

## **TEACHING PROFICIENCY THROUGH READING AND STORYTELLING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Stories are an old but always current tool for conveying meaning and fixing ideas in our memory. Current article deals with using stories within the language classroom which turn language learning into a smooth and stimulating process. The Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) is an effective way to build a language lesson around a story while keeping students' engagement and attention high.*

**Keywords:** Reading, Teaching, Storytelling, classroom, target language, proficiency.

### **АННОТАЦИЯ**

*Истории — старый, но всегда актуальный инструмент для передачи смысла и закрепления идей в нашей памяти. В данной статье речь идет об использовании историй в языковом классе, которые превращают изучение языка в плавный и стимулирующий процесс. Обучение навыкам через чтение и рассказывание историй (TPRS) — это эффективный способ построить языковой урок на основе истории, сохраняя при этом вовлеченность и внимание учащихся на высоком уровне.*

**Ключевые слова:** чтение, преподавание, рассказывание историй, классная комната, изучаемый язык, владение.

### **INTRODUCTION**

TPRS or Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling was created by Blaine Ray, a Spanish teacher, in the late 1980s. It is a language teaching method based on the idea that the brain needs enormous amounts of Comprehensible Input (CI) to acquire a new language. In addition, teachers and students interact and create opportunities for students to speak and try out their new language, resulting in rapid gains in fluency. In fact, recently some TPRS online classes have students reaching the intermediate-mid level in just 60-100 hours where typically this takes 400-600 hours. TPRS focuses on using interactive, co-created oral stories, readings and novels that contain the most commonly-used words and phrases in Spanish, French, German,

or other foreign languages to help students get familiar with a new language easily and quickly.

When developing TPRS, Ray was influenced by the work of Dr. Stephen Krashen and Dr. James Asher. Ray began by combining Dr. Asher's teaching method called Total Physical Response and Dr. Krashen's CI-based language acquisition strategies. The result was a teaching method that focuses on the importance of teacher-student interaction, the use of CI and stories to keep the learner's interest to become fluent in a new language.

Although it was first developed by Ray, TPRS has evolved through the years, thanks to thousands of educators who contributed to improving this language teaching method. Here at TPRS Books, we're committed to continuing the work of these educators by providing workshops and resources to more teachers across the globe who want to learn TPRS and share the gift of language to their students. We travel across the globe for our teachers' language workshops. Each event is filled with training sessions and presentations from our talented team of instructors.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

In TPRS, acquisition of the target language is anchored in stories that students hear, read, write, tell, and retell in class with the guidance of the teacher. There is tremendous focus on first comprehending a story and building confidence with it before actually writing or telling it, the approach puts input at the core of the curriculum. And because of active student involvement with the input, this method follows basic ideas about the role of input in acquisition and learner engagement with the input. There are many layers and aspects to TPRS. It is a living method that is constantly changing. It will continue to evolve and change as we are led by the results of student learning.

In TPRS, there are no "experts," simply teacher language trainees who build a better relationship with students by personalizing stories. Every story is delightfully bizarre (to hold the interest of our students) and personalized (so that our stories speak to the students).

We are always seeking better results in student learning and proficiency as it pertains to classroom teaching. We base our assessments of the teacher how thoroughly the students have internalized the language.

There are various strategies that make up the essence of Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. The first main 3 parts are located to the right while other strategies in Read and Discuss include:

- Relate the situation, characters, and plot to students.

- Ask if they have ever been in such a situation.
- Capitalize on the cultural information in the story.
- Use the story to teach life lessons.
- Act out a scene from a novel.
- Discuss character development, choices and values.

To put it simply, in the TPRS method, stories are used as a tool to convey comprehensible input - needed to guide students to learn new vocabulary - within a setting that requires continuous communication between learners and teacher. All subjects in the classroom play a role in weaving the plot of the story. There is no passive repetition but rather a continuous creative effort - a crucial element in maintaining high student participation.

In this methodology, “acquisition of the target language is anchored in stories that students hear, read, write, tell, and retell in class with the guidance of the teacher. There is a tremendous focus on first comprehending a story and building confidence with it before actually writing or telling it, the approach puts input at the core of the curriculum”.

The strength of the TPRS approach is that it leverages the persuasive and suggestive power of storytelling to systematically expose students to foreign languages within a stimulating and interactive context.

As we will see in the next paragraph, stories provide language teachers with a tool to channel students’ efforts towards the repetition of verbs, nouns, adjectives.

A typical TPRS lesson begins with the teacher choosing a set of target words and explaining their meaning to the class. During the course of the lesson, students will be led to repeat the target words constantly.

The act of memorization, however, is closely linked to the unfolding of the narrative. Students repeat the words as the teacher animates the story. All participants can be involved in the story's development: who are the characters, what will happen next, what will be the ending. Students may also be asked to act out parts of the story.

In this way, students assimilate new vocabulary through a process that has been called “non-repetitive repetition” -- that is, a way of repeating and memorizing vocabulary anchored to concrete and meaningful situations.

TPRS is broadly divided into three steps. In **step one** the new vocabulary structures to be learned are taught using a combination of translation, gestures, and personalized questions; in **step two** those structures are used in a spoken class story; and finally, in **step three**, these same structures are used in a class reading.

Throughout these steps, teachers make the target language more comprehensible to the students by carefully limiting vocabulary, constantly asking comprehension questions, and by including very short grammar explanations known as pop-up grammar. Many TPRS teachers also make use of other comprehensible-input based activities such as reading a class novel or One Word Images.

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up we can say that the steps and techniques of TPRS help teachers to provide this input by making the language spoken in classroom both comprehensible and engaging. TPRS techniques play a large role in other comprehensible input-based methods such as MovieTalks. The strength of the TPRS method is that it helps students expand their vocabulary in a creative and fun way and prompts them to use the target words in a natural conversational context immediately.

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