

Report on Teaching

Incorporating Gundoku, a Vocal Performing Art, into Language Education

Yuka Kusanagi
Gunma University

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how Gundoku, a performing art involving oral recitation of texts, which is widely practiced in Japanese language education, can be adapted into English as a foreign language (EFL) education. In Gundoku, multiple readers read a poem or a story as a group. In this respect, Gundoku is comparable to Readers Theatre,¹ which is popular in English communities. Readers Theatre is a style of theatre performance where readers read aloud literary or educational texts without memorization; the same style applies to the Gundoku practice. Gundoku does not require any particular conditions such as space, number of performers, texts, learners' target language levels, or experience in performing arts. Thus, teachers and learners can practice this creative activity in the ordinary classroom environment. In spite of its easiness and flexibility, Gundoku has great educational value for learners. In this paper, I will present the background of Gundoku, the method of making scripts and instruction, and its educational benefits.

KEY WORDS

Gundoku, Reading Aloud Performance, Literature, Prosody, Cooperation, Collaboration

実践報告

群読の英語教育への援用

草薙優加
群馬大学

要旨

本稿は国語教育で普及している表現活動「群読」の英語教育への援用を紹介する。群読とは、複数の読み手が詩や物語などを分読する英語圏のリーダーズ・シアターに似た声の表現活動である。リーダーズ・シアターは文学あるいは教育的テキストを読み上げる演劇スタイルの一つでテキストの暗記を伴わない。この点、群読も同様である。群読は、場所、人数、テキスト、学習者の言語レベル、表現活動経験などの条件を問わず、普通教室で手軽に行なえる文化活動にもかかわらず、その教育効果は高い。本稿では、群読誕生の背景、脚本作成を含め、英語教室での段階的な導入方法、教育効果を紹介する。

キーワード

群読、音読、文学、プロソディ、協同

1. Introduction

Recently, the world has been changing drastically and our lives and sense of values have been forced to shift from the old to the new. What is expected in language education in this complex and globalized world? Is mastery of language skills enough for learners who are also members of society? Acquisition of the target language is important; however, educators should not forget the importance of other types of vital abilities for human development, such as those taught by liberal arts. The liberal arts skills suggested for Japanese university students are the ability to a) identify problems, b) solve problems, c) negotiate with others, d) make decisions and e) think critically and creatively, and e) think critically and creatively (*Chūōkyōikushingikai*, the Central Council for Education, 2008; *Nihongakujutsukaigi*, the Science Council of Japan, 2010a, 2010b). Along with acquiring these competencies, students are urged to acquire learning skills and become autonomous learners. Individuals must continuously learn new knowledge and skills to meet society's needs after their graduation and throughout their lives in this globally changing world.

These ideas of liberal arts are not unique to Japan, but are recognized internationally. For instance, the ideas are akin to the OECD key competency model designed for students near the end of compulsory education (Rychen & Salganik, 2006). According to this model, students who will participate in society fully need to be able to a) interactively use tools in the forms of technology and language (symbols such as pictures, charts, or graphs; text; knowledge) for their purposes, b) interact with heterogeneous groups, and c) act autonomously. In other words, individuals must be able to apply 'tools' that are appropriate to the situation and deal with changes. Citizens of the current globalized world should learn from their experiences, and then think and act critically accordingly. This process involves the individual's reflective thinking that facilitates personal and social maturity, that is, learners should seek learning about life, not just learning a new language, in the context of language education.

How can we help students understand the importance of these abilities and acquire these essential competencies as well as literacy skills? One of the currently available methods is introduction of Gundoku, or group voice performance. In this paper, I will describe how to incorporate this performing art into EFL education, and its educational effects.

2. What is Gundoku?

Gundoku is reading a literary work, such as a poem or a story, aloud, as a performance with a group of two to 100 other readers. Parsing the word, the Chinese character *gun* represents a group and *doku* refers to reading. Gundoku developed in Japan. Coincidentally, very similar theatrical practice named Readers Theatre developed in the West as well. Gundoku and Readers Theatre are basically the same. Both of them are performed on the stage by actors. More recently, they have been adapted into literacy education. Literary texts and educational texts are commonly used for Gundoku. Besides these materials, subject matter texts in science, mathematics, social studies are widely used for Readers Theatre in the primary and middle school education in North America.

In this section, I will introduce the background of Gundoku and the use of Gundoku in EFL practice.

