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Extensive Reading through Sustained Silent Reading: Developing Comprehension in Adult Learners

■ This article discusses an adjunct Sustained Silent Reading Program (SSR) in which getting satisfaction from reading and developing a better attitude toward reading are the goals. When doing SSR, students self-select books from a collection and read them. They also write journal entries, prepare oral and written book reports, and talk about books that they are reading. They receive recognition for the books they finish. While it is the student's task to read and read a lot, it is the ESL program's task to provide a variety of interesting books that students can understand.

Teachers know that many of their students need to become better readers. To solve this problem, they offer various reading activities that guide students through reading textbooks. A supplementary approach is Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), which offers students much needed reading practice.

Through SSR students read silently during class or lab. SSR differs from extensive reading in that extensive reading is done at home. In this paper, I will first explain why regular reading lessons or classes often do not sufficiently develop students' reading comprehension processes. Then, I will discuss research on extensive reading and SSR. Third, I will present guidelines for an adjunct SSR program for secondary-, postsecondary-, and adult-level ESL students.

Goals of a Reading Class

In reading class students are introduced to effective top-down and bottom-up reading processes or strategies. Top-down processes involve students making predictions about the meaning of a passage by using their knowledge about the subject and about the organization of a text and by selectively reading the text. Students do not need to concentrate on every word, phrase, and sentence to make sense of a text (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1978). Eskey (1986) has remarked,

"Among second language teachers interested in reading, the top-down model has already achieved something like official status as *the* model" (p. 12).

In contrast, bottom-up processes involve interpreting every letter, word, and grammar construction appearing in text. Teachers using oral reading in class ask students to activate many of their bottom-up processing skills. Teachers who have students analyze every new word and new grammar structure in a passage also emphasize this kind of processing. While Goodman (1967) has emphasized the limitations of teaching bottom-up processing, Eskey and Grabe (1988) note that ESL students need to learn to integrate both ways to process text.

Classroom activities almost always activate either bottom-up or top-down processing. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe the many effective ways to help students develop good reading strategies. Examples of activities and additional theoretical background pertaining to students' reading comprehension can be found in recent books (Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988; Devine, Carrell, & Eskey, 1987; Dubin, Eskey, & Grabe, 1986; and Irwin, 1986). Many of these classroom activities can incorporate pair and group work as described by Long and Porter (1985).

Classroom activities can facilitate students' reading acquisition (and language acquisition) only if the reading material is appropriate. To identify suitable materials, we can consider three questions: (a) Is the reading interesting; (b) is it as authentic as possible; and (c) are its key points or storyline organized in a way that helps readers make sense of the passage? Krashen has reminded us that when students are interested and involved in what they are reading, their affective filter is lower (Krashen, 1982 cited in Krashen, 1985). Aside from the level of interest of the text, we also have to consider whether to use simplified or authentic texts. Yorio (1985) has suggested that ESL readers need texts "as authentic as the proficiency level of the learner will permit" (p. 164). Sometimes having a predictable pattern of organization or story structure and having good illustrations will make it possible for students to understand text that is more difficult than their usual reading material (Hill & Thomas, 1988).

While reading class activities and materials introduce ESL students to effective reading strategies, students may not get enough reading practice. Often in reading class, time is taken up by prereading and postreading, and vocabulary activities. If some of the numerous comprehension questions appearing in textbooks are discussed, even less time remains for reading. The result is that students rarely read very much for or during a reading class. Williams (1986) summarizes his concern about this situation: "A learner will not become a proficient reader simply by attending a reading course or working through a reading textbook" (p. 44).

Two other weaknesses of most reading classes are the difficulty of the readings and the pacing of class activities. Despite the fact that students may vary in reading ability in a class, they all read the same texts, which may be too hard or too easy for some of them. Also, the pace of a reading class—how much time is spent on each text—may be too fast or too slow for some students. A slow pace can result in a lot of waiting time and less time spent on reading practice.

