetry and getting them ready to fill in the document. They are encouraged to ask as many questions as possible on some points in the poem which may not have been well understood. Good students ask questions on more technical vocabulary aspects of the English poetry referring to such words as "stanzas", "rhythm" and "rhyme". Less skilled students also vividly participate in this activity. They

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[10] The whole poem can be read in the annex part. Desmond Egan wrote this poem in 1986, one year after the Hillsborough agreement. It was a major event and brought new hope for peace and yet violence did not stop. On the contrary, it intensified. The poet does not take sides but contrasts the fragility of peace with overwhelming fits of violence.

enjoy asking questions on the meaning of some phrases, poetic devices, figures of style, and the theme of the poem. The following table summarises the study process. It mainly retraces the basic patterns such as the form, the structure, the rhythm, the figures of style, and the theme of a poem:

Synoptic analysis of "Peace 1986"

Form Metrical pattern?	- poem with no regular metrical pattern - unrhymed poem
Rhyme scheme?	- Free verse
Structure Stanzas	- 10 stanzas of varying length
Parts	- 2 parts: • In the first part: the phrase "just that" repeated several times • In the second part: each line begins with "too many". It's an anaphora
Rhythm Music?	- Musical quality; a rhythm can be heard - In the first part: short lines with many enjambments which make the rhythm flow - In the second part: juxtaposed clauses which create an effect of accumulation
Other poetic devices Echoes	Use of repetitions and echoes such as alliteration, assonance - Assonance and soft consonants such as /l/ or /b/ in the first part - Clusters (group of consonants, sometimes difficult to pronounce or forcing the reader to articulate) in the second part.
Impressions	- In the first part: the use of soft sounds reinforces the impression of peace - In the second part: the use of harsh sounds gives impression of violence, aggressiveness.
Imagery Personification	- "*Whisper of peace*": the "trees" stand for human beings who whisper words of peace.
Metaphor	- "*The bread of words*": the bread that is shared during a meal stands for words that are exchanged in a conversation.
Symbol	- "*A gate*", "*A window*": here, the gate and the window are symbols for new hope.
Synecdoque	- "*Starving eyes*": the eyes stand for the children.
Form > *thought*	
Impact of Imagery?	- The network of images contributes to capture in a vivid way the opposition between peace and war.
Theme? What is implicitly	- "Just that" emphasizes how modest and unpretentious the need for peace is.

said?	- "Too many" emphasizes how outraging or unacceptable war is.
Conclusion	- The simplicity, quietness and harmony of peace is brought into contrast with the disruptive and noisy violence of war. - The poet contrasts the fragility of peace with the overwhelming violence not only in Northern Ireland but also in the whole world.

From the table above, we outline that "Peace 1986" is a free verse poem since it has not a regular metrical pattern and is unrhymed. Yet, it has a musical quality and we can hear a rhythm. It also makes use of repetitions and echoes such as alliteration and assonance. The poem is structured in ten stanzas of varied length and is globally divided in two parts. We can find within, figures of style such as symbol, personification, and metaphor. The thematic view of the poem expresses the contrast between the fragility of peace and the overwhelming violence in Northern Ireland. The poem not only focuses on Ireland but is a universal call for more peace.

Groups are created and granted twenty minutes for reading the questionnaire in order to better understand what is demanded and choose the most appropriate answers. In fact, the questionnaire is based on five main points which are: the definitions of poetry and a poem, the important themes of a poem, their feelings when reading a poem, and how to write a poem. They are allowed to tick off several answers.

The results of the questionnaire are of many kinds. First, the general definition of poetry given by almost half of the students is "an imaginative and inspiring way of perceiving the world". For ten students, poetry is "interplay of language", whereas eight of them don't feel concerned with poetry. Secondly, as far as the theme is concerned, satire is preferred by twelve students and nine have a yen for courtly poetry. Eight students choose narrative poetry and six would rather deal with lyric. Only four learners opt for nature poetry. Thirdly, the students' views of a poem are diverse. Ten define it as "a rhymed text organised in stanzas and having a regular rhythm". Contrary to them, eight students affirm that a poem is not necessarily rhymed. Most of the students consider that a poem is written in a more refined language. Ten students think that a poem may be an opening window to a new universe. For three students, a poem is a useless matter. However, three others consider it as a kind of foreign language. Fourthly, the students have different impressions when reading a poem. Nine are filled with emotion, seven are indifferent and six feel bored. The message is what nine students pay very close attention to, whereas the most important aspect of a poem is the

image for nine of them. Seven learners are troubled by the mysterious facet of the poem they read and only four enjoy the musicality of the verses. Finally, if the students were to write a poem, seventeen of them think that they'd better listen to their heart. Nineteen propose observing the world around. Six think that to write a poem requires taking inspiration from their own experience.