2.1. The Background of Gundoku

Voices are heard everywhere in peoples' lives. In Japan, there is a long tradition of voice

performance. In the past, there were professional storytellers; monks chanted sutras; common people, such as street vendors, farmers, woodcutters, enjoyed telling stories at home and chanting and singing songs as they worked, as well as at festivals and religious events.

Japanese people also learned values and knowledge by reading aloud. One of the well-known practices of reading aloud was the memorizing of *Rongo*, the Analects of Confucius. In Japan, learning Chinese literature was required for many centuries. This type of reading is called *sodoku*. In *sodoku*, simple reading texts aloud, setting aside actual understanding of them, was thought to be important at the beginning stage of learning (Arai, 1994). It was believed that reading aloud repeatedly enabled the reader to eventually understand the texts in his or her heart.

Traditionally, not only Chinese literature but also Japanese literature was read aloud. Having good knowledge and ability to create poems were a prerequisite for people who wanted to start their education. Poetic masterpieces were handed down from ancient times until now. One example is 100 selected poems named *Hyakuninissu*. This is an anthology of Japanese traditional poems selected by a well-known poet, Fujiwara Teika, in the early 13th century. Even in the present time, it is popular among children to memorize the 100 poems with a card game. In this game, the poems are read aloud for players.

This habit of reading aloud continued even after learning ancient Chinese and Japanese literature became less popular due to social change brought about by the collapse of the feudalism in the 19th century; however, people continued reading aloud. 'Prior to the emergence of printing machines, the majority of citizens had to read books aloud repeatedly to memorize their contents because they had to rent books or share them (Nagamine, 1997).

In feudal times, reading aloud was done in a group such as a family, and an individual read aloud for him or herself or to someone else. When mass media arose in the Meiji era the father of the family read aloud new mass media publications such as newspapers and magazines for other family members for the purpose of entertainment because of the low literacy rate. For this reason, this reading practice was popular until the modern period (Nakanoshima Library, Osaka, 2007). The habit was observed even in public spaces. In the literature, one can find observations about people reading newspapers or books aloud in waiting rooms at railway stations, in train compartments, up until as late as the end of the 19th century (Mori, 1999). However, this habit gradually disappeared due to a change of printing culture and marketing system. The new printing technology offered citizens mass-production publications. This trend brought about the change of the ordinary peoples' reading habits from home community reading to individual reading (Maeda, 1993).

In modern Japan, the habit of reading aloud in public is not observable any more, but learning by reading aloud has been still common in primary and secondary education. For instance, pupils and students are encouraged to chant when memorizing the multiplication table in a mathematics lesson, verb inflection pairs and passages from a textbook in Japanese/English language lessons, and read aloud the 100 poem-cards in Japanese language lessons.

It is on this historical background that Gundoku was created by Kinoshita Junji (1914–2006), a playwright who adapted folktales and Japanese traditional performing arts into modern drama (Iemoto, 1994). In his play *Heike Monogatari*, he dramatized a traditional battle story, which was in the past commonly performed by a lute player, into a form of Gundoku, group reading as a stage art. Coincidentally, similar restorations emerged in English-speaking countries around the same period. Readers Theatre was created as a revival of Ancient Greek Theatre around in the mid-20th century (Coger & White, 1973; Lohmann, 2008). Furthermore, recently, both Gundoku and Readers Theatre have been adopted into

language education in order to improve learners' literacy skills in elementary and secondary education in Japan and in English-speaking countries respectively.

2.2. The Use of Gundoku

With careful selection of appropriate texts, all types of students regardless of their ages, language levels, learning contexts or familiarity with performing arts can enjoy Gundoku and appreciate its educational benefits. Similar to Readers Theatre, performers do not need to memorize the text. They can hold the script and look at it while performing. Thus, unlike drama, Gundoku is cognitively less demanding, especially for second and foreign language learners, because it does not require performers to memorize lines as recitation does: they can rely on scripts while performing. Hence, their anxiety level (i.e. affective filter; Krashen, 1982) can be kept lower, and they can be open for input regardless of their unfamiliarity with performing arts. If the learners feel safe, they can also keep their motivation and self-esteem high. This is one benefit of using Gundoku, especially for introverted or unconfident students using the English language.

