Book Review

Teng, M. F., & Reynolds, B. L. (Eds.). (2024). *Researching Incidental Vocabulary Learning in a Second Language* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003270782

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Although teachers can make huge improvements in learners' vocabulary knowledge through classroom teaching, research suggests that much vocabulary acquisition happens outside of the classroom when students are unaware that they are learning — that is to say, vocabulary is acquired incidentally (Webb, 2020). Educators, then, might serve their students well by encouraging language-related activities outside of the classroom that can lead to greater outcomes. Additionally, it is equally important for researchers to fully understand incidental vocabulary learning and investigate the concept through robust methodologies, so results are credible and studies are replicable for others. As there are limited books and edited volumes on this topic, Teng and Reynolds bring experts together on a range of topics concerning incidental vocabulary learning in Researching Incidental Vocabulary Learning in a Second Language. The volume's almost exclusive focus on incidental vocabulary learning is particularly valuable, making it a welcome resource for teachers, teacher educators, and researchers.

The book is divided into four parts: pedagogy, methodology, individual differences, and future directions. Each chapter is uniformly organized, starting with a short introduction, followed by a discussion of critical issues, methodological guidance, and a proposed future study, providing a comprehensive and structured approach. The first part focuses on pedagogical aspects of incidental vocabulary learning, addressing how reading and viewing can aid incidental vocabulary learning. This section describes the benefits of establishing an extensive reading program to develop L2 learners' vocabulary outside of the classroom setting. The section also sheds light on how single words and formulaic sequences can be learned through audiovisual input (e.g., films, TV series, YouTube) and how this learning can be accurately measured. Given the amount of time second/foreign language (L2) learners dedicate to reading and viewing, this section provides valuable information for educators, highlighting the importance of pedagogical applications of such out-of-school activities as reading and viewing.

Part 2 features four chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of the methodology of incidental vocabulary learning research. This part presents valuable information about points to pay attention to prior to and after an experiment, and a range of tools to gauge learning of single and multi-word expressions via offline and online measures. Part 3 moves on to focus on a variety of factors affecting incidental vocabulary learning. These include motivation, task design, frequency, language aptitude, and prior vocabulary knowledge, among others. The value of qualitative approaches to explore incidental vocabulary learning is also discussed.

The final part examines future directions in research on incidental vocabulary learning. Chapter 11 discusses meta-analysis in SLA research, offering an introductory overview. The author explains the application and advantages of it and suggests three key practices for conducting meta-analyses. In the next chapter, Boers explains how vocabulary-focused activities can subsequently promote incidental learning due to learners' enhanced awareness of vocabulary knowledge and how language-focused activities can guide learners to consolidate different aspects of intentionally learned items.

While other books cover vocabulary learning more broadly (e.g., Boers, 2021; Webb, 2020), this volume almost uniquely and comprehensively focuses on incidental vocabulary learning,

with implications for researchers and teachers. Concerning researchers, the suggested alternative test formats and research tools in Chapter 2 could lead to a greater understanding of the effects of test modalities, thus advancing research. Moreover, the newer methodologies discussed in Chapter 5 could inform our understanding of the cognitive processes involved in vocabulary learning since they can reveal neural activities during vocabulary encounters and subsequent processing. The chapter on data science provides guidance on how to investigate pedagogical decisions through modeling and analysis. The penultimate chapter identifies gaps in the existing literature and provides a framework for future research. The inclusion of meta-analyses, data science, and advanced statistical techniques illustrates the book's alignment with current trends, ensuring its relevance and utility in contemporary research contexts.

This volume is of use for language teachers as well. To begin with, teachers can incorporate extensive viewing and/or reading programs into their syllabus to reinforce their learners' progress. Secondly, teachers can also combine teaching with research and conduct action research to observe whether these programs have an impact on their learners, connecting the takeaways from Part 1 and Part 2 of this book. Regarding individual differences, the chapters highlight the importance of choosing the right materials for the right level and underline that learners' voices should not go unnoticed when designing materials and syllabi. Finally, several implicit vocabulary teaching strategies (and some implicit ones in Chapter 12) are also discussed and suggested in the book.

However, the book has several limitations that could have enhanced its quality. There is growing research on the effects of extramural language activities (e.g., reading books, writing to pen pals, virtual exchange, etc.) on learners' language development. Dedicating a chapter to extramural activities and incidental vocabulary learning research could have enriched the book and drawn more attention to other activities that might encourage incidental learning. Similarly, gaming, which now has numerous studies investigating its role in incidental learning, could have been included. Furthermore, the omission of extensive listening (Chang & Millett, 2014) in the discussion in pedagogical contexts, while including extensive reading and viewing, raises questions about the completeness of the pedagogical strategies presented. Chapter 9 provides a useful overview of multiple factors affecting incidental learning, but notably omits a discussion on imagery in word-related factors, as imagery has recently emerged as an important variable that facilitates vocabulary learning from audiovisual input (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2023). This exclusion is a significant oversight.

Overall, this volume is a valuable resource for researchers because it covers recent findings and methods, providing a solid reference for further study. It is equally valuable for teachers as well, since the book addresses pedagogical and practical aspects of incidental vocabulary learning. By implementing practices and strategies discussed here, teachers can guide their learners to explore vocabulary learning outside the classroom and promote a more well-rounded experience of vocabulary learning.

References

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Biodata

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