



Practice of Free Verse in Poetry: A Systematic Review of Form, Rhythm, Lineation, Reader Response, and Contemporary Use

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Abstract

Introduction: The free verse form of poetry is commonly used today but is often described in very basic terms, like poetry without rhyme and meter. New research suggests that this is not a formless style of poetry and that structure is created by poets using line breaks, rhythm, syntax, repetition, spacing, sound, visual design, and semantic development.

Objectives: To review recent literature on the conception of free verse and identify the key formal, cognitive, cultural, and practical aspects associated with its writing and reading.

Methods: Systematic searching was performed for studies on free verse, vers libre, unmetered poetry, lineation, rhythm, and other poetic practices. Priorities were set to include peer-reviewed studies published in 2021-2026 with DOI numbers. Studies before this period were included as well in order to give a historical perspective to the topic. Selected studies were analyzed thematically in terms of their contribution to the practice, structure, reading, translating and development of free verse.

Results: Five dimensions of free verse were identified as flexible rhythm, meaningful lineation, visual/typographic organization, balance of freedom and constraints, and cultural/contextual adaptation. The literature reveals that readers also react to visual and



auditory cues. Free verse promotes documentary, political, ecological and identity-oriented expression.

Conclusion: The notion of free verse should be considered an open form, not a formless one. Its practice includes deliberate pattern making with sound, breath, syntax, line length, silence, repetition, imagery, and page design.

Novelty: This review synthesizes findings of recent formal, cognitive, reader-response, translation, cross-cultural, and postcolonial research in order to formulate an integrated approach to writing, teaching, and analyzing free verse.

Keywords: lineation; open form; poetic rhythm; prosody; poetic practice

Introduction

Today free verse is a primary form of modern and contemporary poetry. It occurs in literary periodicals, books, classes, poetry slams, digital space, translation, and public writing. But the definition of free verse remains a challenge. According to a simplistic definition, free verse does not have a set rhyme and meter. Indeed, it is helpful. However, this definition fails. When the concept of free verse is reduced to the rejection of rules, it seems an easy form where the writer can freely put words on a page without making any formal decisions. The review of research presented above demonstrates the opposite – free verse usually transfers the responsibility for formal organization from metrical rules and rhyme to others.

The history of free verse in the modern era can be associated with different literary movements and languages: French *vers libre*, American experiments by Walt Whitman, English modernism, Imagism, and postwar developments of poetry are its examples. Nevertheless, recent research urges not to consider this history as an unambiguous progress toward liberation. For instance, Kappeler (2020) claims that the historical concept of free verse had also to do with cultural power relations and the representation of indigenous oral literature. Therefore, the history of free verse cannot be reduced to the history of artistic freedom alone.

Secondly, the issue is about rhythm. The poets of traditional poetry usually provide readers with an apparent pattern using meter, rhyme, stanza, feet and so on. Free verse does not usually have a stable pattern like that. It does not mean that it lacks rhythm. Crone (2023) and Lilja (2024) in their recent papers prove that rhythm plays an important role in free verse and that it might function at different levels. It can be built through stresses, syntax, repetitions, pauses, sound clusters, length of lines, semantics groupings, and reader's bodily reactions.

Thirdly, the problem is about lineation. In free verse, the line break becomes one of the key formal decisions made by the poet. The sentence can be written as a prose text, but once divided into lines, it gets a completely different attention of the reader. According to Pinder (2022), lineation can direct the interpretation of the poem, drawing attention to certain textual aspects. Tartakovsky (2022) proves that lineation can also produce some ethical and aesthetic effects in documentary poetry based on the prose testimony. All these papers demonstrate that line is not just a graphic element. It becomes a semiotic one.



Also, the page of the poem matters. In her recent paper, Sadowski ([2022](#)) examines the free verse as a graphic text, proving that translation alters its visual structure. Pietras ([2024](#)) approaches the same topic treating the graphic organization of the texts on the borders of free verse and prose as written prosody. In this way, the poet creates not only texts but also spaces. A line break can bring silence, a blank space can bring distance, an unusual indentation can alter the tempo or the direction of reading.

