

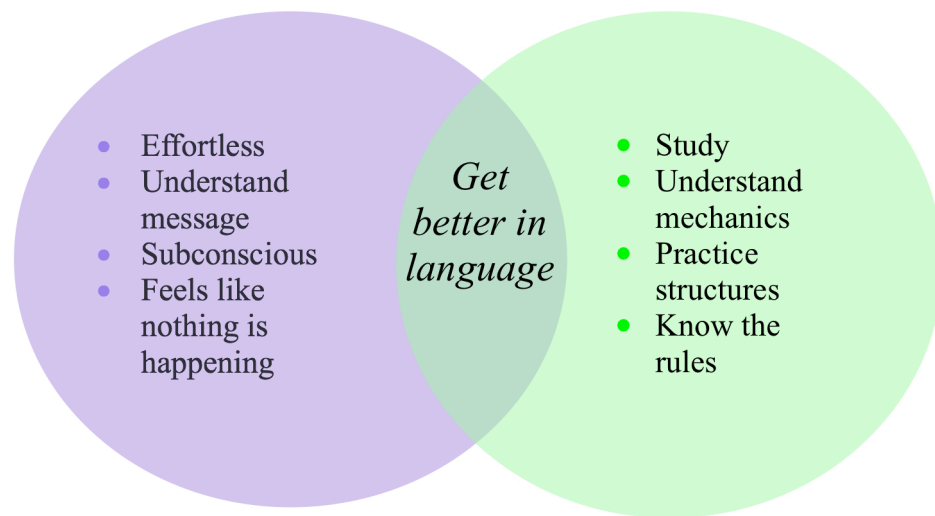
# TPR Storytelling®

## Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling

### How Does Second Language Acquisition Work?

- Language is acquired through comprehensible input. It is an unconscious process; it happens when the learner is focused on the meaning of the message rather than how the language works.
- An important difference between classroom acquisition and “baby acquisition” is: Students have greater cognitive ability than babies. However, they have significantly less time in the language than babies do. Therefore teachers must make the best use of precious classroom time.
- Classroom language must be repetitive, interesting, and varied. Without these elements, we are not using class time in the best way possible. Our challenge is making the language comprehensible while at the same time making it repetitive and interesting.
- Language “learning” refers to understanding how language works. It is enhanced by study.
- Learning enables a student to edit language for accuracy. Acquisition means relying on what sounds right.

### Acquisition / Learning



- ❖ In order to use **learned** rules in speech, three conditions must be met:
  - The speaker must know the rule.
  - The speaker must be focused on the rule.
  - The speaker must have sufficient time to edit.

## Lesson Planning

If you use a TPRS textbook, the lessons are already made for you. But if you want to tell a folk tale or use a different book, the following format applies for teaching ANY structures:

Focus on teaching structure (she gives it to him) rather than vocabulary (single words.) List the structures that you **need** to teach in order to tell the story. Typically a chapter “structure list” will have about 20 phrases, with variations on the same structure repeated many times. (he sent them to us, she offered it to them.)

Break the list into daily lessons of two or three phrases per day. Sometimes the phrase is a sentence, such as “The dog runs.”

A lesson consists of three steps: **establish meaning**, **story**, **literacy**. Each step of the lesson revolves around using the three phrases in as many ways as possible, in an interesting context. Lesson plan for each lesson:

STEP ONE: Introduce the three phrases:

- Written on the board in L2 and English.
- Pronounce and teach a gesture for each phrase.
- As you say the phrases, watch students’ gestures to see if they recognize the phrases.
- Use the phrases in context. (When a student needs help in understanding, simply do the gesture or point to the board.) Use your students as the topic of conversation:
  - Ask questions such as “Rachel, do you have a dog?”

- Talk about the students, using circles to reinforce the words. “Does Rachel have a dog?” “Does Rachel’s dog run fast?” (circle) “Does Rachel run fast?” (compare and contrast)
- Build on what you have learned about a student so that you can talk about that student. “Class, Rachel has a big brown dog. Rachel’s dog is named Al. Al runs very fast.”

STEP TWO: Ask a story.