When designing a course including Gundoku, three stages should be considered: an introductory stage, a practice stage, and an extension stage (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Purposes of Gundoku Practice

	Introductory Stage →	Practice Stage →	Expansion Stage
Purposes (Language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practicing pronunciation & prosody (individual sounds & sound patterns) - Recognizing the roles and functions of paralanguage (posture, gesture, silence, etc.) - Learning new vocabulary & expressions - Becoming familiar with English 		
Purposes (Literature)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding a literary text and the culture behind it - Expressing one's interpretation as a performance 		

Table 2. Three Stages of Gundoku Practice

Phases	Introductory Stage →	Practice Stage →	Expansion Stage
Gundoku activities in a lesson	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presenting a script, explaining the background of the text and the linguistic items in it 2. Reading aloud with the teacher 3. Assigning the reading parts by the teacher or the learners themselves 4. Rehearsing 5. Acting out 6. Appreciating other groups' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ditto (the learners can research the author & the background when time allows) 2. Ditto 3. Ditto 4. Ditto 5. Ditto 6. Ditto 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ditto 2. Ditto 3. Writing a script and assigning the reading parts by the learners themselves 4. Ditto 5. Ditto 6. Ditto

	performances, giving feedback		
Texts	Tongue twisters, nursery rhymes	Nursery rhymes, poems, stories	Poems & stories that the students select, the students' original poems & stories, translations of L1 poems or stories written by well known authors
Scripts	Provided by the teacher	Provided by the teacher	Created by the learners

Searching for appropriate texts is the very first step of making a Gundoku script. According to Shigemizu (2010), a literary work that contains (a) rhythm, (b) rhymes, (c) repetitions of onomatopoeia, calls and literary work that requires various 'voices' are appropriate for a Gundoku script. The voices can be (a) multiple characters' voices, (b) a scene showing characters' words/feelings or a description of the scene, (c) a scene representing a dialogue of two counter inner-voices of a character, (d) a scene describing the past and present, (e) a narration and a speech, etc.

Prior to a lesson, the teacher must create a script based on the following techniques. Gundoku techniques in terms of grouping readers are roughly divided into four: a) a solo—reading aloud a part of a text alone, b) an ensemble—reading aloud a part of a text with a smaller group of readers, c) a chorus—reading aloud a part of a text with a larger group of readers, and d) the whole group reads the text, but different group members read different parts. Iemoto (1994), a pioneer in Gundoku practice in education, suggested ratios of voices for each type as follows:

solo	a loud voice by a single person
ensemble	approximately 20% of the whole voice volume in performance
chorus	approximately 80% of the whole voice volume
whole group	100% of the whole voice volume

Adding voices and deducting voices are common techniques. script 1 is made using these techniques for a group of four readers. Multiple groups can be formed (e.g. five groups for a class of 20 students); however, multiple readers can be assigned for each reader's part depending on the teacher/facilitator's decision. The latter way can be psychologically less threatening for beginners. The title is not included in the script but should be read by the whole group.

Script 1. Big Catch by Kaneko Misuzu (year written unknown) (The script made by Kusanagi)

1	Red skies, sunrise.	(Read by Reader 1)
1,2	Big catch!	(Read by Readers 1 and 2)
1-3	Big catch of	(Read by Readers 1, 2, and 3)
1-4	herring!	(Read by Readers 1, 2, 3, and 4)
All	Up on the beach it's a carnival,	(Read by all readers: Readers 1, 2, 3, and 4)

- 1-3 but down in the sea (Read by Readers 3, 2, and 1)
 1,2 they'll mourn (Read by Readers 2 and 1)
 1 For thousands on the thousands of (Read by Reader 1)
 herrings.

Translated by Dutcher (Kaneko, 1990, p.80)

Another commonly used technique is 'reading by role'. A story is read by a narrator or narrators and characters of the story (see Script 2, Versions 1 and 2). This technique is similar to the one used by Readers Theatre. When a narrator's turns are frequent and tedious, it is suggested that characters should serve concurrently as narrators (see Script 2, Version 2).

The Rocking Horse Winner (Lawrence, 1926) is a short story that took place in England after the First World War. In the script of Version 1, 1 refers to Paul, 2 refers to Hester, Paul's mother, and 3 refers to the narrator.

**Script 2. Version 1: An Excerpt from *The Rocking Horse Winner* by D. H. Lawrence (1926)
 (The script made by Kusanagi) (Read by three readers)**

- 1 'other,'
 3 said the boy Paul one day,
 1 'why don't we keep a car of our own? Why do we always use uncle's, or else
 a taxi?'
 2 'Because we're the poor members of the family,'
 3 said the mother.
 1 'But why are we, mother?'
 2 'Well - I suppose,'
 3 she said slowly and bitterly,
 2 'it's because your father has no luck.'
 3 The boy was silent for some time.
 1 'Is luck money, mother?'
 3 he asked, rather timidly.
 2 'No, Paul. Not quite. It's what causes you to have money.'