Moreover, free verse is not only the product of the Western tradition. The recent research on Balochi poetry shows how it was involved in the process of the modern literary development and became a means for achieving the new thematic and aesthetic goals ([Ullah & Gul, 2024](#)). The study of contemporary American and Ukrainian readers reveals how their cultural knowledge and textual context affect the interpretation of free verse ([Kulchytska & Malyshivska, 2022](#)). Moreover, research on Arabic, Malay, Russian, Chuvash, and South Asian poetry proves that the notion of free verse undergoes changes while entering new literary traditions. In this way, free verse should not be considered as one uniform form adopted from the West.

The current review deals with the practice of free verse in poetry. Practice, in this case, refers to the concrete formal decisions through which poets compose, organize, revise, translate, perform, and communicate the free-verse poems.

The problem is of great importance, as many students and beginners in writing get the wrong understanding of what free verse is: that it is a poem consisting of lines that are broken up. Such an understanding can make one forget about the techniques used in free verse writing. A systematic review can provide us with better knowledge about the nature of this type of poetry.

Research Objective

The major aim of this systematic review is the synthesis of recent research regarding the practice of free verse writing in poetry.

The specific objectives are:

- To identify the major formal practices used to create structure in free verse.
- To study the importance of rhythm, lineation, syntax, repetition, and visual design in free verse writing.
- To review evidence about how readers perceive and interpret contemporary free verse.
- To investigate the evolution of free verse in different languages, cultures, translation, and theme.
- To develop practical implications for the writing and teaching of free verse.

Review of Literature

Free verse as an open form of writing rather than a formless one

Thus, the most recurrent thesis in the literature review is that free verse must be recognized as open form but not the formless one. The distinction is fundamental to the problem at issue. A fixed form allows the poet to rely on a set of pre-established expectations. A sonnet, for



instance, implies a familiar structure before any writing process. Free verse lacks such an exterior structure. Therefore, a local framework needs to be constructed within the poem.

Kappeler (2020) challenges the typical modernist perspective with the historical and political nature of free verse. The author's analysis of Mary Austin reveals the connection between the formal aspect and the representation of the Native American oral culture. It is vital to recognize that form could be free yet influenced by historical concepts of time, culture, and power. Thus, the practice of free verse must be examined from the viewpoint of the writer, poetic tradition, and cultural assumptions related to the form.

Wazzan (2022), in his analysis of Robert Frost's famous criticism of free verse, demonstrates that the opposition between freedom and form is not straightforward. In this way, the controversy about the Frost metaphor helps to pose the practical question: if the net of a regular meter is taken off, then how is the poem controlled? Based on the reviewed literature, the answer to this question is not in the lack of control. The control shifts towards other formal devices like rhythm, syntax, sound, lineation, imagery, and repetition.

This is precisely the point Auer (2025) makes in his paper on vers libre and Anglo-American modernism. In this work, it is argued that the choice of free verse by the modernists did not mean giving up on meter. Rather, it was used as an opportunity to introduce new rhythmic and metrical features. The finding is crucial for practice since it means that free verse writers can also make use of metric elements, stressed patterns, echoes, and recurring rhythmic units. The freedom from a regular meter does not imply the freedom from rhythm.

Rhythm as the hidden structure of free verse

Rhythm is another strong theme in the literature. Crone (2023) claims that the free verse rhythm is not to be identified with the prose one. The analysis of poetic versus non-poetic texts indicates that poetic free verse can generate rich informational and context-dependent rhythmical systems. That means that the lack of any metrical system in the poem is not equal to the lack of rhythm in it.

Lilja (2024) elaborates a cognitive theory of free verse. In her study, the author explains the rhythmical structure of poetry in terms of the mechanisms of repetition, caesura, pulse, lineation, and hierarchical temporal structuring. Importantly, readers perceive rhythm not as a mathematical formula. Rather, they perceive rhythm by paying attention, remembering, hearing, and time-perceiving. The line can become a short-term perceptual unit while the longer-term units can be based on the longer semantic structures.