- Using actors (or puppets or dolls or pictures). Once again, use your students as the topic of the story. Circle each statement that contains one of the lesson’s focus phrases.
- (Optional) Retell the story without actors. You may take the place of the actors or you may have everybody in the class act at the same time! You may **slightly** change or embellish the story to keep interest high.
- (Optional, can be homework) Students tell or write the story from illustrations. In class, they tell to partners. As homework, they tell to their parents.

STEP THREE: Read passage aloud. Students follow silently while listening. Invite them to translate the story. Check that they completely understand every bit of the text.

**Embedded Reading** is a tool to develop fluent reading. It is especially valuable for long reading passages. Begin with the three or four sentences that are the heart of a reading. Translate and discuss. Then add a few sentences that further develop the

reading. Translate and discuss. Repeat the procedure until they can read the full text.

The lesson plan may take 90+ minutes. Repeat the same procedure for each group of two or three phrases. After three or four lessons of this type, recycle by telling a story that uses the words from the preceding lessons.

Then begin again with two-three phrases per lesson, doing a review story after three or four lessons.

After teaching all of the phrases on the list, tell the chapter story (or the fairy tale or whatever story you originally intended to teach.) It is helpful to use an illustrated story strip. Point to each frame and ask questions before moving to the next frame.

The chapter test will give students a chance to prove to you that they know it all!

A culminating activity might be to have students tell the story to their families, to have students perform the story (for their families, for the rest of the school, for the video camera) to have students make their own story books, or to have students write their own stories.

If you choose to have students write their own stories, take advantage of their work by using their stories to make a short story book for that chapter, by sharing stories in class, by taking sentences and combining them into an embedded reading, or by using ideas, topics, or details in the next several lessons!

## Make grammar useful!

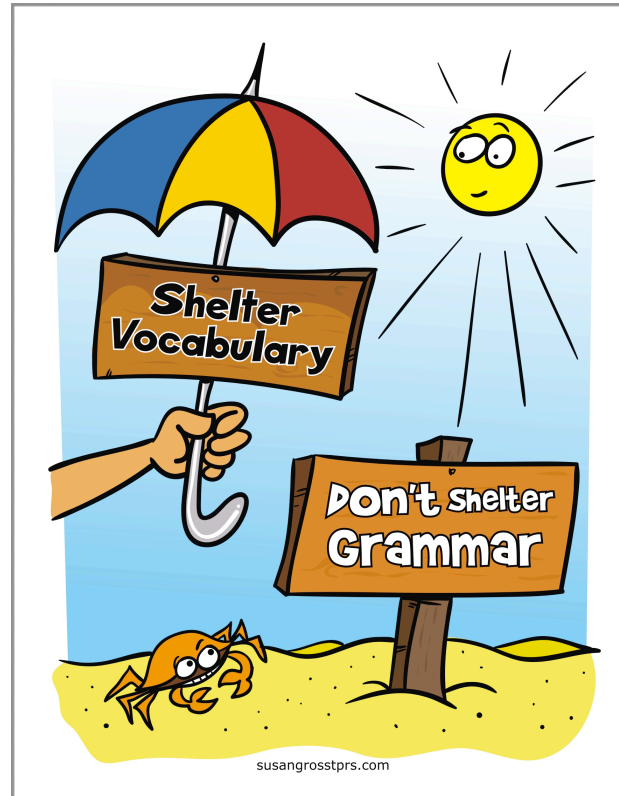
1. Students acquire grammar by understanding how changing things in the language affects the meaning. They do NOT acquire grammar by learning and practicing rules. One effective tool for promoting accuracy is retelling from **perspective**--with guide words at first and then without. Be demanding of your better students by requiring them to retell without help.
2. Always explain grammar from a **meaning** point of view. For example, let your students know what the "le" or "se" does in the sentence. Teach them the past tenses simultaneously by translating the sentence. Make your explanations very quick (15 seconds MAXIMUM).
3. Ask quick **“pop-up” grammar** questions. If the story says, “She gave him a dollar,” ask for a translation of “him.” Also ask questions that get students to focus on verb endings: Class, what does the “r” in “mirar” do?
4. Use **essays** to focus on accuracy, especially with upper-level classes. Correction methods:
  - a. Correct all instances of one or two important errors in each essay, explaining these corrections in detail. Concentrate on verb accuracy and agreement. Your corrections must show that their errors cause confusion. (Yo habla = “I he talks” or livres important = is there one book or more than one?)
  - b. Use a rubric.
  - c. Find and highlight only ten errors in each composition.
5. Speak the language as much as possible in the classroom and **speak it naturally**. DO NOT shelter grammar when

