Making Phonological Sense out of Nonsense Poetry

JODI LAMM

Abstract

Poets like Carroll, Seuss, and others have defined the genre of Nonsense Poetry by making an art out of combining neologisms with poetic form, and giving their readers a sense that they know what is happening in a poem without having any idea what these new words mean alone. These poets must not only have knowledge about word rhymes and the rhythm of poetry, but they must also have a sense of what could phonologically constitute a word. An analysis of the neologisms contained in the poetry of nine different works will reveal exactly what the poets are phonologically aware of, and to what extent these poets can manipulate phonological constraints while maintaining the poetic form, and with it, some sense of meaning in their poetry. My aim in this categorization is to find out how far a nonsense poet can stretch the constraints on human language and still present a poem that reads easily for an English speaker. This tension between the sound and form of natural language and the creativity of neologisms comes through in the poems from which the data come. None of the nonsense goes so far outside the constraints of English, or even human language, that it is rendered meaningless within the poetry.

1. Introduction

With one read through Lewis Carroll's (1995) "The Jabberwocky," an English speaker is bound to notice two things: the poem seems to make "sense," yet there are words contained in it that they know have never appeared in the English language. Poets like Carroll, Seuss, and others have defined the genre of Nonsense Poetry. They have made an art out of combining neologisms with poetic form and giving their readers a sense that they know what is happening in a poem without having any idea what these new words mean alone. These poets must not only have knowledge about word rhymes and the rhythm of poetry, but they must also have a sense of what could phonologically constitute a word. An analysis of the neologisms contained in the poetry of nine different works will reveal exactly what the poets are phonologically aware of, and to what extent these poets can manipulate phonological constraints while maintaining the poetic form, and with it, some sense of meaning in their poetry.

1.1 Scope

While the genre of Nonsense Poetry contains works without neologisms, I will be looking only at those poems with neologisms and natural English within the same poetic form. I will look only at the phonology of the neologisms: whether they conform to English and human universal segment constraints and how they conform to English syllable structure. I am interested not in the meaning the neologisms intend, but how they adhere to these phonological principles. I am concerned with meaning only insofar as it may affect the pronunciation of a word. Essentially, I am interested in knowing what linguistic knowledge a poet attempting to create such nonsense possesses and how his "words" will demonstrate that such knowledge is not actually phonological nonsense.

1.2 Methodology

In my search for nonsense words I began with an anthology of the genre, and worked my way through poems containing any words that were clearly coined by the poet. If it did not look like a natural word of English, I considered it nonsense. These words were checked against the Merriam Webster (2010) online dictionary to ensure neologistic status. I then categorized the words into non-violating of English segments or structure, one violation of English segments or structure, or a violation of human language segment or structure. My aim in this categorization is to find out how far a nonsense poet can stretch the constraints on human language and still present a poem that reads easily for an English speaker.

2. Literature Review

As one of the most well known examples of nonsense poetry, Lewis Carroll's (1995) "The Jabberwocky" not only pulls the reader into an alternate universe simply by the creation of new words, but it also challenges a reader to accept these new words as legitimate parts of speech well suited to the rhyme and meter of the poem. Like Alice, the readers are drawn through the "looking-glass" into a world where the natural order of the world has been disturbed, and they question the meaning of known words while looking for meaning in words they do not recognize. It is precisely this tension between the real and the unreal that causes nonsense poetry to flourish. The combination of sounds may be unfamiliar, but the reader is able to make sense out of them within both a poetic framework and a phonological one. To what extent meaning is obscured is a matter of contention for some authors, but all agree that the strict adherence to pattern is what makes the poem maintain any sense of meaning overall, and there is a definite limit to how nonsensical the words can be in English Nonsense poetry.