Such study alters the approach to revision of a free-verse poem which a poet should take. Instead of the question about whether the length of lines is equal or not, the poet can ask: where does the reader breathe? where does the voice accelerate? where does it pause? what words are stressed? how do certain sounds come back? does the following line confirm the rhythm of the previous one?

That means that there are many possibilities for employing different types of rhythmical structures in free verse. They include natural prosody, pauses, repetition of syntactical structures, consonance, assonance, anaphora, changes in line length, recurrence of stresses, and



semantic rhythm. A poem can shift from short lines to long lines and from a smooth sentence to its fragmented version.

Lineation and the power of the line break

The other defining feature of free verse is lineation, and it is also one of the most interesting practices of the genre. According to Pinder (2022), lineation in non-metrical free verse can be used to facilitate the process of inference in reading. A lineation can highlight a word, postpone a phrase, create ambiguity or create a pause. Thus, lineation in free verse is not merely a form but rather a compositional element.

One particular illustration is the work of Tartakovsky (2022) concerning Charles Reznikoff's Holocaust. Reznikoff was able to create the work that was poetic enough and had clear lineation. However, at the same time, the lineation helped to avoid too lyrical or emotional tone and made his work ethical because lineation determined the degree of intervention of the poet between the source material and the reader.

When writing a free verse, it is important for the writer not to limit oneself with breaking lines according to the page size. Different options should be considered. A line can end with a noun, a verb, an adjective, an article, a preposition or a punctuation mark. Different types of lineation emphasize different words. Breaking the expected continuity of the phrase creates suspense. Breaking the phrase after its actual end creates closure.

Lineation is also related to another feature of free verse - enjambment. Enjambment refers to continuing a sentence or a phrase after the line break. Free verse can use enjambment to create dynamism and surprises for the reader and end-stop lines to create stability. The decision about the type of enjambment depends on whether there should be continuity or interruption of the reader.

Visual form, typography, and space

In addition, free verse has a strong connection with the visual page. According to Sadowski (2022), free verse is a graphic text in which the disposition of signs on the page is an inseparable part of versification. It becomes particularly important in translation when the translator retains the wording but changes spacing, line breaks or disposition. A translation may thus alter the form meaning of the poem even though the dictionary meaning will be preserved.

Following this discussion, Pietras (2024) describes the phenomenon of written prosody in texts between free verse and prose. The research proves that the page may lead the way of reading. The visual disposition of signs can produce continuity, interruptions, directions, and various levels of graphic density. This proves that the material of a poet is not just the language itself but also its disposition.

The practical aspect is especially noticeable in contemporary poetry. Indentation, individual words, short and long lines, white spaces, stanzas, punctuation, and repetition of visual elements become the tool of a poet. However, one should note that visual experiments must not be purely decorative. Design must be related to sound, movement, meaning, or the way how attention is directed. Otherwise, it may spoil a poem.

Free Verse and Reader Response



A poem is never finished until it is read. In their experiment, Kulchytska and Malyshivska (2022) used American and Ukrainian readers and contemporary poems written in the form of free verse. Their research stresses the importance of intertextual, intratextual and infratextual context in interpretation. Poetry involves cultural background and expectations of the reader. Thus, the same poem in free verse may be interpreted differently by readers with different backgrounds.

Implications of this result are straightforward. The author cannot entirely control the interpretation, but it is possible to create enough internal structure to make it possible for the reader to construct a meaningful reading of a poem. Repetition, imagery, syntax, sound, and progression are some techniques that can contribute to the construction of such a structure. In the case of highly open poems, the need for such signs increases even more.

The reader's response can also account for why free verse is perceived to be hard to interpret by the reader expecting meter and rhyme and seeing only a lack of order. The reader trained to pay attention to the syntax, imagery, rhythm, lineation, and visual form will perceive another kind of structure. It is crucial to note how education can contribute to learning how to read such texts.

