

EXTENSIVE FREE VOLUNTARY READING AND FREE VOLUNTARY LISTENING—SOME THOUGHTS ON WHY? AND HOW? IN BULGARIA

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D.E.A.R. April 12th is a day in many schools in the United States centered on what is called D.E.A.R. -- Drop Everything and Read! That initiative can serve as a small hands-on model for improved book reading in Bulgarian, English, Turkish (and other languages) in this country. Here a site for D.E.A.R.: <http://bit.ly/HapTQN> . The present paper is divided into 16 points.

1. FLUENCY FIRST! Paul Nation stresses that learners need the “opportunity to become really good at using what you already know, and that means developing fluency with the language that you have already learned. At every level of language proficiency, learners should try to be fluent with what they already know. So right from the very first day of learning a language, you can be fluent in the small amounts of language that you know” (Nation, 2008). This kind of ‘fluency,’ even for speaking and learning lexis and grammar well, and for improving writing, can be best developed through a lot of reading at your level, whatever that is, even knowing a hundred words. Penguin Easystarts (see below) offer a wide selection of 20-page graded readers at the level of 200 headwords, suitable for beginners, and all with audio pack if desired.

2. FREE VOLUNTARY READING (FVR) & LISTENING (FVL) A key focus for developing reading fluency is wide, relaxed Free Voluntary Reading outside classroom or Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) of a self-selected text for maybe 20-30 minutes inside the classroom. Krashen (2011b) is a good introduction online to the importance of FVR and SSR, Krashen (2011a) his new book on this focus. Krashen (2011c) provides a nice wide-ranging interview online about the need for developing FVR. FVR and FVL -- for recreation and pleasure -- are rare among most English language learners in Bulgaria at all levels. We know that. Research can substantiate it. Most students here are not reading much independently for fun or pleasure. Even newspapers or comics in English. And not listening much in English, except maybe to pop songs. Nor are they reading much in Bulgarian either, or Turkish. In many countries, kids go online but don't read. Kids/teens have their “*e-life*,” /Internet/ “*g-life*,” /computer games/ “*m-life*,” /music, pop + chalga/, “*p-life*,” /cell phones + SMS/, their “*c-life*” /comics/, “*f-life*” /films/ -- But their “*b-life*” /self-selected relaxed reading of books for pleasure/ is quite limited in any language for most younger Bulgarians.

3. TEACHING ‘GEN Y’

Stephen Krashen has an intriguing article regarding actual teen literacy in the U.S., especially influenced by their “*e-life*”: <http://bit.ly/Hhujbw> He also looks in depth at how kids use the Internet for reading, and recommends “Free Voluntary Web Surfing” (Krashen, 2007). Reilly (2012: 9) stresses that ‘Generation Y’ or ‘Net Gen’ in many countries, youth born in the 1980s and early 90s – now so-called “screenagers,” “digital natives” (Prensky 2001) heavily influenced by Internet – “are naturally more visual than textual and therefore show a reduced tendency to read,” have a strong “predilection for entertainment and games” and often “feel disengaged in the classroom” (pp. 7, 3). They may seem disrespectful of teachers, of traditional often boring lockstep learning. Members of this ‘Net Gen’ also may have a different work ethic, don't like rules & deadlines, and can have a lackadaisical attitude toward studying and reading. (Reilly 2012: 5-6). “Much

of the reading done by the Net Gen has been on the Web, where they are more likely to scan than to read. In fact, overreliance on text may inhibit Net Gen participation” (Oblinger 2005: 2.14-15).

This may be particularly exacerbated in the Bulgarian ‘Gen Y’ now in the high schools and universities, having grown up in a country wracked by unending economic crisis, loss of faith in most institutions and mass emigration, children of the “desert of the Transition” (Horvath & Štiks 2012). Some wonder: is this a generation especially heavily resistant to book reading, except for a small privileged learner elite who attend private language schools in the larger cities? Поколение не ни пука? Was there a somewhat different reading culture 30 years ago under state socialism, more reading, much cheaper books? Research is needed! The new site <http://cheti.me> is one positive step forward toward energizing FVR in Bulgarian -- take a look, recommend to your students and friends.

