

## Conceptual Article

# The social nature of reading poetry: The case of reading haiku for content

Hong-Nguyen (Gwen) Nguyen

University of Victoria, Faculty of Education, Canada

It is commonly assumed that skills involved in reading poetry, such as decoding and assessing the poem, scanning for details arise in social relations with others, which makes reading social. However, this is social in a weak sense because these new accomplishments result from people working together. Using an alternative theoretical framework based on Vygotsky's later work, in this paper I defend the strong social nature of reading poetry for content through an example of how students (K-4) read haiku, a Japanese form of poetry. I illustrate that this sense of social is not constructed in the minds of individuals in a social setting, but it refers to a relation—a visible and irreducible joint production that develops as transactional features of the organization of turns in the haiku reading event. I demonstrate how reading haiku transforms itself as a what-where-when poem in this community. Understanding that reading poetry is social in this sense, *through and through*, helps us recognize how this socio-cultural practice keeps (re)producing itself in different cultures.

Keywords: Reading; Reading for content; Social; Reading haiku; Vygotsky

Article History: Submitted 10 September 2020; Revised 2 December 2020; Published online 13 December 2020

## 1. Introduction

Reading poetry is taught and studied in literacy education because understanding poetry is believed to be decisive in the achievement of students and for their engagement in contemporary societies (Hellermann, Thorne, & Fodor, 2017). Although many attempts have been made to understand the complex process of reading poetry, what readers do when they read and comprehend specific texts is still of interest to many researchers (Arya & Feathers, 2012). Whether it is an activity for academic, educational purposes or simply for pleasure, one of the processes or skills required in reading poetry is reading for content (Muller et al., 2017, Peskin, 1998). This skill is often understood as a cognitive process that involves high-order skills such as decoding, linguistic comprehension, thinking, analyzing, imagining, and interpreting (Garrod & Daneman, 2003; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Kamhi, 2007; Koch & Sporer, 2017).

Concurrently with cognitive and individualistic approaches to the construction of meaning process in reading, considerable literature calls for a “social turn” —a new approach to literacy that moves the focus from individual minds or individual behaviour towards social and cultural

---

### Address of Corresponding Author

Hong-Nguyen (Gwen) Nguyen, University of Victoria, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Victoria, BC, V8P 5C2.

✉ [hongnguyen41@gmail.com](mailto:hongnguyen41@gmail.com)

🆔 0000-0001-9846-5954

**How to cite:** Nguyen, H.N. (2020). The social nature of reading poetry: The case of reading haiku for content. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 4(3), 387-400.

interaction (Gee, 1999). For example, it is common to see this point of view in journals of literacy research:

This particular view of language is nested in a broader sociocultural view that suggests that literacy development, as well as the development of the individual more generally, is mediated by signs and fostered by participation in social interaction. . . . The meanings and the language of those interactions become semiotic resources for later language use and, when internalized, lead to an individual's development of "higher mental processes" (Vygotsky, 1978). (Lysaker, Tonge, Gauson, & Miller, 2011, p. 523)

In this theoretical discourse, reading, or the skill involved in reading, is taken to be a socio-cognitive linguistic practice of using text as mediator for purposes of communication and learning; reading is an activity activated by the reader and through engagement in a cooperative reading event with others (Bloome, 1987; Hymes, 1974; Shuman, 1986; Solsken, 1993). Reading first occurs *in* social relation and is then *internalized* in each individual (Gee, 1999; Hellermann, Thorne, & Fodor, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). In this account, those theorists who refer to Vygotsky's socio-historical theory when talking about the activity of reading generally refer to his early works (Vygotsky, 1978) and make a clear distinction between the social, interactive act of reading and the cognitive process of understanding a text (Scollon, 1998). Here, "social" is often considered as the context or the norms that affect the reading and learning-to-read process.

In recent years, however, the view of *social* has been expanded based on Vygotsky's late work, suggesting that reading is social even when one reads in isolation (Vygotsky, 1989). According to the late Vygotsky, reading is social not because people might have scaffolded the activity of reading or because children and adults get together and learn to read together. Rather, each individual reads or can learn to read only because reading exists as relationship, and participation in a relationship, or in a community of reading, is the origin of reading (Roth, 2015). The practice of reading, or the set of skills involved in reading, is not transferred from "outside" the person to "inside" the person, because in the very first instances of reading, every skill required in reading already exists *as* a social relation (Livingston, 2008).

Following these scholars (Livingston, 2008; Roth, 2015, 2009), this paper, first, revisits the theory of *social* in Vygotsky's later work so as to understand how the acquisition of higher psychological functions, for example reading poetry, exists *as a social relation with others*. Second, using a case of a teacher and students learning to read haiku for content, this paper demonstrates how *social* is not jointly constructed by individuals in social settings, but is a visible and irreducible joint production that develops as transactional features of the organization of turns in the haiku reading event. These transactional features exhibit the constitution of a new form of haiku, which, in turn, demonstrates the reading of haiku as an historical, cultural practice and, therefore, as social through and through.

## 2. Revisiting the Notion of "Social" in Vygotsky's Later Work

In social constructivist and sociocultural literature, it is commonly assumed that new psychological functions (skills, such as reading for content) arise in social relations with others, primarily with those already competent, such as parents or teachers (Cobb & Tzou, 2009; Landis, 2003; Muller et al., 2017). Central to this view are the presuppositions that (a) knowledge of reading or writing is not simply transmitted from one generation to the next; rather, it is constructed through the social interaction and practices of groups and individuals within groups before it is internalized in each individual; and (b) readers negotiate with each other to interpret or construct the meaning of a text while reading. Such negotiation occurs when readers use language to communicate their ideas regarding a text to others. Scholars adhering to this view often suggest that reading (as a higher psychological function) is constructed socially and then the skill is internalized in an individual's mind (e.g., Gee, 1999; Hellermann, Thorne, & Fodor, 2017; Lysaker, 2007). Because these new accomplishments result from people working together, they are said to be social as in "socially constructed." Yet when individuals read something on their own, it is the

result of an individual construction. This position takes *social* in a weak sense because social refers only to the context in which the result is produced and as a prior condition for an internalization process happening in individuals (Roth & Jornet, 2017).

