Developing a Focused Reading Lab for L2 Students

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Because of the importance of reading in today's world, L2 curricula should be devised so that at least one instructional component is dedicated to reading. In a Reading Lab setting, instructors can provide students with the guidance they need to become more fluent, independent, and confident readers. By combining sustained silent reading, teacher-guided reading instruction, systematic individualized reading, and out-of-class pleasure reading in a Reading Lab setting, students gradually move from a learning-to-read orientation to a reading-to-learn framework. This article presents a model Reading Lab design and describes the four major instructional components of the Lab as well as the logistics of running a Lab.

INTRODUCTION

With increasing frequency, English language teaching professionals are turning to content-based and integrated-skills approaches to best meet the language and future academic needs of their second language (L2) students (e.g., Snow, Met and Genesee 1989; Mohan 1990; Snow 1991; Crandall 1993). Although a fair amount of reading and reading instruction can take place in content-based classrooms, for many academically-oriented students there is a pressing need for additional reading instruction and practice (see Carrell 1989; Lynch and Hudson 1991 for a discussion of the close relationship between academic success and efficient reading). The incorporation of a reading lab into L2 curricula is one way to provide students with opportunities for focused reading.

In this article I shall present a rationale for a Reading Lab format and describe a model Reading Lab design that comprises four instructional components. This will be followed by a discussion of the logistics of running a Lab, with commentary on the role of placement procedures, classroom ambiance, teacher and student feedback/input, and confidence building techniques.

RATIONALE FOR A READING LAB

A Reading Lab approach represents an effective way to focus on reading in L2 instructional settings (Stoller 1986). In a Reading Lab, reading can be addressed directly and explicitly, permitting students to practice reading as well as receive instruction in strategies which will help them become more successful readers. The Reading Lab has additional benefits:

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1. The Reading Lab provides instructors with an open forum to promote the importance of reading as one of the keys to academic success.

2. In the Lab setting, instructors guide students through a variety of reading activities; the combination of sustained silent reading, teacher-guided instruction, systematic individualized reading, and out-of-class pleasure reading helps students develop the habits of more skilled readers who are capable of regulating reading strategies to best meet their own purposes for reading (Kletzien 1991). On-going opportunities for individualized reading, in particular, allow students to concentrate on reading strategies with which they are having difficulties. As a result of Lab activities, students develop a positive attitude towards reading; at the same time, they recognize (and develop an appreciation for) the work and time needed to develop academic reading abilities.

3. The Lab allows instructors to transition students from a learning-to-read framework to a reading-to-learn orientation.

4. The focused approach to reading, inherent in the Lab, permits students to monitor their reading progress easily, which, in turn, enhances concentration and builds student confidence.

A MODEL READING LAB

In an earlier article, Stoller (1986) presented a basic design for a Reading Lab for low-intermediate L2 students. Since that time, the design has been adjusted to address better the needs of L2 students at different reading proficiency levels. This article presents a Reading Lab model that targets more advanced English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students. The Reading Lab model described here is one that has evolved over the last ten years in the context of an intensive English program in a North American university, with L2 students from a variety of language and educational backgrounds. In actuality, the Lab represents one of seven instructional components that define an intensive English program curriculum designed to prepare L2 students for the demands of future higher education course work. (See Appendix A for a schematic illustration depicting the place of the Reading Lab in the larger EAP curriculum.) Although the Lab was initially designed to be part of a much larger curricular framework, the Lab can easily stand on its own and serve the reading needs of students in a variety of second language and foreign language settings.

The Reading Lab is divided into four major reading activity types: sustained silent reading, teacher-guided reading instruction, systematic individualized reading, and out-of-class pleasure reading (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Reading lab activity types**

Combining these four different approaches to reading and reading instruction allows the Reading Lab instructor to accomplish the following:

1. provide students with opportunities to read in a non-threatening environment that is conducive to reading;
2. build students' repertoire of cognitive strategies for processing text and metacognitive strategies for the monitoring of that process;
3. help students understand why, when, where, and how they might use varied strategies;
4. provide students with opportunities to read materials that best challenge them on an individual basis and that help them become more strategic and independent readers;
5. give students easy access to pleasure reading materials.

