

"I think learning with stories is more fun and more helpful than when we just learn verbs and such. I like learning with stories because we also help create them, which is fun and educational. We get lots of examples that way too."
--Alice



"I really don't like grammar and I much prefer learning French through stories because I honestly think it will allow us students to be more involved and pay more attention in class."
--Kim

TEACHING PROFICIENCY THROUGH READING AND STORYTELLING

Kristin Duncan

Who Am I?

- Spanish 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11/12 at Calgary Academy
- comprehensible input and TPRS® (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling)
- follow me on Twitter @kristindunc
 - #pdtc
 - #TPRS
 - #langchat
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Teacher Frustrations

“I am a good, hard-working teacher! So why...

- can't my students use what they've learned?
- don't they remember what they've been taught?
- can't they do more after so many hours/years of language class?
- are there only 2-3 superstar students?
- do I spend all my time generating activities, grading, and dealing with discipline instead of just enjoying my job and my students?

The Insanity Argument

- “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

-Albert Einstein

Student Quote

- “Grammar never helped me learn French. Telling stories is much more effective. Before this year, I was absolutely terrible at French despite the fact I took it for years. The way you teach is extremely helpful. This year has been the only year I actually ‘took in’ anything I have learned. Before this year, I would forget everything and anything I tried to learn.”

--Kira

Comprehensible Input (CI) Methods

- based on research by Stephen Krashen
- hypotheses:
 - ▣ acquisition-learning hypothesis
 - ▣ input hypothesis
 - ▣ monitor hypothesis
 - ▣ natural order hypothesis
 - ▣ affective filter hypothesis



Comprehensible Input (CI)

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K11o19YNvk>

The Language Teacher

- Language teachers are good at “learning language”
- not all human brains are wired to **learn language**, but our brains are designed to **acquire language**
- failure to acquire a first language is extremely rare
- comprehensible-input based methods take advantage of our natural ability to acquire language

Acquisition vs. Learning

Acquisition

- subconscious “picking up” of language
- acoustical
- almost instinctive
- focus on input (message)
- long-term results

Learning

- conscious study of language
- intellectual
- brain power
- focus on output (form)
- short-term results

What This Looks Like in a Classroom

Acquisition

- providing CCI (compelling and comprehensible input: listening and reading)
- L2 is used to talk about content
- little to no error correction
- emergent speech

Learning

- grammar exercises and memorization of vocabulary lists
- English is used to talk about L2 rules
- frequent error correction
- forced speech

Comprehensible Input (CI)

- don't be taken in by claims about how using mime, pictures, gestures, or interpretive dance will make the language "comprehensible"
- "comprehensible" means "able to be comprehended", not "able to be guessed"

Baby Acquisition vs. Classroom

- a baby who hears a language for 10 hours a day for 6 years has over 20,000 hours in the language
- even a teacher might have had 5,000 to 10,000 hours learning the language
- we have students for 400 to 600 hours if we are lucky
- so we have to make language repetitive for fluency

Change Your Teaching Life

- make fluent speakers fast
- create confident, happy readers
- teach grammar effortlessly
- reduce prep time

The Answer

- TPRS = Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling
- comprehensible-input based method of teaching foreign languages
- uses a mixture of reading and storytelling to help students learn a foreign language
- invented by Blaine Ray, a Spanish teacher in Bakersfield, California, in 1990

TPRS is Good Teaching

- comprehensible, compelling, contextualized, high frequency, repetitive input
- best practice a.k.a. research-based
- differentiation – teaching everyone!
- personalization
- all learning styles
- brain-based
- steep teacher learning curve, but TPRS is a process
- once you are competent at the steps in the process, the prep is minimal

Success of TPRS

- “The most consistent advantages for TPRS are in developing students’ speaking, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. In all these areas, TPRS has consistently outperformed traditional teaching, and has at least equaled traditional teaching in every study.” – Karen Lichtman & Stephen Krashen
- “TPRS should have advantages in retention over time, in comparison to traditional teaching. Compare TPRS students and traditional students on the same measure right before their summer break and right after their summer break.” – Karen Lichtman & Stephen Krashen

Student Quote

- “I think that this stories idea is a lot better than all the other ways of teaching French because then you know how to use French words in a sentence. I have learned a lot. [On the first test], I got one word, but now I can get up to 30 words [in 10 minutes].”
--Francisco