Holquist (1969) reports Elizabeth Sewell's opinion on nonsense: It is "a collection of words of events which in their arrangement do not fit into some recognized system" (p. 150). Overall, this is the effect which nonsense poetry produces, but we will see that the words themselves actually do fit into a system: English phonology. Holquist (1969) himself writes on nonsense that, "It is a closed field of language in which the meaning of any single unit is dependent on its relationship to the system of the other constituents" (p. 150). Surely for these nonsense poets, the neologisms depend on the surrounding architecture of the English language in the poem.

For the poetry critic, nonsense poetry makes any definite meaning of language difficult to grasp, but the rhyme and rhythm of the poetry create an ideal setting for nonsense words to blend in and thrive. Flescher (1969) states that, "The backbone of nonsense must be a consciously regulated pattern" (p. 128). There must be a more stable situation for nonsense words in order to make any kind of meaning come through, and this setting consists of not only the form of poetry, but also the natural sounds, grammar, and stress pattern of the original language. The poem, this controlled form of language, almost completely overtakes meaning for Shires (1988): "Jabberwocky privileges form without regard for content; it privileges the metonymic over the metaphoric" (p. 276). To suit the theme of his story, Carroll uses strict form with nonsense words to create tension between order and disorder. For both Flescher and Shires there is a theme of

lost identity in the Alice stories, and the nonsense of "The Jabberwocky" and other poems I have included in analysis lend a voice to that theme by blurring the line between sense and nonsense.

Although Imholz (1987) does not go into depth phonologically, in his article evaluating translations of the Jabberwocky, he notes that the nonsense words of the English version are all pronounceable, and that it is important that they fit the pattern of sounds relative to the language in which they occur. Beyond the "Jabberwocky," then, there should be a pattern controlling exactly how nonsensical the created words can be in any poem of this genre. Whether a translation, or original creation in a specific language, the neologisms must inevitably succumb to the pattern of the language they are contained in. Imholz describes the translation of the original into new languages as a game: "The rules of this game require that we, like the author and the translator, maintain a perfect, though short lived, Humpty-Dumpty-like balance upon the narrow wall of language between sense and nonsense" (p. 225). It is clear that the strict poetic form along with a linguistic pattern define the sense, while the created words define the nonsense of this game.

In a presentation on nonsense poetry, Weinberger (2005) details in a phonological framework the extent to which authors of this genre have taken their nonsense. He defines limits to the nonsense in segmental and syllabic terms, and categorizes the nonsense words of fifteen authors based on how far these words diverge from segmental and syllabic constraints of English and universal principals. The conclusion is that there are patterns to which the nonsense words conform, and no nonsense word strays from these. No words are deemed impossible for a human speaker, and most words, in fact, are possible for speakers of English. At the phonological level too, there must be order for the chaotic words of nonsense poetry to be placed into, just as there must be a rather strict poetic form.

These sources indicate that there must be some limits to nonsense. For the poetry I will look at, those limits include the rhyme and rhythm of the poem as well as phonological constraints for the nonsense words themselves. The words should conform to English or any language the poem is translated into while maintaining their nonsense appeal. The words may have no meaning in the language, but the use of them, for Carroll, adds to the tension between order and disorder that is thematic in his work featuring this poem. This is the case for the other poets as well; they insert their nonsense words into a pattern that is already set up by English. A phonological analysis of nonsense poetry should reveal that these nonsensical items have the same structure as the original language, providing a sense of chaos within the structure of the poem and the confines of the language.

3. Constraints

3.1 Human Segments

Before looking at the sounds that are contained within nonsense words, one should understand the limits to the sounds contained in human language. According to the International Phonetic Association (2005), the sounds included on the following chart are all the phonemes found in non-disordered human languages.