READING LAB COMPONENTS

To illustrate the various dimensions of this Reading Lab model in more detail, I set forth the following parameters to situate the discussion: the Reading Lab meets twice a week, in two-hour intervals, during a 15-week semester for a total of four hours per week and 60 hours per semester. To ensure that students are exposed to the range of Lab activities on a regular basis, each two-hour session is organized as follows: The first hour comprises a sustained silent reading period and teacher-guided reading instruction. The second hour is devoted to individualized reading. At the end of each Lab session, students can check out pleasure reading materials for out-of-class reading. (See Appendix B for a sample two-hour lesson plan.)

SUSTAINED SILENT READING

A sustained silent reading (SSR)\(^1\) component provides students (and instructor) with an opportunity to read whatever they would like without interruption. During
this time, which can range from 10 to 20 minutes, there is no reading instruction, no instructor intervention or evaluation, only reading for pleasure (cf. Krashen 1993 for a discussion of Free Voluntary Reading). Students can read (or skim) Reading Lab materials, a school or local newspaper, magazines, or any other reading material that they bring with them to class. The benefits resulting from SSR are many, including student autonomy, improved identification and interpretation skills (Silberstein 1994), vocabulary gains (Day, Omura and Hiramatsu 1991; Krashen 1993) as well as improved spelling and an enjoyment of reading (Krashen 1993).

The four basic tenets of an SSR instructional component are as follows:

1. **Time should be set aside for the SSR component on a regular basis.** It is suggested that a block of time be devoted to SSR in each Reading Lab session. Starting out the class with SSR quenches students down and creates a classroom mood conducive to reading. Ideally the instructor should set aside 10 minutes for SSR. As the semester progresses and students become more comfortable as readers and more engaged with the materials they chose to read individually, it is not uncommon for students to request more time for reading. (What more could a reading instructor ask for!)

2. **The Reading Lab instructor should serve as a role model.** During SSR, the instructor should read while their students read. Although the 10-20 minutes could be seen as the “perfect opportunity” to catch up on grading and/or lesson planning, such activities only detract from the mood and purpose of SSR.

3. **SSR reading materials should be self-selected.** SSR materials should not be assigned. Choices should be unlimited (e.g., school newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories, poetry, comic books), though students should be discouraged from reading materials “required” for other classes. Providing students with reading options by distributing (or simply having available) a variety of reading materials can be helpful, particularly for students who are not habitual readers or who do not live in an environment with a lot of reading materials at their disposal.

4. **There should be no evaluation of students’ reading performance and/or progress.** During the SSR period, students should be reading for their own enjoyment and should not be tested or evaluated on the materials that they read.

**TEACHER-GUIDED READING INSTRUCTION**

Despite the fact that students typically enrol in L2 courses with diverse reading proficiencies and varied attitudes towards reading, the entire class can benefit from teacher-guided instruction in three major areas:

1. word/phrase recognition
2. rate development
3. contextualized strategy training.

An explicit introduction to, and regular practice in, these areas can help students become more skilled readers.

**Word/Phrase Recognition**

Reading research has indicated the importance of accurate and rapid word/phrase recognition (Eskey and Grabe 1988; Grabe 1991; Stanovich 1992). Much research indicates that strong readers typically have accurate, rapid, and automatic recognition skills; this ability often distinguishes a strong reader from a weak one (Kim and Goetz 1994). Furthermore, much research indicates that “comprehension deficits can at least in part be traced to deficiencies within the word recognition process” (Chabot, Zehr, Prinzo and Petros 1984: 148; see also Haenggi and Perfetti 1994).

Word/phrase recognition exercises are intended to help students develop the ability to react rapidly and accurately to the appearance of English words and phrases. (See Appendix C for a sample recognition exercise.) From these exercises, students develop a sense of the visual image of key words and phrases. These exercises, which in actuality take up very little instructional time, should not be viewed as opportunities for vocabulary development; they are simply exercises that help students develop speed and perceptual accuracy in distinguishing among words that look alike. Students can keep track of their progress by timing themselves and then recording both their times and number of correct answers at the end of each exercise. (See Stoller, 1993, for procedures for creating and utilizing recognition exercises.)