**Script 2. Version 2: An Excerpt from *The Rocking Horse Winner* by D. H. Lawrence (1926)
 (The script made by Kusanagi) (Read by two readers)**

- 1 'Mother,' said the boy Paul one day,
 'why don't we keep a car of our own? Why do we always use uncle's, or else
 a taxi?'
 2 'Because we're the poor members of the family,' said the mother.
 1 'But why are we, mother?'
 2 'Well - I suppose,' she said slowly and bitterly, 'it's because your father has

- no luck.’
- 1 The boy was silent for some time. ‘Is luck money, mother?’ he asked, rather timidly.
- 2 ‘No, Paul. Not quite. It's what causes you to have money.’

Adapted from <http://www.world-english.org/lawrence.doc>

Although there are more techniques, I cannot present all of them here because of space limitations. Unfortunately, as far as I am concerned, English publications on Gundoku do not exist, but interested Japanese readers may refer to Iemoto (1994, 2001a, 2001b) and Shigemizu (2007, 2010) for various techniques and scripts used to teach Japanese as a first language (L1).

For Gundoku, the decision on the number of readers for each line should be made according to the text, the number of readers in the group, and the desired effect of expression for performance. It is suggested that the teacher should create the script at the introductory stage. When students become familiar with Gundoku scripts, they should be encouraged to create their original script.

3. Gundoku in Practice

In this section, I will introduce some instructional tips on using Gundoku for foreign language education with sample scripts according to each step: the introductory stage, practice stage, and expansion stage (see Tables 1 and 2).

3.1. Introductory Stage

3.1.1 Warm-up 1

Before students practice Gundoku, using one or a combination of the following pieces of advice is recommended, depending on the students' familiarity with Gundoku and the language presented in the script (Shigemizu, 2011).

1. The teacher demonstrates and the learners listen.
2. The teacher reads each phrase or sentence aloud. Then the learners repeat it.
3. The teacher chooses the most important or difficult part in the text for articulation and models it. Then the learners repeat it.
4. Both the teacher and learners read along.
5. Each learner reads aloud his or her own part in a group.
6. Each learner reads aloud his or her own part in a group. Accompanying the learner, the teacher reads along louder than the learner, as loud as the learner, or softer than the learner according to the level of mediation needed.

When introducing Gundoku into the classroom for the first time, warm-up performance activities with fun and rhythmical tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, or short poems are strongly recommended for a few lessons to several lessons (approximately 10 to 20 minutes a lesson, depending on the length of the text). For example, the following tongue twister is suitable at this stage because it is short and simple, but contains three different consonants for the letter ‘s’ (/ʃ/ /s/ and /z/), which are challenging for Japanese learners of

The English sounds and sound patterns to be practiced in the performance of the text should be explained by the teacher before the groups practice the rhyme for acting it out by themselves. There should be many learning points in this simple rhyme. To take one example, in the simple word ‘fat’, the vowel /æ/ is a difficult phoneme for Japanese learners due to the lack of the sound in Japanese. Traditionally, a simple repetition practice with minimal pairs is given (e.g. bat /bæt/ vs. but /bət/); however, this practice tends to be dull. Instead, learners can have the chance to practice the problematic sounds in a more amusing way by participating in Gundoku.

Pronouncing word-final consonants correctly is also required when enunciating more natural English stress patterns. For instance, the word-final consonant /t/ can be challenging for a Japanese learner of English because the Japanese consonant is a semivowel, that is a combination of a consonant and vowel. One example of this is the Japanese consonant /to/ which is a combination of the phonemes /t/ and /o/. It can be pronounced /to/. Due to this linguistic characteristic, learners often transfer their L1 habit and pronounce ‘fat’/fæt/ as /fætto/. This type of transfer obstructs mastery of fluency in terms of accent and stress. This is caused by the difference between the languages; while English has lexical stress, Japanese has pitch accent.

Another challenging aspect is reduction and liaison. The phrase ‘knock at the door’ should be pronounced /nɒkəðɔːr/ instead of pronouncing the words separately as /nɒk/ /ət/ /ðə/ /dɔːr/. Explicit training must be given to students so they can acquire natural enunciation. It is difficult for learners to master it even when they practice with Gundoku. Nevertheless, Gundoku enables them to be aware of the importance of mastery of the English language and at least increase their willingness to learn it. To sum up, through practice with the Gundoku approach, students can learn English sound patterns such as pronunciation, stress, intonation, reduction, liaison in a more natural and amusing way.

