Easy English

Building an Extensive Reading Collection for English Language Learners

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FRANCES WILLSON THOMPSON LIBRARY

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What is Extensive Reading?

Extensive reading (ER) is an approach to teaching reading skills in which language learners read as many materials at their linguistic competency level as possible in order to build their reading fluency.

Richard Day and Julian Bamford lay out the following principles:

1. Students read as much as possible.
2. Students read a variety of materials on a variety of topics.
3. Students choose what they want to read.
4. Students read for interest, fun, and general comprehension.
5. Teachers do little to no assessment of ER activities.
6. Students read materials that are at their comprehension level.
7. Students read on their own.
8. Students read faster, without a dictionary.
9. Teachers orient and guide students through the program.
10. Teachers act as a role model and read while their students read.

(Day and Bamford, 1998)

Although most ER responsibilities fall to the students and instructors, librarians can play an important role in supporting ELL literacy gains by developing and maintaining a dynamic, varied, and balanced collection of ER materials.

Positive Effects of ER

Reading Comprehension & General Skills
(Hayashi, 1999; Krashen, 2004; Yamashita, 2008)

Vocabulary
(Nation & Wang, 1999; Pigada & Schmidt, 2006)

Grammar & Writing
(Elley, 1991; Khansir & Deghani 2015)

Writing
(Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Krashen, 2004)

TOEFL Scores
(Constantino, Lee, Cho, & Krashen, 1997)

ER research has been conducted in countries* around the world.

Africa: 8
Asia: 23
Europe: 4
N. America: 2
Oceania: 7
S. America: 3
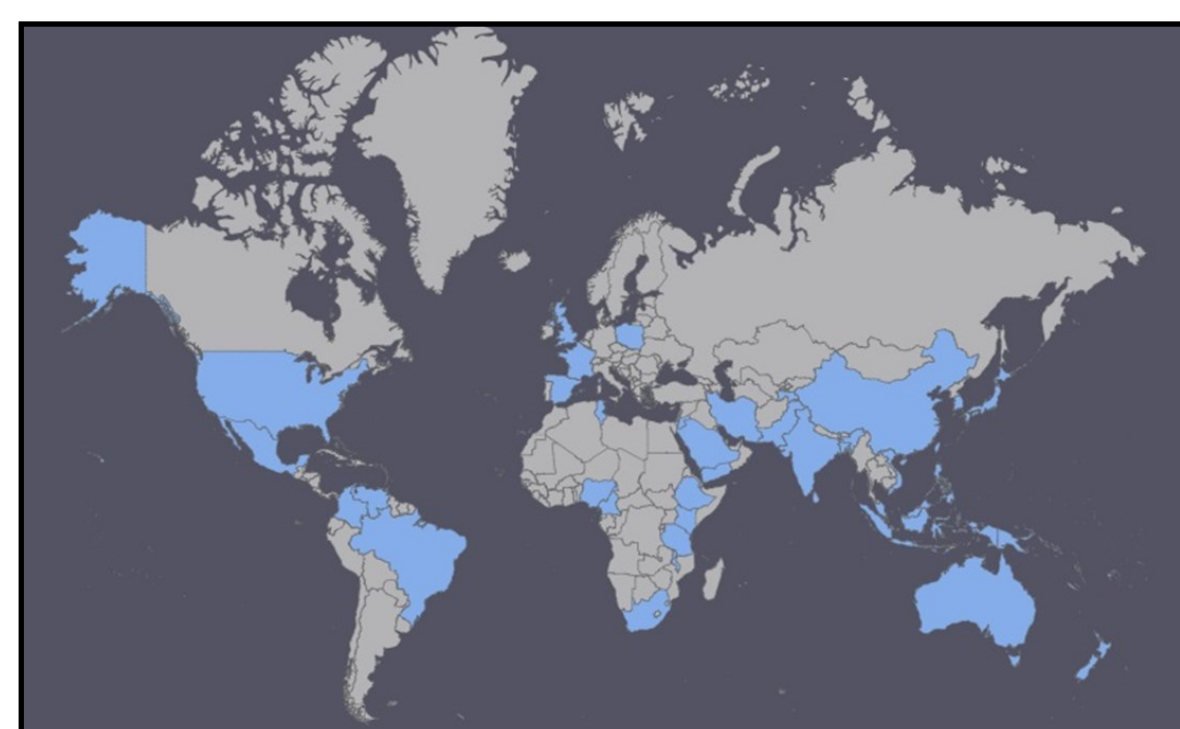
*Compiled by searching for country names in the Extensive Reading Foundation's ER Bibliography
http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/er-bibliography