However, in his later thinking Vygotsky suggests that reading is not an independent, cognitive skill that depends on social context to be social; rather, as any other higher psychological function, *it is itself a social activity*. Indeed, Vygotsky (2005) claims that “every higher psychological function was external – i.e., it was social before becoming function, it was a social relation of two people” (p. 1021). This means that reading, either in instructional situations or at home, first exists in the form of social relations; the process of reading *already exists as* a social relation before it becomes an individual function. Reading *is* social, but not because it is the construction of individuals who act together; rather, reading is identical to that earlier social relation. In this account of reading, an existing social relation then becomes a reality for others and ultimately becomes a feature of the individual (Vygotsky, 1989). For example, in analyzing the case of reading in children between the ages of 1+ and 3+ sitting in their mother’s laps, Roth and Jornet (2017) show how the work of reading is a visible, joint production of attention and sounds by the mother and child. Moreover, identical joint work of attention and sounds is also shown in the exchanges among well-trained research scientists who are able to do the work of reading alone. That means that independently of context (whether “with others” or “alone,” whether in an informal home environment or a professional setting), fundamental features that constitute the work of reading always appear as a joint production, which makes reading at all stages social.

In addition, when scholars in reading research refer directly to Vygotsky’s work (Vygotsky, 1979), they often claim that Vygotsky states that most higher functions such as reading, reasoning, and thought exist in social relations first and then become internalized in the individual (e.g., Lysaker, Tonge, Gauson, & Miller, 2011; Prior, & Welling, 2001). In other words, they refer to Vygotsky’s (1978) general law of cultural development, which states that “any function in children’s cultural development appears first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*) and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)” (p. 57). In fact, Vygotsky, in much of his early writing, was concerned with the mental aspects of an activity (Roth & Jornet, 2017), that is, that it is not cognition itself that is social. In this take, individuals still go through the internalization of whatever is built up within some collective. Yet, in his later work, Vygotsky confirms the “continuous transition of the external to the internal and the internal to the external rather than an imaginary unity and struggle of opposites” (2010, p. 94). Here, Vygotsky maintains the unity of the individual and the social. In fact, “the individual [is] a social microcosm” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 317). We cannot, Vygotsky (1989) suggests, separate the individual and the social, the external and internal, if we want to understand human activities. In developing and using these ideas, Roth (2019) adopts a transactional approach, which means that “there is a unity/identity of organism and environment, [leading] to the fact that neither one can be understood independently of the other” (Roth, 2019, p. 23). Every communicative act or higher psychological function is social because it is developed across the individual and his or her environment and always involves the joint actions of multiple people. Social relations are not the means for internalization of a skill; thus, reading, as any higher psychological function, is an in-built social event in which two or more person-events come to be related (Roth, 2019).

### 3. The Anthropology of Reading Poetry for Content: A Fragment of a Haiku Lesson

When we read a popular novel, an advertisement, or the newspaper, we engage, quite literally, in a certain type of work. The ordinariness of that work allows us to be engrossed in what we are reading; we need not reflectively consider all the things that we are doing. The ordinariness of that work also makes the use of the word “work” seem extreme. (Livingston, 1995, p. xvii)

Although Vygotsky’s later work may be in vogue, it is not explicitly clear how one might apply it in research. In the introductory quotation, we come to know that the work of reading, which is absorbing, consists of some practical actions that can go unnoticed; yet if they are concrete things,

they can be observed and studied, as any other human activities. In this session, I review how the work of reading may be studied anthropologically, that is, through the examination of transactions that are publicly available (concrete things that people are engaged in when they read available at public arena) and I introduce a case of a haiku lesson at a K-4 language arts classroom, which exemplifies the social nature of the work of reading haiku for content.

Most research in reading or teaching reading is often concerned with the author, the reader, or the text separately. However, as the main purpose of the paper is to illustrate the nature of reading, I look at reading itself as the phenomenon. That is, in investigating a reading situation, I do not take into account what the speakers (the readers) say, mean or if their arguments are right or wrong. As Livingston (1995) maintains,

reading is neither in a text nor in the reader. It consists of social phenomena, known through its achievements which lie between the text and the reader's eye, in the reader's implementation of society's ways of reading, in reading what a text says. (p. 16)

Writing about the social of reading means examining all the "work" that people are engaged in when they read any kinds of text as Livingston (1995) suggested "an anthropology of reading." This approach allows the researcher to clear all reasoned discourses about reading to examine the concreteness of reading as a real activity – "the inspectable, cultural practices of a community" (Livingston, 1995, p. 5)

Indeed, when people read, they are involved in a particular "work," which consists of practical actions; such work is always performed in relationship with others (Roth & Jornet, 2017) and is a joint production with those others. This work is a concrete cultural practice and, therefore, can be studied through examination of publicly available turn taking of reading events (Roth & Jornet, 2017). However, the work of reading is normally invisible until some kind of trouble requires resolution by means of joint work. Livingston (1995), for example, has analyzed how the work of reading is made visible when people try to read and work out difficult textual structures. Roth and Jornet (2017) have demonstrated that a child would be unable to read the letter "A" unless involved with another so that a relation between the ink trace in the form of "A" comes to be related to the specific sound /ei/. Joint attention in the work of reading often requires a particular orientation to the medium so that the textual (readable) structures may reveal themselves for the reader.

At this point, I introduce an example of a teacher and students learning to read haiku for content study to illustrate both the work involved in reading and how to examine it anthropologically. The fragment that we consider derives from an episode of the first haiku lesson in a reading class of 10 students (7-10 years old), at the beginning of which the teacher announces that they will start to study haiku. The main task of the day is reading a haiku poem by Matsuo Basho, a Japanese poet. The teacher, Miss Anna, wrote the haiku on the white board and directed students to sit in a circle, read, and study the haiku together.