**Rate Development**

One of the major obstacles that L2 readers face is related to reading rate. A slow reading pace not only affects how much students can read in a given period of time, but it also adversely affects comprehension. Instructors can help students improve their reading speed by integrating timed- and paced-reading practice into the Reading Lab. With timed readings, students read as quickly as they can, attempting to improve both their speed and comprehension over time. With paced readings, a reading pace is established by the instructor (e.g., 200 words per minute) and students are obliged to read at the imposed rate. In this way, students get a sense of what a reasonable rate “feels like” and then have a more realistic goal for timed-reading practice. Timed- and paced-reading exercises are most effective when students keep records of their progress in comprehension and speed. (See Spargo, 1989, for a 10-book series of timed/paced reading passages.)
Contextualized Strategy Training

Although it is said that readers learn to read by reading (Krashen 1993; Eskey 1986), students can benefit from explicit reading instruction that focuses on strategy training (Paris, Lipson and Wixson 1983; Anthony and Raphael 1989; Carrell, Pharis and Liberto 1989; Kletzien 1991; Pearson and Fielding 1991). By means of strategy training, the instructor can build students’ repertoire of deliberate and purposeful strategies to: a) construct meaning (Garner 1987 cited by Kletzien 1991), b) remove meaning blockage (Duffy et al. 1986), and c) read critically (Paris, Wasik and Turner 1991; Pearson and Fielding 1991). Although one Reading Lab objective is to promote students’ independent application of strategies, students can only self-regulate strategy use after being exposed to different strategies, with regular practice and modelling, and learning which strategies will serve their own purposes (Carrell, Pharis and Liberto 1989; Kletzien 1991).

In the teacher-guided component of the Lab, the Reading Lab instructor introduces, models, and then provides students with opportunities to practice a variety of reading strategies in the context of “real” reading situations (Kletzien 1991). That is, instead of introducing strategies in isolation (e.g., skimming for the sake of skimming rather than skimming for the main idea of a passage that one is actually going to read), instructors introduce strategies as they are needed, and as they are recognized as useful by students when actually reading an interesting passage.

There are four keys to successful teacher-guided strategy training. The first is the reading passage itself. Instead of using text fragments, instructors should select full passages that will stimulate the interest of students; instructors can use a wide variety of reading material including chapters from textbooks, news-magazines and newspaper articles, etc. (See Stoller, 1994a and 1994b, for suggested teacher-guided activities to complement the use of news-magazines and business periodicals.) Interesting subject matter, however, is not enough; Day (1994) identifies six other factors that need to be considered when selecting a passage for in-class use: exploitability, readability, topic selection, political appropriateness, cultural suitability, and appearance.

The second key to successful strategy training is to introduce students to the importance of metacognitive strategies such as the following (Marzano, et al 1988):

1. setting goals to establish the purpose for reading;
2. determining expectations;
3. planning strategies to fulfill purpose and expectations;
4. monitoring reading progress;
5. revising strategies, if necessary;
6. assessing accomplishment of one’s goals (i.e., success of one’s efforts to understand). While guiding students in utilizing these metacognitive strategies, instructors help students understand why, when, where, and how they might use them.

The third key is to introduce students to a range of strategies by means of a pre-, during-, and post-reading framework. This so-called framework, however, is flexible and likely to vary in each class session. Apart from the need to vary instructional approaches in order to make class more interesting and not entirely predictable, pre-, during-, and post-reading strategy training will naturally evolve from: a) the students’ purpose for reading, b) the nature of the reading passage itself, c) the students’ background knowledge, and d) the time one can devote to the teacher-guided component of the Lab. The instructor’s selection of strategies will partially be determined by the need to expose students to strategies for dealing with new topics, familiar topics, long passages, difficult passages, new genres, and “inconsiderate text,” that is, text which lacks unity and cohesion (Armbruster 1984).

With these factors in mind, instructors can devise three-part lessons (with pre-, during-, and post-reading activities) to introduce students to strategies that are most appropriate for accomplishing the immediate reading task. (See Table 1 for a listing of some of the strategies instructors can integrate into lessons.)

| Clarifying information not completely understood (see Lysynchuk, Pressley and Vye 1990) |
| Comprehension monitoring |
| Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items (by recognizing affixes and root forms of words, utilizing knowledge of cognates, sounding out words to recognize them, etc.) |
| Determining subject and main verb in complex sentences |
| Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details |
| Generating questions about text content |
| Highlighting, underlining, notetaking |
| Posing questions for directed reading |
| Predicting contents of passage; predicting direction of passage (see Cotterall 1990; Lysynchuk, Pressley and Vye 1990) |
| Previewing passage by determining discourse organization and/or examining organizational framework of passage (title, sub-titles, section headings) |
| Repairing imperfect comprehension by rereading, reading ahead, underlining main points |
| Semantic mapping |
| Skimming for/identifying the main idea (see Cotterall 1990) |
| Scanning for details |
| Summarizing information (see Cotterall 1990; Lysynchuk, Pressley and Vye 1990) |
| Transcoding information in diagrammatic display (e.g., charts, graphs, tables) |
| Understanding relations within and between sentences |
| Use of graphic organizers (Jones, Pierce and Hunter 1989) |