The second phase of the sessions consists of implementing the comparison between the specific phonetic patterns of the English poetry and the French poetry. The study of an English poem entitled "Tyger"[11] by William Blake is given to the students as an exercise. This precise pedagogic activity should be led in successive steps.

First of all, it should not be forgotten that the study of the previous poem entitled "Peace 1986" aimed at developing the comprehension skills in the students. But what the teacher should focus his attention on is that a poetical text is essentially a network of sounds which jostle together. Jacobson shares the same opinion when he argues that "the particularity of poetry is to build a meaning in the light of the similarity or dissimilarity of the sounds"[12]. The issue at stake here is that the teacher should take into account this reality and give the learners some landmarks in the study of English poetry and define the parameters of what may seem to them as a jumble of meaningless words reeled off in verses.

Then, one of the most striking features in the teaching of English poetry in a French speaking class should be the reading aloud. In fact, many teachers think that one of the efficient ways of revealing the demarcation between English poetry and French poetry resides in the sound. This is why, beyond any rational text study, reading aloud appears as a means to teach the students how to hear and feel the rhythm, the melody and the words jostling together. This experience is particularly successful, mainly when the teacher or a student, in their reading, dramatise the poem at most, emphasizing the echoes, making the vowels and labials slip, using a confident tone and making the text alive. The upshot of all this is that, judging by the quietness in the classroom at that moment, the students are captivated and interested. More specifically, the study of another poem entitled "Tyger" by William Blake permits us to be aware of the importance of the sound in English poetry compared with French poetry. The first stage is the reading aloud by two or three students. Then, in groups,

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[11] The whole poem can be read in the annex part. This particular spelling is chosen by the author on purpose. What is at stake here is more the phonetic spelling than the written form.
[12] Roman Jacobson. 'Linguistics and Poetics', in *Style in Language*, ed. T. Sebeok, Cambridge: MIT press, 1960.

the students are asked to itemise the accented and non accented syllables. This process makes it easy to distinguish accents, rimes and repetitions such as /ai/ in the words "tyger", "bright", and "night". Some students also notice the repetitions of the sounds /t/ in the same words. From these answers, we draw parallel between the English `plosives´ which are supposed to explode and some French consonant sounds such as /p/ which are not `plosives´ (for example, the words "poète" and "prince" in Baudelaire's verse in the first table). Brief, in both languages, the words "tiger" and "tigre" embody this sound difference.

Drawing up an assessment of the sessions on the sounds, we can affirm that the pedagogical process is not so easy. First, the teacher should move from a written document to a voicing production. Words should be indented and grouped in units. In such a way, the opportunity is given to the students to make out the phonemes which seem identical. Let's point out that this pedagogical process of language learning is seldom. There's a tendency for teachers to insist on the simple pronunciation of a word as a whole, arguing that learning a foreign language is assimilating pronunciation as well as meaning construction. We think that the chief feature of language learning should be to couple voicing form and written form. For example, a student may confuse the pronunciation of "there" and "here" because in the written form they seem alike. But the oral form should differentiate them and provide the correct pronunciation. To recap, we venture to suggest that in the pedagogical activity on the sound, there is no interest for the students to be taught pure phonetic aspects because they cannot have any appropriate clues in this process. The application of phonemes is primordial as it helps in the meaning construction. For instance, the distinction between /m/ and /n/ brings about the difference between "mice" and "nice". Paradoxically, the fact for a student to search *similar* pairs of words in an English poetical text may help him sharpen his perception of different sounds he used to confuse; either because they don't exist in his mother tongue or they are not real distinct pairs. In this case, they are not considered to be phonemes. For his ears – mainly when it is a question of interchanging written form and acoustic feature – both sounds seem alike whereas a native English man will find them determining in the meaning construction. We would like to take a more practical situation in the classroom. During one of our sessions, we discovered that it was not easy for the students to make a distinction in the pronunciation of /i/ and /i:/. They used to associate "deep", "trees", and "whisper". We justify their problem by the fact that contrary to English, in French there are not various pronunciations of /i/. In English, the difference is prominent and concerns both the duration of

the sound and the quality of the word. For example, "dip" (tremper) is different from "deep" (profond). In the first case, /i/ is closed whereas in the second, /i:/ is open. Where the French language perceives only one sound, the English discerns two.