Demo

- Techniques to look for:
 - personalization (discussing/relating to students' lives)
 - circling (asking many questions about the same statement)
 - repetition
 - adding details
 - focusing on the structures

Demo

- xǐ huān – likes
- yǒu – has
- kàn – looks at

Mandarin Reading (Short)

- Amy xǐ huān kāfēi. Amy xǐ huān Starbucks de kāfēi. Amy bu xǐ huān Tim Hortons de kāfēi. John yǒu kāfēi. John yǒu Starbucks de kāfēi. John méi yǒu Tim Hortons de kāfēi. Amy kàn John de kāfēi. John xǐ huān Amy. John làn mǎn de kàn Amy. Amy làn mǎn de kàn John de kāfēi. John gěi Amy kāfēi.

Mandarin Reading (Long)

- Amy xǐ huān kāfēi. Amy xǐ huān Starbucks de kāfēi. Amy bu xǐ huān Tim Hortons de kāfēi. John yǒu kāfēi. John yǒu Starbucks de kāfēi. John méi yǒu Tim Hortons de kāfēi. Amy kàn John de kāfēi. Amy yào John de kāfēi. John xǐ huān Amy. John yào bào bào Amy. John làn màn de kàn Amy. Amy làn màn de kàn John de kāfēi. John màn màn de gěi Amy bǐ sà. Amy bù yào bǐ sà. Amy yào Starbucks de kāfēi. John kuài kuài de gěi Amy qiǎokèlì. Amy bù yào qiǎokèlì. Amy yào Starbucks de kāfēi. Amy làn màn de kàn John de kāfēi. John làn màn de gěi Amy Starbucks de kāfēi. Amy gāo xìng. Amy bào bào John. John gāo xìng.

Debrief

- Did you feel good/successful/smart?
- Did it feel difficult?
- How was my speed?
- Were you a slow or fast processor?
- Was it personalized/compelling/comprehensible?

Debrief

- How did I circle?
 - Begin with a statement.
 - Ask a question that gets a “Yes!”
 - Ask an either/or question
 - Ask a question that gets a “No!”
 - Ask a question with a question word
 - Fish for a detail

Script

- Amy xǐ huān kāfēi.
- John yǒu kāfēi.
- Amy kàn John de kāfēi.
- John xǐ huān Amy.
- John làn mǎn de kàn Amy.
- Amy làn mǎn de kàn John de kāfēi.
- John gěi Amy kāfēi.

Choosing Target Structures

- choose three or so target structures (not vocabulary terms!)
 - ▣ gives him
 - ▣ is afraid
 - ▣ couldn't find it
 - ▣ wanted her to go
- useable chunks of language
- choose based on frequency
- good structures are often verb-driven
- “Super Seven”: location, existence, possession, identity, preference, motion, volition
- limit vocabulary

3 Steps of TPRS

- establish meaning
- tell/ask a story
- read and discuss

Establish Meaning

- write structure in target language and English (colour-code)
- gesture / mnemonic devices / memory aids
- this is not “listen and repeat”
- translate practice sentences on whiteboards
- ask the students personal questions utilizing vocabulary
- ask students about each other
- seek responses that make the students look good
- seek liars and encourage unusual responses
- watch barometer students to ensure 100% comprehension
- if possible, use the information you find out in the story later

Establish Meaning

- Structures:
 - you have to
 - s/he helps him/her,
 - s/he can't
- What can _____ (a cow, the president, a baby, Tiger Woods) not do?
- Who helps you with _____ (your homework, family problems, problems with your friends)?
- Do you have to _____ (study for exams in English class, go to bed early, do chores at home, eat your vegetables)?
- In school, what do students have to do?
- Can you _____ (sing well, do calculus, speak English, sleep when it's not dark)?

Material

- can write them yourself
- can buy story scripts in English
 - ▣ Anne Matava - <http://bit.ly/1aWn6jz>
 - ▣ Jim Tripp - <http://bit.ly/MMgv05>
- TPRS curriculum materials and novels at tprstorytelling.com

Basic Story Script

- Act 1/Location 1
 - ▣ There is a CHARACTER at LOCATION #1. But there is a problem because CHARACTER wants (or wants to get rid of) an OBJECT. So CHARACTER goes to LOCATION #2.
- Act 2/ Location 2
 - ▣ The OBJECT is not there. CHARACTER is sad (disappointed/frustrated/angry/upset/confused depending on class vocabulary depth). So CHARACTER goes to LOCATION #3.
- Act 3/ Location 3
 - ▣ The OBJECT is there! CHARACTER has the OBJECT now. CHARACTER is happy!