Table 1: Sample listing of strategies to include in teacher-guided instruction.
The fourth key to successful teacher-guided strategy training is to introduce students to strategies associated with thinking critically, strategies expected of students in mainstream academic environments. This training requires that students learn when, why, and how to:

1. distinguish between fact and opinion, bias and reason, and primary and secondary sources;
2. recognize provable statements, deceptive arguments, stereotypes, ethnocentrism;
3. evaluate primary and secondary sources of information;
4. determine author’s credibility;
5. understand information when not explicitly stated;
6. apply information to new contexts as well as analyse, synthesize, and evaluate the reading material.

It should be noted that in traditional teaching, there is often an implicit assumption that learning to think (and read) critically “develops naturally as students learn increasingly complex levels of discipline content and information” (Meyers 1986:10). This notion is being challenged in mainstream classrooms as well as L2 classrooms. Guiding students to think and read critically should not be viewed as an educational option, but as an indispensable part of instruction (Norris 1985; Chance 1986).

Although the literature often lists certain critical thinking strategies in order of “complexity and difficulty” (see Bloom’s taxonomy in Gronlund 1985), Reading Lab instruction should mirror real life demands and be neither sequenced rigidly nor limited to one strategy before moving on to the next. An inflexible, lock-step approach parallels the use of dated instructional grammar sequences (e.g., present continuous first, then present, past, present perfect, etc.). Such instructional approaches do not reflect real language use and are therefore restrictive for L2 students.

**SYSTEMATIC INDIVIDUALIZED READING**

The teacher-guided activities described above give the instructor the opportunity to address vital reading strategies that benefit the entire class. Yet, as stated before, students enrol in L2 courses with different reading proficiencies and diverse attitudes towards reading. For that reason, approximately 50% of each Reading Lab session (i.e., the second hour) is devoted to individualized reading. In this way, students can systematically work with reading materials and corresponding activities that complement their own proficiency levels and reading needs. In this individualized component of the Lab, students can proceed at their own pace rather than be forced into a rhythm artificially imposed on an entire class. Moreover, students can actively solicit assistance in areas of greatest need and provide instructors with input (in the form of queries and/or requests) that will allow the instructor to guide the student towards improved reading performance.

For Reading Labs with lower level students, “reading lab kits” are effective for individualized reading; these kits include multi-level reading materials designed to enable each student to work through the materials methodically, moving ahead as fast and as far as his/her reading rate and capacity will allow (see “kits” published by SRA Reading Laboratories; Grolier Educational Corporation; Bowmar/Noble; Barnell Loft).

Because there are no commercial “kits” available for more advanced readers, Labs should be stocked with introductory university or high school course textbooks, advanced L2 reading materials, magazines, journals, and other academically-oriented series for individualized reading. With the assistance of flexible “reading guides,” devised by instructors to guide students through the selected materials on their own, students can practice many of the strategies previously introduced in the teacher-guided component of the Lab on their own, at their own pace. Self-instruction materials should be devised to give students increasing amounts of responsibility; that is, students should be given opportunities to decide which reading strategies to use, and then evaluate their choices, as they progress. (See Dickinson, 1987, for characteristics of effective self-instructional materials.)

To illustrate one way to organize the individualized component of the Lab, I will describe why and how the Greenhaven Press *Opposing Viewpoints* series has been adapted at Northern Arizona University to help students develop the habits of strategic readers. Parallel procedures could be followed with other texts.

The use of opposing viewpoints, inherent in the Greenhaven Press series, has many benefits. First, it lends itself to the introduction of real world problems and controversies of interest to students (e.g., health issues, social issues, human sexuality, government, economics, politics, criminal justice, geographical area studies, values, ethics, religion, technology, mysteries). Second, the examination of opposing viewpoints obliges students to consider diverse frames of reference. To illustrate, the volume entitled *The Environmental Crisis: Opposing Viewpoints* (Bernards 1991) has six major themes, each one exploring a different environmental problem (i.e., pesticides, garbage, waste disposal, air and water pollution, and environmental protection). In general, the complexity of each theme is explored via two or three sets of opposing viewpoints. For example, the section on pesticides includes three pairs of opposing viewpoints (e.g., “Pesticides must be more closely regulated” and “Pesticides need not be more closely regulated”). The divergent
perspectives inherent in opposing viewpoints such as these create a state of “disequilibrium” (Meyers 1986), a situation in which students must consider positions that are possibly at odds with their own.