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC) © 2005 IPA

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	N		
Trill	ʙ			r					R		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ		ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	L			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

Clicks		Voiced implosives		Ejectives	
ʘ	Bilabial	ɓ	Bilabial	ʼ	Examples:
ǀ	Dental	ɗ	Dental/alveolar	pʼ	Bilabial
ǃ	(Post)alveolar	ʄ	Palatal	tʼ	Dental/alveolar
ǂ	Palatoalveolar	ɠ	Velar	kʼ	Velar
ǁ	Alveolar lateral	ʛ	Uvular	sʼ	Alveolar fricative

VOWELS

Front   Central   Back

Close   i y — ɨ ʉ — ɯ u
          ɪ ʏ   ʊ
Close-mid e ø — ɘ ɵ — ɤ o
                 ə
Open-mid ɛ œ — ɜ ɞ — ʌ ɔ
             æ   ɐ
Open   a ɶ — ɑ ɒ

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

OTHER SYMBOLS

ʍ Voiceless labial-velar fricative
w Voiced labial-velar approximant
ɥ Voiced labial-palatal approximant
ʜ Voiceless epiglottal fricative
ʢ Voiced epiglottal fricative
ʡ Epiglottal plosive
ɕ ʑ Alveolo-palatal fricatives
ɺ Voiced alveolar lateral flap
ɧ Simultaneous ʃ and x

Affricates and double articulations can be represented by two symbols joined by a tie bar if necessary. k͡p t͡s

SUPRASEGMENTALS

ˈ Primary stress
ˌ Secondary stress   ˌfoʊnəˈtɪʃən
ː Long   eː
ˑ Half-long eˑ
˘ Extra-short ĕ
| Minor (foot) group
‖ Major (intonation) group
. Syllable break   ɹi.ækt
‿ Linking (absence of a break)

DIACRITICS   Diacritics may be placed above a symbol with a descender, e.g. ŋ̊

̥	Voiceless	n̥ d̥	̤	Breathy voiced	b̤ a̤	̪	Dental	t̪ d̪
̬	Voiced	s̬ t̬	̰	Creaky voiced	b̰ a̰	̺	Apical	t̺ d̺
ʰ	Aspirated	tʰ dʰ	̼	Linguolabial	t̼ d̼	̻	Laminal	t̻ d̻
̹	More rounded	ɔ̹	ʷ	Labialized	tʷ dʷ	̃	Nasalized	ẽ
̜	Less rounded	ɔ̜	ʲ	Palatalized	tʲ dʲ	ⁿ	Nasal release	dⁿ
̟	Advanced	u̟	ˠ	Velarized	tˠ dˠ	ˡ	Lateral release	dˡ
̠	Retracted	e̠	ˤ	Pharyngealized	tˤ dˤ	̚	No audible release	d̚
̈	Centralized	ë	̴	Velarized or pharyngealized	ɫ			
̽	Mid-centralized	x̽	̝	Raised	e̝	(ɹ̝ = voiced alveolar fricative)		
̩	Syllabic	n̩	̞	Lowered	e̞	(β̞ = voiced bilabial approximant)		
̯	Non-syllabic	e̯	̘	Advanced Tongue Root	e̘			
˞	Rhoticity	ə˞ a˞	̙	Retracted Tongue Root	e̙			

TONES AND WORD ACCENTS

LEVEL			CONTOUR		
e̋ or ˥	Extra high		ě or ˩˥	Rising	
é ˦	High		ê	Falling	
ē ˧	Mid		e᷄	High rising	
è ˨	Low		e᷅	Low rising	
ȅ ˩	Extra low		e᷈	Rising-falling	
↓	Downstep		↗	Global rise	
↑	Upstep		↘	Global fall	

The blank white spaces are potential sounds that have not yet been discovered in a human language, and the shaded areas of the chart are sounds that could not possibly occur in a human language (IPA, 2005). Should any of the nonsense poets have taken advantage of non-existing

speech sounds, their neologisms would surely be complete nonsense to any human reader. However, this nonsense poetry must still be readable by speakers of the language it was written in, so it is likely that English poets will stay within the segment structure of their own language: English.
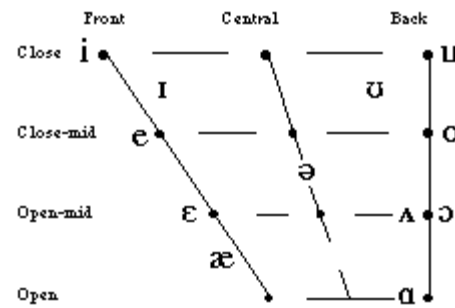
3.2 English Segments