Cultural adaptation and multilingual practice

Free verse has never been confined to any single language. There are numerous adaptations of the form in various languages including French vers libre, the traditions of American and British modernism, Arabic, Japanese, Russian, Korean, Balochi, and numerous other traditions. Recent studies support a pluralistic perspective on this evolution.

Ullah and Gul (2024) analyze the development of free verse in Balochi literature paying much attention to the contribution of modern poets to the evolution of themes and aesthetics. Their research proves that free verse has been used as an expansion of what can be said in the language of Balochi poetry. This is not imitation.

In the book by Sofronova (2025) one explores the poetics of free verse in the work of Chuvash poet Stanislav Sadur. What is important about this research is that it contributes to the investigation of free verse outside the standard English-language canon. In addition to that, the study provides insights into the shaping of open forms through the influence of local literary tradition and the interaction between word, image, and sign.

The review found several studies linking free verse to Arabic and Malay literary development. Research comparing different literary systems indicates that the form may migrate from one system to another and receive new meanings along the way. For example, the concept of freedom is not always identical in all contexts. It can refer to modernity, political transformations, cultural rebirth, author's voice, or opposition to the established literary institutions.

For a writer, what this implies is that the use of free verse does not necessarily mean replicating line breaks of English-language poetry masters. One needs to explore the interaction between free verse and rhythm, syntax, sound system, oral tradition, and literary history of their native language.



Free verse, translation, and movement between forms

In the process of translation, the form becomes particularly challenging because of its dependence on particular elements which cannot always be easily transferred. For example, Sadowski (2022) notes that graphic form can be changed in translation. In the paper by Monnin (2023), concerning the French translation of the poem describing the history of Earth, it is argued that free verse can be particularly valuable in the expression of deep time and bringing scientific knowledge closer to the general audience.

The process of translation, however, also shows that free verse is not merely lack of form. If a poem has no form at all, then its translation is effortless because the translator can copy the poem verbatim. Yet, the translator faces the challenge of making decisions on the length of lines, the use of pauses, syntax, rhythm, spacing, and stress. The lack of form in the original creates additional challenges for translation.

Thus, it can be suggested that one should find out what the dominant formal features are in a poem prior to translating it. Does the poem rely predominantly on the use of sound, lines, visual space, repeating syntactical constructions, or semantic rhythm? In this case, the translator can aim at retaining the function of the poetic form.

Free verse and political, documentary, ecological, and identity-based expression

The reviewed literature demonstrates that free verse form is employed by poets when flexible poetic forms are required to describe complex experience. Thus, the poetics of rupture by Agha Shahid Ali can be analyzed in the context of political crises, uncertainty regarding poetic form, and challenges of writing about violence and displacement. The study focuses on the connection between form and politics instead of separating them.

The study by Monnin (2023), in turn, provides another context in which free verse is used. For instance, free verse may be a useful tool to convey scientific and ecological ideas due to its ability to create movement and express various aspects of reality, including large temporal scales. Contemporary Indian women's poetry, in its turn, represents an example of how free verse is used in works related to intersecting identities.

Yet, the review does not prove the assumption that free verse should necessarily be regarded as being more political, democratic, personal, and modern as compared with traditional verse. As is shown by Kappeler (2020), there may be problems associated with such assumptions. There is no inherent political value in form; its meanings depend on the way the form is utilized.

Methods

Review design

This research used the systematic narrative review methodology. The review was conducted according to the general principles of transparent systematic-review reporting presented in the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). Meta-analysis could not be used as the literature included literary-critical, formal, interpretive, reader-response, comparative, and humanities studies, and not research articles presenting comparable numerical results.

Search strategy



Structured searches were conducted in August 2026 in web-indexed records and publisher pages. They were designed to include both direct research of free verse and research of formal mechanisms employed in free verse practices. Search expressions were: "free verse" AND poetry; "free verse" AND rhythm; "free verse" AND lineation; "free verse" AND line break; "free verse" AND reader; "free verse" AND translation; "vers libre" AND poetry; "free verse" AND typography; "free verse" AND contemporary poetry; and "free verse" AND poetic form. The DOI records were always checked against the publisher or the journal pages.