Third, through the use of opposing viewpoints, students must evaluate the authors’ credibility, consider alternatives, make inferences, pose questions, and solve problems in order to reconceptualize their own perspectives. As a consequence, students move from a dualistic stance (right versus wrong) to a new stance of considering other alternatives seriously (Meyers 1986; Johnson and Johnson 1988).

A two-phased approach, developed to systematize individualized reading with the Opposing Viewpoints series, has proven particularly effective. Students work through both phases on their own and at their own pace, with opportunities for instructor feedback and student input at frequent intervals. Phase I involves nine steps that introduce students to the procedures and expectations of the individualized component of the Lab; purposefully integrated into these steps are reading strategies that will be or have been introduced and practised in the teacher-guided component of the Lab. The nine steps are outlined in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step One</td>
<td>Orientation to an Opposing Viewpoints book (determined to be of interest to the majority of the class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Two</td>
<td>Overview of opposing viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Three</td>
<td>Careful reading of opposing viewpoint A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Four</td>
<td>Evaluation of and reflection on opposing viewpoint A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Five</td>
<td>Overview of opposing viewpoint B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Six</td>
<td>Careful reading of opposing viewpoint B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Seven</td>
<td>Evaluation of and reflection on opposing viewpoint B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Eight</td>
<td>Cross examination of opposing viewpoints A and B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Nine</td>
<td>Careful review of steps 1-8 in order to identify reading strategies used and to critique their effectiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Nine-step introduction to individualized reading

Students become familiar with the Opposing Viewpoints format and the expectations of the individualized Lab component by completing the nine steps associated with Phase I. Students then embark on a more extended 15-step Phase II. At this point, students select an Opposing Viewpoints volume of their choice and progress through accompanying instructional materials systematically, at their own pace. It should be noted that the instructional materials devised for Phase II must be more open-ended than Phase I materials because they need to be usable for any text in the series. Despite the generic nature of these materials, they can be devised to recycle strategies previously introduced and practised in teacher-guided activities. Throughout Phase II, students interact with the instructor at periodic intervals, soliciting feedback from the instructor and providing feedback to the instructor about their reading needs. The 15 steps are outlined below:

**Step 1.** Students select topics of interest by first consulting a list of all Opposing Viewpoints books that are available. (As of Fall 1995, the series included over one hundred different titles.) Students then examine actual volumes of interest by previewing the contents of each volume, examining chapter headings and the sets of opposing viewpoints in each chapter. Students select the book that is most appealing and interesting.

**Step 2.** Students select (a minimum of) three pairs of opposing viewpoints (in the book of their choice) for later reading. By examining chapter titles more carefully, they identify those viewpoints with which they are likely to agree and those with which they are likely to disagree. In addition, they consider the ways in which the three pairs of opposing viewpoints might be related (e.g., general political framework; scientific viewpoints; local, national, global orientations).

**Step 3.** Students decide which pair of opposing viewpoints they would like to begin with. After designating the first pair (viewpoints A and B), they do the following:

a. preview opposing viewpoint A and try to determine what they already know about the topic and if they are likely to agree or disagree with the viewpoint. They try to ascertain the author’s background and how it might influence the author’s viewpoint. Finally, they pose some questions to think about while reading the article.

b. read opposing viewpoint A carefully (underlining, highlighting, or taking notes, if deemed necessary).

c. evaluate and reflect on the passage by considering their original hypotheses, their questions, and their opinions about the issue.

**Step 4.** Students follow the same procedures for opposing viewpoint B, initially considering how the new viewpoint might be different from the first.

**Step 5.** Students cross-examine opposing viewpoints A and B, considering: a) the kinds of information each author used to support their arguments, b) the strengths
and weaknesses of each argument, and b) how their own opinions have changed as a result of reading the two viewpoints.

**Step 6.** By reviewing the activities associated with Steps 1-5, students reflect on the strategies they used to read viewpoints A and B. They identify at least two strategies that were particularly useful and commit themselves to applying those strategies, if applicable, when reading the second pair of opposing viewpoints.