Of the possible consonants in human language, English uses 24 phonemically, and takes twelve of the possible vowels for its own inventory (Speech Accent Archive, 2010). Although nonsense poets could make use of any human sound, they are still limited by the English alphabet, and the spelling principles of the language. A poem may not become very popular in print if the poet makes up his own symbols, or even uses phonetic symbols the average reader would not recognize. If the poet wants to create nonsense with unknown symbols, he may have to include a note of explanation along with the poem. This would become burdensome for the reader, and take away the usual tension found in nonsense poetry between the structure of the rhyme and meter of our own familiar language and the unknown words that seem to fit so well into that structure.

CONSONANTS
(PULMONIC)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d				k g			
Nasal	m			n				ŋ			
Trill											
Tap or Flap											
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ						h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ						
Lateral fricative											
Approximant				ɹ			j				
Lateral approximant				l							

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

VOWELS

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

other sounds: labio-velar voiced central approximant [w]; 5 diphthongs.
(Speech Accent Archive, 2010)

      Since most nonsense poetry is not entirely made up of nonsense words, the nonsense words are surrounded by the natural language, and so must fit into the rhyme of the language in which it is written. This means that poets must have some knowledge of not only the sounds themselves, but also the way the sounds are put together in their language.

3.3 Syllable Constraints

In addition to individual sounds, there are constraints on the formation of human languages, and these also function specifically for the English language. The Sonority Principle, one of the constraints on how human language segments are placed together, plays a huge role in syllable formation for English. An ideally formed syllable proceeds from the least sonorous segment in the onset to a more sonorous segment in the nucleus, and finally to a less sonorous segment if there is a coda (Clements, 1992, p. 65). According to Selkirk (1984), following this Sonority Principle, the segments of human language can be ranked according to how sonorous they are, from most to least: vowels>glides>liquids>nasals>fricatives>stops. If a syllable, moving from onset to nucleus, becomes more sonorous, and from nucleus to coda it becomes less sonorous, it follows that onset clusters of English should also proceed from a less sonorous to a more sonorous segment. This is true for English, and limits the amount of onset clusters English is capable of producing with its segment inventory. In fact, for English onset clusters, only an approximant may serve as the second element. The only exceptions to this condition are onsets that begin with [s] (Clements, 1992, p. 65). Nonsense poets could take advantage of the Sonority Principle to form truly foreign words, but once again, they must adhere to their rhymes and structure. This will limit the kind of nonsense poets are able to conjure.

      Another condition that will limit the kind of phonological nonsense poets are able to compose should be the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP). Yip (1988) provides a definition of this principle: "At the melodic level, adjacent identical elements are prohibited" (p. 66). This means, for instance, that the OCP will not allow two segments with the same place of articulation in a row, or as we will see in one nonsense example, two or more segments that are exactly the same in a row.

3.4 English Spelling Convention

In addition to these phonological constraints, the English alphabet itself plays a role in the ability of poets to compose their neologisms. Like any reader of this nonsense poetry, I will assume that the authors adhere to the conventions of English spelling; the letters used to represent the sounds of their nonsense words are pronounced the way they typically are in known English words. For instance, if the English letters "tch" are used in a coda, I will assume they are pronounced as in the word "catch" [t] and not that the author wants to insert the stop [t] before the affricate. For any words that do not obviously conform to rules of English spelling, I will explain my interpretation in the data section.