Stage effects can be added with various paralinguistic features such as volume, speed, stress, different types of voice, for instance, female voice vs. male voice, vocal expressions, pauses, clapping, stamping, whistling sounds, and sound effects by voice (e.g. the sound of wind). Physical movements, such as gestures and actions, can be added for the desired stage effects. Note that the purpose of adding stage effects is to present the essence of the literary work, not to satisfy the students’ desire for novelty, so that both the audience and performers are able to achieve a deeper understanding of the text and create something meaningful to them.

Teachers who wish to introduce drama into language lessons may consider using Gundoku as a good warm-up activity. Gundoku is especially helpful for reserved students because such learners feel that voice performance is less threatening than physical drama.

Script 4. Mother Goose Rhyme (The script made by Kusanagi)

1, 2	One, two,
1, 2	buckle my shoe,
3, 4	Three, four,
1 to 4	knock at the door,
5, 6	Five, six,
1 to 6	pick up sticks,
7, 8	Seven, eight,
1 to 8	lay them straight,

9, 10	Nine, ten,
1 to 10	a big fat hen,
11, 12	Eleven, twelve,
1 to 12	dig and delve,
13, 14	Thirteen, fourteen,
1 to 14	maids are courting,
15, 16	Fifteen, sixteen,
1 to 16	maids in the kitchen,
17, 18	Seventeen, eighteen,
1 to 18	maids in waiting,
19, 20	Nineteen, twenty,
All	my plate's empty.

3.2. Practice Stage

At this stage, the learners become more familiar with reading texts aloud. They are free from hesitation, and are ready to perform a longer poem or an excerpt from a story. The main objective at this stage is to understand the text more deeply and interpret it through performing and appreciating others' performances as well as learning language skills. Learning to collaborate with others in a group is also expected. These processes require readers to personalize the world of the text by connecting what was expressed in the text and what they observed and experienced in their lives. This requires a transaction, that is interaction between the reader, the text, and the author (Rosenblatt, 1994[1978]). In order to facilitate this type of inner-communication processing, some background information about the poem should be given by the teacher before rehearsing. It is more meaningful if the learners inquire and obtain the background information by themselves as a small project in or outside the classroom beforehand so that they can understand the background of the literary work and they can communicate with what is expressed in the work they read.

I will show one example of using a well-known poem (see Script 5) for this learning stage in this section. As stated earlier, some factual information about the poet and poem can be taught or investigated by students, but I will present brief background information for the poem by Miyazawa Kenji in Script 5 for the sake of the readers' convenience here. Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933) was a poet and a writer of children's stories. He was also a teacher at an agriculture school, a fertilizer salesperson, and a farmer. He was born as the oldest son of a wealthy pawnbroker family in Hanamaki, 70 kilometres inland from the Pacific Ocean where Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck in 2011. Being an educator and a Buddhist, he put his heart into helping poor farmers throughout his life. His interests in science, arts, and religion are reflected in his works. After his death, many of his works were published and gained popularity not only among general readers but also artists in various fields. Many artists (poets, writers, film makers, cartoonists, artists, singers) were influenced by his literary world.

The poem *Strong in the Rain* (year written unknown) is known as one of the most important works of Miyazawa. As is the case with his other poems, various interpretations can be made by readers. The translator (Pulvers, in Miyazawa, 1997) of this poem said that the poet addressed his strong will and prayed for overcoming fears in his mind² and helping troubled people at the same time. The situation and the author's sentiment synchronize with the current situation in Japan. For this reason, this poem came into

peoples' minds and was read by both sufferers and those who came to their aid on 11 March, 2011 immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Readers are also able to connect themselves with what is expressed in the poem and their own experiences of the disaster. In other words, they can relate their personal observations with social issues.

Script 5, *Strong in the Rain* is one example for a large group of students aiming to incorporate effects of different voice expression for male and female voices. To create the desired effects, some paralinguistic features such as volume, speed, inflection, stress, pause and tone of voice should be considered and practiced repeatedly. The original version of the Japanese poem (see Appendix 2) may be introduced first to students whose mother tongue is Japanese, as the case may be. The benefits of using L1 are that students are able to seize the meaning and the message of the literary work more easily, and make observations on similar or different ways of expression across languages. Some educators avoid using L1 in a second or foreign language classroom, but from my experience, I have found that presenting poems in L1 lightens students' cognitive load as well as their affective load.

At the practice stage, either the teacher or the students can produce a play. The prosodic features of stress, intonation, speed, volume, tone of voice, and silence should be paid attention. In the production, artistic stage effects can be added such as gestures or actions, sounds or music, lighting, props, and slides on the screen. However, take notice of the purposes of the production. Namely, the learners should realize what the author of the literary work wants to express, and what they as performers want to express. The performers may try out some ideas while practicing and determine what they want for their performance. In this way, they are also required to observe their own performance objectively and critically.

