

I. Enjoying Sound and Rhythm: Recitation Activity


Since the 1980s, there has been heated debate about the nature of language ability that language education seeks to achieve. The definition has been expanding from purely linguistic and cognitive proficiency comprised of linguistic knowledge (sound, grammar, vocabulary, etc.) and the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening)—which are considered transferable—to communication skills focused on social interaction and a more proactive, comprehensive view of language ability that includes non-linguistic aspects. We learn language not only intellectually, through mental effort. You as teachers probably know from experience that classes incorporating the physical activity and the senses are valuable not only to get the attention of students, but indeed stimulate the learning process.

The material introduced in Professor Saito Takashi's book is appealing, but in Japanese classes for non-native speakers, comprehension is as much a priority as being able to enjoy the rhythm. Here, we would like to suggest recitation and/or reading aloud activities that utilize materials appropriate for Japanese classes.

Activity 1: *Iruka*

"Iruka" Second verse

(*Kotoba asobi uta*, Tanikawa Shuntaro, Fukuinkan Shoten 1973)

 Unfortunately we are unable to publish the "Iruka" poems on the website because of copyright restriction. But if you are interested, please send an inquiry to takarabako@tjf.or.jp and we will be happy to send you a printed version of *Takarabako* No. 4 which contains the two poems.

Objectives: To enjoy the rhythm of the Japanese language
To nurture a sense for the rhythms of the Japanese language

Level: All

Procedure:

1. Write the poem "Iruka" on the board.
2. Students may enjoy the poem by listening to the teacher's recitation of the poem while referring to the English translation. Point out the dual meaning of *iruka* to the students. (Depending on the level of the students, have them infer the meaning of the poem.)
3. In order to recite rhythmically, place an "×" and explain that the "×" is a silent beat. Recite the poem keeping time every other beat. (Each line is composed of eight syllables including the silent beats.)

You may want to keep the beat by tilting your head left or right at each □, or by turning your upturned palm upside down and up again, or by tapping a desk lightly with a finger at each ×. Clapping hands is probably unsuitable for the gentle tone of the poem.)

4. Practice reciting in pairs. While one is reciting, his/her partner keeps time every other beat.
5. Once students have captured the rhythm of the poem, recite in unison. Have a student keep the beat.
6. Next, recite while keeping time in four beat measures.
(Hold one arm out in front of you and turn your palm over with every □.)
7. Recite without keeping a beat.

Variation

You may choose to keep the beat by showing pictures of dolphins.

Picture cards that can be used in class may be downloaded at Takarabako website.

Expansion

Expansion ideas may be found on the Takarabako website.

Note 1

"Iruka"


The poem's pleasing rhythm is created from a combination of sound repetition, alliteration [head rhymes] through the fourth line, rhymes [end rhymes] in every line, and the 7, 7 syllable arrangement. Traditional Japanese poetry is characteristically composed of five and seven syllables or a combination of the two, which are considered pleasant Japanese rhythms. However, the basic units in Japanese rhythm are not odd beats, but even beats, that is, 2-beat rhythm. Placing a silent beat at each "×" creates the ideal rhythm.

The other appeal of this poem is its use of homonyms. Japanese has many homonyms because of its limited number of syllables. In the *waka* world, *kakekotoba* (punning) is a rhetorical technique commonly used. Try experiencing it in the English translation.

Activity 2: *Kappa*

"Kappa" First verse

(*Kotoba asobi uta*, Tanikawa Shuntaro, Fukuinkan Shoten 1973)

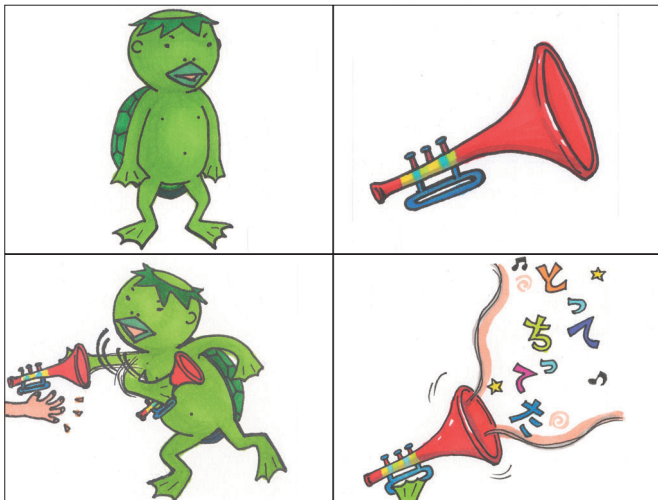
 Unfortunately we are unable to publish the "Kappa" poems on the website because of copyright restriction. But if you are interested, please send an inquiry to takarabako@tjf.or.jp and we will be happy to send you a printed version of *Takarabako* No. 4 which contains the two poems.