Extensive Reading

To overcome the limitations of a traditional reading class, teachers introduce extensive reading. Extensive reading is done on students' own time usually without any preview or follow-up work on concepts, grammar, or vocabulary. In practice, extensive reading programs have almost always relied on ESL/EFL graded readers, reading kits, such as Science Research Associates (SRA) reading labs (Parker, 1978), or excerpts from unsimplified textbooks. A common recommendation is to assign at least 1 hour of extensive reading for each hour of in-class close reading of text (Williams, 1986). However, many students do not have the skills or the motivation to read this much on their own at the beginning of a program.

TESL instructors have rarely investigated the effectiveness of extensive reading programs. Robb and Susser's (1988) extensive reading research involved having a class of Japanese university freshman English majors read SRA cards in class five times a week. SRA cards consist of an illustration, a short simplified text, and questions. On average students completed 40 SRA cards during the year. In addition, students read a minimum of 500 pages at home from a class library of ESL readers and adolescent literature. Robb and Susser found that the class using their extensive reading approach improved more on postreading tests than their control group which covered reading skills exercises in a well-known ESL reading textbook both in class and for homework.

Laufer-Dvorkin (1981) studied two classes of Israeli university students enrolled in EFL reading. Laufer-Dvorkin concluded that the extensive approach, in which students read 7- to 10-page excerpts from academic textbooks for each class, was less effective than the intensive approach, in which students closely read one- to three-page excerpts from academic texts for each class. Laufer-Dvorkin's research suggests that authentic materials that are too long and difficult for students to understand are unsuitable for extensive reading.

Several researchers have described book collections for extensive reading. Stoller (1986) suggests that ESL programs have a lending library of ESL readers that are grouped by level of difficulty. Students select at least one book to read each week and at least 13 for a semester. While Stoller's lending library is housed in a university reading lab, another ESL teacher has worked with the community

library to develop a collection of about 300 paperback ESL readers and a publicity campaign to "attract nonnative speakers to the library" (Shanefield, 1986, p. 1). These books, which were housed apart from the general fiction collection, were divided into three levels of difficulty. Shanefield's lending system provided data on how often each book was borrowed.

Bamford (1984) has created a similar lending library of ESL readers at the American School of Business in Tokyo. Based on students' reactions to books in this collection, he rated readers from numerous publishers on a 4-point scale from extremely popular to "often received negatively" (p. 238). Bamford cited Nuttall's (1982) and his own suggestions for displaying the colorful covers of ESL/EFL graded readers to attract readers (p. 258).[1]

Hill and Thomas (1988) give an analysis and assessment of 12 United Kingdom publishers' ESL/EFL graded readers. Their assessment is based on "twelve years of...use of readers" (p. 44) in Uganda and Malaysia. They discuss a reading program, in which 200 Malaysian schools participated, which included nine levels of class reader collections and a larger library collection of nine levels of readers. When Hill and Thomas examined 12 ESL/EFL series of readers, they focused on physical features, text, and subject matter. They considered each series overall in terms of its readability, interest, and suitable audience. This overall evaluation included a ranking of the 12 series. The series with the highest overall scores were as follows: Heinemann Guided Readers, Longman New Method Supplementary Readers, Hutchinson Bulls-Eye, and Longman Structural Readers. But Hill and Thomas stressed that each series had some excellent books and that the best collection consisted of books from a variety of publishers. Hill and Thomas relied on trial and error and overall readability levels to place readers into levels. Their elementary-level books (their Level G) were based on a word list of about 300 entries and consisted of about 16 pages. Their intermediate-level books (Level E) were based on a word list of about 800 entries and consisted of about 48 pages. Their advanced-level books (Level A) were based on a word list of about 2200 entries and consisted of about 96 pages (p. 50). While Hill and Thomas's nine readability levels may be a helpful framework for selecting and grouping books to send out to their participating EFL schools, it may not be necessary to have as many levels in all collections since students can select books by first reading a few pages.

Limitations

All of these extensive reading approaches involve students reading outside of class. While the kind of reading materials varies, use of graded ESL/EFL readers is most common. Most researchers of extensive reading stress developing book collections made up of interesting books with attractive covers. But researchers of extensive reading rarely offer strategies that help students select books, motivate students to read, or integrate reading with speaking. Proponents of a Whole Language approach suggest that such integration is very important (Goodman, 1986). There is also no discussion of teachers monitoring the kind and amount of homework they assign so that students have time for extensive reading.