#### Fragment 1

- 01 A Alright, here, we have a haiku ((*turns to the board and sits down looking at the children*)). Can somebody read it for us? Solomon? ((*various children including Solomon raise their hands while others just stare at the board*))
- 02 S autumn moonlight/a worm digs silently/ into a chestnut ((*Solomon looks at the board*))
- 03 A interesting. autumn moonlight/a worm digs silently/ into a chestnut. What do you think when you hear the poem? (0.8) Eva, what do you think when you hear the poem? (0.6) Valencia, you have your hand up?
- 04 V a worm?
- 05 A a WORM? Okay. What's the worm doing? ((*turns to the board and stands up*)) (0.4) Autumn moonlight/a worm digs silently/into a chestnut. (0.5) What's the worm doing?
- 06 F it's digging into the chestnut (slow and dramatic voice) ((*Miss Anna looks at the board moving her fingers across the words of the haiku while Finn speaks*))
- 07 A does it dig loudly?
- 08 S no ((*and shakes his head at the same time*))

- 09 A it's digging very quietly (*very soft voice, just like when she is whispering something and moving her fingers across the words on the board*). What time of the day is it?
- 10 S night (Tyler/Soloman)
- 11 A how do you know that?
- 12 S ((Soloman *points at the board*)) because it says autumn moonlight.
- 13 A what time of the year is that?
- 14 S autumn

This fragment illustrates a typical exchange in a reading class, especially in a reading-poetry lesson. Students sit in a circle, take turns to respond to the teacher's invitations, for example, to read or to answer questions. From turn 03 to turn 14, starting with a reading aloud and the question, "What do you think when you hear the poem?" Miss Anna invites students to state their thinking regarding the poem; students respond to her invitation by offering answers. Apart from continuous answers from students and questions from teachers, long pauses and repetition of the question appear, as well as do reading aloud, body orientation towards the board, and movement of fingers across the words on the board.

From a social constructivist point of view, reading here is understood as jointly constructed and internalized by different individuals in classroom settings. However, the anthropological, or transactional, approach allows one to study reading for content by examining concrete action manifested through the organization of turns. Here, the first thing that we observe is how in the first turn, in stating, "Alright, here, we have a haiku. Can somebody read it for us?" (turn 01), the teacher formulates what is coming: the work of reading haiku. The work of reading here visibly concerns the text of a haiku and more than one person. The teacher, in turning to the board and then inviting "somebody" in the classroom "for us," names whatever comes later in the classroom exchanges as "reading haiku." The activity of reading does not have a name, but it is also exhibited publicly for everyone in the classroom including the teacher, Soloman (the invited student), and other students to see.

If reading involved only the act of "reading aloud" or "reading silently," then after Soloman read the poem aloud, the activity of reading would stop. However, here, continuing the reading aloud from the student in turn 02, is the reading aloud from the teacher and many other practical actions (verbally and physically) from both the teacher and students, including, for example, questioning, responding, moving fingers across the words, and turning towards the board (turn 03-turn 14). In this fragment, Miss Anna's asking, "What do you think when you hear the poem?" can be considered as initiating reading the poem for content. Also, this makes turn 1, the naming of the activity and the two readings-aloud (from the student and the teacher), a lead-in or a pre-step for the reading for content. So, reading involves thinking, which is normally perceived as a mental process (Huey, 1908) or a process internalized in each individual. However, here, Miss Anna's asking implies that such thinking required in reading haiku for content is exposed in the public arena because whatever students and the teacher bring later to the classroom exchange is considered as "thinking." The work of reading then implies not the work of mouth, but also the work of ears, the "hearing." Whatever appears in later turns is related directly not only to the teacher's question, but also to Solomon's reading aloud (turn 2), the teacher's reading aloud (turn 3), and the teacher's introduction of the activity (turn 1). In sum, reading here is shown to be a joint work of both the teacher and student(s). However, it is not because they are "reading haiku" in the same social setting that makes such work concrete and social. What is observed is that the work of reading haiku for content is woven from practical actions of both teachers and students, manifested as transactional turn takings in the classroom.

#### 4. The Social Nature of Reading Haiku for Content

From the first look, the presented fragment of a haiku lesson allows us to see the visibility of reading haiku for content as concrete, practical joint work. It remains to show that what the participants do in reading haiku for content is already irreducible joint work developing as

transactional features of the organization of turns in the haiku reading event; rather than individual work that is jointly achieved in the classroom setting. Finally, I discuss how these transactional features exhibit the teacher and students in fact constituting a new form of haiku, thus illustrating that reading haiku is a historical, cultural practice.

#### 4.1. The Social Nature of Joint Production in Reading Haiku for Content

It is not unusual to see reading for content described as a skill built up and developed through the conversation of participants in understanding a text such as a poem (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2002). Moreover, the classroom setting is also taken as an ideal background in illustrating how the work of reading is constructed through sequential interaction between a teacher and students; and how, therefore, reading is social, context-based, and mediated (Cole & Engstrom, 1993). However, here, as distinct from a combination of the work of individuals, I show how the act of reading for content and its verbal account constitute a pair, becoming irreducible joint work. In addition, as it is joint work, it is not necessary to separate or make a clear distinction between intermental or intramental processes. I consider two elements found in the irreducible joint work: questioning for response and scanning details of the poem.

##### 4.1.1. Questioning to be responded

Many studies that support social constructivism in literacy education advocate interaction and joint work in class, yet criticise a traditional teaching approach in which the teacher is the centre of activity (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Lenski & Nierstheime, 2002; Rainey, 2017). In this view, whether a poetry-reading activity (such as reading for understanding) is social or not depends on how the teacher organizes or plan the class, or how the teacher shares the talk and turns with the students.