**Steps 7, 8, 9 and 10.** Students follow steps 3, 4, 5, and 6 for the second pair of opposing viewpoints (C and D).

**Steps 11, 12, 13, 14.** Students follow steps 3, 4, 5, and 6 for the third pair of opposing viewpoints (E and F).

**Step 15.** Students critique their use of strategies and reading performance by reviewing the steps they have taken and identifying the strategies that they employed while reading the three pairs of opposing viewpoints. In consultation with their instructor, students set an agenda for future reading assignments, identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Depending on student input and instructor observations, instructors might create special activities for individual students to guide them towards improved reading performance.

It should be noted that because of students’ varying proficiency and motivational levels, students will proceed through Phases I and II at different paces, some making great gains quickly and others needing more time. The instructor must diligently oversee each student’s progress to make sure that each student is working at a reading level (and pace) that challenges but does not overly frustrate the individual student.

**OUT-OF-CLASS PLEASURE READING**

The Reading Lab provides students with easy access to pleasure reading materials and encourages students to read outside of class. When interesting reading materials are made available, students are more likely to check them out and read them on their own. What is important is having a variety of materials to satisfy the diverse interests (and fluctuating moods) of Reading Lab students (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, biographies, travelogues, mysteries, easy books, more challenging books, academic texts, comic books, short books, long books, romances, magazines-weekly news, sports, business, environmental, computer). The additional reading that results from this voluntary reading will have the effect of improving students’ reading skills, their confidence, and self-identification as readers (cf. Kitao, Yamamoto, Kitao and Shimatani 1990, for a classroom approach that provides incentives – bonus points – for extra reading).

**THE LOGISTICS OF RUNNING A READING LAB**

**Placement**

For the Reading Lab to work effectively, each student’s reading proficiency should be assessed at the very beginning of the course. The results of placement procedures can inform instructors about individual student’s reading needs as well as the reading needs of the class as a whole. With placement data, Lab instructors can plan teacher-guided instruction and guide individualized reading work accordingly. Incorporating an open-ended questionnaire into placement procedures that permits students to identify interests, perceived reading needs, and L1/L2 reading habits provides the instructor with valuable student input that can be used to shape Lab activities.

**Classroom Ambiance**

The success of a Reading Lab depends partly on its physical setting. The Reading Lab should be situated in a quiet location (with good lighting) so that silent reading is possible. Comfortable chairs and tables that allow for reading and notetaking, if appropriate, are also desirable. A Lab supplied with plentiful reading materials helps create an environment suitable for reading. Bulletin boards with interesting reading materials (including good student essays) can add to an inspirational print environment.

The success of a Reading Lab also depends on establishing a classroom atmosphere conducive to reading; starting out with SSR, during which everyone is reading quietly and reading what they want to read, is an effective way to set the right mood. In the second half of the Lab, during individualized reading, the instructor and students must accustom themselves to speaking together at a whisper level to maintain the right atmosphere. Finally, the Lab needs a clock (with a second hand) so that students can time themselves while completing recognition exercises, rate development practice, and their individualized reading tasks.

**Teacher Feedback**

The Reading Lab instructor must provide students with consistent feedback. In order to do so, the instructor must keep tabs on each student’s progress by observing the student in class, reviewing student’s record keeping, watching how much outside reading the student does, conferring with the student, reviewing reading assignments, etc. At different times during the semester, each student will require varied types of feedback. Some will need to be encouraged to read more, and others coaxed to read more quickly; some students will need to be reminded to read more carefully while others will need to challenge themselves more and work harder, etc.

The instructor can “use” the Reading Lab to help students understand what they are actually doing to improve their reading by bringing the reading process to the
Student Feedback/Input

The Reading Lab model set forth in this article gives students multiple opportunities to provide feedback about the Lab and input about their reading needs to their instructor. The model also encourages students to make decisions for themselves about reading choices and activities. The sustained silent reading period and pleasure reading check-out procedures give students almost total freedom to select readings of their own choice. During the individualized reading component of the Lab, students discuss their reading needs and evaluate their reading progress with their instructor at frequent intervals. By carefully listening to student input during these interchanges, instructors gain valuable information that can be used to tailor teacher-guided instruction to the needs of students in the Lab.