These concerns are important since students often tell us they do not have time to read. When they do read, many of them read slowly. For students who have the motivation and the time to regularly do pleasure reading on their own, an extensive reading program works; for students who are reluctant or inexperienced readers of English, an SSR program gives them more reading practice because they do some reading in school.

Sustained Silent Reading

While SSR is similar to extensive reading because it gives students reading practice, it also differs. SSR, introduced in the United States in the 1960s, has most widely been used with elementary school native English-speaking children who do pleasure reading in school. Children doing SSR read materials that they select and supply on their own. SSR does not take up very much school time since SSR sessions range from 30 minutes once a week to 10 to 30 minutes each school day (Krashen, 1985). Further, during the designated period, the teacher reads, too, so that children have a role model. This approach usually involves no class lending library, no record keeping, and no cost to the school district.[2]

When SSR is introduced to an ESL class, however, certain changes may be in order. If students cannot find suitable books because there is no SSR book collection, and if they are only given 10 minutes, they may not read enough to get hooked on a story. Therefore, some modifications are necessary if SSR is to be effective with ESL students. (These modifications are discussed in the section entitled, "Setting up an Adjunct SSR Program.")

SSR is based on the premise (Fader, 1976; Krashen, 1985; Smith, 1978; Williams, 1986) that students learn to read by reading materials that interest them and that this exposure to a lot of reading helps them acquire effective top-down processing strategies. Eskey and Grabe (1988) suggest that extensive reading is the only way students can build their bottom-up as well as their top-down processing skills. They point out that exercises cannot substitute for practice (p. 228). I make the same claim about SSR. Furthermore, SSR is supported by researchers who have examined ways to apply schema theory in ESL reading programs (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988).

During the last 20 years, considerable research has been done on native speakers' exposure to SSR, much of which has been summarized by Krashen (1985) and Wiesendanger and Bierlem (1984),

yet there is still no conclusive evidence that SSR improves students' reading ability. But Krashen suggestsd that "ten out of twelve studies [on SSR] can be interpreted as indicating that SSR is as good or better than regular programs for increasing language skills..." (Krashen, 1985, p. 93). Krashen notes that many studies are based on just a few months of exposure to SSR. Wiesendanger and Birlem (1984) offer additional explanations for the inconclusive findings. They note that sometimes participating teachers are not convinced that SSR is worthwhile, so in-service training may be needed for SSR to be effective.

Other researchers of ESL or EFL students' improvement in reading support SSR. Elley and Mangubhai (1983) found that elementary school students in Fiji given SSR of picture books improved more in language skills after a year than the control group. Based on their findings, the authors recommended having at least 150 well-chosen picture books. They found that simplified books were not necessary.

Hafiz and Tudor (1989) examined the effect of SSR (they called it extensive reading) on 16 Pakistani 10- to 11-year-old children in England. They found that "receptive and productive language capacities—especially in the area of accuracy of expression—can be substantively improved through simple pleasure reading" (p. 689). In their study, the SSR group met 1 hour daily after school for 12 weeks to read ESL/EFL readers. The group read from a collection of 104 available ESL/EFL readers provided by the researcher. The SSR group was made up of volunteers who had "very positive parental support for the project" (p. 7) which helped to maintain students' attendance in the program. Two control groups had no supplementary SSR. Hafiz and Tudor suggested that their study supported Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) since students' regular SSR provided an "acquisition-oriented form of learning" (Hafiz & Tudor, p. 4).

Lipp (1988b) found no significant improvement on commercial reading (Nelson Reading Test) for intermediate students doing 8 weeks of adjunct SSR when contrasting them with a control group of ESL students spending the same amount of time with reading drills (SRA cards). However, the data also showed that doing reading drills could not be shown to be more effective than SSR, so we cannot reject SSR. Other researchers have already noted that at least 6 months of exposure to SSR may be needed before students show significant improvement on reading comprehension tests (Wiesendanger & Birlem, 1984).

Although research evidence on the effectiveness of SSR ranges from inconclusive to supporting, researchers have found an advantage of SSR: improvement in attitudes toward reading. Aranha (1985) found attitude improvement in Asian Indian children who were introduced to SSR, and Sadoski (1980) found attitude improvement in American high school students who were doing SSR in English.