Inclusion criteria

The studies were considered to be relevant in case of meeting the following criteria: (a) they were peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles or research contributions with a DOI; (b) they were devoted to free verse, vers libre, non-metrical verse, lineation, rhythm, visual structure, reader response, translation, or cultural development relevant to free verse practice; (c) they were published in English or had an English bibliography and abstract; and (d) they offered evidence or theoretical interpretation of free verse practice.

The review focused on research carried out between 2021 and 2026 as stipulated by the journal's requirement of recent literature. Some earlier articles were considered only for providing historical and theoretical background. Non-scholarly websites, teaching resources, poems without research analysis, articles without DOI information, and other publications referring to free verse incidentally were excluded.

Screening and selection

The titles and abstracts were reviewed to filter those which were directly relevant. The duplicates were excluded. Finally, full texts were analyzed for the included studies. The evidence included more peer-reviewed journal articles. This evidence involved literary criticism, poetics, cognitive versification, pragmatics, reader response research, comparative literature, translation and cultural literary history.

Data extraction

In each of the works analyzed, there is mention made of the following: author and date of publication, linguistic/literary background, research topic, research methodology, findings, and relationship to free verse. Themes have been identified, and these include rhythm, lineation, visual structure, reader response, cultural adaptation, translation, and thematic/poetic uses.

Quality and Relevance Assessment

Since there is no one-size-fits-all quality rating tool for humanities research, the evaluation criteria included methodological clarity, presence of peer-reviewed publications if available, DOI identification, clear articulation of the research question, explicit analysis of the primary literary texts, and relevance to the research question itself. Interpretive literature reviews were not rated in a fashion similar to a clinical trial study but given more weight if these criteria were met.

Results

Features of the analyzed literature



The last synthesis included a selected set of DOI-referenced papers, most of which were written after 2021. The literature was highly interdisciplinary. Some researchers relied on close reading and historical poetics; others employed experimental readers, pragmatic approach, cognition-based study, comparative analysis, or translation study. As seen from the graph, free verse is not being studied as an exclusively modernist literary-historical phenomenon anymore. It is also being researched as a perceptual, graphic, cultural, and communicational phenomenon.

Table 1

Main Themes Found in the Systematic Review

Theme	Formal or research problem	Implication for practice
Rhythm	Rhythm of speech, stressing, pauses, repetitions, temporality	Rhythm must be designed intentionally in free verse
Lineation	Lineation, enjambment, end-stopping, emphasis	Any lineation alters the meaning and the tempo
Form as visual shape	Spacing, indentation, typography, layout of the page	The page may be used to participate in prosody
Reader response	Cultural background, context, inference	Internal pattern allows for the interpretation of open form
Cultural adaptation	Local language, literary tradition, modernity	Free verse undergoes transformation in a new tradition
Translation	Rhythm and visual translation	The translator should translate function not just words
Public and thematic function	Documentary, ecology, politics, identity	Open form is well suited to complex or evolving themes

Finding 1: Structure in free verse is flexible but calculated

One of the key findings is that free verse is not identical with any sort of randomness in lineation. From all of the literature sources considered, authors apply structure using various combinations of forms. In a free-verse poem, there is no necessity to repeat the same metrical form. Instead, a poet can use repetition of sounds, syntactical construction, images, rhythms, or shape of lines. A free verse poem may evolve from line to line rather than having a pre-set form.

The finding directly responds to the first research question. Practice of free verse is grounded in formal decisions made on a case by case basis. Form evolves into something unique for every poem. That is why two free-verse poems can be completely different yet equally good in terms of their form.

Finding 2: Importance of rhythm continues



Another key finding of the paper concerns the importance of rhythm in poetry. Authors such as Crone (2023), Lilja (2024), Rumsey (2024), and Auer (2025) reject an oversimplified binary opposition of metrical verse and free verse. Rhythm can survive even after the elimination of a strict metrical form.