speaking to students! If they do not hear natural language they are unlikely to acquire it.

6. English is used **only** to guarantee comprehension (such as translating readings) or to clarify meaning as quickly as possible (such as in pop-ups).

7. Write a **class story**.

Teacher writes the story on the screen while the entire class invents the story line. Continually ask about spelling, gender, conjugations, anything relating to accuracy. Students answer questions about all of the structure they know while copying the entire story. Praise them for asking questions about how the language works. Students are more likely to learn grammar from multiple mini-lessons than from a five-minute lesson that has an explanation and drill. To see an example of a class story, see the DVD *“TPRS in the 90’s”* by Susan Gross.



## Grammar Schedule

While the teacher uses **all** of the language accurately **all** of the time, it is helpful to have a grammatical focus in mind. Certain features like affirmative/negative are obviously essential to understanding. These are the first things that must be clarified. In level one, I used the following “point of view” plan:

*Aug - Oct* 3rd person singular and plural.

*Nov - Dec* 1st person singular.

*Jan - Feb* 2nd person singular.

*Mar - Apr* 1st person plural.

*May* 2nd person plural.

At the conclusion of a story, we quickly retold from the point of view that I was working on. Each point of view included possessive adjectives; direct object, indirect object, disjunctive, and reflexive pronouns; regular, irregular, and reflexive verbs. Some years I did not make it through all of the points of view because I only moved to the next point of view once the students demonstrated mastery of the current point of view.

However, I used all forms correctly whenever appropriate in our storytelling and conversations. Therefore they heard all points of view all year long. The above plan simply guided what grammar I chose to **emphasize** and to **assess** for that chapter.

## Reading

A well-developed reading program is **essential**. A reading program is not an ancillary; it is crucial. A good reading program includes the following reading activities:

- **Kindergarten day.**  
Teacher reads a children's book to the class.
- **Free Voluntary Reading.**  
Students select their own reading material from the classroom library. Classroom materials should include brochures, magazines, baby books, children's books, storybooks, and novels. An abundance of high-interest materials is required. These materials need not be geared to the student's vocabulary or grammar lessons; they should simply be appealing to the students.
- **All-class translation (TPRS reading).** Everyone reads the same material. Students translate (individually or as a group.) Students need to know at least 75% of the vocabulary for this activity to be successful. In addition to pop-up grammar and vocabulary, discuss the reading in the target language. Personalize the discussion by connecting the events and characters to your students.



- **Homework reading.** Once they know 90 to 95% of the vocabulary, students can read a chapter as homework. Reading is the best use of homework time for levels 3 and above. You may choose to assess with a quick quiz.
- **Reading a novel** promotes fluent reading skills. Fluent reading means *without dictionaries*. Our students will not start out as fluent readers; they must be guided. Begin with a novel that is almost totally comprehensible. Students translate out loud, while the teacher assists as needed. All students follow along in their own books. While there are many opportunities for pop-up grammar, remember that reading is a language acquisition activity, not a hidden agenda for grammar lessons. Focus on the plot, the characters, what will happen next, and enjoyment of the story.

In levels 3 and above, students can read novels as homework. Once they understand at least 90 to 95% of the vocabulary, students can read independently. Begin by translating the first few chapters in class. By grouping the students and letting each group run their own translation while you move among the groups, you will know when they are ready to read independently. Assign the next chapter for two or three days later. Most teachers have them write summaries or give them quizzes over what they have read. Because it is difficult to find novels that are appropriate for level one and level two students, you may choose to order the novels on the order form. If you would like to see more novels for German, French, and Spanish reading programs, go to <http://www.susangrosstprs.com> and click on "Lessons." There are

teacher-recommended reading lists for kindergarten through seniors in high school in French, Spanish, and German.

## Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to know how well you are teaching. If you don't know how much of the material has been mastered, you don't know what to do tomorrow!

Constantly assess students by listening for instant, unanimous responses to all statements and questions. When the response is low, do not move forward until the cause of misunderstanding has been cleared up.

Formal assessment includes quizzes, tests, and exams:

Frequent unannounced ten-point **quizzes** tell you which items need to be re-taught.

**Chapter tests** (secondary level) may include vocabulary, listening, reading, culture and an essay.

**Semester exams** should assess proficiency: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture.

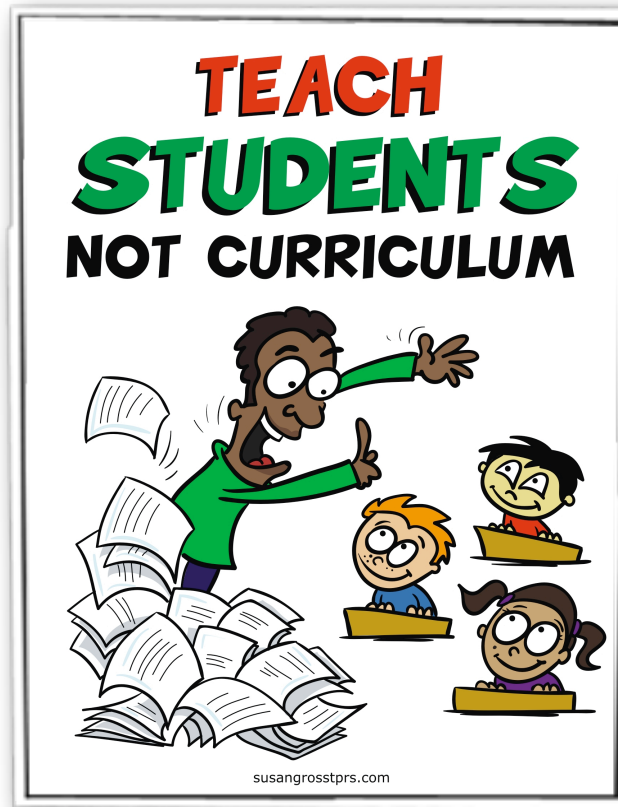
## Student Rapport

In order to maintain an appropriate classroom atmosphere, teachers need to be in control. They need to create a safe environment. Very often, student resistance stems from the fear of being rejected or ridiculed. A negative student atmosphere has a negative impact on learning. We must eliminate ALL negativity in our classes. This includes comments, facial expressions, smirks, and overt behavior. It also includes teacher impatience, sighs, and sarcasm.

Show respect for students. Accept them for who they are. Show them you care. Know about their lives and talk about their lives in class and in mini-stories. Shake their hands and ask them about their friends, family, or hobbies.

“Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

-- Anonymous





# TPRS on the web!

[www.susangrosstprs.com](http://www.susangrosstprs.com)

articles and rubrics  
lesson plans for French  
schedule of workshops

[www.tprstorytelling.com](http://www.tprstorytelling.com)

workshops  
order materials -- FREE sample materials!  
map of TPRS teachers!

**Multi-Cultural Conference: Dominican Republic**  
**Punta Cana Club Med!! June 25 -29, 2012**

[www.blaineraytpsr.com](http://www.blaineraytpsr.com)

workshops  
order materials (Fluency through TPR Storytelling)

**The Annual National TPRS Conference**  
**Las Vegas, NV July 23 - 27, 2012**

[www.benslavic.com](http://www.benslavic.com)

Blog, books (PQA in a Wink), materials

<http://www.fluencyfast.com/>

Language classes for adults

<http://www.tprstories.com/ijflt/>

The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching

## Join tprstalk !

The **TPRStalk bulletin board** consists of TPRS teachers from everywhere! We teach all languages, all levels. We are new teachers, experienced teachers, and experts who want to provide support for each other.