Setting Up an Adjunct SSR Program

While SSR seems effortless, I have found that it takes careful planning and monitoring. While SSR can be implemented in an ESL class with a classroom teacher setting up a class lending library, I will discuss implementing it in a reading lab in which a lab coordinator structures the program, selects the reading materials, and supervises the staff. The amount of time that students spend in a lab can vary. At the American English Institute at California State University, Fresno intermediate-level students have three 50-minute lab classes a week for 12 weeks each semester. Twice a week of SSR lab may be sufficient for advanced students who are able to read on their own time. In this section I will discuss the physical setup and the staffing of an SSR program. I will also offer sugestions for lab activities and for selecting and building an SSR collection and strategies for motivating students.

Before discussing these topics, let me offer some suggestions which are specific to integrating SSR into an ESL class in contrast to an English language arts class for native speakers. First, this modified SSR approach for ESL integrates reading and writing. This integration may help students in their content area classes. In addition, unlike SSR for native speakers, this program provides most of the reading materials, and lab staff talk about the materials to build students' interest. The collection of books is not limited to graded ESL/EFL readers and the lab monitors do not always read during the SSR period.

While the SSR activities that are described make up at least 80% of students' reading lab activities, the lab offers other materials as well. Supplementary lab materials include *Timed Readings* (Jamestown Publishers), speed reading exercises, SRA Power Builder cards (but students are asked to complete only the comprehension questions so that they get more reading practice), and read-along tapes that accompany a few written texts. In addition, teachers and students are encouraged to bring in and talk about newspaper and magazine articles that interest them.

The Physical Set Up

Having a room with comfortable seating and attractive displays of books and other reading materials is preferable for SSR. But SSR can be done in a regular classroom: Reading materials are carried in a box to the class.

Staffing

An SSR lab can be staffed with lab monitors who are graduate students. They need to be trained as to why SSR is important, how SSR differs from regular reading class activities, how SSR can be introduced to students, and what monitors can do to facilitate and

motivate students' SSR. Monitors need to be given summaries of many of the books in the collection. SSR is more successful when it is offered by ESL students' reading teachers.

Introducing SSR to Students

The introduction of SSR to students should include the following:

(a) discussing why reading in English is important;

(b) countering possible objections of students to SSR;

(c) giving book talks (brief descriptions of selected books); and

(d) having students select books to read.

It is necessary to introduce students to the importance of reading through a brief discussion. To counter possible objections to SSR, teachers need to mention research which suggests that pleasure reading can lead to improvement in reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammatical development, and writing style (Krashen, 1985) and that they will not necessarily be aware of this linguistic growth.

Another part of the SSR orientation—the book talks—is effective when the presenter is familiar with many books in the collection. To prepare for book talks, it is best to read some of the books or at least to read brief reviews or summaries of them. When giving a book talk, the instructor should put out at least twice as many books as there are students in class, talk about 10 of them in some detail, and briefly describe about 10 additional ones. During a book talk, the instructor should hold up a book, write the title on the board, and tell students about the book. Use of gestures, body movement, the chalk board, and some props make the talks clearer and interesting. When presenting each book, the teacher must try to help students understand key words in the text. When listening to book talks, students write down the titles of any books they want to read. See Appendix A for a description of a sample book talk.

After the book talks, students need an opportunity to look at the books more closely. They can look inside books to see if they can make sense of the ones they are most interested in. By the end of the period, students should turn in a list of three books they want to read. The lab monitor selects one of the three books for each student. This way everyone can begin with a book that interests him or her. Students check out books during the next SSR period.

Integrating SSR with Journal and Summary Writing

During the next SSR period, students are given lab folders which include journal entry pages and their reading graph (see Appendix B). They also receive a written and oral book report worksheet which can be very similar to the one suggested by Stoller (p. 66). Students read and are encouraged to use a dictionary as little as possible.

During the last 5 to 10 minutes of each period, they write journal entries about their reading. Their journal entries consist of very brief summaries and comments about their reading. Students are encouraged to look in the book while writing their journal entries but some may not want to. At the end of the period, students record the number of pages they read on their journal page and on their reading graph, and they respond to questions about the book: Was it interesting? Was it hard to understand? These activities—reading, writing journal entries, evaluating the book, and keeping track of progress—continue throughout the semester. Students are encouraged to read their books at home and enter the number of pages they read on their own on their reading graphs. Lab monitors check students' folders at least once a week.