As a result, the review reveals rhythm as a secret element which organizes free verse. The author starts from an easy-sounding sentence; however, the revision makes changes in rhythm. Words can be rearranged to make better stresses. A line can be shortened to create a faster rhythm. The longer line can be used to create delays in closing lines. The repeated grammatical structures can create the rhythm. Thus, the final poem sounds spontaneous but well revised.

Finding 3: Lineation is a meaning-making element

The third finding is the fact that lineation is an important craft skill. According to Pinder (2022), lineation determines where one's attention should be directed. In addition, Tartakovsky (2022) proves the significance of lineation in the creation of documentary poetry. Moreover, Lilja (2024) finds the connection between lineation and cognitive processing. Thus, three scholarly articles show that the line is not only a vessel for several words.

Line breaks can perform several functions: first, they help to control pace. Second, line breaks emphasize a particular word. Third, line breaks can create ambiguity. Fourth, line breaks help to make visual balance. Finally, line breaks can create a connection between the end of the previous line and the start of the next one. Thus, an effective free verse should use these elements.

Finding 4: Visual organization is part of poetic form

The fourth finding is that free verse requires attention to the page. Sadowski (2022) and Pietras (2024) suggest that visual design affects the perception of literary texts. It is especially crucial for poems where unusual spacing, as well as alternations between prose and verse forms, is employed. The review considers typography and white space a component of free-verse practice rather than supplementary elements.

This finding becomes especially relevant for digital poetry because screens have various sizes, and lineation changes when a poem is moved from one device to another. A writer who relies on the specific spacing in his/her work should take into account the material aspects of publication. However, the problem of digital display does not diminish the importance of visual form. On the contrary, it brings this aspect into sharper focus.

Finding 5: Reader interpretation is culturally situated

The fifth finding is that free verse is perceived in the context of cultural conventions. Kulchytska and Malyshivska (2022) reveal both similarities and differences in American and Ukrainian readers' responses. Interpersonal knowledge, textual features, and cultural schemata are used by the reader in the process of interpretation. Thus, the openness of free verse does not mean that there is a single reading experience.

It means that a writer needs to balance between coherence and openness. He/she can allow readers to fill gaps while offering clues for understanding. These clues include images, shifts in syntax, sound, and structural development.



Finding 6: Cultural variation in free verse forms

The sixth finding is the significance of cultural variation. Ullah and Gul (2024) investigate the emergence of free verse in the Balochi literary canon. Sofronova (2025) analyzes a Chuvash setting. Other comparative works demonstrate the associations between free verse and particular conceptions of modernity and renewal. In sum, free verse must be understood as a family of practices, not one universal method.

Finding 7: Free verse facilitates thematic adaptability

The seventh finding is that free verse is usually chosen if the theme is unstable, complicated, fragmentary, or changing. Some themes examined in this review include political crises, documentation, nature, identity, and science. Free verse is not necessarily better suited for such topics. The flexibility of this poetic form allows poets to change pace, voice, lineation, and other structural elements in accordance with thematic changes.

Discussion

These findings provide an opportunity to state an obvious but crucial statement: free verse is a freedom from a fixed system, not a freedom from form. The distinction should be at the forefront of criticism and instruction. In the absence of meter, the poet has to make formal choices. Where are the pauses? Where should the phrase end? What sounds should recur? How will the poem look on the page? What words need to be isolated? How should the poem end? Firstly, it is important to consider the interdependence between freedom and limitation in a poem. It is hard to generate expectation in a poem without limitations. A reader needs to have something repetitive in the work to see a pattern. In free verse, such patterns can be small, temporary, and changing. One stanza can have repetition of the syntax and the next one repetition of sound. A poem can set a pattern and later disrupt it. Disruption will make sense only if the reader had the pattern.

This is why a good free verse tends to contain what can be referred to as local constraints. These are constraints that the poem sets on itself temporarily. For example, a poem may have the phrase "I remember" at the beginning of some lines and then suddenly stop having it. Or it may tend to have long lines but suddenly switch to a short line. This line will become effective due to its disruption of expectation.