4. Data

4.1 No English Violations

a. "Jabberwocky" (Carroll, 1995, p. 27-28)

brillig	slithy	toves	gyre
gimble	wabe	mimsy	borogoves
mome	raths	outgrabe	Jubjub
frumious	Bandersnatch	vorpal	manxome
Tumtum	uffish	tulgey	frabjous
callooh	callay		

Any English speaker reading "The Jabberwocky" could effortlessly and fluently pronounce each of Carroll's nonsense words. Although the reader may be looking at these words for the first time, since every one of them conform to English rules of syllabification and none contain any non-English segments, there would be no problem. Indeed, the words fit quite effectively into the meter of Carroll's poem, and rhyme with the words of English.

b. "The Cannibals' Grace before Meat" (Dickens, 1979, p. 124)

> Choo a choo a choo tooth.
> Muntch, muntch. Nycey!
> Choo a choo a choo tooth.
> Muntch, muntch. Nycey!

Since this poem is about a group of cannibals preparing to roast a Latin teacher, I assume that the nonsense word, *muntch*, is only a variant of the English word, munch, and does not violate the Sonority Principle by progressing from a nasal to a stop, then to the more sonorous fricative in pronunciation. The word, *nycey*, I interpret as the cannibals exclamation of how nice the "meat" will taste. I pronounce it [naɪsi]. None of these nonsense words violate English segments or syllable structure.

c. Vogon Poetry (Adams, 1980, pp. 65-66)

> Oh freddled gruntbuggly thy micturations are to me
> As plurdled gabbleblotchits on a lurgid bee.
> Groop I implore thee, my foonting turlingdromes.
> And hooptiously drangle me with crinkly bindlewurdles,
> Or I will rend thee in the gobberwarts with my blurglecruncheon,
> See if I don't!

Known as "the third worst poetry in the universe," Vogon poetry is used to torture the protagonist, Arthur Dent, as he is a prisoner of these aliens (Adams, 1980, p. 64). Even though written by aliens, it does not contain any segments foreign to human language, and no words violate sonority or the Obligatory Contour Principle. Like "The Jabberwocky," the poem contains novel word creations, but all words contained could be English words.

d. *Did I ever tell you how lucky you are?* (Seuss, 1973, p. 13)
>   He never will know if the *Gick* or the *Goor*
>   fits into the *Skrux* or the *Snux* or the *Snoor*.

This final example of non-violating nonsense contains only a few of the words coined by Dr. Seuss for his children's books. There is nothing in the structure of either *gick* or *goor* that violates English syllable structure, and although the onset clusters of *skrux, snux*, and *snoor* appear to violate the Sonority Principle, they are acceptable onset clusters in English, as in the words *scream*, or *snake*.

4.2 Violation of an English Constraint

a. Did I ever tell you how lucky you are?

>   You're lucky you don't have a Borfin that *shlumps*. (Seuss, 1973, p.18)

>   And, while we are at it, consider the *Schlottz*,
>   the Crumple-horn, Web-footed, Green-bearded *Schlottz*. (Seuss, 1973, p. 20)

Although the shl- onset of these Seuss words occurs in English loanwords from German or Yiddish, it is not found in the standard dialect of English (Crystal, 1995, p. 243). For this reason, I consider these words in violation of Standard English syllable structure. The coda of *Schlottz* presents another violation of the Sonority Principle since the less sonorous stop precedes the fricative. This coda progression is atypical for an English syllable.

b. "Two Old Crows"   lines 21-28 (Lindsay, 1979, p. 270-271)
>   And those two black crows
>   Turned pale,
>   And away those crows did sail.
>   Why?
>   B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B-cause.
>   B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B-cause.
>   'Buzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz   zzzzzzzzz   zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz
>   ZZZZZZZZ.'