Ask/Tell A Story

- build by ASKING questions using the target structures
- goal is to provide compelling, comprehensible input
- story is short, simple and interesting
- teach to the eyes!
- get actors up in front of class
- coach melodramatic acting and overreact
- time-out sign
- stay “in-bounds”
- encourage audience participation (Ooh la la! Oh no!)

Storytelling Demo

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= E g 1 v a a X F L A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg1vaaXFLA)

Questioning Technique

- Questions = Details = Interest = Students pay attention long enough to learn something
- we are striving for interesting (compelling) comprehensible input
- same formula but different end product each time
- students will be hearing and acquiring the basic structures no matter what
- use names, products, celebrities and stores that students know and recognize as well as cognates

Examples of Questions

- | | |
|---|--|
| □ Why does the CHARACTER want the OBJECT? | □ When she arrives at LOCATION #2, is someone there? |
| □ Does she want it or does she have to have it? | □ Who does she see? |
| □ Should she want the OBJECT? | □ What does she do? |
| □ Should she have the OBJECT? | □ What does "New Character #2" say to her? |
| □ Does she know where LOCATION #2 is? | □ Does she know where LOCATION #3 is? |
| □ Who does she see? | □ Does she know how to go to LOCATION #3? |
| □ What does "New Character" say to her? | □ When she arrives at LOCATION #3, what does she do? |
| □ Can she go to LOCATION #2 right away? | □ When she arrives at LOCATION #3, is there Another Character? |
| □ How does she go to LOCATION #2? | □ Who gives the OBJECT to her? |

Levels of Questioning (Circling)

- yes/no
- either/or
- say it wrong (3 for 1)
- fill in the blank
- who/what/where/when/how many
- why/how
- what now/what is going to happen

Levels of Questioning (Circling)

- more sophisticated language with each level
- ask the whole class and also individual students
- ask questions at the level of the student

How to “Circle”

- make a statement
- ask a question to which the answer is YES
- ask questions to which the answer is NO by substituting other subjects, verbs, and predicates
- follow them up with either/or questions
- ask open-ended questions to which students know the answers
- ask open-ended questions to add more details that are not known yet
- do a comprehension check

Circling Example

- Statement: Marcos quería ser un torero.
- YES: ¿Marcos quería ser un torero?
- NO: ¿Marcos era un torero?
- EITHER/OR: ¿Marcos quería ser un torero o quería ser un abogado?
- OPEN-ENDED: ¿Quién quería ser un torero? ¿Qué quería ser Marcos? ¿Por qué quería ser un torero? ¿Qué quieres ser? ¿A Marcos le gustan los toros?

Different Levels of Statements

- Level 1: The boy wants/wanted to buy a car.
- Level 2: The boy who worked all year, bought a car yesterday.
- Level 3: The boy will buy a car tomorrow if he has enough money.
- Level 4: If he worked a little harder, he would have bought a car by now.

Group Activity

- in partners or small groups, come up with a basic sentence in English
- fill out circling template for that sentence
- practice doing it out loud in your TL with various sentences

Student Quote

- “I like learning French with stories because it makes me remember things better. Like if I don’t remember something, I would think back to the story. Without stories, it would be hard to learn them one by one.”
--Anna

Read and Discuss

- based on the material in previous steps
- reinforces the content
- can be at a slightly higher level than spoken language
- can ask/tell story in present tense and read in past tense
- discuss by asking questions about the text (circling), doing grammar pop-ups or relating to students
- translate reading

Use of English

- often seen as “bad”
- if it helps make something comprehensible, it is helpful
- shows exactly where students are getting stuck when reading
- no speaking in English to explain grammar
- can call it “decoding” rather than translating
- makes students feel successful; like language is “easy”

Pop-Up Grammar

- extremely short, contextualized explanations of grammatical concepts
- focus on meaning rather than form
- are frequent and repetitive to aid acquisition
- don't use grammatical terms (eg. indirect object pronoun, 3rd person plural)
 - If the story says, “She gave him a dollar,” ask for a translation of “him.”
 - Ask questions that get students to focus on verb endings:
Class, what does the “n” in “miran” do?

