



# Integrating Reading Strategy Liaison Instruction and Extensive Reading

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This study investigates how the implementation of extensive reading and reading strategy training in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program fostered undergraduate students' reading strategy use. The study utilized an exploratory research design, involving the observations of 60 Japanese students across two classes within a private university in Japan. They were assigned to do a post-reading strategy survey. The results reveal that the two experimental groups, who received reading strategy instruction and engaged in extensive reading, exhibited an increase in top-down reading strategy use. The findings also have implications for CLIL teachers and curriculum designers, as they shed the light on steps to incorporate extensive reading and reading strategies in CLIL programs.

*Keywords:* Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), reading strategy training, extensive reading

English language instructors at Japanese universities are often required to follow curriculum, syllabi, and textbooks that do not suit student needs and interests (Gough, 2020). As a result, learning English reading remains tedious for students because it is difficult to envision real-world applications of the language or make personal connections with it. To deal with that problem, Japanese educators tend to incorporate extensive reading components to university English classes with the hope to promote language learning through the use of materials that are more interesting to the students (Mikami, 2017). Meanwhile, extensive reading researchers have also demonstrated that the utilization of proper reading strategies is effective in improving reading comprehension (Banditvilai, 2020; Ruiz, 2015), and that less skilled readers have the potential to enhance their comprehension abilities through the implementation of reading strategy training (Cantrell et al., 2010).

Despite the aforementioned benefits of extensive reading and reading strategies to

raise students' interest and comprehension, little attention is devoted to the integration of reading strategy instruction and extensive reading (Yuliani et al., 2024). There has also been limited research on this topic in the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) context so far especially on the relationship between reading strategy instruction and extensive reading. For this reason, this study was intended to explore the impact of the integration of reading strategy instruction and extensive reading on students' strategy choices, and how the teacher embedded the training into the CLIL curriculum. Thus, this research was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the teacher embed reading strategy instruction and extensive reading into the CLIL curriculum?
2. To what extent did the integration of reading strategy instruction and extensive reading impact the utilization of reading strategies by undergraduate students?

## Literature Review

### *Reading models and pre-reading strategies*

In the context of bottom-up and top-down models of reading strategies, several previous studies have explored this field. Yildiz-Genc's 2009 research on Turkish EFL learners revealed the predominance of top-down strategies in both languages, with a comparatively limited and less varied use of bottom-up strategies. Similarly, Geladari, Griva & Mastrothanas's 2010 study showcased proficient readers' diverse application of top-down strategies, while low-level readers tended to rely primarily on bottom-up strategies for word decoding, often disregarding the broader reading process. Additionally, Boonkongsaen et al.'s 2016 examination of Thai science students' English reading strategies indicated a significant dependence on "bottom-up" strategies. Understanding the implications of these diverse reading strategies and their impact on language acquisition is crucial for the development of comprehensive pedagogical approaches, promoting a balanced integration of both bottom-up and top-down strategies within the teaching curriculum to foster a holistic understanding of text comprehension among learners of different proficiency levels. Critical exploration of the nuanced interplay between these strategies remains vital for effective language instruction.

### *Extensive reading and reading strategy training*

Several studies have investigated an integrated approach of reading strategy models and extensive reading in EFL context, which could potentially cultivate a harmonious language learning environment for EFL students. One of these studies, Burrows's (2012) yearlong investigation, delved into the impact of strategy instruction combined with extensive reading among four groups of Japanese participants. The findings suggested that the groups that received reading strategy instruction exhibited superior performance compared to the groups focused

solely on extensive or intensive reading. Therefore, integrating extensive reading with reading strategy instruction is potentially enhance reading comprehension, providing students with a more holistic and well-rounded language learning curriculum that supports language-focused learning, meaning-focused input, and fluency enhancement.

Additionally, in Shih et al.'s (2018) quasi-experimental research carried out in Taiwan with two groups of EFL college first-year students, it was demonstrated that reading proficiency could be distinguished by the manner in which learners utilized context to facilitate comprehension. Further analysis of the data from the group undergoing the combination of extensive reading and strategy instruction designated that learners at lower-intermediate levels, particularly those with lower proficiency, require additional support in utilizing context clues for improved reading comprehension. Thus, these findings emphasize the necessity of providing specific guidance to learners at varying proficiency levels, especially at lower-intermediate stages, to effectively combine extensive reading and strategy training, thereby facilitating a more nuanced and effective language learning experience. Building upon previous research that identified the challenges faced by lower-proficiency learners in CLIL contexts, this study provides empirical evidence to support the need for targeted interventions to enhance their reading skills.

