Fostering English Reading Habits in Senior Citizens:
The Pure Optimal Unified Input (POUI) Approach

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ABSTRACT:

As Japan's retiree population continues to grow, many older adults are dedicating their leisure time to learning English. However, effective teaching methods tailored to this demographic remain underexplored. This study compares two approaches to teaching English reading to seniors: the traditional grammar-translation method and a Pure Optimal Unified Input (POUI) approach, operationalized through Story-Listening (SL) and Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR). Conducted at Shitennoji University in Osaka, the research evaluates how these methods impact long-term reading habits and outcomes. A questionnaire was distributed to 181 individuals who participated in these courses between 2009 and 2022, yielding 97 responses. After excluding participants who attended both types of courses, 84 responses were analyzed. Results indicate that 75% of SL/GSSR participants continued reading in English after completing the course, compared to 53% of grammar-translation participants, illustrating higher retention in the SL/GSSR group. Additionally, SL/GSSR participants reported more intensive reading habits, averaging 24.2 minutes of daily reading versus 7.3 minutes in the grammar-translation group. They also strongly preferred novels (80% vs. 11% in the traditional group, who largely favored other texts). These findings underscore the value of providing abundant, comprehensible, and engaging input, through both listening and reading, to older learners while minimizing cognitive load. Rather than focusing on dissecting complex texts, fostering enjoyment in reading emerges as a more effective strategy for developing lasting reading habits. By combining auditory input with level-appropriate books, the SL/GSSR approach appears to equip seniors better to become proficient, independent readers than traditional methods. Despite limitations such as a moderate response rate and a small sample size for the grammar-translation group, this research highlights the potential of the POUI framework to inform program design for seniors and foster lifelong language acquisition.

Keywords: Story-Listening (SL)**,** Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR)**,** Senior Learners**,** Pure Optimal Unified Input (POUI)**,** Sustained Reading Habits

INTRODUCTION
Exploring Effective Approaches for Senior Learners

With the global population of retirees 65 and older steadily increasing, [1] many Japanese seniors are dedicating their leisure time to learning English. [2] This trend has spurred the creation of English courses tailored to older adults. Despite this growing interest, there remains a notable gap in research on effective teaching methods and materials for this demographic,

emphasizing the need to understand their unique learning requirements better (Yamamoto, 2022).

At Shitennoji University in Osaka, an Open Campus program for the local community offered two contrasting approaches to teaching English reading. The first employed the traditional grammar-translation method, focusing on explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction to build accurate reading skills through literary texts. The second approach utilized what I refer to as the *pure optimal unified input approach*, emphasizing language acquisition through input-only techniques that combine Story-Listening (SL) and Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR), free from activities that might distract from acquisition.

Although, at first glance, this approach may seem akin to adding storytelling to an Extensive Reading program, it is, in fact, fundamentally different. SL/GSSR is designed to provide auditory and visual language input that is comprehensible, compelling, rich, and abundant, and free of forced output, comprehension checks, error correction, memorization, drills, or testing. Contrastingly, storytelling and extensive reading often adopt more targeted instructional models with comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises. SL/GSSR instead follows a "Non-Targeted" acquisition method (Krashen, 1982, 1985, 2003, 2013), deliberately omitting pre-teaching of vocabulary and grammar, mid-comprehension questions, post-activity discussions, memorization, error correction, drills, and testing, focusing solely on providing rich, natural language input.

The availability of these two distinct approaches within the Open Campus program presented a unique opportunity to evaluate their long-term effectiveness for senior learners. While input-only methods have demonstrated superiority over traditional (eclectic) approaches in improving test scores (see: http://www.sdkrashen.com and http://www.beniko-mason.net), a critical question remains: *Can these methods foster sustained language acquisition and help learners become lifelong readers?* In other words, are the benefits of input-only approaches enduring, and do they promote lifelong learning habits?

This study investigates the long-term impact of the input-only method by evaluating its effectiveness in cultivating enduring English reading habits compared to the traditional grammar-translation approach. Through an analysis of survey responses from former participants, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the potential of these methods to promote lifelong language acquisition and reading proficiency among senior learners.