Confidence Building

Students can gain confidence in their reading abilities by keeping track of their progress in recognition practice, rate development activities, and individualized reading. Students should be encouraged to fill in progress charts, recording their times and results, on a regular basis. The resultant visualization helps students see the progress they are making, in turn building their confidence and their self-esteem as readers.

CONCLUSION

Because of the importance of reading in today's world, L2 curricula should be devised so that students are enrolled in at least one instructional component that is dedicated to reading. In a Reading Lab setting, instructors can provide students with the guidance that they need to become more fluent and independent readers. By combining sustained silent reading, teacher-guided instruction, systematic individualized reading, and out-of-class pleasure reading, students gradually move from a learning-to-read orientation to a reading-to-learn framework. With improved reading skills and a keener understanding of what is involved in strategic reading, L2 students prepare themselves for the reading demands that they are likely to encounter outside of their L2 classrooms.

ENDNOTES

1 SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) is sometimes referred to as USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading) or as DEAR (Drop Everything And Read).

2 The Greenhaven Press Opposing Viewpoints series has more than 100 volumes. Each volume has a central theme (e.g., drug abuse, immigration, the death penalty, the homeless, the environmental crisis, genetic engineering). Each theme is then divided into five or six sub-themes, each one defined by a question. For example, in the volume on genetic engineering (Dudley 1990), the five sub-themes are based on these questions: Is genetic engineering beneficial? Can genetic engineering improve health? Does genetic engineering improve agriculture? Is genetic engineering adequately regulated? and Will genetic engineering lead to a biological arms race? Five sections, each representing a sub-theme, present three balanced sets of opposing viewpoints (e.g., “Research in genetic engineering must proceed” and “Research in genetic engineering should be halted”). In total, each book has between 30-36 readings (i.e., 15-18 sets of opposing viewpoints).

3 I would like to acknowledge Camille Stewart, currently teaching at Lindhurst High School, Lindhurst, CA, who worked with me to develop Opposing Viewpoints instructional materials while she was at Northern Arizona University, teaching in the Program in Intensive English.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

Overview of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum in Northern Arizona University's Program in Intensive English, Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

The intensive academic English preparation course for L2 students at Northern Arizona University comprises 26 contact hours per week. It is made up of seven instructional components. The theme-based Core Class addresses all skill areas including study skills and computer skills. The other six curricular components (including the Reading Lab) offer additional support for individual skill areas. The schematic illustration below provides a general overview of the curricular components and corresponding skill emphases.

![Curriculum Diagram]

**CORE CLASS**: Theme-based integrated-skills course (10 hours per week)

- academic
- academic
- academic
- academic
- study skills
- computer
- reading
- writing
- speaking
- listening
- literacy

**TOEFL PREPARATION** (4 hrs /wk)

- READING LAB (4 hrs/wk)
- INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION (2 hrs/wk)
- VIDEO (2 hrs/wk)

**WRITING TUTORIALS** (2 hrs/wk)

**COMPUTER LAB/COMPOSITION** (2 hrs /wk)
## APPENDIX B

### Sample two-hour Lab session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Focus of Lab segment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-20 min</td>
<td>Sustained silent reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50 min</td>
<td>Teacher-guided activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Three word/phrase recognition exercises with record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>keeping (7 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Timed- or paced-reading with record keeping (10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Contextualized strategy training (23-33 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 min</td>
<td>Systematic individualized reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of class</td>
<td>Pleasure reading check-out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX C

### Sample word recognition exercise

#### Key word

1. **confront** comfort contain confront console conferred
2. **sped** speed bled sold spied sped
3. **hospital** hatred hurried hospice hospital hundred
4. **crying** drying buying praying frying crying
5. **worried** married buried worried worldly dried
6. **agreed** agree again agents agreed agitate
7. **guys** gays buys days pays guys
8. **shot** sheet shout shot shop smog
9. **another** annoyed enough amputate another animate
10. **reason** treason reason rebound reacts reality
11. **whole** whale wheat white whirl whole
12. **except** accept exempt except expect exists
13. **fight** might night light flight fight
14. **against** agency agent again against agents
15. **kill** bill fill hill kill pill
16. **along** along alone atlas alters among
17. **might** sight right night might light
18. **believe** believe receive beliefs receipt behavior
19. **together** tighten leather weather together twilight
20. **stopped** stripped stopped tripped cropped dropped

Time: _____________ seconds

Number correct: ___________ /20

(from Rosen and Stoller 1994: 182)