4. WHY ARE FVR & FVL NEGLECTED IN BULGARIA AND THE REGION?

The most important factor perhaps is simply scarce resources for graded ‘easier’ reading in English -- little at home, very little in libraries, book shops. And too much of what is available are ‘classics,’ too difficult. At the heart of resource scarcity is the question of austerity budgets and no money for such books: the ‘political economy’ and ‘social ecology’ of learning’ -- in Bulgaria in a lower-income economy now in crisis for over two decades [!]. In part, this is due to student learning styles: pupils and even university students tend to *study what is assigned for tests*, what is marked. The result is that most teachers *do not encourage free voluntary reading* outside class, even online. I suggest you give students a ‘reading history questionnaire’ – you’ll discover interesting stuff (see Appendix 1 for a draft model of such a questionnaire). If large amounts of FVR/FVL are recommended, we are talking about Extensive Reading (ER) and Extensive Listening (EL), which I discuss below. ER/EL are also very rare in Bulgarian education, either for L1 or L2 (or L3).

Along with scarce and overly expensive materials, for teachers there is always the argument of “not enough time” in the curriculum, ER not linked to the syllabus and the state exams, and downward pressure from the authorities on teachers to conform to the set syllabus. Maley (2009) also mentions “resistance from teachers, who find it impossible to stop teaching and to allow learning to take place.”

5. IT WORKS! Stephen Krashen (2004a) and other literacy scholars have long stressed the importance of FVR/FVL for improving *all* proficiency skills, including speaking and writing. Krashen (2004b): “In the last few decades, evidence from several areas continues to show that those who do more recreational reading show better development in reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. These results hold for first and second language acquisition, and for children and adults.” Moreover, even for academic language: “I predict, if you look at the career of people who’ve mastered academic writing, you’ll see this middle-stage of massive, wide, phenomenal amounts of free voluntary reading for pleasure” (Krashen, 2011c, 23:00-24:00).

What students from elementary proficiency level on up need is lots of ‘comprehensible input’ – stories and texts at a lexical and grammatical level in their ‘comfort zone.’ The guiding thesis is: Learners need a great amount of Free Voluntary Reading and Listening (for fun, pleasure, self-selected). This meshes with Nation’s (2006) suggestions about the importance of building *fluency* at whatever level of language you know, and thus recycling the words you are mastering by keeping the reading ‘easy.’

Significantly Reilly (2012: 9) stresses that GenY is “more holistic than analytic: therefore extensive reading is likely to be more attractive for them than intensive reading.”

and he suggests using ER strategies much more to “make a variety of materials available to students” and “allow them to select what they want to read.”

6. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM INDIA

A fascinating empirical study from Andhra Pradesh state in southern India (Amritavalli 2007) suggest that student-selected texts at their own level for FVR is highly effective, likewise for learners in deprived circumstances and from working-class families, or children who themselves are already working outside school, and is also effective with adult learners. Learner autonomy for reading and listening in selecting texts in a learner-centered constructivist (see point 15 below) .framework is what Prof. Amritavalli found can work wonders: “This study arose from the belief that successful second language learning can result when the power to choose learning materials is vested in the learners themselves [...] it is necessary for each learner to take charge of her learning, which happens at her convenience rather than strictly during class or tuition time [...] Each learner undertakes an exploration of the language in accordance with her current ability” (pp. ix, 17). Her own pupils in the study preferred quite short texts, with shorter sentences, and at their own level of comprehensibility, which they themselves know best. Especially interesting is chap. 3, “What is authentic for deprived learners?” (pp. 28-48).

7. WHAT IS ‘EASY’? → ‘FIVE-FINGER RULE OF THUMB’ / READING FAST FOR FLUENCY

This means no more than five unfamiliar new words per page of about 275-300 words, the classic ‘5-finger rule of thumb’ for comprehensible input (2% new words on a page, best not more!). Research suggests learners need to encounter a lexical item 25-30 times in different contexts of reading and listening before they really learn it. Ergo: read, read, read, for fluency, in your comfort and pleasure zone.

8. KEY COROLLARY TO FVR: *Extensive Reading (ER,) and Extensive Listening (EL)*, centered on massive reading & listening for pleasure of easier material, reading for fun are the “Magic Carpet to Language Learning.” (ER 1st World Congress Kyoto Sept. 2011; see the Grabe videos below)].