In contrast, in the current view speaking is an appeal to another (question, order, invitation, or interdiction), in which a reply is already implied and in which an appeal is heard. It is not a certain teaching approach, or teacher planning, or student motivation, or mutual teacher and student reading in the classroom that makes reading a joint work. *The joint work (speaking | actively listening; questioning | answering; inviting | accepting an invitation) exists not only in the relation (interactional order), but in fact constitutes the relation (Roth, 2016).* Figure 1 makes such joint work apparent sociologically and psychologically.

<b>sociological</b>	03	A (says)	interesting. Autumn moonlight/a worm digs silently/ into a chestnut. What do you think when you hear the poem? (0.8) Eva, what do you think when you hear the poem? (0.6) Valencia, you have your hand up?	
	04	S (hears)	interesting. Autumn moonlight/a worm digs silently/ into a chestnut. What do you think when you hear the poem? (0.8) Eva, what do you think when you hear the poem? (0.6) Valencia, you have your hand up?	(speaks) a worm?
<b>psychological</b>				

Figure 1. A transcription suggesting that hearing makes explicit the sociological and psychological dimensions of talk

First, the teacher in saying, "What do you think when you hear the poem?" (turn 03), invites everyone to participate in the joint work of meaning construction. The question is not posed as an individual utterance. Rather, it is posed as part of an interactional sequence. The teacher uses fundamentally social language in which the question does not belong to any individual. Such a question has come to Miss Anna from other(s) and, in her speaking, she returns to the other: here, ten students from the class and three members of a visiting research team. Indeed, before this question is Miss Anna's reading aloud and that of a student. As we continue with the observation and analysis, we notice after the question and a long pause that Miss Anna targets the question to a specific other, "Eva," in "Eva, what do you think when you hear the poem?" and then another student, "Valencia, you have your hand up?" Here we can clearly see that this speaking (questioning) does exist for recipients, Eva and Valencia, and others in the classroom. This questioning does not turn from individual to "social" because it comes from the teacher's own lesson plan or approach in teaching reading to a classroom setting (with other students). This questioning, in itself, cannot be understood alone because it already implies some kind of responding (whether accepting or rejecting) in the next turn. Indeed, after the teacher's first questioning a long pause appears (0.8) and after the teacher's repetition of the question another long pause appears (0.6). The long pause, which is co-produced by everyone in the classroom, indicates that the question—the invitation to the inquiry of haiku content—is not accepted yet and another attempt needs to be initiated. Then, when the teacher targets the question to Valencia, she says, "Valencia, you have your hand up?" instead of saying, "Valencia, what do you think when you hear the poem?" Her saying makes evident two things: (a) her question, which is for all, is already heard by student(s), including Valencia, thus, no repetition is needed; and (b) she notifies that her previous saying (questioning) expects some kind of response/return from others and now she acknowledges that she sees/understands such accepting/responding from other(s), in this case, Valencia.

Moreover, the fact that Eva takes up the invitation and offers a response (turn 04) makes evident that the question, "What do you think when you hear the poem?" appears in the teacher's mouth and runs through the other's ears at the same time and that such a question is intelligible for everyone who is present in the class (Roth, 2016). Turn 04 also makes evident that the saying in turn 3 exists for two and is appropriate. The turn itself (turn 03 or turn 04) does not constitute a question or an answer. If we heard only the student, we would not know that the statement is a reply to a query. Putting it differently, although the questioning comes from the teacher and the responding comes from the student, the questioning or responding in itself is already social. And here, in reading the haiku for content, such questioning and responding comes together (turn 03 and turn 04) as a pair or irreducible unit, indicating the social nature of the joint work of the reading process.

Here, questioning | answering or inviting | accepting the invitation (functioning as operational work constitutive of the practice of reading haiku for content) first develops as a transactional feature of the sequential organization of turns between the teacher and student(s) in the reading event. The classroom setting is not the origin of the sociality of the reading activity. It is not because the teacher is questioning, and the students are answering *together* that makes reading haiku for content a social event. Rather, questioning | responding itself is already irreducible, social joint work. If, somehow, the teacher targeted the question to Valencia and Valencia did not take it up by her response, (but, perhaps, the teacher responded), her saying (questioning | responding) would not be less social than it is. The teacher-question and the student-answer are two micro-social events that come as the social event—reading haiku for content. In fact, the very social nature of the event determines the turns and the talk between people. The nature of the statement as answer arises from the positioning of the turn with respect to another turn that can be heard as a question. That is, the very nature of the turn as an answer is premised on the social interaction and its norms, to which people orient in their activity, which they produce to be heard, and to which others can be expected to attend. In general, the conversation illustrates that questioning is to be

understood and responded to and is evidence of how reading haiku for content exists as irreducible social, joint work among the teacher and the students.

#### 4.1.2. Scanning details of the poem

In a reading class, when students search for and provide answers to express their comprehension of a text, it is assumed that they use their individual cognitive processes. In fact, the reader-response approach is one of the prominent methods in teaching literature this method supports learners in maximizing their competence, creativity, and imagination in reading (Langer, 1994; Rosenblatt, 2005). In this fragment, we observe the joint work of scanning details of the poem; the work of scanning details of the haiku appears as the coordination of the articulation of sounds (questioning, answering, reading the poem aloud) and attention (pointing, turning towards the board). As the transcription shows, when the teacher continues asking students, "What's the worm doing?" (turn 05), she immediately turns to the board and after a long pause she reads the poem aloud again. After another long pause, she repeats her question. What can be observed is that the teacher's question is not accepted. It is not accepted on the part of both teacher and students because just as speaking implies listening, questioning implies responding. For this reason, the long pause appears, and the teacher turns towards the board, rereading the haiku aloud, and offers a repetition of her question. This body turning, then, first shows how the teacher's rereading relates to her questioning, the text on the board, and also whatever comes next. This body movement functions as a hint for the students in the scanning for details of the poem. Thus, it is not individual in itself because it is always for others and it is available not only for the teacher, but also for all members in the classroom to see. When the student provides the answer, "It's digging into the chestnut" (turn 06), this makes clear how turning towards the text, the questioning, and the reading aloud come to be accepted and understood. The teacher's questioning, turning towards the board and repeating the question, and the student's responding are all inter-related. Therefore, the skill or work of scanning for details of the poem in the process of reading haiku for content is social because it is irreducible joint work for both the teacher and the student.