It is significant that the appropriateness of a poetical text is essential. For example, when the teacher helps the learners underline the two distinct parts of "Peace 1986" through the repetitions of grammatical structures such as "just that" and "too many", he provides them, by the way, a framework enforcing repetition as one of the major figures of poetry. Globally, the sound functions as an articulation between the form and the heart of a poetical text. In the process of the study of the poem, the students are invited to give their general impression on the first and the second parts simply from their perception of the repetitions of some phrases. They find the first part as soft as peace because of the hissing, the palate-alveolar fricative and the labial sounds produced by the repetitions. On the contrary, the second part gives an impression of aggressiveness because of the clusters such as /skr/ or /gdj/, and harsh consonantal sounds such as /k/ or /g/. To sum up, the pedagogical message that needs to be spread should be: "In the end, poetry is not so difficult; we need only to find out the repeating elements".

If it is undeniably true that the sound appears as a major figure of poetry, the imagery also is not to be neglected, though it plays a minor role in language distortion. The images are related to the semantic field of the poem. On this basis, some questions are put to the students: "What are the images that the poet associates with peace in the first part and war in the second part of the poem?" How are these images organised into a hierarchy? The answers of the students are transcribed under the form of a diagram reproduced here:
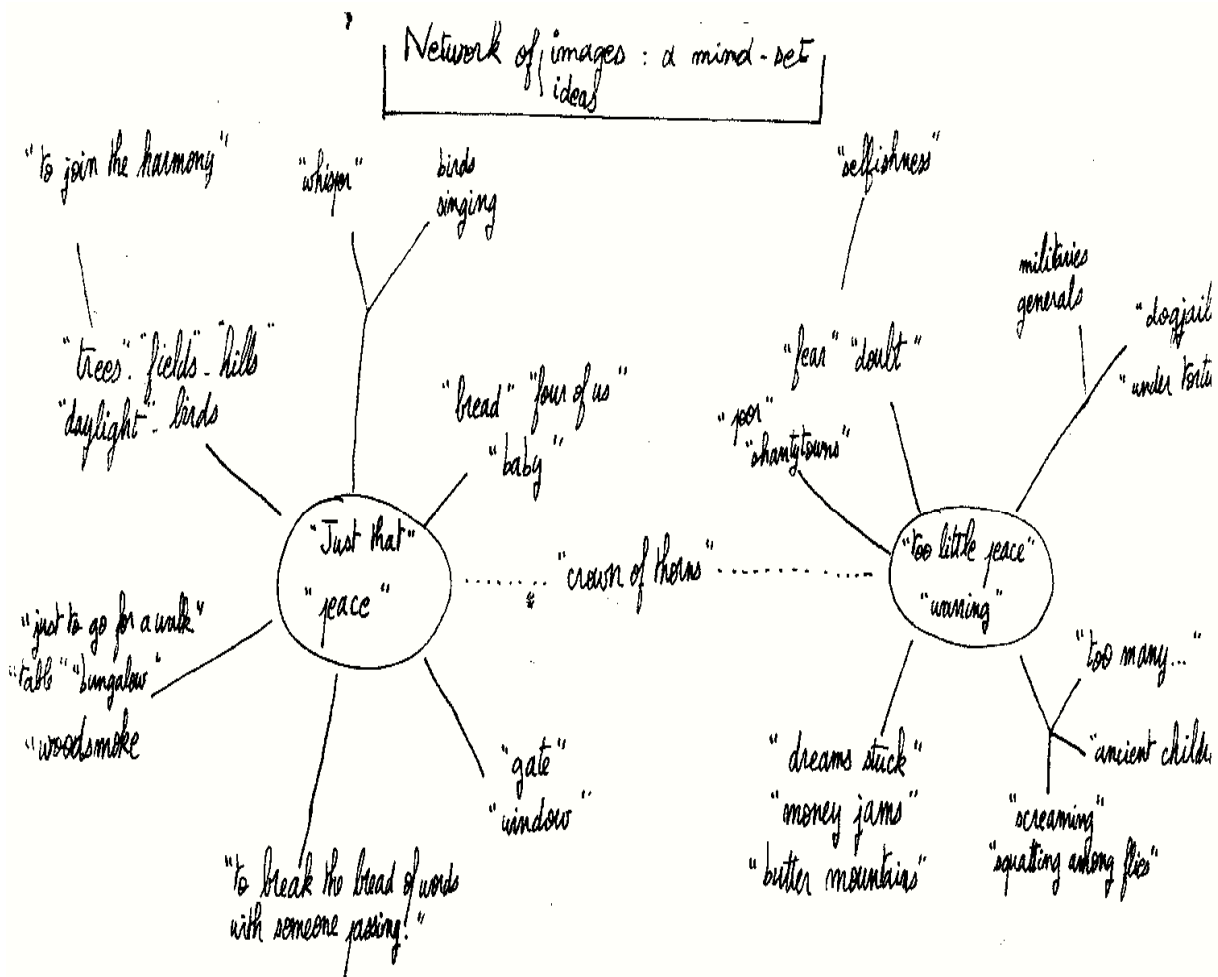
In the diagram there are two central circles. One contains mainly the word "peace" and the other discloses an atmosphere of war. Around them, there are various expressions or words which are linked to them. The main challenge for the students is to find out the key ideas or the dominant image corresponding to these expressions. To easy their task, the teacher gives an example which is that of the semantic field of nature leading to the notion of harmony. It's worth mentioning here that the complexity of this exercise requires more participation of the teacher. In fact, although the students delimit quite well the work stakes, it is difficult for them, for example, to establish a similarity of the references between the following expression and words: "just to go for a walk", "table", "bungalow" and "woodsmoke". With the help of the teacher, they finally find out that these phrases refer to a simple and humble life without any pretentions or to a peaceful home. This is the same process for the second part of the poem where the notions of violence, oppression, and misery are perceptible.