Objectives: To enjoy the rhythm of the Japanese language through physical movement.
To become used to the rhythm of double consonants.

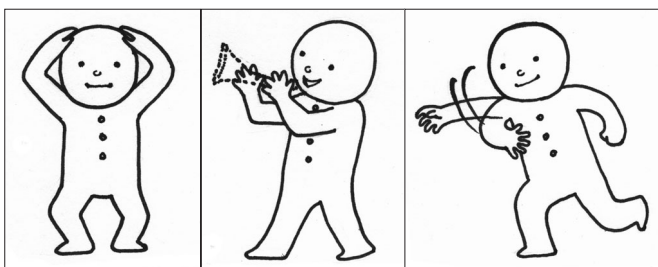
Level: Young students

Procedure:

1. Write the poem “Kappa” on the board.
2. Recite the poem to the students while clapping at each □ (“×” is a silent beat). Instruct students to skip in a circle when they hear a clap. (In age groups for which skipping and gestures are not appropriate, have students use their hands to keep the beat.)
3. Provide an explanation of *kappa*, showing a picture. Make sure students understand the meaning of each word and the poem.



4. Show students a gesture for each word. Instruct students to perform the respective gesture when they hear each word during the teacher’s recitation.



Picture cards that can be used in class may be downloaded at Takarabako website.

5. Have students skip or perform the gestures while they recite the poem.

Expansion

Expansion ideas may be found on the Takarabako website.

Note 2

“Kappa”

This short poem is full of fun—not only the delightful hopping rhythm of double consonants, but other features such as the kappa character,

the mischief of *kapparatta* (snatched) and *kappa* as homonyms, the overlapping sounds of double consonants and their amusing meanings, and the onomatopoeic expression *totte chitte ta*.

Kappa are mischievous legendary creatures believed to live in rivers and streams. They have extraordinary physical strength despite their small size, dragging horses and people into the water and drowning them. Their favorite food is cucumbers. They have a water-filled, dish-like part on their heads, and on their backs, a shell like that of a turtle. They lose their strength when the water in the dish dries up.

Pre-activities that stimulate the learners physically and mentally are vital not only for these recitation activities, but for any classroom activity in language study that utilizes both the body and the senses. They are a necessary step in enabling students to be more aware of their own sensations and recognize that some people have sensations different from theirs. It would be ideal if the teacher or an associate of the teacher were specialists on the topic, but that is not always the case. The following are ideas that anyone can easily put to use.

Pre-activity: Listening to sounds with eyes closed

Have students guess if they can hear a pin falling to the floor. Ask them to close their eyes and drop a pin. If they can’t hear the sound, ask them what objects they think they can hear falling to the floor and try them. (Students may be the one to drop the objects.)

Instruct the students to raise their hand if they hear an object falling to the floor. After dropping the object, have students open their eyes and tell them how many people raised their hands. Have students guess what the object was.

II. Producing Sound and Rhythm: Recitation Performance

For your next school festival or assembly, why not produce a recitation performance with choreography, visual aids, or a melody that will allow even an audience who doesn’t understand Japanese to appreciate the rhythm of the language?

**Performance Idea 1: Recitation Duet
“Gacho wa gaa gaa”**

“Gacho wa gaa gaa”

(Paiga ippai, Wada Makoto, Bunka Shuppanyoku 2002)

がちょうは	ががああ	A goose honks <i>gaa gaa</i>
からすは	かあかあ	A crow caws <i>kaa kaa</i>
みみずく	ほうほう	An owl hoots <i>hou hou</i>
うしは	もうもう	A cow moos <i>mou mou</i>
かえるは	げろげろ	A frog croaks <i>gero gero</i>
したを	ぺろぺろ	Its tongue goes <i>pero pero</i>
いぬは	わんわん	A dog barks <i>wan wan</i>
ねこは	にゃんにゃん	A cat meows <i>nyan nyan</i>
ぶたは	ぶうぶう	A pig oinks <i>buu buu</i>
マラソン	ふうふう	In a marathon, <i>huu huu</i>
ひざは	がくがく	My tired knees go <i>gaku gaku</i>
くちを	ぱくぱく	My mouth goes <i>paku paku</i>
あせが	たらたら	Sweat drips <i>tara tara</i>
のどは	からから	My parched throat is <i>kara kara</i>
みずを	がぶがぶ	Gulping water is <i>gabu gabu</i>
ふくは	だぶだぶ	Baggy clothes are <i>dabu dabu</i>

ズボン	は	ゆるゆる	Sagging slacks are <i>yuru yuru</i>
どろんこ	ぬるぬる	Mud feels <i>nuru nuru</i>	
あめ	が	ざあざあ	Heavy rain falls <i>zaa zaa</i>
がちょう	は	ががあ	A goose honks <i>gaa gaa</i>

Topic: Onomatopoeia and mimetic words

Stage Direction: Indicating the subject of each line with pictures, recite energetically and loudly.