More interestingly, at the same time that the student articulates an answer, the teacher again turns to the board and moves her fingers across the words of the haiku, as if confirming the sounds (the answer) from the student. The teacher turns direction and produces a sound-word reading, the student evaluates it; then the student produces a sound-answer, and the teacher confirms it by turning towards the board and moving fingers across the words. Pointing or moving the fingers across the text is one of the most common activities of the early reading process (Muller et al., 2017). Furthermore, reading together entails certain joint attention to cultural objects (e.g., letters, words, images) (Roth & Jornet, 2017). As joint work, reading haiku for content is social because the tie between (a) material traces that exist to be read (the haiku on the board) and (b) turning towards the board and moving fingers across the words first exists as a social relation. The work of pointing in reading has been observed and analyzed in other research that looks closely at reading situations of young children learning to read in their mothers' laps and at the reading situations of well-trained researchers (Roth, 2019, Roth & Jornet, 2017). In those studies, pointing, which is a fundamental work constituting reading, always exists as relation (with and for others). Likewise, here, even though most students are able to read without their fingers moving across the line, we can see how the teacher and students exhibit the work required to identify and locate just where reading finds a readable text. We can see that the answer, "It's digging into the chestnut," is accepted, which highlights the dialectic process of turning and finger pointing; thus, in analogy with reading, it can be formulated as a pair: {pointing or turning | object (sounds/letters/words)}. For the activity of reading to continue, such orienting towards the object of attention is made visible in the turn taking. The link between text and reading, therefore, does not exist in any of the actions taken independently. Reading haiku for content comes into existence as an irreducible social relation – reading | text among all classroom participants.



Overall, in this fragment, we witness how the student's articulation of the answer binds with the teacher's turning towards the board and moving her fingers across the line. What we witness is that the work of reading for content was completed in and as the *joint work* of scanning for details of the poem between the teacher and the student. The student(s) do not scan for the answers on their own even though the answers do come from their mouth(s). Scanning for details, which is a necessary skill of the work of reading haiku for content, appears as the intersection work of questioning, answering, turning towards the board and moving fingers across the haiku lines on the board; those micro-works are all distributed between the teacher and students manifested through the classroom turn taking.

This way of reading haiku for content appears in the rest of the lesson fragment and many other reading haiku lessons. Questioning to be responded and scanning for details of the haiku are actually among the conditions required for reading or learning to read haiku at this place among this community of the teacher and K-4 students.

#### 4.2. Reading Haiku is a Historical-Cultural Practice

I have presented how reading haiku for content first exists as a social relation, that is, as irreducible joint work manifested through sequential turns in reading events. To demonstrate that reading haiku for content is social through and through, it remains to discuss how reading haiku for content offers itself as a learnable, historical-cultural practice through the interactional order. I will start with reading aloud and continue with a demonstration of how haiku reading transforms itself as a what-where-when poem in this reading community.

##### 4.2.1. Reading aloud

Reading aloud is a common skill or activity in poetry class, especially for young learners, as reading aloud is considered a socio-cognitive strategy to help readers build up resilience and enjoyment in the reading process (Lucina, Bauml, & Taylor, 2016). However, in contrast to the claim that it is teacher and student reading haiku together that makes reading aloud visibly social, here I show that reading haiku aloud is fundamentally social because this form of organization is prerequisite for reading to understand. Indeed, "reading aloud is not something children spontaneously invent. Children come to find reading in the same way that they find speaking (and, thereby, language). Instead, they participate as recipients in reading events, then they read aloud with someone else being recipient, and finally they read silently and for themselves" (Roth & Jornet, 2017). Tarzan, Kaspar Hauser and similar cases never learned to read on their own (Simon, 1978)

In fragment 1, we see the appearance of many turns of reading aloud (turn 02, turn 03, turn 05) from both the student and the teacher. Yet these turns are not understood as individual and separate turns from the teacher or the student alone. When reading aloud appears in the fragment, it implies an introduction to the inquiry, the giving of feedback, and the hint (referral) for the reading for content process. That the teacher publicly invites students to read the poem in turn 01, "Can somebody read it for us?" would obviously lead to a student's offering a reading aloud, as in turn 02. This reading aloud exists for both the teacher and the student because it functions as an acceptance of the invitation from the teacher. It is also interesting that the teacher did not ask the student to *read aloud*. In her saying, only the verb "read" appears. The student could read the text quietly instead of offering the first reading aloud in turn 2. Between turn 02 and 03, in no other turn does the teacher directly invite the class to reread the poem aloud. Here, besides the short and general commentary, "Interesting" (turn 03), the teacher never provides any feedback or comments on the student's first reading aloud. Instead, the teacher seamlessly rereads aloud the poem as if it were part of Solomon's reading. Here, the reading aloud from both the student and the teacher appears as the inevitable first step of the inquiry of reading haiku for content. Already, both the teacher and the student understand that without reading aloud, reading haiku for content is impossible.

If we continue to read the lesson fragment transcription, another reading aloud from the teacher appears in turn 05, after a long pause after another query regarding the meaning of the poem. As the reading aloud in turn 03, this reading aloud appears as an initiation of the repetition of the query and also an invitation for students to refer to in finding the answer to the teacher's query. After the readings-aloud from the teacher (turn 03 and 05), the acceptance and the answer from the students make it visible that the readings-aloud are present and accepted by the students. In short, reading aloud, which appears across the lesson either in the teacher's turn or the students' turns, exist for all, the teacher, the student, and others in the classroom. Figure 2 summarizes how reading aloud exists for both the teacher and students in learning to read haiku for content.