Secondly, it is necessary to address rhythm in a poem. The review questions the assumption that rhythm belongs to metrical poems. Crone (2023) demonstrates how free verse can build complex rhythmical structures while Lilja (2024) describes the connections between rhythm and cognition, memory, and bodily timing. Therefore, the practice of poetry writing should include oral reading. The writer should read the draft aloud, look for flatness, note natural stresses and try different lengths of lines.

Thirdly, it is important to speak about lineation. The break in a line should be considered a compositional choice rather than a necessity to break prose into separate pieces. Many bad free verse poems start as prose which is divided into small fragments. It can create an illusion of poetry without forming poetry. A better approach to writing poems is revising the lineation of



the poem after drafting. The writer can explore what happens when one moves the break one word before or after.

Fourthly, it is necessary to discuss the role of visual design in prosodic structure. According to Sadowski (2022) and Pietras (2024), the page participates in prosodic structure of a poem. It means that a poet should think of how his or her poem looks at the first encounter with it. However, visual structure should be linked to the internal movement of the poem. Big blank area may symbolize silence, distance, absence or hesitation. Isolated word may symbolize emphasis. If there is no connection between the visual form and sound or meaning, it is artificial.

The fifth implication relates to culture. In general terms, free verse has been treated as the universal marker of modernity. As the reviewed literature proves, this idea requires reconsideration. As shown by Kappeler (2020), modernist notions of free verse could function within cultural hierarchies. Research on Balochi and Chuvash poetry indicates that the genre could be adapted to local literary traditions. Thus, authors should analyze the connection between free verse and resources of their native tongue.

This implication is especially relevant to multilingual settings, including South Asia. In multilingual contexts, English-language free verse in Nepal, India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh might be related to native poetic tradition, oral recitation, singing, religious poetry, folk genre, and regional languages. The technique is most effective when the writer does not simply adopt features of Anglo-American modernism but creates free verse out of his/her own language and cultural background.

The sixth implication relates to teaching. Most students require encouragement to write freely, but encouragement is not enough. What is really needed is a method of revision. One good classroom strategy would include the following steps: draft freely, read the draft aloud, identify repetitions of sound and phrase, experiment with line breaks, look at white space, delete unnecessary words, compare prose and lineated versions, and read the poem aloud once more. In other words, the poet is free in writing but needs to craft his/her work.

The seventh implication pertains to criticism. Critics should not use only negative definitions like "not metrical" or "not rhymed." Such definitions say nothing about what a poem does; they only show what it does not do. Thus, the critic needs to perform a more detailed analysis, paying attention to positive organizing principles such as rhythm, syntax, lineation, imagery, repetition, visual structure, voice, and semantic development. This way, one can evaluate a poem by the quality and consistency of these principles.

The eighth implication relates to translation. Contrary to what one might think, free verse may be translated more problematically than traditional poetry. Its form is flexible and the translator needs to identify its elements. A word-for-word translation will preserve content but sacrifice form, for example, lineation or rhythm. In order to reproduce the effect of the original, a more functional approach may involve changes in line length or syntax. As Sadowski (2022) notes, visual structure should not be overlooked in this case.



Ninth implication regards digital poetry. Contemporary poems can switch between books, website pages, social networks, and performances. The free verse can adjust to all of these forms, but there could be changes in line breaks and spacing because of the digital format. Further research should focus on responsive lineation, screen reading, audio versions, as well as the connection between visual and verbal free verse.

Tenth implication regards interdisciplinarity. Monnin ([2023](#)) demonstrates that free verse can be used for communicating geological knowledge. It indicates that poetry can be viewed as a form of public knowledge communication. The free verse combines information with the experience of time, emotions, and sensations. Therefore, it could be useful in such areas as environmental humanities, science communication, and education.

A Practice Model for Writing Free Verse

Systematic findings could be translated into a simple practice model. There are seven steps of the model.

Step 1: Collecting the material. Start from an image, memory, question, a scene, sound, or a statement. At this point, do not care about meter.