Maley (2009) suggests the following characteristics of successful EL, which can also be applied in part to Extensive Listening. The following have been adapted from his list:

1. Students read a lot and read often. Maybe 30 minutes a day, 2-3 hours a week.
2. There is a wide variety of text types and topics to choose from, fiction, non-fiction, comics, graphic novels and texts, drama, newspapers.
3. The texts are not just interesting: they are engaging/compelling.
4. Students themselves choose what to read. If they find too hard after 2-3 pages, they try something else.
5. Reading purposes focus on: pleasure, information and general understanding.
6. Reading is its own reward. For pleasure, not some test. You acquire more vocab, grammar, subconsciously.
7. There are no tests, no exercises, no questions and no dictionaries. **READ FOR PLEASURE IS THE AIM.**
8. Materials are within the language competence of the students, maybe 2% of words not known, the “five-finger rule” (see below).

9. Reading is individual, and silent.
10. Speed is normal, not too slow. Maybe 100 words a minute, 6,000 an hour (slow for some). But 2 hours a week means about 48-50 thousand words a month. It can add up to 600,000 running words a year at this slow rate.
11. The teacher explains the goals and procedures clearly, then monitors and guides the students, who are autonomous learners.
12. The teacher is a role model, herself a reader, who participates along with the students, not a police officer for literacy.

Maley stresses that “there is no cheaper and more effective way to develop learner autonomy. It offers comprehensible input, with repeated encounters with language the students already largely know: “the only reliable way to learn a language is through massive and repeated exposure to it in context: precisely what ER provides.” ER enhances general language proficiency, including speaking skills and writing. Indeed, the more we read, the better we write. It develops broader general knowledge, and gives strong support to the effect of multiple exposure to language in context, in line with (Hoey 2005) and his theory of “lexical priming.” And very importantly, ER creates and sustains motivation to read more, looking for “compelling” material. Maley notes: “the effect on self-esteem and motivation of reading one’s first book in the foreign language is undeniable.” This was my own experience as well in learning German largely from graded learner literature, analogous to what is called a “home run book: my first!” (Krashen, 2004a, pp. 82-84).

A focus on ER and EL suggests some *10,000 words a week* or more of sustained, repeated comprehensible input amounting to a goal of ca. 500,000 words annually at a reading & listening speed of *100 words per minute, 100 minutes a week*. (100 x 100 x 52) In Japan, teachers may try to reach the double: 1,000,000 running words intake per year in the SSS approach – Start with Simple Stories -- the work of Akio Furukawa: <http://bit.ly/GHPKF6> Akio’s approach is great! Extensive can mean repeated readings of and listening to the same material, but more normally is reading hefty amounts of new material, lots of graded readers. It seems to be working in Japan! What about in the Balkans?

9. HOW MANY WORDS DO STUDENTS ‘NEED TO KNOW’?

Knowing well the 2,000 most frequent word families in English gives ca. 76% coverage in most texts, the British National Corpus 3,000 highest frequency headwords covers some 86% of academic texts, with about 90% coverage for much fiction. Nation (2006: 72) argues notes that the “most frequent 4,000 words from the BNC plus proper nouns account for around 95% of the running words, and to get to the 98% coverage level a vocabulary of at least 8,000 words plus proper nouns is needed [...] thus a similar vocabulary size of around 8,000 to 9,000 words is needed to read newspapers” and various genres of fiction. He estimates some “6,000–7,000 families for dealing with spoken text” (79). ER can help students recycle and really learn lexis at ever higher levels, depending on student motivation.

10. INTENSIVE READING

ER goes significantly beyond ‘Intensive Reading,’ which is more the norm of typical course book ‘readings’: look ‘INSIDE’ the text, look ‘IN’ at vocabulary, grammar, reading skills, various kinds of exercises, teacher-led; maybe learners know 90-96% of vocabulary – all reading the same thing, at same pace, both better and weaker students. The text may be boring to some students, perhaps even demotivating. Intensive Reading is often not individualized, or self-selected. But intensive reading with a focus especially on building

“collocational competence” is important (Seizova, 2012), and can be combined with ER/EL. She stresses that “Intensive Reading and Extensive Voluntary reading are complementary – the solution is a blend of intentional and incidental learning.”