## Method

### *Participants and study design*

The study was conducted with 60 first-year Japanese undergraduates from two classes at a private school in Tokyo. These students were enrolled in a reading course as part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program, designed to enhance their language skills. The primary objectives of the CLIL curriculum were to advance the students' proficiency in the target language (English) and to seamlessly

integrate language learning into the regular academic curriculum. The study specifically involves all students at pre-intermediate levels, as determined by the TOEIC IP placement test. Throughout a period of fourteen weeks, the teacher responsible for the two classes recorded her teaching experiences and insights in weekly observations, outlining her strategies for incorporating various reading models. The semi-structured observations detailed the systematic implementation of strategic reading instructions and the assessment of her students' perceived benefits concerning the development of their reading strategies.

In detail, the semi-structured observations in this study refer to a research method where the observer follows a predetermined set of key points, but the specific questions and their order can vary based on the flow of interaction and participants' responses. In this particular context, the semi-structured observations were designed to capture the strategies and techniques the teacher used to promote strategic reading, as well as to observe students' engagement and responses to these instructional approaches. This method allowed for flexibility while maintaining a focus on specific research questions. Moreover, to assess students' perceived benefits of their reading strategies, a post-intervention survey was administered. To complement the qualitative data from the observations, a final post-survey was conducted to measure actual strategy use between top-down and bottom-up reading strategies. The findings from these assessments were analyzed to determine the extent to which integrating reading strategy instruction with extensive reading influences the utilization of reading strategies among undergraduate students.

Additionally, the students engaged in collaborative pair work to select a series of extensive reading materials from Oxford graded readers tailored to facilitate language learning. This comprehensive approach facilitated an extensive examination of the teacher's experiences and the students' involvement in integrating

reading strategy instructions and extensive reading. The integration aimed to serve as a motivating factor and enhance reading comprehension among the students.

### *Procedure and theoretical framework*

The development of the reading strategy instructional environment was founded on the fundamental principles outlined in the models of the reading process theory (Nuttall, 1996; Eunjeon, 2009). Particularly, effective reading involves a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes, as well as the strategic use of various reading techniques. Besides, motivation and engagement play crucial roles in successful comprehension. These principles underscored the critical role of reading strategies in facilitating effective reading comprehension, aligning with various aspects of the reading models. The integration of reading strategy instructions into extensive reading activities encompassed a range of tasks, including skimming, scanning, summarizing, outlining, vocalizing challenging sections of the text, simplifying complex sentences, and previewing vocabulary. These initiatives aimed to strengthen learners' intrinsic motivation for reading, ultimately fostering an increased interest in extensive reading. It was expected that this heightened reading engagement, coupled with extensive reading, would contribute to enhancing the learners' overall sense of comprehension competence.

Moreover, the instructional setting was deliberately structured to encourage independent learning. Students were given the freedom to engage with a variety of Oxford graded reader materials, with the option to personalize difficulty levels and choose preferred genres. This process was facilitated through a comprehensive graded reader library within the university, enabling students to have a more autonomous learning experience. In order to cultivate a sense of solidarity, students were motivated to share their experiences and activities related to extensive reading with their peers. This communal approach was

implemented to foster a sense of connection and reading motivation among the participants.

*Data collection and analysis*

Data from both the teacher and learners, including a post-survey and classroom observations, were collected and methodically organized for initial analysis. The data were categorized thematically, with a specific focus on the integration procedures and the students' utilization of reading strategies. For the purposes of this study, particular attention was given to data concerning the specific steps taken by the teacher in providing reading strategy instructions within the domain of English reading. This specific set of data was utilized to develop a comprehensive five-step training model that illustrates the practical implementation of these strategies. The resulting model provides valuable insights into the nuanced process of strategy training within the CLIL framework facilitated by extensive reading.

**Results**

*Steps that the teacher embedded reading strategy instruction and extensive reading into the CLIL curriculum*

Starting from the initial week of the semester, the researcher commenced observations until week 12, during which the teacher provided an introduction to commonly employed reading strategies. In the second week, a comprehensive overview of Oxford graded readers suitable for the students' pre-intermediate proficiency levels was presented. Weeks three to seven were dedicated to introducing bottom-up reading strategies in class A, while class B was exposed to top-down reading strategies. Subsequently, over the following five weeks (Weeks 8-12), there was a cross-replacement of both bottom-up and top-down strategies between the two classes, aimed at mitigating the potential influence of the sequential order of instruction on the students' perceptions of the applicability of each set of strategies, thus ensuring an unbiased assessment of their impact.