Step 2: Finding the natural rhythm. Read the draft out loud. Pay attention to places when the speed or stress of voice increases or decreases, mark these places.

Step 3: Give shape to the lines. Separate the writing into lines based on sense, breath, sound, and emphasis. Do not use equally sized lines unless the poem makes a case for them.

Step 4: Make local patterns. Introduce repetition, syntactic parallelisms, sound echoes, images, or variation in line lengths. The poem must build up its own set of expectations.

Step 5: Evaluate the visual design. View the poem without reading it. See if the design works for the movement of the poem. Cut visual decisions that do nothing but decorate the page.

Step 6: Introduce conflict and variation. When every line is doing the same thing, the poem can become dull. Make a shift in the pattern when necessary. Use short lines after long lines, silences after noise, or a statement after imagery.

Step 7: Reassess the necessity of all words. Eliminate words that simply explain the poem's meaning. Question each line ending. Read the poem many times out loud. Does the last line close the poem, leave it open, or make a specific statement?

This framework does not propose a single formula for free verse. This model intends to make visible places of formal choices made in the process of creating a poem. Different poems will make use of various combinations of these stages.

Limitations of The Review

Several limitations exist for this review. Firstly, the studies of free verse exist in many languages, and this review is limited to the available bibliographic and abstracts in English. Secondly, the humanities literature is highly interpretive, which means that we cannot aggregate this data statistically. Thirdly, the requirement of DOI means that valuable books, dissertations, and other sources have been left out of this review. Fourthly, this search was



based on scholarly web-indexed resources and the publisher pages instead of downloading all records from every commercial database available. Consequently, one should perceive this paper as a systematic review, rather than a comprehensive census of all literature related to free verse.

An additional limitation is in geographical distribution of research in the field. Despite inclusion of studies written about Balochi and Chuvash literature, and cross-cultural reader research, the main mass of studies available are focused on European and English-language literary studies. Future research should cover the studies on free verse in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, African, and Latin American literature.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This systematic review reveals that practice of writing free verse is based on formal organization of a poem. Free verse does not eliminate poetics of poetry but transforms it. Poets can structure their poems with help of rhythm, lineation, enjambment, syntax, repetition, sound, imagery, visual layout, and semantic progression instead of being dependent on regular meter and rhyme.

Rhythm is still important as shown by recent cognitive and formal research of the phenomenon. Readers' perception is affected by rhythmic patterns regardless of presence of any regular meter. Another crucial element is line. Line breaks affect readers' perception of the poem: they can guide attention, change meaning, regulate pace of reading, and produce ethical effects. Visual aspect is important because page is involved in poem's prosody.

Free verse is culturally specific; it transforms when it migrates from one language and literary tradition to another. The research into Balochi, Chuvash, Arabic, Malay, and cross-cultural reading reveals that free verse may become a technique of local literary rejuvenation instead of mere imitation. This result is valuable for poets who create their works in multilingual communities.

It is recommended that the poetry pedagogy stops presenting free verse as a poetic genre without any form. Students should be educated in terms of learning to listen to rhythm, trying out different line endings, using repetition, controlling silence, and experimenting with visual arrangement. Creative writing classes should consist of comparative exercises, where students transform the same piece of text into prose, metrical poetry, and several examples of free verse. These exercises may help reveal the function of form.

It is recommended that literary criticism should recognize the positive structures of free verse. Further studies should address digital free verse, spoken free verse, multilingual composition, translation, reader experiments, and the connection between free verse and local oral tradition. More empirical reader-response researches will be helpful since at the moment there are numerous theoretical discussions but few controlled studies of reader responses.

The key idea is clear: free verse is not the lack of form. Free verse is the technique of making the form adaptive and responsive to the peculiarities of the poem. Poet is liberated from any



pattern but stays responsible for the creation of a pattern of sound, motion, attention, and meaning. From this perspective, free verse should be regarded as discipline.

Author Contribution

The authors equally conceptualized the topic of the review, formulated the research questions, searched and screened the literature, synthesized the literature, wrote the manuscript, and approved its final version.

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