11. WHAT TO READ?

- THE WORLD OF LEARNER LITERATURE - Graded readers for foreign language learners: there are now over 3,000, fiction and non-fiction for EFL – See the *Extensive Reading Guide* of erfoundation.org, p. 16 (download here: <http://bit.ly/HOo2Ce>). But most graded readers are a bit expensive in lower-income economies. We need cost-free learner literature. Macmillan Readers for Beginners at 600 headwords have 36 titles, all with audio: <http://bit.ly/HhiJOU> Penguin Easystarts at 200 headwords offer 24 different titles, many by Stephen Rabley and John Escott, recognized British writers for children, all with an audio pack: <http://bit.ly/HLPh3L> Penguin Kids Readers, a new series at six levels from 200 headwords on up, offers more than 25 titles: <http://bit.ly/HSzOhR> All these are nicely illustrated, collaboration with Disney. *Finding Nemo* is one of the potentially most popular in this series, with links to the film by Disney (2003). But the cost around US\$6 or more per small book for Kids Readers, and perhaps US\$10-13 for Easystarts, is beyond the means of most learners and many libraries. Express Publishing has a no. of readers from Level 1 (300 headwords), most with CDs; the Early Primary Readers series comes with a Multi-ROM disk for activities and DVD video, and stories can be acted out by the learners as short plays, here a video sample: <http://bit.ly/HcJJNK> . These books are also in the range of US\$12 with disk.
- LEVELED READERS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS – few available here in Bulgaria in any bookstore, except in Bulgarian translated from English. Wizard of Oz, Black Beauty, David Copperfield, Graded drama., such as *Romeo and Juliet* at a level of 1,200 headwords from Penguin. Nota bene: graded drama is very sparse and needs a strong push in the realm of graded literature materials.
- YOUNG ADULT FICTION, especially with themes connected to the life worlds of your students / lit. for kids and teens: *Children’s literature and Young Adult Fiction* should be a main focus. There are thousands of titles. See this video from UK: <http://bit.ly/GZ2amV> A good site for Best Young Adult books in U.S.: <http://bit.ly/GXuJ9N>
- ONLINE GRADED READERS? – there still are very few because of copyright. URL: <http://esolebooks.com> is one good site.
- SHORT STORIES ONLINE – there are numerous good sites, here a few: http://free-online-novels.com/short_stories.html <http://www.shortstories101.com/> <http://bit.ly/JquIf0> These written by students: <http://shortstories.student.com/>
- VOA SPECIAL ENGLISH -- the online archive www.voaspecialenglish.com has over 100 American stories in simpler English, graded at 1,500 headwords. Here a famous story by Jack London: <http://bit.ly/HYdiCX> Search “American stories” in the archive, using ‘exact match’ from 2002 here: <http://bit.ly/I8RdBG> .
- NARROW READING (many books by a single author, or on a single subject area]: *Twilight saga* by Stephenie Meyer (4 vampire-theme novels), the Harry Potter series. What about British author for kids and teens Enid Blyton? (see <http://www.enidblytonsociety.org>). Enid is largely unknown here in Bulgaria. Her work encompasses several hundred books for younger readers. Mary Wilkins Freeman is one of the best American short story writers of a century ago, and all her stories are online: <http://bit.ly/xCV0QV> . On narrow reading/listening, see the

article by Krashen: <http://bit.ly/GJwUbg> . Krashen (2007) stresses that reading on the web can also be shaped by narrow reading of a particular site, or focus on a particular topic in FVS.

- **GLOBAL & CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES** -- Intriguingly, Reilly (2012: 9) stresses the idea of including materials on social issues in the reading of ‘Gen Y,’ texts about ecology and climate change, poverty, women’s issues and the like – since “Gen Y seeks a purpose and a passion.” VOA Special English has many such texts, multimodal, and this can be experimented with precisely in line with Reilly’s suggestions regarding ‘Gen Y’ pedagogies. See also my paper on Global Issues at the BETA conference (2012) as well. Simpler materials for ER and Global Issues are available at ‘Global Issues for Learners of English,’ a site of the *New Internationalist* and still accessible, though discontinued: <http://tinyurl.com/btf9d6t> Materials from this site are utilized in Templer & Tonawanik (2010).
- **SIMPLER NEWSPAPERS** -- The *New York Times* has started a new paper, *TIMES IN PLAIN ENGLISH*: <http://bit.ly/HELhAb> It is definitely much simpler English, with articles rewritten from the *NYT*, *Wall Street Journal* and other U.S. papers, and downshifted to lower-intermediate B1 level. This can be used like VOA Special English for cost-free ER, recreational reading at easier levels. Lots of the articles deal with issues of interest, political, economic, social. Research is needed on this new cost-free online resource.
- **SELF-SELECTION** --Amritavalli (2007) experimented with having learners self-select texts even in their own assigned textbook, with interesting results to see what students prefer. The focus is on learner autonomy even within the prescribed syllabus.