**Table 1**

*Research design and integrated procedure*

	Class A	Class B
Week 1	Observation Frequently used reading strategy introduction	
Week 2	Graded readers (Oxford 3000 core words) introduction Interrelation between Graded readers and frequently used reading strategy introduction	
Weeks 3-7	Semi-structured observations Bottom-up reading strategies introduction	Semi-structured observations Top-down reading strategies introduction
Weeks 8-12	Top-down reading strategies introduction	Bottom-up reading strategies introduction
Week 13	Integrated practice session	
Week 14	Post-survey Final test	

The presentation of these bottom-up and top-down strategies did not occur in a single session but rather in smaller segments over the duration of the study. The comprehensive five-step training model, derived from data collected through semi-structured observations over the course of 12 weeks, delineates the practical application of these strategies as outlined below.

*Step 1: Familiarization with common reading models and strategies (Week 1)*

Introduce students to the fundamental concepts of top-down and bottom-up reading models and their relevant strategies, emphasizing their distinctive characteristics and applicability in the CLIL reading contexts.

*Step 2: Introduction to graded readers and its alignment with reading strategies (Week 2)*

Familiarize students with the graded readers (Oxford 3000 core words) and emphasize the correlation between the

readers and the previously introduced common reading strategies.

*Step 3: Comprehensive instructional guidance (Weeks 3-12)*

Provide comprehensive instruction on each specific strategy associated with top-down model, focusing on skills such as skimming, scanning, and summarizing. Similarly, offer in-depth guidance on bottom-up strategies, emphasizing skills such as word reading out loud, previewing vocabulary, and breaking down complex sentences (see Table 2 for details).

*Step 4: Integrated practice session (Week 13)*

Facilitate integrated practice sessions that encourage students to apply both top-down and bottom-up strategies concurrently. Design exercises that prompt students to employ a combination of these strategies while doing extensive reading to enhance overall reading comprehension and critical analysis of texts.

**Table 2**

*Distinct reading strategies employed by the teacher for each model*

Reading Models	Relevant reading strategies	Details
Top-Down	Skimming	Glance through the text, latter read for details
	Scanning	Mark or highlight important parts
	Summarizing	Take notes and summarize given texts by own words
Bottom-Up	Reading out loud	Read out loud difficult parts of the text
	Breaking down complex sentences	Identify the subject, verb, and object, making it easier to grasp the overall meaning
	Previewing vocabulary	Try to understand key vocabulary words in the text helps readers decode and comprehend the content better

### *Step 5: Ongoing assessment and progressive skill application (Week 14)*

Continuously assess students' progress in utilizing top-down and bottom-up strategies, encourage students to apply the acquired strategies independently, fostering their autonomy in selecting and implementing the most suitable reading approach based on the nature and complexity of the extensive reading materials.

### *Influence of integrated reading strategies and extensive reading on undergraduate students' reading strategy utilization*

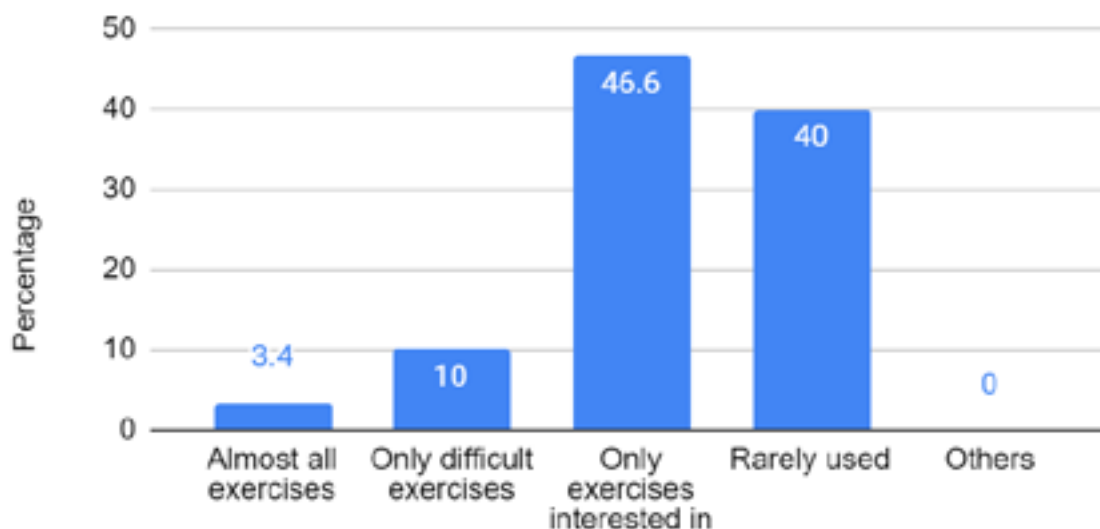
The data presented in Figure 1 offers insights into the utilization patterns of bottom-up reading strategies within the context of various reading comprehension exercises. Analyzed from the post-survey conducted at the end of the semester, it reveals that a small percentage of respondents, approximately 3.4% (2 students), employed bottom-up strategies for nearly all exercises. Moreover, 10% (6 students)