Exploring the SL/GSSR and Grammar-Translation Methods
Grammar-Translation Method (G-T Method)

The Grammar-Translation Method, a mainstay of traditional language instruction, emphasizes explicit grammar teaching and translation exercises. At Shitennoji University, this approach utilized literary texts such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Little Prince*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *The Remains of the Day*. Reading materials were selected based on students' interests. To enrich the learning experience, the instructor provided detailed explanations in Japanese, addressing the grammar, vocabulary, and historical context of both the stories and their authors. Students reported satisfaction with the lessons and the instructor, and many continued taking the course for several years. While this method supports conscious learning, its materials and teaching strategies differ from those used in the SL/GSSR method.

Story-Listening Materials

The *pure optimal unified input (POUI)* approach emphasizes subconscious language acquisition through listening, facilitated by Story-Listening (SL). Instruction begins with simple yet engaging narratives, such as Aesop's fables, fairy tales, and folk tales, and gradually progresses to longer texts, such as the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales, then progresses to more complex stories, including Shakespeare's retellings by Charles and Mary Lamb, and short stories by O. Henry, and selections from *100 Great Short Stories*. [4]

Although Aesop's fables are often classified as children's literature, they are linguistically rich and thematically profound, making them suitable for learners of all ages and levels. For instance, *The Brother and the Sister* contains three academic words (affect, conduct, interpret) and five relatively uncommon words (average, embraces, impartially, mirror, while) within just 171 words. Its underlying theme, contrasting inner beauty with outward appearance, adds depth, engaging listeners both linguistically and conceptually. [3]

Fairy tales and folk tales, with their universal themes and cultural resonance, also play a key role in engaging learners while exposing them to various vocabulary and linguistic structures. For older adults, short stories by creative writers featuring twists, turns, and unexpected endings offer unique appeal, further enhancing motivation to acquire language. This demonstrates the effectiveness of these materials in Story-Listening with older learners.

SL Method

"An important corollary of the Comprehension Hypothesis is the 'Net Hypothesis': Given enough comprehensible input, i+1, all the vocabulary and structures the student is ready for is automatically provided" (Krashen, 2013).

This Net Hypothesis aligns closely with the Non-Targeted Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. According to Krashen, when teachers provide abundant, optimal input, learners naturally receive sufficient i+1, language input precisely suited to their current acquisition stage.

Building on this concept, I propose that when listeners are fully engaged in numerous stories conveyed through the comprehension-aiding supplementation (CAS) strategy (Krashen, Mason, & Smith, 2018), they acquire new language at i+1 while also reinforcing previously acquired language through i-1 and i input. CAS includes non-linguistic support (e.g., drawings on the board, facial expressions, gestures) and linguistic support (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, explanations of words and characters, commentary on the storyline). Additionally, learners are exposed to i+n, providing a foundation for future acquisition.

As Krashen points out, extensive exposure to optimal input ensures that learners absorb a wide range of vocabulary and structures. Critically, i+1 encompasses more than just grammar and vocabulary; it includes pronunciation, stress, intonation, accent, phrases, idioms, and other essential aspects of language.

SL (Story-Listening) differs from other story-based instructional approaches by focusing on dynamic, adaptive storytelling rather than merely reciting the story or read-aloud of a picture book. Its emphasis on CAS ensures that input remains rich, abundant, compelling, and comprehensible (Mason & Krashen, 2020a; Krashen & Mason, 2022).

What distinguishes SL as a *pure* input-only method is its conscious avoidance of traditional instructional practices such as pre-teaching vocabulary, posing comprehension questions, post-story activities, memorization, drilling, testing, or homework. Instead, SL provides a steady flow of input, free from such distractions that could weaken the impact of the listening experience.

Furthermore, SL relies on the teacher's capacity to notice and respond to subtle cues from listeners. Facial expressions, posture, and other body language often indicate confusion, discomfort, or engagement, prompting the teacher to adjust pacing, rephrase content, or retell sections of the story as needed. This responsiveness is especially valuable for senior citizen students, who may be less inclined to voice misunderstandings directly. By interpreting nonverbal feedback, teachers help ensure that learners feel supported and stay immersed in the story-listening process.

Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR)

Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR) complements Story-Listening by allowing learners to choose books aligned with their interests and proficiency levels. Teachers curate a selection of level-appropriate books, beginning with graded readers and gradually advancing to authentic texts. This incremental shift fosters both fluency and accuracy (Mason, 2005, 2019; Krashen, 2020; Mason & Smith, 2021).

GSSR initially uses graded readers but incorporates texts with authentic language as soon as possible. When paired with SL, students develop familiarity with natural language across diverse stories, preparing them to handle authentic, non-graded texts free from artificial grammar or vocabulary sequencing. Through this approach, learners strengthen their ability to engage with real-world language.

Rationale for Study

Research consistently demonstrates the effectiveness of input-only methods such as Story-Listening (SL) and Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR) in achieving considerable language acquisition outcomes. For example, non-English majors who attended weekly SL/GSSR sessions outperformed English majors on a 100-item cloze test after just one semester, despite the English majors having six conventional (conscious-learning) classes per week in addition to a single SL/GSSR session (Mason, 2018).

Another study found that learners in an SL/GSSR course who wrote short summaries in Japanese, without English output practice or corrective feedback, performed comparably on the reading section of TOEIC, writing, and cloze tests compared to groups who wrote English summaries and received feedback (Mason, 2004). Notably, the Japanese summary group saved approximately 150 hours over three semesters by avoiding the time-intensive cycle of writing and repeatedly revising English summaries.

Further evidence comes from a study of seventh graders at a public junior high school (Mason & Ae, 2023). Students who graduated in 2023 and were taught primarily through an input-based approach, avoiding forced output, error correction, memorization, testing, and homework, achieved final high school mock exam results comparable to those of 2022 and 2020 graduates with more traditional learning backgrounds. Notably, these 2023 graduates saved more than 200 hours over three years by not having to complete any homework in their

English class. Research on senior learners likewise supports the efficacy of SL/GSSR, showing notable gains in both proficiency and test performance (Mason, 2011, 2013a, 2013b), with additional findings reported in Mason (2013c).

Despite these encouraging findings, the long-term impact of input-only methods remains underexplored, specifically whether learners continue to read in English once formal instruction ends. This study addresses that gap by examining whether input-only methods foster sustained language engagement among senior learners compared to the grammar-translation approach. It focuses on the long-term effects of each method and assesses their capacity to promote enduring reading habits beyond the classroom.

STUDY

This study investigates which approach, traditional grammar-translation or input-only SL/GSSR, is more effective in helping senior learners develop and maintain a regular habit of reading in English. The findings offer valuable insights for designing future English courses tailored to older adults.

To collect data on participants' post-course English reading habits, the Shitennoji University Regional Collaboration Promotion Center administered a questionnaire. The responses shed light on each approach's long-term impact and serve as a foundation for future research on effective language-learning methods for senior learners.

Subjects

Between 2009 and 2022, 181 individuals participated in English reading courses: 136 in Story-Listening/Guided Self-Selected Reading (SL/GSSR) classes and 45 in Grammar-Translation (G-T) classes. While some students dropped out after one semester, most continued for multiple years. In the SL/GSSR track, some participants remained for over a decade, reflecting long-term engagement. Although a few individuals attended both types of courses, the majority followed just one approach.

Each course met weekly for 90-minute sessions, typically over 10 to 12 weeks per semester. In the G-T course, participants read an assigned book alongside the professor in class and continued reading at home. Outside of reading the English text aloud, the professor primarily used Japanese for instruction. The G-T participants typically covered one book each semester.

By contrast, SL/GSSR participants typically listened to three stories per 90-minute session. Those who remained in the SL/GSSR program for five years likely heard around 360 stories delivered in the SL format. Assuming a storytelling rate of approximately 100 words per minute, this corresponds to an estimated 900,000 to 1,080,000 words over five years.

SL/GSSR participants also had access to a university library with over 5,000 English-language books, including graded readers and authentic texts for young adults and general readers. Reading reports submitted during the program indicate that some participants read. 500 pages per semester, while others exceeded 5,500 pages in one year.

For reliable comparisons, individuals who were still enrolled in the SL/GSSR course or had attended both types of courses were excluded from the analysis. The G-T course was offered from 2013 to 2019 but was discontinued after the professor's retirement.