In the second or third week, students are introduced to the oral and written report worksheets. Students are asked to write several drafts of a summary about one book during each semester. After students write first drafts of a summary, the lab monitor has a conference with them and helps them revise summaries for content. Appendix C shows two drafts of one student's summary. In addition, students are encouraged to make a short oral presentation about a book they liked. Before students give oral presentations, they complete an oral presentation worksheet.

Motivating Students

To increase students' motivation, the instructor can give students achievement ribbons as soon as they finish their first book. In addition, once a week stickers, which can be attached to their ribbons or their reading graphs, can be awarded to students for each additional book they have completed. When these awards are given out, the recipients can be recognized in class. After students have completed at least three books, each class can also come up with a list of favorite books which is then exchanged with another class. But the most important source of motivation is having a big enough collection of well-liked books. If a student gets hooked on a book, he or she will tell friends about it.

The lab staff meets regularly to come up with additional activities that result in students talking about their reading in small groups; this kind of sharing helps maintain students' interest in SSR.

Building and Managing an SSR Collection

To build a collection, instructors should have students complete a reading interest survey (see Appendix D). The compiled data can be used to select books (Lipp, 1988a). If waiting for class questionnaire results delays book orders too much, the instructor can consult the results of a study of the reading interests of more than 200 university-bound foreign students. In this study, the following genres of books

received the highest ratings: world problems, sports, travel to other countries, mystery, adventure, academic subjects, and historical novels. The books much liked by a smaller group of students were science fiction, travel in the United States, romance, famous people, and cars and mechanics (Lipp & Wheeler, 1989). This study shows that having a variety of genres of fiction and nonfiction books is important.

To build a collection of books for intermediate-level students, an instructor can select from the following kinds of books: (a) paperback graded readers specifically written for ESL/EFL students (mostly fiction is available), (b) high-interest, low-reading-level books written for American students reading below grade level, and (c) children's literature (including a few carefully chosen picture books). For a few students, unsimplified adolescent and adult fiction books are suitable, but for most intermediate-level students they are too difficult.

Intermediate-level students appreciate illustrated books that are under 150 pages in length. These guidelines about book length are consistent with ESL students' self-reported preferred book lengths. A study of intensive English program students found that the largest number of low-intermediate students preferred books with fewer than 50 pages in length (Lipp & Wheeler, 1989). Almost all of these students preferred illustrated books.

An instructor can use book lists such as the California State Department of Education's *Recommended Readings in Literature K-8* (1986) and Brown's (1988) *A World of Books: An Annotated Reading List for ESL/EFL Students* to locate titles. However, Brown's book includes very few books that are under 100 pages, so it is more helpful when selecting books for advanced students. Children's literature publishers' catalogs like Scholastic's are useful for locating good, unsimplified books. Appendix E provides an annotated list of books that are favorites of low- to high-intermediate ESL students.

The list does not include many books with pictures because of their high price. The picture books that work best are about adult characters and are illustrated in a way that is not insulting to most adults. Picture books about folk tales are additional sources of illustrated, unsimplified books (Lipp, 1989).

When primarily assembling a collection of books to lend to students, a teacher should allow at least two titles per student, but four (or more) books per student is best (Nuttall, 1982). Almost all SSR and extensive reading program designers divide their book collection by level so that students can more readily find suitable books. For students with TOEFL scores under 500, Bamford (1984) recommends six classifications of books. Hill and Thomas (1988) suggest nine groupings. We use three categories: low or basic, consisting of illustrated books under 50 pages; intermediate, consisting of books 50 to 130 pages usually with illustrations in each chapter; and advanced,

consisting of books 100 to 230 pages, many of which are without illustrations and are unsimplified. Intermediate-level students usually select books in the first two categories.

Besides assembling a book collection, dividing it into levels, and setting up borrowing procedures, the instructor also needs to weed out books that remain unread, reorder books that are missing or worn out, and order new titles. Some funds and administrative time are needed to maintain an SSR collection.