Props: Pictures of subjects covered in the recitation (goose, crow, etc., indicated in English.)

Performance: Have the class recite in two groups.

◆ First half (Onomatopoeia)

Group 1: While pointing at each picture, “がちょうは”

Group 2: “ががあ” following Group 1

◆ Second half (Mimetic words)

Group 2: While pointing at each picture (knees, mouth, sweat, throat, water in a glass, etc.), “ひざは”

Group 1: “がくがく” following Group 2

Note 3

“Gacho wa gaa gaa”

The onomatopoeia/mimetic word combination of each stanza forms a rhyme, creating a pleasant rhythm that easily rolls off the tongue. In particular, the subject and onomatopoeia of the first stanza have similar sounds. Furthermore, the last line connects back to the first, forming a full circle and adding another enjoyable aspect to the recitation. Not only does this poem provide the fun of imagining English equivalents for the onomatopoeia, it leads the learner into the world of mimetic words.

Performance Idea 2: Rap “Gakko”

“Gakko”

(*Pai ga ippai* [Piles of Pies], Wada Makoto, Bunka Shuppankyoku 2002)

さんすう こくご しゃかい りか
おたふくかぜに げり はしか

えんぴつ けしゴム ふで がびよう
はきけに めまい にっしやびよう

きょうかしょ しゅくだい がっきしけん
みずぼうそうに へんとうせん

こくばん はくぼく つうちひょう
くしゃみ はなみず かふんしょう

たいりよくそくてい うんどうかい
おなかがいたい はがいたい

えんそく とうだい どうぶつえん
はなち ふなよい ちゅうじえん

ちこく そうたい ずるやすみ
きりぎりす かさふた おでき うみ

そうじとうばん クラスいいん
べんぴ ふうしん じんましん

Math, language arts, social studies, science
Mumps, diarrhea, measles

Pencils, erasers, brushes, thumbtacks
Nausea, dizziness, sunstroke

Textbooks, homework, term exams
Chicken pox, tonsillitis

Blackboard, chalk, report cards
Sneezing, runny nose, hay fever

Physical exams, field days
Stomachache, toothache

Field trip, lighthouse, the zoo
Bloody nose, seasickness, earache

Arriving late, leaving early, playing hookey
Cuts, scabs, boils, pus

Cleaning duty, class chair
Constipation, rubella, hives

Topic: Vocabulary on school and ailments

Stage Direction: While tapping knees and otherwise moving to a hip hop beat, rap the poem.

Props: Have students prepare lyrics to be distributed to the audience. (Kana, romanization, and English translation.)

Practice: Tell students that they will be rapping in Japanese, and recite the poem to them while tapping your thigh at every □ (“x” is a silent beat). Explain the meaning of the poem.

さん	すう	×	こく	ご	り	かし	や	か	い	×			
おた	ふく	×	か	ぜ	に	げり	は	し	か	×			
えん	ぴつ	け	し	ご	む	ふ	で	が	び	う	×		
は	き	け	に	×	め	まい	に	っ	し	や	び	う	×

Performance: Have the class recite in two groups.

◆ Group 1: First line of each stanza (school vocabulary)

◆ Group 2: Second line of each stanza (ailment vocabulary)

Distribute a handout with the English translation and romanization, which will allow an audience unfamiliar with Japanese to enjoy along with the performing students.

Note 3

“Gakko”

Not only does this poem rhyme, making it easy to follow, the vocabulary is on subjects familiar to students. Since the poem simply lists the vocabulary one after another, it is fairly easy to understand. Refer to *Pai ga ippai* (Wada Makoto, Bunka Shuppankyoku, 2002) and *Kotoba no kobako* (Wada Makoto, Subaru Shobo, 1981) for more attractive materials with illustrations.

The following activity ideas are also available on the website

- ◆ Taking a Shot at Classical Japanese
- ◆ Shiritori
- ◆ Heno heno moheji Contest
- ◆ Hayakuchi kotoba
- ◆ Mimi o sumasu
- ◆ Singing Activities