Compliance with Research Ethics

To uphold ethical standards, the questionnaire included an explanatory document describing its purpose. Participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous, that results might be disseminated orally or in writing, and that their feedback would help improve English reading education. They were invited to complete and return the survey only if they consented to these terms. Emphasizing anonymity and the importance of honest feedback helped ensure data reliability and the potential for refining future courses. All survey-related communication was handled by the university office by mail, which distributed a request letter and collected completed questionnaires, thereby minimizing any handling bias and maintaining anonymity. Furthermore, the study received ethical clearance through the university's review process, demonstrating full compliance with institutional guidelines.

Exploring English Reading Habits After Course Completion

A survey was distributed to former attendees to evaluate participants' English reading habits and preferences after they completed the courses (in some cases, years prior). The questionnaire aimed to capture insights about their ongoing reading practices, potential barriers, and suggestions for improvement. Specifically, respondents were asked:

- What is your current age?
- When was the last time you attended the course?
- Has reading in English become a habit for you?
- Do you still occasionally read in English?
- What types of texts do you currently read in English?
- If you no longer read in English, why did you stop?
- Approximately how many hours per month do you spend reading in English?
- What improvements could help you read more English books?

These questions helped assess long-term engagement with English reading and shed light on factors influencing sustained language practice among senior learners.

Results

Of the original 181 participants (136 in the SL/GSSR group and 45 in the grammar-translation group), 97 returned the questionnaire, yielding an overall response rate of 54%. Sadly, four participants had passed away, leaving 93 usable responses. To ensure reliable comparisons, nine participants who had attended both types of courses were excluded, resulting in a final dataset of 84 respondents: 67 from the SL/GSSR group and 17 from the grammar-translation group.

The grammar-translation group (G-T) achieved a 38% response rate (17 out of 45) across six years (2013 - 2019), whereas the SL/GSSR group had a higher response rate of 49% (67 out of 136) across 13 years (2009 - 2022).

Questionnaire Responses

1. Current Age

Table 1 displays the age distribution and average ages for each group. On average, SL/GSSR participants were 60.7 years old, while G-T participants were 64.1 years old.

Table 1: Age Distribution and Average Age of SL/GSSR and Traditional Course Participants

Age Group	30	40	50	60	70	80	Average Age
SL/GSSR (n=67)	1	8	7	22	27	2	60.7
G-T (n=17)	1	1	1	3	9	2	64.1

2. Time Since Last Course

SL/GSSR participants reported last attending the course any time from over 15 years ago to as recently as four months ago. Overall attendance for SL/GSSR appears steady over the years. Additionally, 90% of SL/GSSR respondents could recall when they last took the course, compared to 65% of G-T participants, potentially suggesting a stronger attachment or lasting impact for the SL/GSSR approach.

Table 2. Time Since Last Course Participation

Time Since Last Course	Over 10 year ago	7-10 years ago	4-6 years ago	1-3 years ago	less than 1 year ago	No response
SL/GSSR (n=67)	16	11	9	13	11	7
G-T (n=17)	1	6	4	0	0	6

3. English Reading as a Habit and Occasional Reading

Table 3 summarizes participants' current English reading habits. Among the 67 SL/GSSR respondents, 13 (19.4%) said English reading had become a habit, and 37 (55.2%) reported occasional reading. In the G-T group, 3 out of 17 (17.6%) developed a habit, while 6 (35.2%) read occasionally. Notably, nearly half (47%) of the G-T respondents reported losing interest in reading altogether, compared to 25.4% of the SL/GSSR group. Overall, 75% of SL/GSSR participants and 53% of G-T participants remain active English readers.

Table 3. English Reading Habits

Reading Frequency	Regular reading in English	Occasional reading in English	Lost interest in reading in English
SL/GSSR (n=67)	13 (19.4%)	37 (55.2%)	17 (25.4%)
T-G (n=17)	3 (17.6%)	6 (35.2%)	8 (47%)

4. Types of Texts Read

Table 4 shows the types of reading materials used by participants who continue to read in English. Of the 50 active readers in the SL/GSSR group, 40 (80%) primarily read *fiction* (such as novels or short stories), while the remaining 10 (20%) focus on other materials, including online articles or magazines. In contrast, among the nine active readers in the G-T group, only 1 (11%) reads *fiction*, whereas 8 (89%) prefer alternative texts.