Types of Materials

Language Learner Literature (LLL, aka Graded Readers)

- The standard for ER collections
- Specifically written for language learners
- Series are leveled with restraints on grammar and vocabulary
- Typically have vocabulary help, pre and post-reading exercises
- Language Learner Literature Awards (2004—2016)
- Number of titles published on bell curve: more for intermediate than beginner or advanced learners
- Major Publishers: Oxford Univ. Press, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cengage/National Geographic, Pearson, MacMillan
- Genres:
  ⇒ Adapted classics
  ⇒ Movie novelizations
  ⇒ Original fiction (mystery, SFF, romance, thriller, etc.)
  ⇒ Original nonfiction (mainly life sciences, history, biography, and culture)

Read-along

- Subset of LLL
- Audio recording accompanies book
- Provide listening practice, aid word recognition

High Interest/Low Literacy (Hi/lo)

- Written for native English speakers with low literacy skills
- Typically have vocabulary help
- Fill out gaps in LLL levels & subjects
- Major publishers: Saddleback & Orca
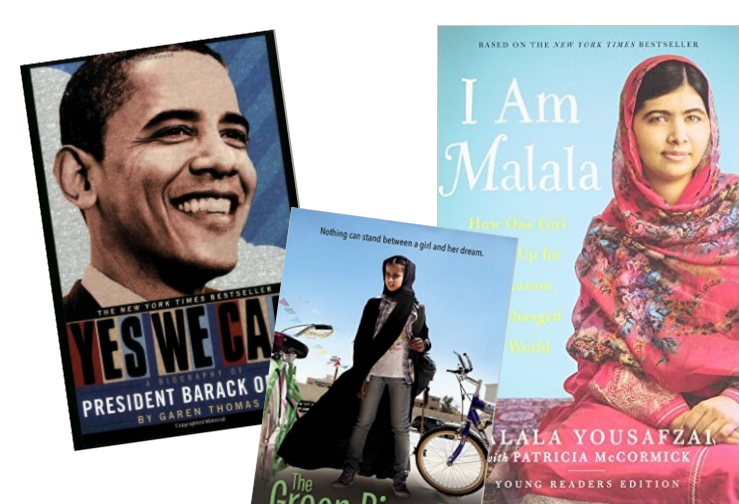- Genres: mainly fiction, some nonfiction

Graphic Novels and Comics

- Images give reader context clues
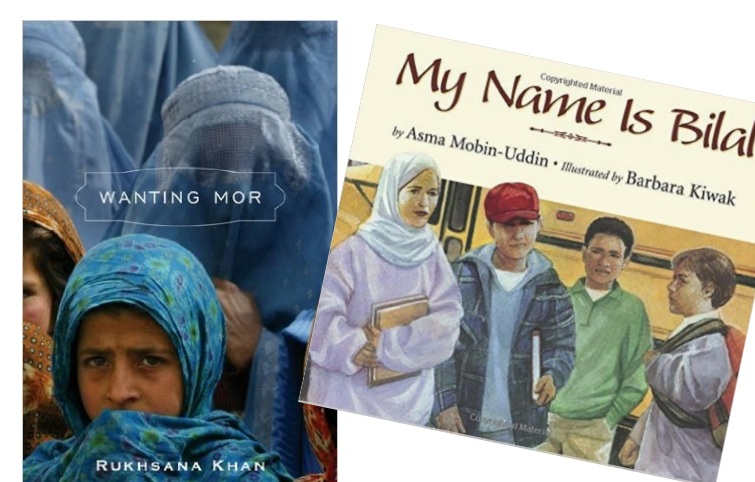- Attention grabbing
- Connection to American pop culture

Young Adult Books

- Authentic English*, but not quite college level
- Multicultural stories, multiple genres
- Connection to American pop culture

Children's Books

- Authentic English*, grade levels
- Multicultural stories, multiple genres
- Some students don't want "baby" stories

*Authentic language has grammar structures and vocabulary that are known to pre-literate native speakers but are often beyond the reach of ELL students, so incorporate authentic materials mostly at upper intermediate and advanced levels.