12. MULTIMODAL MATERIALS GALORE

Graphic novels and comics, Manga in English. A huge growing body of material that young readers love. Get these into libraries and students’ hands! (see Templer 2009). See Classical Comics: www.classicalcomics.com [versions in original + simple ‘Quick Text’]. There is a great need to experiment with such multimodal reading materials, especial in the form of graphic comic versions of great literature. Here a preview of the ‘Quick Text’ version of Romeo and Juliet: <http://bit.ly/H4UaCN> . Dracula in a QT version is sampled here: <http://bit.ly/HNo4ie> Both Oblinger (2005) and (Reilly) 2012) stress the need for using multimodal materials with Net Gen students, who often have a keen preference for visual and kinesthetic learning (Reilly 2012: 5).. Many graded readers now come with an audio pack, ergo also quite multimodal. Amritavalli (2007) emphasizes that her pupils tended to select materials that had pictures to reinforce the short preferred texts.

13. BASICS OF VOA SPECIAL ENGLISH AS A COST-FREE ONLINE TOOL

VOA Special English – a huge online archive of texts at 1,500 headwords (lower-intermediate level) <http://www.voaspecialenglish.com> is a valuable cost-free tool for reading and listening. It is the largest single ‘easier’ resource online, with MP3 audio for many texts. Action research is needed on SP in the classroom.

- SE is based on a 1,500-word core ‘high-frequency’ vocabulary Plus 3-4% of more specialized vocabulary, depending on the subject. *** But it basically *recycles* high-frequency vocabulary, important for all learners. *** Repetition and recycling of basic lexis is crucial – Special English does this well. *** It averages *13 words per sentence*. *** Its grammar, though natural, is simpler – generally one *proposition* [idea] per sentence. *** A kind of ‘English for Academic Purposes

Lite' -- *EAP LITE*. *** All of it is also on audio (MP3), *read at a speed of 90 words a minute* (versus 120-130 words per minute in more 'normal' speed).

- Every day, it has 10 minutes of World News. Plus two feature articles: on 14 'subject areas,' from agriculture, development, education, 'people in America,' American short stories, other subjects. All this material is archived online, since 2000. *ABOUT 720 FEATURE ARTICLES A YEAR. → NEARLY 7,000 ARTICLES IN THE ARCHIVE* at this point, well over 3.5 million words, and adding 14 articles per week. This should be a site for ER looking at contemporary problems in Reilly's (2012) sense. Here a VOA Special English video on International Women's Day: <http://bit.ly/HupGun>.
- At 90 minutes words a minute, about 2,650-2,700 words in 30 minutes, every day. = 18,500 words /week. = 962,000 words a year. D.E.A.R. with Special English 20-30 minutes a day is good practice.
- The 10 minutes of world news is only audio (about 900 words), the *two daily features* are audio + print, about 1,750 words. The long articles average 1,400 words, short ones generally 400 words.

14. LISTENING – FVL/EL

Along with the many thousands of texts now available with MP3 in the archive on the VOA Special English site, students can work with <http://www.eslpod.com>, created by Jeff McQuillan, a close associate of Stephen Krashen. It is good lower-intermediate listening. BBC Learning English has good videos for listening: <http://bbc.in/GRXgK5> Students can record many kinds of genres from Internet (news reports, readings of stories on youtube) and listen on their recording device. BBC International is a great source for news reports that can be listened to repeatedly, and much other EL input, but it may be too fast, too hard for many learners. Listen to "The World Today" every day, for example. A program from BBC at more normal reading or speaking speed of ca. 125 words a minute will provide approximately 7,500 words in a hour. Two hours a week, 50 weeks for the year, would provide some 750,000 running words for EL. The entire VOA daily Special English broadcast is 30 minutes, some running 2,700 words. And as mentioned, graded readers with audio provide another platform for EL, with Penguin Easystarts at just 200 key words vocabulary. Of course, songs are a great listening genre, and part of students' "*m-life*" in any case, much available cost-free on Internet, including lyrics. And songs are 'fun' listening, par excellence.

15. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ER/EL

The pedagogical approach of social constructivism (Reyes & Vallone 2008: 31-38, 167-172) in the ESL classroom at all levels is a good armature for including and energizing student-centered ER/EL and much independent reading for pleasure. "It values questioning, reasoning, analysis, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation, and creativity among the intellectual assets that children will need in school and in life beyond school" (Crawford & Reyes, 2012: 32). Social constructivism encourages students to construct meanings for themselves, to 'learn by doing,' through collaboration, and also much individualized work, since every student has a different 'zone of proximal development' in Vygotsky's conception (ibid., 13-14). It is very much in the spirit of Bruner's "knowing is a process, not a product" (ibid., 15), and is also the kind of pedagogical praxis better suited for working with 'Gen Y,' as Reilly (2012: 10) intimates. Constructivist educators try to "create an open and stimulating environment that is conducive to learning," (Crawford & Reyes, 2011: 14) with a lot of simpler 'sheltered reading,' and careful scaffolding for individual comprehension as in Vygotskian pedagogy -- in this case centered on reading

in EFL grounded on readily ‘comprehensible input’ in Krashen’s classic “*i + 1*” sense (ibid., 15-16). ER/EL + FVR/VFL fit in well with this. Amritavalli (2007) also builds on it.

16. TURNING TALK INTO WALK – SOME KEY FOCUS AREAS IN READING PEDAGOGY IN BULGARIA

- (1) Research: projects on ER/EL/VFR, student “*e-life*,” “*p-life*,” “*g-life*,” “*c-life*,” “*m-life*,” “student reading histories,” action research that teachers can do, looking at the Bulgarian ‘Gen Y’ (Reilly 2012) -- including research on FVS, Free Voluntary Web-Surfing, and more aspects of ‘social constructivism’ for energizing literacy in the Bulgarian schools. As Krashen (2007: 7) notes, suggesting self-research by teachers: “The best way, in my experience, to get a feel for narrow FVS is to try ourselves. The internet provides us with a unique opportunity to test the effects of narrow reading on oneself without expending a lot of effort in finding relevant and related reading material.” This is in line with what Prensky (2001) recommends in pedagogies for “digital natives.”
- (2) The Bulgarian Reading Association (бач www.bulra.org) can brainstorm fresh ways to get students and families reading more in Bulgarian and in L2 or L3. They can develop projects, build more outreach into the schools, joining hands with BETA for promoting Free Voluntary Reading in both Bulgarian and English. Experiments are needed with the site <http://cheti.me> and other initiatives, in the sense of promoting reading for a Bulgarian ‘Net Gen,’ especially in the context of the “desert of the Transition” (Horvath & Štiks 2012) in Bulgaria, and the social gloom it has generated.
- (3) In this context of prolonged crisis, the massive exodus from Bulgaria raises intriguing questions: there are 2,036,092 now (April 2012) living abroad -- ca. 25% of the former Bulgarian population 20 years ago -- and some 80,000 Bulgarians studying in colleges outside Bulgaria, particularly in the U.K., where their number has tripled since 2009 (<http://bit.ly/IdsZpx>). Some 300,000 migrants are in the U.S., their number mounting. What impact does this have of EFL pedagogy? Do youth planning to study abroad have stronger reading habits? Are future emigrants better students in some respects, including interest in reading? How do migrants (students + workers) see this? Research is needed.
- (4) Pro-active advocacy—directed to government and other potential funding sources- by бач/BRA, teachers, NGOs to prioritize energizing of literacy in Bulgarian, Turkish and foreign languages in this country, rediscovering “*b-life*” again. Needed are much better school and neighborhood libraries with large collections of ‘learner literature’ for English, graded and leveled readers galore. There could be family reading projects (<http://bit.ly/GQFgms>), much experimented with in the U.S. and U.K. Programs can be encouraged to create a “book flood” in schools, neighborhood libraries (Krashen 1997; 2004a). This means multiple copies of book, library sets for extensive reading by many students. Krashen 2011c, 4:00) stresses: “Children of poverty is everything in education [...] Well-off children have thousands of times more access to books than poor children. They live in neighborhoods with more book stores. Children of poverty in the United States live, there are no books anywhere, you can’t find them, so how can you do well in school?” He argues that worldwide, we need to guarantee every child massive cost-free access to books. This means “libraries, libraries, libraries.”
- (5) Pressing perhaps to create a new government-supported publishing house for very low-cost books in English, “deprivatizing publishing and knowledge