One of the crows in Lindsay's poem happens to stutter, and the repetition of 'B' is meant to represent this. It is easy to imagine that the stutterer would insert vowels, interrupting the continuous stream of a stop consonant. However, if the poet had meant this, perhaps there would be some vowel interrupting these B's. The string of z's, on the other hand, represents the sound of a bee, and is likely pure onomatopoeia. One must always keep in mind, however, that poetry is meant to be shared aloud, and optimally should be easily spoken. In this case, the three clusters of z's are an obvious violation of English structure. According to the OCP, there should not be more than two identical elements, and there are many more than two in these sequences.

c. *The Lorax*   (Seuss, 1971, p. 24)
>   "Look, Lorax," I said. "There's no cause for alarm.
>   I chopped just one tree. I am doing no harm.
>   I'm being quite useful. This thing is a *Thneed*.
>   A Thneed's a Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need!"

The onset, thn- is a violation for English onset clusters. Although it is not a sonority violation since the progression is from a less sonorous fricative to a more sonorous nasal, it is a

cluster that does not exist in English words. Clements (1992)wrote that only approximants may occur as the second segment of an onset cluster, with the exception of [s], and indeed the only allowable English onset cluster with [n] as its second element is sn- as in *snow*.

> d. *On Beyond Zebra!* (Seuss, 1955, p. 13)
> I ramble, I scramble through *swampf* and through *swumpf*

In this Dr. Seuss story, a young boy has created new "letters" of the alphabet that begin after the letter 'z'. These new letters are in fact clusters of the original sounds in the alphabet, and his new symbols used to represent them are combinations of letters. The coda –mpf of *swampf* is a violation of the Sonority Principle. Instead of ending in the least sonorous [p], this segment is followed by a more sonorous [f]. The nasal, stop, and fricative are also three labials in a row, a violation of the OCP, which does not prefer more than one adjacent element in a row which shares place of articulation. It is possible that Dr. Seuss is representing in the orthography what he hears in an English speaker's pronunciation of this coda. This process, known as English Stop Intrusion, occurs in English when there is a nasal followed immediately by a fricative. A stop will be inserted between the nasal and the fricative in some dialects of English (Dinnsen, 1984, p. 269).

4.3 Violation of Human Language Constraint

> a. "A Radical Creed" (Burgess, 1979, p. 230)
> I don't give a $\sqrt{D^2}$
>
> For the stuff you denominate hair
> And your fingers and toes and your
>
> Neck and your nose,
>
> These are things it revolts me to wear.

In his "A Radical Creed" Burgess presents perhaps the most interesting of nonsense words when he uses mathematical symbols in place of a word. The radical and squared signs are not present on the IPA chart, and so have no obvious sound interpretation. It is most likely that Burgess wants the reader to say, "I don't give the square root of D squared" so that there is at least a slant rhyme with hair and wear, fitting his meter and rhyme scheme. He is still using a symbol not found in English, and not documented on the IPA chart to reflect a series of sounds. If this is not a violation of human language, it is still a very creative and completely novel use of symbolism and sound.

5. Conclusions

Of all the literary arts, the genre of Nonsense Poetry should allow for some of the most creative uses of human language. As seen in the data, many of these poets create entirely new words in their languages, but only one poet goes as far as attempting to create a truly nonsensical, that is, non-human utterance. This, however, is still a symbol recognized by most humans who are familiar with mathematics. It is not that these poets are not fully exercising their capacities for creativity; rather, they are confined by the constraints of human language and of their own English language.

English speaking poets will inevitably choose not only human segments, but specifically English segments. Working within the orthography of their own language, in order to represent even nonsense words, they must stay within the English alphabet. Only Burgess (1979) steps outside the realm of the alphabet and inserts the mathematical symbol for a square root, but this is fairly easily recognized and read as "the square root of." In order for poetry, even nonsense, to be read by English speakers, poets must be confined to segments (the alphabet) familiar to their readers.