SUBSCRIBE VIA WEB: <http://tprstalk.com>

You can post questions, read answers, and browse the files for information. Join and use this bulletin board for your own professional development program!



## Order online!

Books, Materials, Workshops:

[www.tprstorytelling.com](http://www.tprstorytelling.com)  
e-mail: [Carol@tprstorytelling.com](mailto:Carol@tprstorytelling.com)

[www.blaineraytpsr.com](http://www.blaineraytpsr.com)  
e-mail: [blaineray@aol.com](mailto:blaineray@aol.com)

**Links** to LOTS of additional materials  
and web sites are on my web page  
[www.susangrosstprs.com](http://www.susangrosstprs.com)  
Then click "Links"

# Keys to Success with TPR Storytelling®

## Key #1: COMPREHENSIBILITY

Look into the eyes of students to make a connection with each student. Looking in their eyes is a way to be sure that communication is taking place. **Verify** that they comprehend by doing **many** comprehension checks:.

1. Ask “What did I just say?”
2. Ask “What did I just ask?”
3. Ask “What does the word \_\_\_\_ mean?”

*Or:*

1. Hold up fingers to show how much they comprehend

Ask the comprehension check questions of individual students, not the entire class. The entire class will always get it right!

If you use a word or phrase that students do not understand, write it on the board (with translation.)

Speak slowly. Pause after every word, or phrase, or sentence. (Depending on their level of language.) Allow time for students to process the language, to digest what was just said.

Teach at the pace that the class requires. Do not move to the next lesson, the next story, or even the next statement until comprehension is perfect and 100% of the students know what

has been said so far. This means that the curriculum will not dictate the pace of class; student progress will dictate the pace!

Recycle as much language as possible. Strive to use every word or structure from the entire year in every lesson! Recycling all of the familiar language enhances comprehension and fluency.

## Key #2: REPETITION

Ask many questions that contain the phrase you are teaching. Your goal is to say this phrase 80 or more times! It is NOT your goal to get the students to repeat the phrase. Once students answer the question with one or two words, you will then repeat the entire answer. This gives you another repetition of the phrase in a meaningful context.

When you ask a question that the students already know the answer to, you are “circling.” When you ask a question that they don’t know the answer to, you are adding interest.

Recycle all of the information that has been discussed so far. If telling a story, go back to the beginning and re-tell what has happened so far. If doing PQA or discussing a current event, summarize the conversation, looking into the eyes of each student.

Add details to each sentence. The details give you the opportunity to restate the sentence while making it longer! Not only will you get extra repetitions by adding details, you will



also be teaching how the language works. That is because the details might be such things as the day or the weather, a big number or a description, modes of transportation, dependent clauses or prepositional phrases.

Add a new location or a new characters. This simple technique gives you an opportunity to then compare the characters or compare what happens in each location. The comparison automatically involves repetition but in more creative ways.

Verify the details of the story with the class and with the actors. Additionally, verifying with actors teaches students how to talk to each other.

### Key #3: INTEREST

Add details to stories by asking questions about the story that the students don't know. Invite students to guess. Tell them, "Surprise me with your guess. If you don't surprise me, I will surprise you."

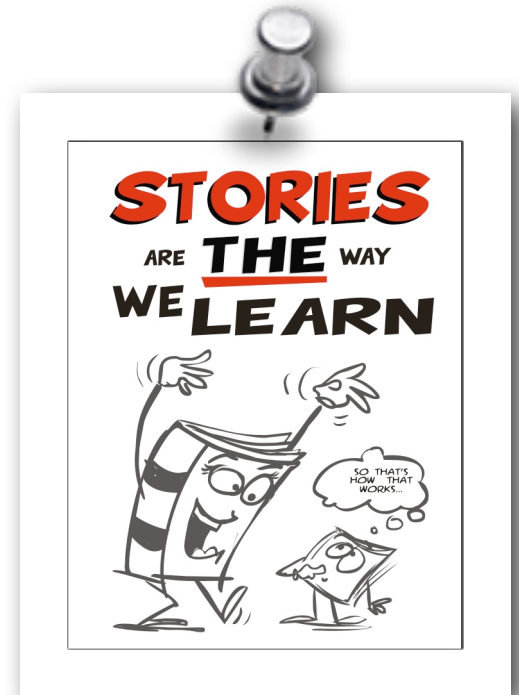
Personalize the stories based on the surprising answers our students provide. As you learn more about your students, insert these details into the stories.