The SSR program described in this paper has been classroom tested with intermediate university-bound intensive English program students for several years. A similar program can be offered to adult school students and to limited-English-proficient school children. However, these students' reading interests should be identified first so that the book collection is adjusted to reflect readers' interests. With inexperienced or reluctant readers, the amount of time devoted to each SSR period and the frequency of SSR periods can start small and gradually increase. Thus, SSR can help all ESL students become better readers. ■

Appendix A

A Sample Book Talk

A New Life, by Roy Sorrells, is an adventure story. A young couple, who are about your age, are ice skating in the mountains when it begins to snow. The young man wants to return home because he is worried that his car will be damaged if they get stuck in a snow storm. As they are leaving, they notice a trail of blood. (Stop to make sure that everyone understands *trail* and *blood*.)

They follow the drops of blood and find a man who is hurt. He tells them that he had a motorcycle accident and tried to walk to get help but was too weak. He explains that his neighbor, who lives across the lake from where they are, is about to have a baby, so he went to get a doctor.

The young couple discusses what they will do. The man worries about his car, but his girlfriend wants to help the hurt man's neighbor because she is a nursing student and knows how to deliver a baby. What do you think they should do? (Ask for a few opinions.)

They go to the lake, which they think about crossing. But they don't know if the ice will be thick enough to hold their weight.

Read the book to find out what happens to the couple, the hurt man and his neighbor. (In previous semesters, some students identified this book as their favorite.)

Appendix B

Sample Journal Page

Date: _____ Pages read: _____

Write a few sentences about the story. Also, tell if you like the story and if it reminds you of an personal experiences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The book that I am reading is . . .
 __ too hard __ a little hard __ about right __ a little easy __ too easy

The book that I am reading is . . .
 __ boring __ not very intersting __ OK __ interesting __very interesting

Appendix C

Sample Student Drafts of a Summary of Peril on the Road *by Judith A. Green*

1st Draft

They, Jeff and Rita, were getting married and setting out on their big trip. They were going to go to California from New York by motorcycle in two weeks. During their trip, they had a lot of problems, for instance, they lost their way, they couldn't go into some restaurants for Mop or their dog Mop dead and so on. But they enjoyed their trip and had a good memory. I think they would have been living together in peace.

Note. The lab monitor noted that the key characters were identified and the main events—traveling westward—were clear. She also pointed out that this summary discussed the different places where Jeff and Rita went, but it did not discuss why the book was a mystery.)

Revision

Jeff and Rita were getting married and setting out on their big trip. They were going to go to California from New York by a motorcycle in two weeks. During their trip, they had a lot of problems. For example, they couldn't go into some

restaurant for their dog, or especially they were followed by two robber because two robber misunderstood them as police. So they were almost killed by them. But their dog helped them…

Note. The lab monitor asked the writer to add a personal reaction to the summary.

Appendix D

Sample Reading Interest Inventory

Name: _____ Native Language: _____ Country: _____

Level: _____ Date: _____ Age: _____ Sex: __ Male __ Female

Status: __ New __ Returning

1. Of the following subjects, which ones would you like to read about for pleasure.

Mark your choices with an (X).

__ adventure	__ health and fitness	__ travel in the U.S.
__ historical novels	__ fashion	__ travel in other countries
__ spy	__ food	__ world problems (hunger,
__ mystery	__ children's literature	energy, population growth)
__ science-fiction	__ celebrities (actors,	__ current events (the news)
__ western	pop singers)	__ religion
__ romance	__ famous people: biographies	__ electronics
__ classics: famous titles	and autobiographies	__ cars and mechanics
__ career stories/occupations	__ sports	__ scientific studies
__ problems of teenagers	__ animals	__ business
__ nature stories	__ academic subjects. Which one? _____	

2. Of the subjects that you chose above, put a second (X) next to the *three* subjects that interest you the most.

Appendix E

Graded ESL Readers

Alexander, L. G. (1989). *K's First Case.* New York: Longman.
 K, a young detective, solves a murder mystery.