Script 5. *Strong in the Rain* by Miyazawa Kenji (Miyazawa, 2007) (The script adapted from Iemoto (2005), arranged by Kusanagi for English)

All	Strong in the rain
All	Strong in the wind
1 (Male)	Strong against the summer heat and snow
All males	He is healthy and robust
2 (Female)	Free from desire
All females	He never loses his temper
All females	Nor the quiet smile on his lips
3, 4 (female)	He eats four <i>go</i> of unpolished rice
5 (female)	Miso and a few vegetables a day
6,7 (male)	He does not consider himself
8 (male)	In whatever occurs...his undersatanding
9 (male)	Comes from observation and experience
10, 11 (male)	And he never loses sight of things
12 (male)	He lives in a little thatched-roof hut
13, 14 (male)	In a field in the shadows of a pine tree grove
Ensemble A	If there is a sick child in the east
Ensemble A	He goes there to nurse the child
Ensemble B	If there's a tired mother in the west

Ensemble B He goes to her and carries her sheaves
 Ensemble C If someone is near death in the south
 Ensemble C He goes and says, ‘Don’t be afraid’
 Ensemble D If there’s strife and lawsuits in the north
 Ensemble D He demands that the people put an end to pettiness
 All males He weeps at the time of drought
 All females He plods about at a loss during the cold summer
 All Everyone calls him Blockhead
 15 No one sings his praises
 16 Or takes him to heart...

All females That is the kind of person
 All males I want to be

* *go* (the measurement of capacity, one *go* is equivalent to a 180.39 cubic centimetres.)

* *miso* (soybean paste)

Translated by Pulvers (Miyazawa, 2007, p. 92)

3.3. Expansion Stage

At the expansion stage, the students can create an original Gundoku script by themselves as group work. In the process of discussion, they need to reach agreement on understanding the text and reflect their understanding in their script. They should not only show their understanding and creativity, but also promote their social skills, such as negotiating with others.

The following poem is another work by Miyazawa Kenji:

***Shouldering the Flowers of the Narcissus* by Miyazawa Kenji (1927)**

Shouldering the flowers of the narcissus
 white and yellow
 ‘Morning!’
 ...farmer Jacob ...
 I’m just back too from selling hyacinths
 “Whew”
 “Oh, baby cabbages”
 “I’m going to plant them along the Sen River
 but the first flood will be the end of them”
 “Hey, good morning”
 “Nice day”
 the shadow of a row of pines
 a dog... a yellow shaggy poodle
 a bird is calling ... a bird is

calling
Screaming like shrikes
Children on their way to school
Burst from the morning sun

Translated by Pulvers (Miyazawa, 2007, pp.58)

When introducing this type of abstract literary work, a teacher should instruct his or her students step by step to help them understand what is expressed with the words and between the words by imagining a) the age, the season, the time, b) the context and the situation, c) characters, d) events, and so forth. In this poem, the contrast between the first part and the later part of the poem should be paid attention to. The poem begins with a peaceful morning scene in the country, but ends with a chaotic image. Readers may notice that villagers always have the weight of a flood on their mind, even on a beautiful morning as described in the line 'I'm going to plant them along the Sen River but the first flood will be the end of them'. Pulvers (Miyazawa, 1997, p. 237), the translator of the poem and a researcher of Miyazawa, claimed that the phrase 'the shadow of a row of pines' is frequently used as a premonition of a catastrophe in Miyazawa's poems. The following metaphoric phrases 'a bird is calling', 'screaming like shrikes', 'a dog... a yellow shaggy poodle', 'Screaming like shrikes, children on their way to school, burst from the morning sun' may also symbolize an outbreak of a flood or fear of a disaster in this quiet village.³ Through reading a literary work like this, readers can also feel and ponder over social issues in a holistic manner. Some couldn't but some other students could grasp the negative image described in the poem saying that the words 'shadow', 'end', 'yellow' provoke an anxious atmosphere and tried to reflect their interpretation in their performances according to their written comments.