Exaggerate with size, ridiculous numbers, unexpected colors, and celebrities.

### What about output?

**Writing:** Students should write stories and essays. (Simply filling a blank with a word is not writing!) If they write for speed, grade for quantity. If they are given time to write with care, then use a rubric to grade it.

**Speaking:** Have student retell the story to their partner at the end of the story. Allow a superstar to retell the story to the class. These retells should take only 2 or 3 minutes since output is not making students better in the language. Retelling to an adult makes a good homework assignment and does not cost any class time!



# The 3 Steps of TPR Storytelling®

## Step 1 Establish Meaning

Write the English meaning on board  
Gesture

**Personalize** the phrases:

Ask questions using the new words.  
Ex: If the word is a noun, ask if a student likes it. If the word is a verb, ask if he does it.

Show interest with follow-up questions.

Ask whole group about the first student.

Get reactions from whole group.

Ask similar questions of another student.

Compare and contrast students.

Tips for success:

1 Always look for confusion (hesitation or no response) and use translation to clear it up.

2 Make sure that **every** student understands everything.

3 Show interest and enthusiasm.

4 Capitalize on the comparison between students to make a little story about them.

## Step 2 Story

Actors dramatize the story. They perform after each statement.

Spend plenty of time on the story (do NOT hurry.)

Follow each statement with questions.

Use a variety of questions: translation, low-level, open-ended, and creative.

Use translation to clarify grammar and structure. (Pop-up frequently.)

Creative questions (that have no answer yet) invite unexpected or personalized details.

Students respond to statements with “Ohhhh!”

They must answer all questions.

Use the information that you learned about students to personalize the story.

Recycle parts of the story.

Retell the story (without actors, or everyone acting with a partner, or illustrating) if you need/want to.

Teach to the eyes! Look at the audience, not at the actors.

Enjoy the sparkle students.

## Step 3 Literacy

Give students a printed story.

Students **translate** the story, (either as a group or one at a time.)

Make sure that students understand..

Use translation to explain grammar so that grammar is tied to meaning, not to a grammar rule.

**Discuss** in the language:

- 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.
- Give a short quiz on the reading.
- Act out a scene from a novel.
- Discuss character development, choices and values.

Repeat step 3 for as many readings as you have. Extended readings, embedded readings, and novels can also be translated and discussed in this manner.

*It is the teacher's job to show enthusiasm and to be supportive at every step of every lesson.*

## Circling chart = four possibilities for every word!

Statement: Charles reads Harry Potter

	Charles	reads	Harry Potter
+	Does <b>Charles</b> ....	Does Ch. <b>read</b> ....	Does Ch read <b>HP</b> ?
or	Does <b>Charles</b> or <b>Tony</b> ....	Does Ch. <b>read</b> or <b>eat</b> ....	Does he read <b>HP</b> or <b>Superfudge</b> ?
-	Does <b>Superman</b> ....	Does Ch. <b>eat</b> ...	Does he read <b>Superfudge</b> ?
?	<b>Who</b> ....	<b>What</b> does Ch <b>do</b> ?	<b>What</b> does he read?

*Keep the questions interesting!* Add a detail every 2 - 3 questions. (When, where, how, what day, what time, for how long, with/to/for whom, how many, what color, how big, how often, what weather, why)

Circle with each new detail, so that the sentence becomes long and complex (and interesting)

EXAMPLE: On Thursdays at 2:37 PM Charles reads Harry Potter in the school library with Sasha Obama.

*Want some output?*

When you want a complete statement rather than one word answers, try these questioning structures:

Does he read HP or doesn't he read HP?

Does Charles read HP or does HP read Charles?