Table 4. Types of Texts Read

Types of Texts Read	Fiction Books (%)	Others (%)
SL/GSSR Readers (n=50)	40 (80%)	10 (20%)
Traditional Readers (n= 9)	1(11%)	8 (89%)

5. Reasons for Discontinuing

A total of 17 SL/GSSR participants indicated they no longer read in English. Their reasons varied: 5 cited loss of interest, 5 pointed to life changes (e.g., relocation, job shifts, family commitments), 2 reported shifting their focus to speaking, and 1 mentioned an inability to find interesting books. Another 4 participants (24%) said the difficulty of reading in English influenced their decision. Among the 8 G-T participants who stopped reading, 6 (75%) found English reading too difficult, 2 lost interest, 2 became more interested in speaking, and 1 noted weak eyesight as an issue. Table 5 details these findings.

Table 5. Reasons for Discontinuing Reading

Reasons for Discontinuing	English is difficult	Lack of Access	Life Changes	Weak Eyesight	Interested in Speaking	Lost Interest
SL/GSSR (n=17)	4 (24%)	1	5	0	2	5
Traditional (n=8)	6 (75%)	0	0	(1)	(2)	2

6. Time Spent Reading

Among the 50 SL/GSSR participants who continue to read, 40 provided monthly reading-time estimates, totaling 483 hours—an average of 12.1 hours per person per month (equivalent to about 24.2 minutes per day). Meanwhile, nine continuing readers in the G-T group reported 33 total hours per month, or an average of 3.7 hours per person (7.3 minutes daily). Table 6 outlines these figures.

Table 6: Time Spent Reading

Time Spent Reading	Total Hours/Month	Average Hours/Month/Person	Average Minutes/Day/Person
SL/GSSR (n=40)	483	12.1	24.2
Traditional (n=9)	33	3.7	7.3

7. Improvements Suggested

Table 7 shows participants' suggestions for enhancing English reading opportunities. SL/GSSR respondents proposed increasing the availability of English books at local libraries (13 responses), offering guidance on suitable books (9 responses), and reducing book costs (1 response). Only one participant in the G-T group offered suggestions, noting a need for more English-language books in local libraries.

Table 7. Suggestions for Improvement.

Suggestions for Improvement	English books in the local libraries	Information about appropriate books	Lower prices on English books
SL/GSSR (n=23)	13	9	1
G-T (n=1)	1	0	0

Overall Observations
- The SL/GSSR group not only had a higher response rate but also reported a stronger tendency to continue reading in English.
- Among participants who ceased reading, difficulty emerged as a more common factor in the G-T group.
- SL/GSSR respondents provided more varied feedback regarding improvements, emphasizing increased accessibility to reading materials and guidance on selecting appropriate books.

These findings suggest that an input-only approach may be more conducive to fostering long-term reading habits among senior learners. Further analysis and longitudinal research would help clarify the sustainability and broader applicability of SL/GSSR strategies.

DISCUSSION

Regardless of which course students initially chose, all participants showed an underlying interest in English. Students who enrolled in the G-T class typically already possessed higher-level English skills or an interest in literary texts, while those who opted for the SL/GSSR approach likely had a preexisting affinity for the language. Despite both groups retaining over half their learners as ongoing English readers, the proportion of SL/GSSR participants who continued reading after course completion was notably higher than in the G-T group (75% vs. 53%). Moreover, SL/GSSR participants read with greater intensity and consistency, averaging about 24.2 minutes of daily reading compared to just 7.3 minutes for those in the G-T program. Several factors likely contributed to these differences, which are explored in detail below.

Gateway to Reading: The Power of Listening to Stories with CAS

A key distinction between SL/GSSR and traditional reading instruction lies in the inclusion of auditory input. Research has consistently highlighted the benefits of listening to stories and read-aloud activities for literacy development and second-language acquisition (Elley, 1989; Vivas, 1996; Wang & Lee, 2007; Cho & Choi, 2008; Krashen, 2019). Building on the Conduit Hypothesis (Krashen, 2018), which posits that reading fiction can lead to academic reading, listening to stories offers a natural bridge to reading proficiency. Stories presenting comprehensible, engaging, and rich auditory input expose learners to grammar, vocabulary, and syntax in meaningful contexts, laying the groundwork for improved reading comprehension.