Re-reading Strategies

- can get more repetitions of target structures by having students re-read the text
 - draw a 6-square story frame
 - answer comprehension questions (in English or TL)
 - CLOZE activity
 - scramble events in story; students have to put in order
 - silent acting
 - students read and put unknown words on board
 - write alternate version of story; students compare and contrast
 - write erroneous version of story; students identify errors
 - students match illustrations with events from story

Why Read?

- time spent in reading for pleasure is more valuable for foreign language development than time spent in direct instruction
- more than 70% of a literate person's vocabulary in her first language comes from reading
- comprehension and language acquisition increase when a person reads narrowly, because the reader sees the same words used over and over again
- gaining vocabulary through reading is 10 times faster than studying word lists alone

Class Novels

- available at tprstorytelling.com (French, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, German, ESL)
- good to change things up
- easy-reader with limited new vocabulary
- good plots and relatable characters
- often includes cultural references or takes place in the target language culture
- students feel so smart when they can read (and understand) a whole “novel”
- can build your curriculum of stories around structures required for novel

Embedded Reading

text

An adjusted text for students.

A teacher-adjusted text for students that develops skills and deepens understanding.

A teacher-adjusted text created for students that develops reading skills and deepens the understanding of the content of the text.

Embedded Reading

- made up of multiple versions of a text
- each version has the previous one “embedded” within it
- students are exposed to repeated versions of the text and engage in a variety of activities with the text
- create a clear visual
- are “easy” so students feel successful
- offer variety

Base Version

An ant went to the ocean.
He saw many fish.
The fish swam away.

Second Reading

An ant went to the ocean to find a friend.

He saw many fish swimming in the ocean.

He said, "Hello fish!"

The fish swam away.

The poor ant!

Who will be his friend?

Third Reading

One day a lonely ant went to the ocean to find a friend. He saw many fish swimming around in the deep blue waters of the ocean. The ant thought, "Great! New friends!" He said, "Hello fish!" Unfortunately, the fish swam away. The poor lonely ant was alone again! He walked down the beach thinking, "Why did they swim away?" He was so discouraged. Would he try again another day?

Fourth Reading

One day a lonely ant decided to make some new friends. He was tired of the ant hill. He was tired of the ant hill and tired of being just like everyone else. He decided to leave the anthill to find a new life. So, he moved to Hawaii. The first day, he went to the beach to find a friend. He saw many fish swimming around in the deep blue waters of the ocean.

The ant thought, "Great! New friends!" He said "Hello fish!" Unfortunately, the fish swam away. The poor lonely ant was alone again! He walked down the beach thinking, "Why did they swim away?" He was discouraged, but he wanted to try again.

Embedded Readings

- Stories
- Articles
- Notes/messages
- Conversations
- Essays
- Novels
- Poems
- Shopping lists
- Song lyrics
- Letters
- Advertisements
- Instructions
- Children's books
- Emails
- Invitations
- Reviews

Embedded Readings

Bottom-Up

- start with structures
- the base reading is created first, and additional details and information are injected into each level

Top-Down

- start with final version
- provides a way for teachers to make literature or other text that students perceive to be beyond their capabilities, accessible to students

Student Quote

- “I like learning French through stories because it is a fun and interactive way to learn. We get to be creative and have fun.”

--Katy

Cultural Reading

- any piece of TL culture can be used as a basis to backwards plan a mini-unit
 - ▣ Torres de Tarragona (Human towers) - <http://bit.ly/1IFkAzq>
 - ▣ Tour de France (Bicycle race)
 - ▣ Botas Picudas (Pointy boots) - <http://bit.ly/1jz2ssS>
 - ▣ Corrida de Toros (Bullfighting) - <http://bit.ly/1etaiMq>
 - ▣ Lo Sobrenatural (Supernatural)

Free Reading

- “There is massive evidence that self-selected reading, or reading what you want to read, is responsible for most of our literacy development. Readers have better reading ability, know more vocabulary, write better, spell better, and have better control of complex grammatical constructions. In fact, it is impossible to develop high levels of literacy without being a dedicated reader, and dedicated readers rarely have serious problems in reading and writing.”