Organizing the Collection

Leveling Collection

- LLL: no standard levels across different series, even under one publisher
- Extensive Reading Foundation has equivalence chart based on publisher's headword counts.
- Create your own system
  ⇒ Color coding levels, number/letter scale
  ⇒ Extensive Reading Foundation suggests 6—8 levels
  ⇒ Should have some flexibility for books that need to be re-leveled
- UM-Flint solution: unique system
  ⇒ Created 3 distinct collections English Language Program (ELP) 1, 2, 3
  ⇒ 3 collections color coded for Beginner, Intermediate, & Advanced
  ⇒ Letters from G to A break down larger groups (based on Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading [defunct] scale)

Cataloging Collection

- Books should be shelved together for easy locating.
- Big issue! No assigned Library of Congress (LC) call numbers
- Could create non-LC call numbers that tie into leveling, but not very flexible
- UM-Flint solution: Assign separate collections & create LC call numbers
  ⇒ Gave ELP collection designations, so shelved separately from main collection
  ⇒ Fiction cataloged as English language learning materials (PE 1100s), but adapted classics cataloged as variation of original text's call number
 ⇒ Nonfiction classified by subject

Displaying Collection

- Books tend to be very skinny (esp. for beginners), hard to see when shelved normally
- Some ER guides suggest displaying books with many of the covers visible, but in most libraries it is impractical
- UM-Flint solution: display some books on shelves, rotate them

Orienting Students

- Bring ELL classes to library toward beginning of semester.
- ORIENTATION SHOULD VARY BASED ON LINGUISTIC LEVEL.
- Try to discuss students' reading habits.
  ⇒ Do they read only for homework? Do they read for fun?
  ⇒ Do they read for enjoyment in their first language? Do they like reading in English?
  ⇒ What kind of materials do they read? Books, magazines, newspapers, websites? Only nonfiction or some fiction?
- Give leveled handouts about ER "rules" based on Day and Bamford's principles.
- Model a read-along experience.
- Explain leveling system: colors and letters.
- Explain call numbers: how to tell which books are fiction & which are nonfiction.
- Navigate to library webpage for ER collection.
  http://libguides.umflint.edu/ELP/reading
- Demonstrate how to search the library's catalog for ELP books.
- Have books laid out on table (easier to peruse than when shelved).
- Assist students through check out process, esp. new or beginner students.
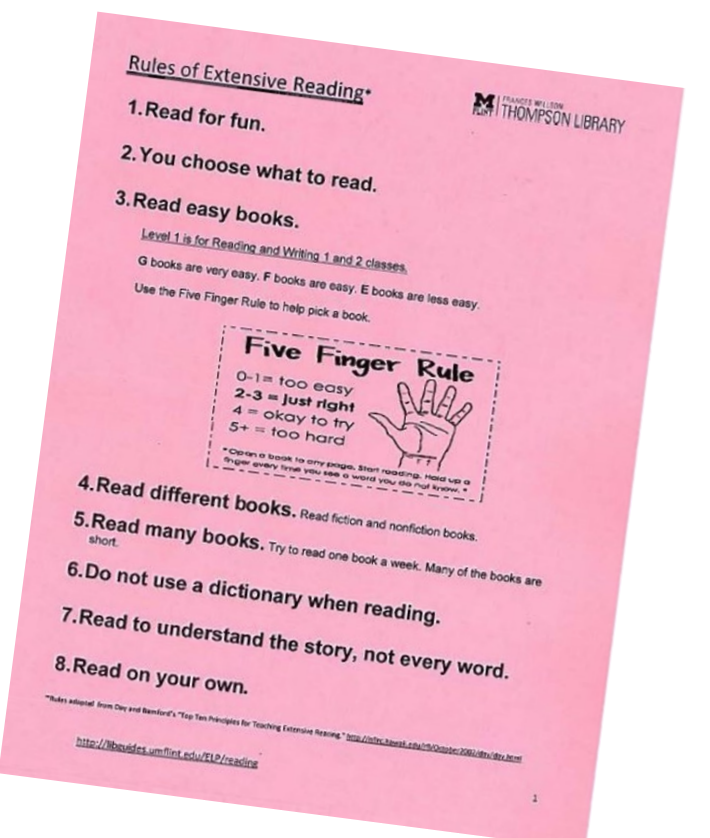
Suggested Reading

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