Certainly, the complexity of the image study is a commonplace because the choice of the dominant notions and the organisation of a hierarchy in the semantic fields are subjective and may vary from a teacher to another. However, this is precisely one of the conditions of poetry study. At a certain moment, it is necessary to take out some options and propose an interpretation though it might not be satisfactory or omit many basic elements.

V.   Sessions Assessment

We can acknowledge from the above sessions, some insufficiencies and acquisitions in our class experimentation. On the one hand, two main weaknesses can be noticed. First, during the class sessions, the oral production was insufficient because the students were not granted more opportunity to speak. They were put in a phase of comprehension and apprehension so that they couldn't react efficiently. We presume that this relative passivity is due to the way the poems have been introduced. The teacher, we confess, should have allowed the learners a larger floor for self-expression regarding the theme, the images and sound effects of the poems and their impression. For example, he should allow several students to read the same poem so as to let the others experiment different reading tones and dramatisation techniques. These initiatives may afford the students the poem appropriateness orally as well as visually. This process may also grant time to the students to well prepare their reading before taking the floor in front of their fellows. Of course, there is a risk in this option if the meaning construction is fixed by a paraphrase, giving room for the

traditional meaning elucidation. To prevent this, an acceptable solution should be to invite the students to propose various interpretations. In this way, the text is kept open and not reduced to a gloss. Otherwise, all the work for poetic perception and signification through repetitions may be sapped. Ultimately, the poetic text loses its grounds for existence and becomes a simple instrument for English courses. Secondly, this work is characterised by its punctual aspect. This three-month project turned out to be inadequate for such a huge experimentation. In other words, to reach better conclusive results, it is necessary to perform more sessions in which a larger selection of poems may be proposed to the students. Obviously, one may think, two poems are far from being satisfactory to infuse in the students' mind the notion of Anglo-Saxon poetry so as to give them the ability to compare, evaluate and show preference to a poem or another. In addition, more sessions may permit to teach to the students' supplementary activities such as speech production, various reading facets, rhythm and verse sequences, pauses and speeding-up.