In SL/GSSR, stories are delivered through both auditory and visual means (e.g., drawing while telling), creating a multisensory experience that boosts comprehension, particularly for older learners. As Cho and Choi (2008) have noted, read-alouds pair naturally with free reading.

Story-Listening (SL) extends this partnership by matching stories to learners' comprehension levels. Through regular exposure to spoken stories, learners develop stronger listening skills, expand their vocabularies (see https://www.beniko-mason.net/publications/ for evidence on SL and vocabulary), and establish a robust foundation for reading proficiency. Over time, the progression from listening to reading becomes seamless, as learners are motivated to pick up books independently.

The Story-Driven Intrinsic Motivation Hypothesis

Engaging narratives are central to the SL/GSSR approach. Stories spark curiosity and evoke emotional connections, fostering intrinsic motivation. Unlike the G-T method, where students commonly read one assigned textbook, the SL/GSSR program allows learners to choose their own books. This autonomy increases the likelihood of enjoyable, meaningful experiences, encouraging voluntary participation. Emotional engagement with characters, compelling storylines, and rich cultural contexts inspire learners to read more, deepening their commitment to language acquisition.

I propose the "Story-Driven Intrinsic Motivation Hypothesis," which states that satisfying auditory experiences nurture intrinsic motivation, thereby fueling continued reading and language acquisition. By regularly providing engaging auditory input, SL keeps the gateway to language acquisition open and cultivates persistent interest in reading. Intrinsic motivation, reinforced by compelling content, drives learners to seek books on their own, reinforcing their reading habits and promoting ongoing linguistic development. Further research on this hypothesis could offer insights into the precise mechanisms behind sustained learner engagement.

The Amount of Reading Encouraged in the SL/GSSR Method

One clear difference between the two groups involves overall reading volume. SL/GSSR participants reported an average of 12.1 hours of monthly reading (approximately 24.2 minutes per day), compared to just 7.3 minutes per day for the traditional group. This disparity can be traced to how the SL/GSSR program is structured, initially recommending 50 - 70 pages of reading per week, then gradually moving to 100 -150 pages per week, often through graded readers. SL/GSSR typically begins with "starter-level" texts that are short and accessible, allowing learners to meet weekly reading targets and experience early satisfaction comfortably. This sense of accomplishment and enjoyment likely drives the notably higher reading volume observed in SL/GSSR. By contrast, traditional classes often rely on time-consuming dictionary use to decipher unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases, supplemented by the instructor's explanations in the students' native language. This labor-intensive process can diminish the pleasure of reading, leading students to view English texts as overly challenging and discouraging them from reading outside the classroom. Meanwhile, SL/GSSR participants develop consistent reading habits that persist beyond the course itself, contributing to a more enduring engagement with the language.

POUI Principle

The SL/GSSR method is grounded in the "pure optimal unified input" (POUI) principle. This approach avoids practices such as pre-teaching, forced immature output, [5] error correction, memorization, post-activities, comprehension questions, and testing. Instead, the focus is on providing optimal input, comprehensible, compelling, rich, and abundant input by interweaving listening and reading to facilitate language acquisition. Conversely, traditional methods often struggle to provide adequate input. Students are usually required to study only small amounts of text in great detail, resulting in limited language exposure. Explanations are frequently delivered in Japanese, further reducing target-language input, and texts are often too difficult for many learners. Such constraints make it challenging to attain meaningful or lasting proficiency.

Long-Term Support with Story-Listening

Under the unified input approach, even after SL/GSSR participants become comfortable choosing their own reading materials, they continue listening to longer, more complex stories, often those intended for native speakers. This consistent auditory exposure helps learners develop advanced reading competence and navigate the inherent challenges of reading. Reading, even in one's first language, requires considerable effort. With SL, the spoken delivery provides cues like tone, pitch, and pacing, which students can mentally "replay" while reading texts independently. Sustained focus during SL sessions, which can last 40 to 60 minutes, enhances working memory by teaching learners to hold and process multiple pieces of information. Meanwhile, exposure to sophisticated language in longer stories enlarges students' vocabulary and linguistic repertoire, mitigating the cognitive strain of reading. Because SL/GSSR classes devote 90 minutes entirely to story input, learners develop strong listening and reading habits that support them well beyond the classroom. In the GSSR component, teachers offer ongoing guidance to help learners choose books aligned with their proficiency and interests, promoting feelings of achievement and motivation. SL lays the groundwork for independent reading while continuing to nurture learners as they move toward more autonomous reading practices, ensuring sustained linguistic growth.