Burton, S. H. (1979). *Eight Ghost Stories.* New York: Longman.
 These short ghost stories take place in England.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. (1975). *The Secret Garden.* (simplified). New York: Longman.
 Mary Lennox, sent to live on her uncle's estate in England, discovers a garden, makes new friends, and adjusts to her new home.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. (1980). *The Speckled Band* (simplified). St. Paul: EMC Corporation.
 Helen is about to get married, but she is terrified because she has heard a low whistle in her bedroom at night. It is the same sound that her sister heard before she mysteriously died just before her wedding.

Hitch, Norma S. (1988). *Passport to America: California Discovery*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Michael hears about a gold mine from Nancy. Nancy's roommate's brother is trying to explore it, but some other people are determined to keep everyone away from it.

Milne, John. (1975). *Road to Nowhere*. London: Heinemann.

In this adventure, a young Moslem living in a traditional village wants to marry a wealthy villager's daughter. The government wants to build a road which some people oppose because they don't want their village to change.

High-Interest and Low-Reading-Level Books

Bradley, Steve. (1985). *The Sure Thing*. Belmont, CA: Pitman (Distributed by Fearon).

A young woman jockey will ride on the fastest race horse, Whirlwind. A gambler tries to bribe her to hold Whirlwind back when racing; her boyfriend wants her to accept the bribe.

Green, Judith A. (1981). *The Secret of Room 401*. Providence, RI: Jamestown Publishers. (Also good is *Peril on the Road* by the same author and publisher. Refer to Appendix C for a student summary. These books include exercises which we ask students to ignore.)

Rick Tardif is awake in his hospital room when he notices that every night someone raises and lowers his window shade. Rick and another patient keep watch over the hospital parking lot to figure out the meaning of the signal.

Smith, Shannon M. (1984). *Hobo Bridges*. Castro Valley, CA: Quercus Corporation.

Hobo Bridges comes across a dead man and picks up a note and a gun that are next to the man. Later he realizes that his fingerprints are now on the gun, so he knows he must find the real murderer. He thinks the note may help him.

Sorrels, Roy. (1982). *A New Life*. New York: Sundownbooks (New Readers Press/ Laubach).

Children's Literature (Books with themes adults can relate to)

Blume, Judy. (1980). *Superfudge*. New York: Dell.

Peter, a 12-year-old and his brother, Fudge, a 4-year-old have to adjust to having a baby sister and to moving to a new city. This book includes many funny episodes about the lives of the Hatchers, a traditional family.

Buck, Pearl. (1986). *The Big Wave*. New York: Harper Trophy.

This story takes place in rural Japan where Kino and his friend Jiya, both boys, hear about the big wave. Later in the story the disaster strikes, and Kino learns to accept the consequences.

Cleary, Beverly. (1983). *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. New York: Dell.

Through Leigh's letters to a children's book writer and later through Leigh's journal entries, readers learn about a family that is adjusting to divorce and about Leigh's school life.

MacLachlan, Patricia. (1985). *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. New York: Harper Trophy.

A rural family needs someone to fill their dead mother's place. After the father puts an ad in a paper, the children wonder who will come to live with them.

Dr. Seuss. (1986). *You're Only Old Once: A Book for Obsolete Children*. New York: Random House.

A humorous picture book about an old man who has to visit several medical specialists.

White, E. B. (1980). *Charlotte's Web*. New York: Harper Trophy.

A young pig is saved from being butchered by the magical skills of a gray spider, Charlotte, and by Fern, the farmer's daughter.

Snyder, Dianne. (1988). *The Boy of the Three-Year Nap*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

This picture book is about a poor lazy boy who devises a plan that lets him marry his wealthy neighbor's daughter. It is based on a traditional Japanese folktale.

Footnotes

[1]Anyone planning to purchase ESL/EFL readers can avoid purchasing books that later go unread by referring to Bamford's graded reader evaluations. Of course, his article does not evaluate unsimplified books or books developed for native speakers who are reluctant readers.

[2]When SSR is introduced in an ESL class certain changes may be in order. If students can't find suitable books because there is no SSR book collection, and if they are only given 10 minutes, they may not read enough to get hooked on a story. Therefore, some modifications are necessary if SSR is to be effective. These modifications are discussed in the section entitled, "Setting Up an Adjunct SSR Program."

[3]The author wishes to thank Lisa Heberlein for ideas which led to the development of the reading graph in Appendix B.

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