Free Reading

- create library of children's books in the target language
 - ▣ get books from Scholastic
 - ▣ buy lots of books on eBay
 - ▣ have students purchase and donate books
 - ▣ get a donor/grant to buy books with
 - ▣ go to garage sales
 - ▣ order some extra easy-reader novels - www.blainerautpr.com
- level them in terms of difficulty
- give students time 2-3 times per week to read whatever they want
- no assessment/work needed – let them enjoy it!
- have a conversation about what they read afterwards

Free Reading



Kindergarten Day

- last day of class, once a week
- make sure everyone can see pictures
- students (some or all) can sit on floor
- teacher sits on floor
- have students volunteer to bring cookies!
- "read" the book to your students in the target language (big books work great)

MovieTalk

- developed by Dr. Ashley Hastings
- steady stream of visual input accompanied by a teacher's comprehensible narration describing the action in a movie or asking questions about it
- use any type of video (ie. movie, video clip, commercial, etc.); film shorts are ideal!
- volume way down or off
- pause frequently to describe what is happening, circle important structures and check for comprehension
- more vocabulary is 'in bounds' because you can point to pictures

MovieTalk

- “the brain craves novelty”
- learners are 65% visual and can process up to 36,000 visual messages per hour
- faster than auditory processing for most students
- no teacher can draw as fast as a movie
- two words per minute of dialogue in a movie refers directly to what is on screen, but at least eighteen words per minute when teacher narrates

MovieTalk Demo

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7JBuUx7gM>

Games

- make sure they somehow are providing comprehensible input!
 - Running Dictation
 - Pencil Game
 - Write, Draw, Pass
- martinabex.com

Technology

- Textivate – www.textivate.com
- Educreations - www.educreations.com

Assessment

- categories: reading, listening, speaking, writing, culture, communication
 - R & L – 15%
 - W & S – 25%
 - C & C – 10%
- subcategories: formative (quizzes) 40% and summative (exams) 60%
- 1 type of quiz per story; cultural items that use target structures work well
- midterm and final with all components except communication
- communication is how well they communicate during storyasking time

Timed Free Writes

- students write for 10 minutes and write as many words as possible
- can be a retell of a story, use a prompt, or have them write their own original story
- can keep track of number of words on a graph
- informal evaluation – helps see where they are struggling
- sometimes I use them as a writing quiz mark
- not scored for accuracy

Core Precepts of CI-Based Teaching

- comprehensible input is the goal of everything we say in class
- comprehensible input is not immersion
- interesting to students trumps teacher brilliance.
- no forced speech beyond the level of acquisition.
- shelter the vocabulary, not the grammar.
- repeat many, many, many times. in varied forms. in interesting ways. repeat.
- explain grammar on an as-needed basis
- constant comprehension checks
- go slow!
- PQA (personalized questions and answers):
- mastery learning
- other advantages of TPRS®

Other Advantages of TPRS®

- personalized and adaptable
- not dependent on technology and materials
- can teach for an hour with three new structures
- quality repetitions
- important structures in an interesting context
- way to stay in L2

Student Quote

- “Although at first I was apprehensive to learn French through stories, I have learned a great deal. I truly feel as though I will leave your class knowing more French vocabulary and phrases.”
--Lauren

Note

- This majority of the material from this presentation was adapted (with permission) from Bryce Hedstrom’s handout on “Understanding TPRS”.
- Please visit his website for more like this. Click on “Free Stuff” for some great TPRS resources, handouts and other useful materials.
- www.brycehedstrom.com

TPRS & CI Websites

- tprsteacher.com (My blog)
- martinabex.com (Blog)
- benslavic.com (Blog and forum - \$5/month)
- brycehedstrom.com (TPRS resources and handouts)
- mjTPRS.com (Russian teacher in Alaska's blog)
- groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/moretprs (Listserve)
- embeddedreading.com (Collection of embedded readings)
- tprstorytelling.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- kplacido.com (Blog)
- somwheretoshare.com (Blog)

Social Media

- on.fb.me/Hi9hhk - or search Alberta Second Language Teachers on Facebook
- on.fb.me/1ceCsjZ - or search TPRS Teachers on Facebook
- Twitter
 - @lclarca
 - @senoraCMT
 - @frauholzer
 - @CarolGaab
 - @MartinaBex
 - @sonrisadelcampo
 - @placido
 - @srtabarragan

Student Quote

- “I like learning with stories. It is better than memorizing notes like I did from grade 4 to grade 8. In fact, I don’t even remember a lot of the stuff I learned last year! The stories are fun, funny, sometimes enjoyable, include everyone, and repetitive so I remember French. It’s like having kindergarten all over again!”
--Hibah