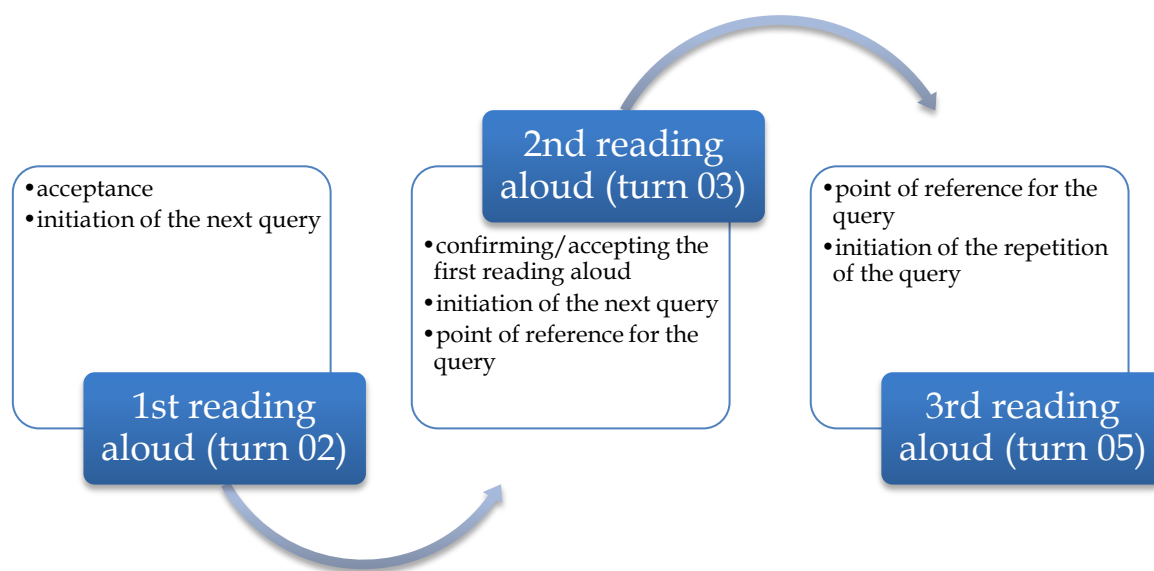


Figure 2. A diagram demonstrating how reading aloud exists for both the teacher and the student

As in a case where reading aloud appears when a child reads with his mother (Roth & Jornet, 2017), reading aloud appears in the interactional order so that a child can learn to read silently later in his or her life. Vygotsky (1987) also studied how a child first reads aloud with others, and for others, then later on its own. That is, reading aloud is the condition for learning to read to happen. Here, although the teacher and students are biologically mature enough to read the haiku silently, reading aloud is still visible in the sequential organization of turns because it is indispensable work in the practice of reading haiku generally and in the process of learning about the content of the haiku specifically. It is, in fact, the only place where we can see "reading" and learn to read and get feedback on our reading. The student reads aloud to answer the teacher's question. The teacher reads aloud as a way to ask students further questions, as a way to remind students to search for the answers in the text. In reading aloud, the poem on the board (the text) becomes connected to the whatever that the student already knows. In general, reading has to be aloud as it is the condition for learning to read haiku silently for content later. "This also is an indication to the primacy of speech over reading because reading presupposes speech, which again is social" (Roth & Jornet, 2017, p. 172).

In sum, reading haiku aloud in this fragment again illustrates how reading, as any other cultural practice, offers itself to the reader/learner who, in participating, makes the practice its own. Moreover, reading aloud appears in the sequential turns as invitation to the query, giving feedback, or point of reference illustrating how reading aloud is culturally formed.

#### 4.2.2. Haiku as a what-where-when poem

If reading were social only because people get together to learn and read together, the teacher's power would determine the interactional order in the reading classroom and the teacher's plan or

approach would decide the nature of the text (Rainey, 2017). Here I demonstrate that reading haiku for content is cultural and historical because when the teacher and students read haiku, they constitute a new version of haiku as a what-where-when poem *together*, which might be different from its original form or what is commonly known.

Looking at what comes first in learning to read a haiku for content, namely the teacher's question (turn 03), and the response that follows, "A worm," from Valencia (turn 04), we understand that, "Valencia, you have your hand up?" is treated as a question to a specific individual, as an invitation for an investigation into the poem. After Valencia provides a reply to the teacher's question, Miss Anna acknowledges that she hears the answer by repeating the answer, "A worm," with different intonation and, "okay" (turn 05). The intonation of the word, "worm," here is similar to that of a tag question for confirmation in daily conversation. Indeed, Miss Anna follows the repetition of Valencia's response with another question, "What's the worm doing?" and, "Okay." If the word, "Okay," which is normally used to express agreement with or affirmation of information that the speaker receives, in this situation, the teacher's follow-up question, "What is the worm doing?" appears even more important than "okay" in confirming that the response of the student is accepted with a take up of "the worm." This take up of "the worm" shows that the worm can be talked about, or that it is important to study. It is not just the worm that is the focus. The teacher continues to expand the topic of study or investigation by the emphasis on the verb "doing" and her orientation towards the board when saying, "doing." With this question, the teacher is showing the students what to look at in more detail and where and how to get into the reading.

After a student provides an answer in turn 06, the teacher again accepts and confirms the answer of the student by a question in turn 07. Here, we see the first affirmation of the action "digging" and the second affirmation of "the worm." As we continue reading the fragment, we see the same thing happen multiple times: the teacher proposes questions one after another and invites students into the investigation of the poem (turns 03, 05, 07, 09, 11, 13) and students provide answers (turns 04, 06, 08, 10, 12, 14). When the teacher affirms the answers by taking up the answer for another elaboration, the students read/orient their eyes towards the line(s) of the haiku on the board to look for the answer. In the course of doing such an investigation in reading haiku, both the teacher and students also look at, point at, or refer to the haiku on the board whenever they look for or affirm the answer (turns 05, 06, 08, 09, 12). In general, the flow from turn 03 to turn 14 formulates an interactional pattern of *inquiring-response-accepting the invitation for further investigation-response-affirmation-invitation for further investigation-response-etc*, a general picture or a description of how the reading for content practice structures in a language classroom here.

