

***Reading to Learn in a Foreign Language: An Integrated Approach to Foreign Language and Assessment* by Keiko Koda and Junko Yamashita (Eds.)**

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Premise of *Reading to Learn in a Foreign Language*

This edited volume is part of the rapidly expanding Routledge Research in Language Education series, and like other volumes in the series presents recent research related to key issues and theories in language education; in this case the documentation of a project exploring a content and language integrated, assessment driven approach to language teaching based on Koda's (2016) notion of reading to learn. Ten authors have contributed to the work, including experienced scholars in the field of second language reading including Grabe, Koda, Stoller, and Yamashita, as well as some lesser-known researchers in the field. The book describes their project in its entirety and consists of three main sections, starting with three chapters on the theoretical foundations of the approach, followed by seven chapters that detail the implementation of the approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Japan and Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) classrooms in the US and the outcomes. The book is concluded with a final chapter on the potential for the approach to be adopted in other foreign language classrooms.

The Integrated Communication Skills Approach

The Integrated Communication (IC) skills approach contains three interrelated operations: text-meaning building, personal-meaning construction, and knowledge refinement. Koda and Yamashita (2019) define these terms as “(a) constructing text meanings based on linguistic information presented in a text (text meaning building), (b) connecting text information to the reader’s personal experience and prior knowledge (personal meaning construction), and (c) reflecting on what the reader has learned for the two preceding operations (knowledge refinement)” (p. 3). The book endeavors to address questions about the effectiveness of the IC skills approach and other dual-focused approaches such as content-based instruction (CBI) (Stoller, 2004) and content-language integrated learning (CLIL) (Dalton-Puffer, 2011) which are gaining popularity and seen as desirable to produce students to compete in the globalized world. The approach attempts to teach language skills for “analyzing, reflecting on, and communicating content information” (Koda, 2019, p. 43), and is seen as a progression from learning to read.

The Chapters

Koda and Yamashita’s introductory chapter describes the framework, approach, and layout of the book. Grabe and Stoller’s chapter two discusses how and why content-based instructional frameworks facilitate reading to learn. The complex nature of reading to learn and the skills developed in the process, derived to some extent from Goldman, Snow, and Vaughn (2016), are explained. They look at content-based instruction as a means to achieve reading to learn and how the necessary skills can be imparted. The chapter includes the word reread 32 times, and it appears that rereading for different purposes is something that is often missing from language-focused textbooks. While Callender and McDaniel (2009) found that rereading a

text had little positive effect on assessment tasks for L1 students, it is seen as an efficient strategy (Anderson, 1991) and often promoted in L2 reading strategy research as a desired skill at both sentence and text levels (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). Rereading is often actively and efficiently used by readers with relatively high ability (Zhang, 2001), and for reading to learn it seems necessary to connect texts and read between the lines especially when language learners who are involved may have less experience and ability of reading to learn. The third chapter by Koda lays out in detail the conceptual foundations of the IC skills approach. Koda and Yamashita set out to answer three overarching questions in the book concerning content-based foreign language instruction. How can dual-focused content-driven foreign language instruction be best integrated in the classroom? What factors might influence this integration? What impacts might dual-focused instruction have on cognitively mature students?

The second part of the book reports on how the IC skills approach has been implemented in different real-world contexts, albeit mostly in Japan. Each chapter follows the same basic format which facilitates comparison between contexts – introduction, context, course design, distinguishing features, outcomes, evaluation, final reflection, and conclusion. In chapter four, Yamashita describes how she implemented the approach in three classes of non-English majors at a research university in Japan. She was constrained by a previously chosen textbook thus unable to provide the desired thematic coherence of the approach. Nevertheless, she still noticed improvements in students' motivation and engagement. Murao, in chapter five, found herself in a similar context to Yamashita although she managed to incorporate a coherent theme of cross-cultural experience throughout her course. Her approach was unique in that it used what, how, what if, and what else questions as a framework to develop personal-meaning construction and knowledge refinement skills. Murao felt that the approach had changed both the students' and instructor's views on foreign language learning, which was the biggest benefit of adopting the approach. Baba's chapter six explains how she introduced the approach in a reading/writing class for English majors at a women's university. She was constrained by rigid curriculum in which she was under pressure to teach to a fixed schedule using a prescribed textbook, but still was able to incorporate content learning with some instructional adjustments.

Ichikawa, in chapter seven, in a context with much more freedom, implemented the IC skills approach in a four-skills, project-based course for English majors at university level. He added reading to learn skills to the course objectives and set cross-cultural understanding as the general theme of the project. He observed strengths among his students that he had not noticed in the past and realized the importance of formative assessment as a key part of the course. In chapter eight, Kojima implemented the approach at her 2-year women's college with a group of English majors in a listening-focused communication course. In her context she had enough flexibility to redesign the course and include other skills and introduce essay writing with a focus on transcultural competence. Integrating content and language made the author realize that the approach led to more authentic use of English. She used motivation theory to explain the motivational changes in her students, and to some extent, this explains some of affective changes made by students in other chapters.

In chapters nine and ten, there is a move from Japanese EFL classrooms to American CFL classrooms. Zhang and Koda (Chapter 9) introduced the IC skills approach to an intermediate level CFL course in a university. The syllabus was modified from a language-focused course primarily looking at vocabulary and grammar to one that included cultural learning as the content component. Reading to learn skills were noticeably improved, lexical sophistication increased, and students positively evaluated the approach. Formative assessment was also felt

to be particularly important in adjusting teaching to meet student needs. In chapter 10, Ze and Koda introduced the approach to an advanced level CFL course which already had a dual focus, although the teacher needed to further adjust her teaching style to accommodate the approach. Again, positive effects were noticed in the students' reading to learn skills and their lexical sophistication, with the instructor finding that the integration provided by the approach was key to the success.

In the final chapter (Chapter 11), Yamashita and Koda summarize the book and try to address common themes that arose in chapters four to ten. The first theme is that even when a dual focus is included in an imposed syllabus, teachers tend to focus mostly on the language and ignore or place much less emphasis on the content or see it as a way to teach language and not as an integral part of the course. They stress the importance of textbook choice and the difficulty of adapting a language focused book to the IC skills approach, in particular deciding on a coherent theme for the course. The third theme is the importance of integrating both summative and formative assessment. Fourth is the positive effect on learners even though the courses were only one semester long. It remains to be seen if the novelty would wear off if the course length were increased. The final theme they noticed was the positive effect on instructors' beliefs about the importance of an integrated approach.

Reflection on Authors' Premise and Language Education Context

The book and the approach it describes provide, especially in Japan and other similar contexts where teacher development, flexibility and innovation are sometimes lacking, a chance for motivated college teachers to improve the education they are delivering and at the same time improve their own self-efficacy while giving their students increased agency and treating them like the cognitively mature students that they are. Raising teacher self-efficacy in Japan may be particularly important for Japanese English teachers who scored lower than their native English-speaking colleagues on all aspects of self-efficacy in one comprehensive study (Praver, 2014). The authors provide examples of grading rubrics and worksheets as appendices to the practical chapters, and these provide further clarification of the approach and hopefully enough guidance for teachers to adapt the approach to their own contexts. Having taught EFL courses myself in both public and private universities in Japan with varying degrees of teacher autonomy, I can see the potential of the approach in integrating language education with content, which is sometimes encouraged in a top-down manner without training or support, although for some of the less motivated teachers I have worked with, the extra time required to prepare may not be seen as being worth the effort. To overcome this issue, and to get universities and teachers to more widely adopt the approach, a logical next step seems to be the introduction of some textbooks based on the approach.

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