distribution to some extent. Could we imagine a «Народно Издателство Прочетене»? If Bulgaria can afford NATO, troops stationed in Afghanistan, it can afford new inventive programs in people's literacy. In Bulgaria, kids in the bottom half of the school population in terms of SES (socioeconomic status) have little access to books anywhere, Roma kids and youth in particular. Significantly, Roma children are now 21% of all kids 1-9 years old, most in poverty (<http://bit.ly/Hw38dt>). It is all a question of priorities. Krashen reminds us: "The tragedy we have world-wide is that the amount of money we're putting into testing, a fraction of this would guarantee every child access to books, better health care, better food" (2011c, 5:57-6:20). Make a Bulgarian D.E.A.R. a multi-faceted & inventive national education policy priority, oriented especially to the underprivileged!

Some Useful Websites

What is Extensive Reading? www.extensivereading.net/ www.erfoundation.org
Waring, Rob. (2010) <http://www.robwaring.org> [superb site for FVR, ER, EL]
Waring, Rob. (2010). <http://www.robwaring.org/er/index.html> Great site [!] for Extensive Reading
Waring, Rob. (2010). <http://www.robwaring.org/el/> Good site for Extensive Listening articles.
Krashen, Stephen David. <http://sdkrashen.com> Many excellent downloadable articles on FVR -- see also his journal IJFLT (<http://www.ijflt.com>).

BASIC ENGLISH 850 (www.basic-english.org) is another resource than can be revitalized for Extensive Reading. It is based on 850 headwords; see Templer, 2008a, 2009.

MORE GOOD VIDEOS: Rob Waring: <http://bit.ly/GJ7wIz> // Bill Grabe, ER 1st World Congress, Sept. 2011: <http://bit.ly/GTrtXS> <http://bit.ly/GSWnZr> // Glasgow Online March 2012, Extensive Reading author awards video: <http://bit.ly/GRneyY> Krashen (2011) on poverty and literacy: <http://bit.ly/HrHx5S> Krashen (2012) on reading & poverty: <http://bit.ly/HG8Y9t>

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Appendix 1

EXPLORING YOUR OWN READING HISTORY

1. What are your first memories of reading in Bulgarian or another language at home? Did someone read fairy tales or other stories to you, like your mom? What do you remember about a favorite story? Tell a bit.
2. What are your earliest memories of reading in English. At home? At school? What stories were there, like perhaps Peter Pan?
3. What did you enjoy reading most when you were in the age range of 6-12. Fairy tales, adventure stories? Name a few. Did you have a favorite book as a kid?
4. Is there any book that was a “home run” book for you – the very ‘first book’ you read by yourself?. Some book that started you to read more, that motivated you to begin reading more on your own?
5. Do you have a favorite author today in Bulgarian or another language? Why do you think his or her writings appeal to you?
6. What is the best or most interesting book you’ve read in English? What about in Bulgarian (or Turkish, if you learned to read Turkish when young)?
7. When you were young, did you have a lot of book at home to read, maybe your parents’ books?
8. Did you go a lot to a library when you were young, and take books home? Can you remember something about that?
9. Do you come from a ‘reading family,’ i.e. a family where your own parents or brothers or sisters, or maybe some other relative, tend to read a lot? If so, did that influence you?
10. Do you own many books other than textbooks, schoolbooks? If so, what are they, and about how many?
11. Roughly how many hours a week do you read for fun and pleasure in Bulgarian?
12. Roughly how many hours a week do you read books or newspapers on your own (FVR – Free Voluntary Reading) in English?
13. What kind of texts do you enjoy reading most in Bulgarian. What kind of texts don’t you like to read much?
14. Do you like to read a lot online? What? We call this “Free Voluntary Web-Surfing” (FVS).
15. What topics do you prefer to read about when online?
16. Roughly how much time a day do you spend reading something online – Facebook, blogging, articles or newspapers, email from friends?
17. Have you ever seen the website in Bulgarian <http://cheti.me> ? If not, look at it. What do you think – useful for you? If so, how?
18. Have you read a good book recently? Did you finish it? Why did you like it?
19. Is there any author or single book that really changed your thinking? What, be specific if you can?
20. Have you read Harry Potter or the Twilight series? In what language if you did, and how many of the books? Why did you like Harry Potter stories, or the werewolf stories in Twilight? Write a few sentences.
21. Look at the following websites: what do you find there that might be interest or help to you? www.extensivereading.net www.robwaring.org

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