If we pay close attention to the order of this interaction, we see that the teacher and student approach the poem in the same manner, looking at the sentence structure or story structure in any English language classroom. All the identifying objects of attention that they follow fall into the exact order of a basic sentence structure. They start with the question/answer regarding the subject (the worm) and follow with the verb (digs silently into the chestnut) and then the adverb (autumn moonlight). The reading work makes visible the haiku text structure as a clear Subject-Verb-Object or a What-Where-When poem. The haiku is known among many scholars as a short poetic form developed in Japan in the 17th century. Apart from being known as a seventeen-syllable poem in a 5-7-5 pattern, each haiku is also known as the Zen poem, a poem that captures a moment of mindfulness, a moment of the here and now (McGee, 2009; Yasuda, 1957). In this fragment, the haiku text, when read by the teacher and students, adopts a new form, a new appearance—as a what-where-when poem, which also has been noticed and described in articles and talks of haiku practitioners in North West areas (Wakan, 2003). In fact, the anthropology of reading allows researchers to understand that the text, once read, is a description of reading (Livingston, 1995). Hence, it is not the teacher's lesson plan or the nature of the haiku text that decides the reading work. It is actually the other way around, the nature of the haiku text depends

on reading. The haiku practice offers itself as a learnable reading form: a what-where-when poem. Reading haiku for content then is a phenomenon that has cultural and historical aspects and is therefore social through and through.

## 5. Conclusion

Following scholars who suggest that higher psychological functions are social through and through, I have demonstrated the social nature of reading poetry through a case of reading haiku for content in a K-4 language arts classroom. Although children learn to read haiku for content with the teacher in the classroom, the classroom setting itself does not contribute to the primacy of sociality in reading poetry. Context constitutes the social only in a weak sense. Instead, in this case of reading haiku for content, *social* is strong, referring to the relation—the irreducible joint work manifested through the sequential organization of turn taking. Here, we can observe how the practice of reading haiku for content manifests itself across different modalities (finger pointing, reading aloud, scanning for details) and participants (teacher, students) and yet emerges as one unitary event. It is neither the eye nor the text, but the relation that binds eye and text into a given praxis that emerges as the work of reading; competent reading follows the material resources that the text offers and the haiku text, once read, is a description of the work of reading (Livingston, 1995).

Reading poetry (haiku) is a social practice. That is, reading is a manifestation of both the body (nature—voice, gesture, eye movement) and culture (nurture) (Roth & Jornet, 2017). People normally read haiku poetry although originally it comes from Japanese culture. Without culture, no reading of haiku could occur; nor without biological development. In fact, as reading is social, we can study reading anthropologically, which means we can follow and document each new instance when the practice reproduces itself. Our analytic method has shifted from considering what is in the student or teacher's mind to focusing on the concrete work available through the transactional features of sequential organization of turns in reading events and to treating reading practice as a phenomenon *sui generis*, existing as and reproducing itself as relations.

This analysis helps us understand that children are able to learn to read a haiku for content because this skill exists in the form of an ordered relation of actions and verbal accounts mapped on the interactional order. Although many children at this age do not come to class with full knowledge of haiku practice or of the haiku/zen master, Matsuo Basho, children participate in exchanges where the haiku reading for content norms will come to be recognized as constituting the visible order. Indeed, by the time that they participate in this reading classroom, they have been part of many reading communities (social relations) that are the first examples of reading practice. That is why reading haiku for content consists of the work of reading aloud, scanning for details, questioning and answering the question, and the haiku transforms itself into a what-where-when poem.

In addition, in the fragment, the teacher may appear to be the organizer of the teaching/learning process—she names the activity, she leads with questions and elicits responses. However, the work of reading haiku for content unfolds as an interweaving of several forms of the micro-irreducible joint work of all participants in the classroom. The teacher, then, is allocated a second turn slot in the sequential organization of turns in the reading event. Indeed, the social nature of reading exhibits a pattern of discussion/interaction that is commonly observed in the reading classroom (Initiation-response-feedback “IRF” – the teacher initiates, the learner responds, the teacher gives feedback). Yet, such pattern (whether planned or not by the teacher) is not the condition for the social nature of reading to happen. Everything that the teacher or the student does in this reading event is a social relation—joint work attributed to more than one person. The analysis shows how the work of reading and the work of teaching fully coincide, which also has already been noted and analyzed in the work of Roth (2019). It is here that the contributions of both teacher and children to the joint work create opportunities for their own cultural learning and development.

Bakhtin (1981) says that “the reality reflected in the text, the authors creating the text, the performers of the text (if they exist), and finally the listeners or readers who recreate and in so doing renew the text – participate equally in the recreation of the represented world in the text” (p. 253). Here, the way that haiku is approached as a what-where-when poem makes visible that reading haiku is a practice that is cultural and historical and, therefore, is social through and through. *When teacher and student learn to read haiku, they constitute a new form of “haiku.”* It is not a five-seven-five poem or a poetic form that originates from linked verse, or a zen poem. It is entirely different from the way that Japanese children read haiku or haiku masters gather and read haiku in a renga community (linked verse game). The haiku that the teacher and student study is given a new form of life, just as are many other cultural forms imported or exported into a new historical, social situation. What, I ask, in a haiku allows such a possibility of transformation? Here, let us imagine the relationship between a haiku (a text) and a reader or a participant of a practice. In this relationship, can the haiku (the text) be a passive participant? I imagine that just like the learner of haiku who grows during a journey with haiku, the haiku also adjust itself to adept to a new situation. It adapts itself – or makes itself visible, learnable – for the learner who might come from a totally different cultural and historical background. And it is precisely because reading always exists as a social relation that the practice/the skill can reproduce itself from one to another culture.