As the reader can see, the poem begins with a short dialogue between a farmer, Jacob, and an unknown acquaintance of his. 'Reading by role' (see Script 2, Versions 1 and 2 for model scripts) can be used for making a script. At first glance, this dialogue looks short and simple, however, in fact, identifying who says each line is rather ambiguous as well as imagining to whom Jacob is talking. Some students said that it was difficult for them to imagine the situation of the poem due to the ambiguity; however, this ambiguity can be a good resource for developing the students' imagination and negotiation skills through interpreting the poem and making a script. It is a good idea for them to draw illustrations or act out physically as an experiment in order to create the context, and decide who says which line among the readers to draw illustrations or act out physically as an experiment. In this way, each group may create their own unique scripts based on their interpretations. According to their comments, some students were overwhelmed a little, but there were some students who said thinking over who said each line was interesting.

3.4. Evaluation

Performing literary works helps learners improve their language and communication skills and develop their inner worlds, as described above. To be fully beneficial, reflection is necessary. According to Dewey (1938, p. 13), 'we do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience'. Modern experiential learning theory, which was greatly influenced by Dewey, claims that attainment from learning (i.e. knowledge) is grasping and transforming experience (Kolb, 1984). In this respect, evaluating their

performance and others' performances has an educational value.

Both the teacher and learners can evaluate or comment (Iemoto, 2001a). One possible way is that they can choose one or two groups; for instance, asking, 'Which group's performance would you like to listen to again?' Another way is commenting on each group's performance. The following evaluation points are suggested by Iemoto (1994, p. 234):

1. How the literacy work was interpreted.
2. How appropriate the casting was.
3. How elaborate the expression was.
4. How impressive the performance was.
5. How well the performers collaborated.
6. How devoted the performers were.

Evaluating themselves helped the learners observe their own performance more objectively by comparing with other groups' performances as follows: 'I notice that what is expressed in the poem differs depending on how the lines are read and 'I realized how different the atmosphere became depending on their interpretations'. If learners perform without reflective evaluation, they have no opportunity to reflect on what they did and learned, and they will not improve as much when they perform next time.

4. Learners' Perceptions of Gundoku

This section reports Japanese national university students' perceptions of the Gundoku instruction described above over one semester based on the post-semester questionnaire. The students were beginners of English whose TOEIC level ranged from approximately 250 to 350. Out of the 23 students, 10 had experienced Gundoku in Japanese; however, none of them had experienced Gundoku in English.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions on a five-point Likert-scale (1 = disagree, 5 = agree) covering perceptions of the Gundoku instruction and their English abilities. The respondents marked only one choice for each question. All the students gave their consent for their data to be used for educational and research purposes.

Judging by the obtained results, the students had a positive experience in Gundoku in terms of enjoyment and learning English (Q1 = 4.13, Q2 = 4.17, Q3 = 1.74), and their motivation was high (Q1 = 4.13, Q4 = 2.30). As for their perceptions of improvement and interest, considerably higher results were obtained on pronunciation, communication, and poems. Modestly positive results were also obtained on vocabulary, sentence structure, confidence in read-aloud, and interest in the English language.

Table 3. Post-semester Questionnaire Results

	Question (<i>n</i> = 23)	Average
1	Gundoku was enjoyable.	4.13
2	Gundoku was helpful in learning English.	4.17
3	Gundoku was of no use in learning English.	1.74
4	I did not want to do Gundoku.	2.30
5	My pronunciation improved by doing Gundoku.	3.78
6	My vocabulary was improved by doing Gundoku.	3.43
7	I became more conscious on sentence structure.	3.39

8	I became more interested in the English language.	3.49
9	I became more interested in poems.	3.70
10	I gained the ability to communicate.	3.87
11	I learned to read aloud more loudly.	3.52

The questionnaire also provided an open-ended section to comment on Gundoku in Japanese. What the students said mainly corresponded with the Likert results. I will present the comments that the quantitative results do not show.

- It was hard for me to perform in front of my classmates because of my poor pronunciation, but there were times I enjoyed.
- I often noticed my weakness in pronunciation while working with my classmates. I felt it worthwhile communicating with many people.
- We could cooperate with each other towards the end-term performance, but it was hard to make a good team because group members did not have a positive attitude towards improving our performance at the beginning.
- There were individual differences for reading speed and such, and this made our performance difficult, but it was interesting to know there were different ideas on how to read.
- In this class, I learned that English is not hard but enjoyable.
- I could analyze the sentence structure and the message of the poem through Gundoku. It was new to me to observe English this way. I acquired a new type of thinking as well as ability of speaking.
- I understood that the English language also has rhymes. It was worthwhile learning about it while enjoying it.