exclusively utilized these strategies for challenging exercises, while a substantial proportion of participants, comprising 46.6% (28 students), indicated the application of bottom-up strategies specifically for exercises that captured their interest. Notably, a considerable number of students, accounting for 40% (24 students), reported rare use of these strategies. No students identified other approaches for the utilization of bottom-up reading strategies. These findings provide valuable insights into the nuanced utilization trends of bottom-up strategies.

Figure 2, also derived from the post-survey, depicts the frequency of top-down reading strategy utilization across different reading comprehension exercises. It was found that a majority of the surveyed students, approximately 53.4% (32 students), employed these strategies consistently across almost all exercises. Additionally, a notable proportion, comprising 16.7% (10 students), exclusively utilized these strategies when confronted with challenging exercises, while 23.3% (14 students) reported using

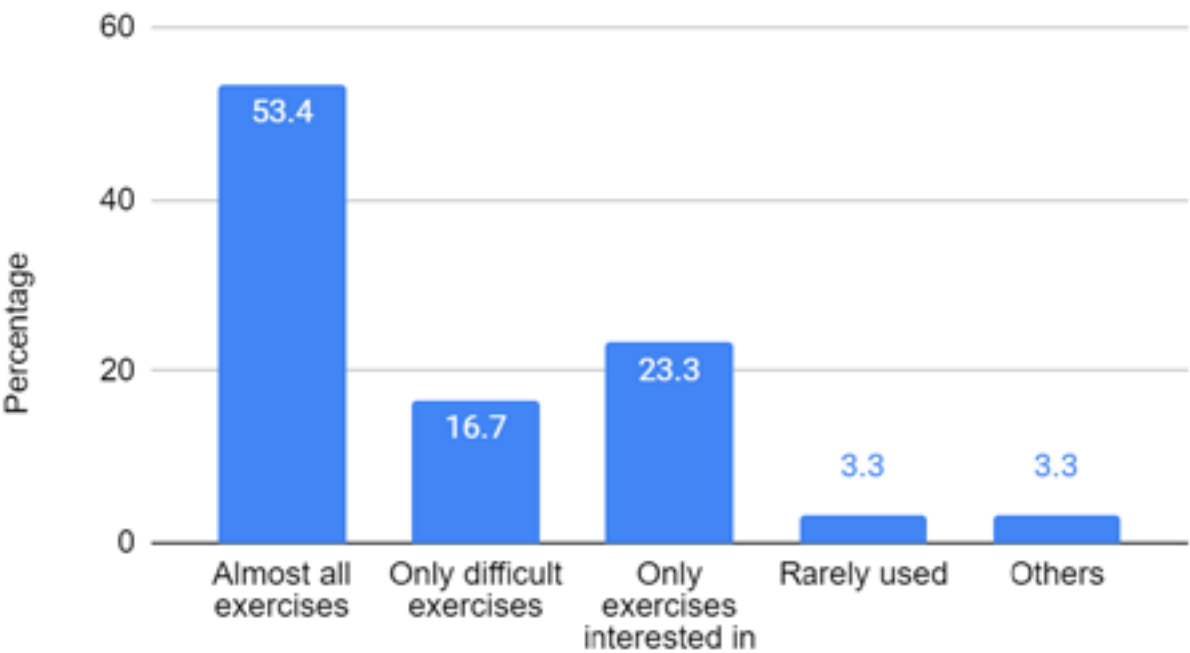
**Figure 1**

*Frequency of using bottom-up reading strategies in doing reading comprehension exercises*



**Figure 2**

*Frequency of using top-down reading strategies in doing reading comprehension exercises*



them solely for exercises that piqued their interest. Conversely, a small percentage of students, approximately 3.3% (2 students) each, indicated rare use of these strategies or adopted other, unspecified approaches. These findings highlight the positive influence of the integrated approach on students' engagement with these strategies across various comprehension tasks.