Access to Books and Reduced Book Costs

Lastly, an important factor supporting the sustained reading habits in SL/GSSR is the availability of an extensive library with free English books during the program. Now that participants have completed the course and lost access to these resources, many emphasize the need for better availability of English books, especially in local libraries, and for lowering the cost of such materials. These external factors significantly influence an individual's ability to sustain reading habits. For educational systems committed to fostering a lifelong love of reading, a passion for knowledge, and high-level reading proficiency, addressing these challenges should be a priority.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of an input-only acquisition approach, operationalized through Story-Listening (SL) and Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR), in

cultivating and sustaining English reading habits among senior learners. Compared to the traditional grammar-translation method, the input-only approach had a notable impact on both reading preferences and volume, offering a compelling alternative for language acquisition.

While previous research highlights the efficacy of input-based methods across various age groups and proficiency levels, this study specifically examines how the Pure Optimal Unified Input (POUI) framework compares to traditional methods in promoting sustained reading habits.

Despite certain limitations, such as a 54% questionnaire response rate, a relatively small sample size in the grammar-translation group, and potential researcher-involvement bias, this investigation represents, to the best of our knowledge, the first direct comparison of an input-only method and a traditional method focused on senior learners' English reading habits.

Teaching older adults to read in English requires techniques that reduce cognitive load and address challenges unique to this demographic. Such challenges include visual and auditory impairments, limited availability of suitable reading materials, and the cost of acquiring them. Simplifying language acquisition benefits learners at any age, yet it is particularly vital for senior learners. The POUI approach, rooted in Krashen's Input Theory, emphasizes delivering non-targeted, "pure" input that is compelling, comprehensible, rich, and abundant, what we refer to as *optimal input* (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Mason, 2020). Additionally, by combining both listening and reading in a unified system, the approach provides a holistic pathway to language acquisition.

In conclusion, this study underscores the potential of the POUI approach to serve as a practical, effective solution for senior learners, fostering language development and promoting a lifelong appreciation for English reading.

Future research should focus on creating listening and reading materials specifically tailored to older learners' interests and proficiency levels while also addressing their particular needs. Moreover, continued efforts to enhance educators' skills in delivering stories under optimal input principles will be essential.

As POUI Acquisition Methods, mainly through SL and GSSR, continue to evolve, they will be pivotal in supporting lifelong language acquisition and strengthening reading habits among older adults. This study lays the groundwork for refining and broadening input-only strategies to meet the growing needs of this demographic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES:

(1) World Population Aging 2019 Highlights. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf

(2) Learning English from age 65! Learn about its benefits and effects, from brain activation to human relationships. https://ohanasikagawa.com/blogjp/how-learning-english-affects-brain

(3) 100 great short stories: https://americanliterature.com/100-great-short-stories/
Aesop: The Brother and the Sister: https://fablesofaesop.com/the-brother-and-the-sister.html

(4) The Brother and the Sister**:** https://www.gutenberg.org/files/21/21-h/21-h.htm#link2H_4_0211
"A FATHER had one son and one daughter, the former remarkable for his good looks, the latter for her extraordinary ugliness. While they were playing one day as children, they happened by chance to look together into a mirror that was placed on their mother's chair. The boy congratulated himself on his good looks; the girl grew angry and could not bear the self-praises of her brother, interpreting all he said (and how could she do otherwise?) into reflection on herself. She ran off to her father, to be avenged on her brother, and spitefully accused him of having, as a boy, made use of that which belonged only to girls. The father embraced them both, and bestowing his kisses and affection impartially on each, said, "I wish you both would look into the mirror every day: you, my son, that you may not spoil your beauty by evil conduct; and you, my daughter, that you may make up for your lack of beauty by your virtues.""

(5) Krashen. Down with forced speech:
http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/down_with_forced_speech_pdf.pdf

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