## References

- Arya, P., & Feathers, K. M. (2012). Reconsidering children’s readings: Insights into the reading process, *Reading Psychology*, 33(4), 301-322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2010.518881>
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Bloome, D. (1987). *Literacy and schooling*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Cobb, P., & Tzou, C. (2009). Supporting students’ learning about data generation. In Roth, W.-M. (Ed.) *Mathematical Representation at the Interface of Body and Culture*, (pp. 135-170). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Cole, M., & Engstrom, Y. (1993). A cultural historical approach to distributed cognition. In *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational educations*, ed. Gavriel Salomon, (pp. 1-46). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Garrod, S., & Daneman, M. (2003). Reading, psychology of. In L. Nadel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of cognitive science* (Vol. 3, pp. 848-854). London: Nature Publishing.
- Gee, J. P. (1999). The future of the social turn: Social minds and the new capitalism. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 32(1&2), 61-68.
- Hellermann, J., Thorne, S. L., & Fodor, P. (2017). Mobile reading as social and embodied practice. *Classroom Discourse*, 8(2), 99-121.
- Hoover, W., & Gough, P. (1990). The simple view of reading. *Reading and writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2, 127-160.
- Huey, E. B. (1908). *The psychology and pedagogy of reading* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations of sociolinguistics – An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kamhi, A. (2007). Knowledge deficits: The true crisis in education. *The ASHA Leader*, 12(7), 28-29.
- Koch, H., & Spörer, N. (2017). Students improve in reading comprehension by learning how to teach reading strategies: An evidence-based approach for teacher education. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 16, 197-211.
- Landis, D. (2003). Reading and writing as social, cultural practices: Implications for literacy education, *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 19(3), 281-307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560308213>
- Langer, J. A. (1994). A Response-based approach to reading literature. *Language Arts*, 71(3), 203-211.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2006). *New Literacies: Changing knowledge and classroom learning*. Philadelphia, IL: Open University Press.
- Lenski, S. D., & Nierstheimer, S. L. (2002). Strategy instruction from a sociocognitive perspective. *Reading Psychology*, 23(2), 127-143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/027027102760351034>
- Livingston, E. (1995). *An anthropology of reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Livingston, E. (2008). *Ethnographies of reason*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Lucina, J., Bauml, M., & Taylor, E. (2016). Promoting resilience through read-alouds. *Young Children*, 71(2), 16-21. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/ycyoungchildren.71.2.16>
- Lysaker, J. T. (2007). Reading, writing and the transformation of the self: The accomplishment of literacy. *International Journal of Dialogic Science*, 2(1), 325-336.
- Lysaker, J. T., Tonge, C., Gauson, D., & Miller, A. (2011). Reading and social imagination: What relationally oriented reading instruction can do for children. *Reading Psychology*, 32(6), 520-566. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2010.507589>
- McGee, M. D. (2009). *Haiku – the sacred art: A spiritual practice in three lines*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing.
- Muller, H. J., Thomas G., Franziska G., Jim K., & Stella P. (2017). Reading English-language haiku: processes of meaning construction revealed by eye movements. *Journal of Eye Movement Research*, 10(1), 1-33.
- Peskin, J. (1998). Constructing meaning when reading poetry: An expert-novice study. *Cognition and Instruction*, 16(3), 235-263. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532690xci1603\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532690xci1603_1)
- Prior, S. M., & Welling, K. A. (2001). "Read in your head": A Vygotskian Analysis of the transition from oral to silent reading. *Reading Psychology*, 22(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702710121388>
- Rainey, E. C. (2017). Disciplinary literacy in English language arts: Exploring the social and problem-based nature of literary reading and reasoning. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 52(1), 53-71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.154>
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (2005). Literature: S.O.S.! *Voices from the Middle*, 12, 34-38.
- Roth, W.-M. (2015) The role of soci(et)al relations in a technology-rich teaching - learning setting: the case of professional development of airline pilots. *Learning, Culture, and Social Interaction*, 7, 43-58.
- Roth, W.-M. (2016). On the social nature of mathematical reasoning. *For the Learning of Mathematics*, 36(2), 34-39.
- Roth, W.-M. (2019). *Transactional psychology of education: Toward a strong version of the social*. Cham: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04242-4>
- Roth, W.-M., & Jornet, A. (2017). *Understanding educational psychology: A late Vygotskian, Spinozist approach*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39868-6>
- Scollon, R. (1998). Reading as social interaction: The empirical grounding of reading. *Semiotica*, 118, 281-294.
- Shuman, A. (1986). *Storytelling rights: The uses of oral and written texts by urban adolescents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simon, N. (1978). Kasper Hauser's recovery and autopsy: A perspective on neurological and sociological requirements for language development. *Journal of Autism and Childhood Schizophrenia*, 8(2), 209-217.
- Solsken, J. W. (1993). *Literacy, gender, and work in families and schools*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1979). Consciousness as a problem of psychology behavior. *Soviet Psychology*, 17, 29-30.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky, (vol. 1): Problems of general psychology*. New York: Springer.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1989). Concrete human psychology. *Soviet Psychology*, 27(2), 53-77.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (2010). Two fragments of personal notes by L. S. Vygotsky from the Vygotsky family archive. *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology*, 48(1), 91-96
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky vol. 3: Problems of the theory and history of psychology*. New York: Plenum.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (2005). *Psixologija razvitija čeloveka* [Psychology of human development]. Moscow, Russia: Eksmo.
- Wakan, N. B. (2003). Haiku-writing: Learning from the pine. *Green Teacher*, 72, 13-14.
- Yasuda, K. 1957. *The Japanese haiku: Its essential nature, history, and possibilities in English, with selected examples*. Rutland, VT: Tuttle.