As shown by the data, poets are not only confined to the set of English segments, but they have limitations in the way these segments are combined as well. Most of the data (4.1) are kept within the syllable structure of English. In fact, the entire collection of neologisms from "The Jabberwocky" stays within the confines dictated by the Sonority Principle and the Obligatory Contour Principle as manifested in English. Two of the violations of English syllable structure in 4.2, both from Seuss, contain onset clusters not found in the standard form of English, but one is common enough as a borrowing from Yiddish (Crystal, 1995, p. 243), and the violation in *Thneed* , while not an onset cluster in English, is not at all difficult for English speakers to pronounce. The coda of *swampf* is a violation of the Sonority Principle, but is also easily pronounceable for English speakers. The most extreme example of an English violation occurs in "Two Old Crows," where the strings of consonants are examples of onomatopoeia. These strings of consonants, however, can still be pronounced by an English speaker, so a reading of this entire poem would not be affected by such a violation.

The only potential violation of human language is in section 4.3, where a mathematical symbol is used in place of letters. Since the rest of the nonsense poetry uses the English alphabet to represent nonsense, and I assume that the alphabet is used in the conventional way, there is no way to pronounce the symbol alone. There is a way to interpret the symbol, but the symbol alone does not convey a human sound.

Aside from mathematical symbols, the neologisms of the nonsense poetry data are not entirely phonological nonsense. Even nonsense words must be pronounceable by the reader of poetry, and typically these words fit within the structure of the poem, sometimes even rhyming with the natural language. There is no nonsense so outrageous that it cannot be rendered into human speech, completely devoid of meaning. As Holquist (1969) claimed about nonsense poetry, the neologisms are contained within the pre-ordered system of a language. Any meaning the nonsense might have is dependent upon the meaning of the natural language it is surrounded by. This tension between the sound and form of natural language and the creativity of neologisms comes through in the poems from which this data comes. None of the nonsense goes so far outside the constraints of English, or even human language, that it is rendered meaningless within the poetry.

References

Adams, D. (1980). *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy*. New York: Harmony Books.

Burgess, G. (1979). "A Radical Creed." In G. Grigson (Ed.), *The Faber book of nonsense verse* (p. 230). London: Faber and Faber.

Carroll, L. (1995). *Lewis Carroll: Selected poems*. Keith Silver, (Ed.). Manchester: Carcanet Press.

Clements, G. (1992). The sonority cycle and syllable organization. In W. Dressler, H. Luschutzky, O. Pfeiffer, & J. Rennison (Eds.), *Phonologica 1988.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (1995). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dickens, C. (1979). "The Cannibals' Grace Before Meat." In G. Grigson (Ed.), *The Faber book of nonsense verse* (p. 124). London: Faber and Faber.

Dinnsen, D. (1984). A re-examination of phonological neutralization. *Journal of Linguistics.21*(2), 265-279.

Flescher, J. (1969). The language of nonsense in Alice. *Yale French Studies*, *43*, 128-144.

George Mason University Speech Accent Archive. (2010) *Native phonetic inventory: English.* Retrieved from http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_native.php?function=detail&languageid=18.

Holquist, M. (1969). What is a Boojum? Nonsense and modernism. *Yale French Studies 43*, 145-164.

Imholtz, A. (1987). Latin and Greek versions of "Jabberwocky": Exercises in laughing and grief. *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature, 41*(4), 211-228.

International Phonetic Association. *The international phonetic alphabet.* Retrieved from: http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/ipachart.html.

Lindsay, V. (1979). "Two Old Crows" In G. Grigson (Ed.), *The Faber book of nonsense verse* (p. 270). London: Faber and Faber.

Merriam-Webster Online. (2010). Retrieved from www.merriam-webster.com

Seuss, Dr. (1955). *On beyond zebra.* New York: Random House.

Seuss, Dr. (1971). *The lorax.* New York: Random House.

Seuss, Dr. (1973). *Did I ever tell you how lucky you are?* New York: Random House.

Shires, L. (1998). Fantasy, nonsense, parody, and the status of the real: The example of Carroll. *Victorian Poetry*, *26*(3), 267-283.

Weinberger, S. (2005). Literary nonsense: Linguistics of neologisms. Handout.

Yip, M. (1988). The Obligatory Contour Principle and phonological rules: A loss of identity. *Linguistic Inquiry, 19*, 65-100.