On the other hand, we can draw some positive lectures from this experimentation. Concerning language and motivation, the most profitable activity – whose impact may be weighed up immediately – was the fact that the students have been given abilities to detect identical sounds in a poem. In this session, the learners have really invested themselves and brought into play the language by bringing up to date phonetic differences important for meaning construction. The second remarkable acquisition is that the linguistic interest seemed evident in this phase of teaching English poetry to French speaking students. In actual fact, insisting on the repetition of structures is a way of fixing these structures in the learners' mind. Repetition is an essential method of learning. The students have been taught to tackle English language in a new light and examine its potentialities in an original style. Many students have come across a new "expression" through the interpretation and the comprehension of images. On balance, we observed, as the sessions and questionings were taking place, that the impact of poetry on English is either linguistic or indirect and underground. The linguistic aspect is immediately visible through the repetition of sounds and structures. The underground feature is not easily perceptible. For, it is difficult to determine how far the rapport of the students to the English language has changed. In a nutshell, we can derive from this experimentation that a new experience may lead the students to accept the part of incomprehensibility of language learning. Thus, the lesson to be drawn is that a radical change from the traditional attitude to a modern vision of language learning through poetry is

not to be expected. A foreign language acquisition is a continued sequence with sometimes obstacles, questionings and hesitations. It is also a permanent discovery and subject to gigantic steps forward.

Conclusion

Teaching an English poem to French speaking students is not as pretentious as we may think. To sensitize the students to language distortion, codes of both languages such as the metrical, syllabic or accentual aspects, the importance of rhymes or alliterations have been compared. The poem has been the springboard for the teacher to draw the learners' attention on the phonic feature of language which differs from the traditional semantic study of poetry. Concerning the meaning construction, we shifted from the formal appearance to the effect obtained and we proposed the teaching of a network of images to show that a poem is not inscribed in linear, logical and argumentative trends but can lean on bundles of pictures and games of contrasts.

However, a more questionable aspect of this experimentation was that the setting up of devices intended to imply the students in a full self-expression. Unfortunately, in the survey of the poems, certain phases of reading aloud which could have permitted a better implication of the students lacked. Some questions on how to help the learners appropriate the poem orally and apprehend more efficiently the "powers of language" remain still unanswered. But this study is just a start and a future and further survey is necessary to fully work out the teaching of English poetry to French speaking students. Among the propositions to consider, there is Yve Bonnefoy's view, which invites us to revert from time to time to the learning of a poem by heart: "L'apprentissage par cœur d'un poème permet une intimité qui lui [...] permettra la compréhension [des poèmes] à des plans bien plus nombreux et surtout profonds que ceux que la critique analytique visite".[13] Whatever the case, to develop, vary and adapt this practice to different levels and class types is imperative because this experience appeared to be fruitful. In spite of the contradictions that can be noted, it really permits to change the approach of the students in relation to the English language. What is important for the teacher is to mind himself language distortion and accept not to catch all the aspects of a

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[13] Yves Bonnefoy, «Remarques sur l'enseignement de la poésie au lycée» in *Articuler les savoirs. L'enseignement de la poésie* CNDP, MEN de la Recherche et de la Technologie, Paris, p. 57-76.

text. Every poem is unique and calls a different treatment and a different sensitization. The stake of such a work is to facilitate the access to the poem known as a "treasure of meaning."

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ANNEX 2

The Tyger

TYGER tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Blake. 1757–1827

PEACE 1986

For Seàn MacBride

just to go for a walk out the road
just that
under the deep trees
which whisper of peace

to break the bread of words
with someone passing
just that
four of us round a pram
and baby fingers asleep

just to join the harmony
the fields the blue everyday hills
the puddles of daylight and

you might hear a pheasant
echo through the woods
or plover may waver by
as the evening poises with a blackbird
on its table of hedge
just that
and here and there a gate
a bungalow's bright window
the smell of woodsmoke of lives

just that!

but sweet Christ that
is more than most of mankind can afford
with the globe still plaited in its own crown of thorns

too many starving eyes
too many ancient children
squatting among flies
too many stockpiles of fear
too many dog jails too many generals
too many under torture by the impotent
screaming into the air we breathte

too many dreams stuck in money jams
too many butter mountains of selfishness
too many poor drowning in the streets
too many shantytowns on the outskirts of life

too many of us not sure what we want
so that we try to feed a habit for everything
until the ego puppets the militaries
mirror our own warring face

too little peace

Desmond Egan, *Poems for peace*, 1986