5. Conclusion

In summary, Gundoku has many educational benefits. First, Gundoku helps learners improve their language skills, especially prosody. They can use English in a meaningful context and develop their automaticity in the language. Thus, fluency can be obtained. Learners will also improve their reading comprehension by encountering new vocabulary, analyzing text components and elements critically, and understanding different genres. Second, Gundoku helps learners understand literature and culture, as well as express their feelings. Performance makes learners internalize the world of a literary work; hence, they can understand the work more deeply. Third, learners have opportunities to develop their expressivity (Shigemizu, 2007). Through step-by-step experience of expression, learners will become more responsible, and take risks without hesitation. Fourth, learners will develop their social skills by building a community with shared experiences. They will collaborate with others as performers, and their good collaboration will facilitate solidarity among them (Shigemizu, 2007). In the theory of motivation, relatedness enhances learners' motivation in learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Lynch, 2003). Gundoku also trains learners how to listen and observe themselves and others (Shigemizu, 2007). It can be part of social skill training. Lastly, Gundoku is flexible and easy to conduct. You can try it whenever and wherever you want to with any number of learners. It does not require special materials or space (Shigemizu, 2007).

As this paper described, flexibility is an attraction of Gundoku. The focus may be the language, literature, culture, current issues or other things. The practice of Gundoku described in this paper weighs more on ‘process-performance’; however, Gundoku may be used for ‘product-performance’, for instance, as mid-term or end-of-term projects. There are many other possibilities. I hope many teachers and learners will experience this wonderful and insightful performance.

Notes

1. Readers Theatre is also called Reader’s Theatre, Interpreters Theatre, Platform Theatre, Concert Theatre, Chamber Theatre, Group Reading, Multiple Reading, Staged Reading, Story Theatre, or Play Reading.
2. The poem was found as notes after his death and was believed to have been written when he was seriously ill. For this reason, the year written the poem is unknown.
3. Big floods were caused by a tsunami going upstream when the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami occurred in the Inwate Prefecture, where Miyazawa had lived.

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Glossary of Japanese Words

平家物語 (Heike monogatari)	The Tale of Heike
百人一首 (Hyakuninisshu)	The Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets
群読 (Gundoku)	Group Read-aloud
論語 (Rongo)	The Analects of Confucius
素読 (Sodoku)	Reading texts aloud while simply setting aside actual understanding of the texts

Appendix 1. The Original Poem, *Big Catch* by Kaneko Misuzu (the year written unknown) (Kaneko, 1990, p. 81)

大漁
金子 みすゞ

朝焼け小焼けだ
大漁だ

大漁鯉の大漁だ
大漁だ。

浜は祭りの
ようだけど
海のなかでは
何万の
鯉のとむらい
するだろう。

Appendix 2. The Original Poem, *Strong in the Rain* by Miyazawa Kenji (the year written unknown) (Miyazawa, 1997, pp. 204-209)

雨ニモマケズ
宮沢 賢治

雨ニモマケズ
風ニモマケズ

雪ニモ夏ノ暑サニモマケヌ
丈夫ナカラダヲモチ
慾ハナク
決シテ瞋ラズ
イツモシズカニワラッテイル
一日ニ玄米四合ト
味噌ト少シノ野菜ヲタベ
アラユルコトヲ
ジブンヲカンジョウニ入レズニ
ヨクミキキシワカリ
ソシテワスレズ
野原ノ松ノ林ノ蔭ノ
小サナ萱ヅキノ小屋ニイテ
東ニ病氣ノコドモアレバ
行ッテ看病シテヤリ
西ニツカレタ母アレバ
行ッテソノ稲ノ束ヲ負イ
南ニ死ニソウナ人アレバ
行ッテコワガラナクテモイヽトイイ
北ニケンカヤソショウガアレバ
ツマラナイカラヤメロトイイ
ヒデリノトキハナミダヲナガシ
サムサノナツハオロオロトアルキ
ミンナニデクノボートヨバレ
ホメラレズモセズ
クニモサレズ
ソウイウモノニ
ワタシハナリタイ

Appendix 3. The original Poem, *Shouldering the Flowers of the Narcissus* by Miyazawa Kenji (1927)
(Miyazawa, 1997, pp. 98-100)

水仙をかつぎ
宮沢 賢治

水仙をかつぎ
 白と黄との
やあお早う
 わらいにかゞやく村農ヤコブ.....
ぼくもいまヒアシンスを売ってきたのです
ふう
あゝ玉菜苗
千川べりに植え付けますが
 洪水をかぶればそれっきりです
やあお早う
いゝお天気です
 松の並木の陰
 犬 黄いろなむく犬め
 鳥の声 鳥の声
朝日のなかから
学校行きのこどもらが
もずのように叫んで飛び出してくる