**Discussion**

In terms of the first research question, the five-step training model presented within the study reflects a deliberate and systematic approach to enhancing students' reading proficiency through the integration of both bottom-up and top-down strategies. By strategically segmenting the presentation of these strategies across multiple sessions throughout the study's timeline, the model demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the gradual learning process, allowing students to develop a comprehensive grasp of each strategy's application within the context of CLIL reading environments. The initial step's emphasis

on familiarizing students with fundamental reading models and strategies lays a strong foundation for their subsequent engagement with the graded readers and the corresponding reading strategies. This deliberate alignment between the graded readers and the established reading strategies in the second step not only facilitates a more coherent learning experience but also underscores the practical relevance of these strategies in real-world reading contexts.

Furthermore, the comprehensive instructional guidance provided in the third step highlights the study's commitment to equipping students with the necessary skills for effective comprehension and analysis of complex texts. The integrated practice sessions in the subsequent step effectively encourage students to apply a holistic approach, enabling them to combine both top-down and bottom-up strategies to enhance their overall reading comprehension abilities. The model's final step, centered on ongoing assessment and progressive skill application, acknowledges the importance of continuous evaluation

and individual autonomy in selecting and implementing appropriate reading strategies. By fostering a dynamic learning environment that encourages independent strategy application, the model underscores the significance of promoting self-directed learning and critical thinking skills among students.

Regarding the second research question, the findings depicted in Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide valuable insights into the diverse patterns of utilization of bottom-up and top-down reading strategies among undergraduate students in the context of reading comprehension exercises. Analyzed within the framework of the models of the reading process theory, these results underscore the intricate interplay between the cognitive processes involved in the reading comprehension task. The relatively lower percentage of students employing bottom-up strategies for almost all exercises suggests a more selective application of these strategies, potentially indicating a preference for a more targeted and informative bottom-up model training to solve complex textual information.

Similarly, the more frequent utilization of top-down strategies across different exercises, as indicated in Figure 2, aligns with the theoretical propositions of the top-down model, emphasizing the significance of utilizing prior knowledge and context in comprehending textual information. The higher frequency of top-down strategy implementation in exercises that captured students' interest while using graded readers, highlighting the role of motivation and engagement in shaping the application of these strategies, emphasizing the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation for effective reading comprehension.

## **Conclusion**

The study's five-step training model integrates bottom-up and top-down reading strategies within the CLIL context, serving as a structured mechanism to bolster students' reading proficiency. Through a meticulous

segmentation of the training sessions, the model underscores the significance of gradually instilling a nuanced understanding of each strategy's application. By emphasizing the alignment of fundamental reading models with graded readers, the model establishes a robust platform for fostering students' engagement with graded readers, thereby cultivating a more comprehensive understanding of how each strategy can be optimally leveraged.

The study's emphasis was on providing meticulous instructional guidance to students. It also facilitates integrated practice sessions, underscoring its commitment to enhancing students' proficiency in navigating complex textual structures. The deliberate focus of the model lies in the facilitation of continuous training, ensuring a thorough understanding of students' progress. Simultaneously, the model encourages individual autonomy in the application of various strategies, fostering a sense of self-directed learning among students. This approach is instrumental in honing critical thinking skills within the student cohort, contributing to their overall cognitive development and academic growth.

However, to provide a comprehensive and nuanced assessment of the impact of integrated reading strategies, future research endeavors should consider incorporating standardized benchmarks as a means of quantifying students' performance in reading comprehension tasks. The inclusion of standardized measures, coupled with longitudinal studies, would undoubtedly afford a more granular evaluation of students' reading comprehension abilities, thereby engendering a more holistic understanding of the sustained benefits by this pedagogical approach. Emphasizing the integration of standardized benchmarks and longitudinal studies would undoubtedly pave the way for the continual refinement of effective reading instruction practices, thus fostering a more profound comprehension of students' reading

proficiency and development of strategy use within the CLIL contexts.

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