

# Advanced TPR Storytelling



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## Personalization is central to TPR Storytelling®

**Personalization** refers to centering class around the students. In **step one**, we personalize the language by talking only to the students, with the students and about the students. We ask questions (PQA) and listen to student responses. We make their responses the topic of conversation.



In **step two**, we make a story about a student and some of the information that we know about our students. Often the information from the step one conversation is what instigates the story. We embellish

the story with things like TV shows, famous people, school activities or sports that are interesting to our students. We show that we care about students by guaranteeing that all students understand every word of the story.

In **step three**, we make comparisons between the reading and our students. We relate topics in the stories to our students' lives. It is important to take advantage of every opportunity to make our students look good. They are always portrayed as being intelligent, powerful, and influential.

## Create a Playful Atmosphere in the Classroom



Playfulness involves grinning, smiling, winking, joking, teasing. It means having a light touch and enthusiasm that is communicated by your whole body!

A variety of tools will add flair to your storytelling. It is helpful to take one tool and focus on using it for a week.

Examples of these tools: chanting, echoing, singing, rhythms. Use vocal variety to highlight structures in isolation. Use the structures in context but connected to students and celebrities or unusual situations. Assign words to individual students, pointing to that student each time you say the word. Assign the role of "professor" to a student who then decides the color and size of things, as well as nationality or motivation for characters.

Playfulness is enhanced when we celebrate originality, talent, acting, anything that is unique about our students. By taking the time and energy to know something special about each student, we get playful ammunition. When taught with an atmosphere of playfulness, students react with the belief, "Hey, this is really FUN!"



### Advanced circling

The purpose of circling is to get abundant repetitions of the target structures. The purpose of repetitions is to get the language to “sound right” to the students. It is not essential to get all of the repetitions in one section of the story or even in one class period. Joe Neilson likes to work on 10 or 12 structures over a period of a week or more, using them every day in a slightly different way and in a different story.

The order of questions is **not** crucial; keeping students listening to the content of the message **is** crucial. Choose questions so that your students will answer successfully, and so that they can’t predict what the next question will be. In fact, acquisition is more

likely to occur when the questions are a surprise. As long as they are trying to understand what is being said, acquisition is taking place!

The form on page 5 spells out the basic circling pattern (yes, or, no, question word.) Beyond the basic circling questions, ask **open-ended questions**. Open-ended questions invite students to invent details, motivation, and clever twists. Assessing students with an **affirmative/negative assessment question** reveals which students are ready to retell the story.

The skillful weaving of circling questions, open-ended questions, and affirmative/negative assessment questions keeps the questioning from becoming predictable. Throw in a quick **recycle** of “the story so far” and you have a good recipe for personalized comprehensible input! (CI + P)

### Classroom Management



Classroom atmosphere is based on the relationship between the teacher and the students. Successful management requires the teacher to show genuine caring about the students, their lives, their hobbies, and their families. Nothing improves atmosphere more than **noticing** students!

Misbehavior indicates that the students do not perceive the at-

mosphere to be safe. This perception could be fueled by eye-rolling, giggling, smirking, or impatience. When students sense that the atmosphere is not safe, they are unwilling to participate.

It is the teacher’s job to guarantee a safe atmosphere for all learners. By showing respect for students **and for themselves**, teachers promote appropriate student behavior and a safe atmosphere.

### Reading

In addition to step three of TPRS, have students read for pleasure. Reading novels, children’s books, and assorted realia in the classroom, at home, and on the internet promotes fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy.

The purpose of such reading is simply to understand the message. Whatever enhances pleasure in reading and makes students want to read more or longer is to be encouraged. If something seems cute or clever to the teacher but does not make students want to read more or longer, it is not promoting fluency.

Some reading activities that promote acquisition are Free Voluntary Reading, whole-class reading ( of interesting novels that provide discussion topics because the story is so good), and dramatizing scenes from stories or novels.

Assign a summary or give a quiz to verify that they did their reading homework. Keep it simple, though! Doing a summary or tak-

ing a quiz is not what makes reading pleasurable.

## Homework

Speaking of homework, keep it as short and enjoyable as possible. Some teachers have students do grammar drills on the internet (Quia for example.)

In level one, have students write three possible answers for each question. It is a fun assignment, focuses on meaning, and provides enjoyable discussion the next day. Furthermore it helps them understand parts of speech.

Tell a story to an adult is a simple homework assignment. It takes no time from the classroom!

Create a story you can tell (either by writing it or by drawing it) keeps a class busy the next day. It also offers new story ideas for making a “student-written” short story book, and for story lines that may become “home-run stories” in future classes.

In levels 3 and up, student essays are used to assess writing style and accuracy. Of course reading improves these writing traits, so there is no need to assign a large number of (or particularly long) essays.

Three methods for grading essays:

1. Use a rubric.

## Advanced TPR Storytelling

2. Highlight every occurrence of a single error. (Such as agreement or conjugation)

3. Highlight only the first ten errors.

When students read at home, they can write summaries (in English or in the language) to verify that they have read the assignment.



## Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to find out how well students know the material. If they know what has been taught so far, then it is appropriate to continue with a new lesson. If they do not know the material, then rework the challenging structures or vocabulary in a new story.

The most accurate assessments are cumulative and unannounced. Assessment does not make students better in language, so use only as much time as is necessary to find out what you need to know.

**Quizzes** should be quick to grade. Suggestions: true/false, yes/no, short answer, translate

vocabulary, multiple choice, or answer two questions about reading homework.

**Chapter tests** can assess vocabulary, reading, culture, and writing. Include information from the whole year, not just the current chapter.

The **final exam** should be a proficiency assessment. It should assess comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing,

## The Three Steps, Advanced

### Step one:

Aim for a full-class conversation. In addition to doing PQA, add playfulness to this step. Use chants, songs, and personalization to create an atmosphere of mutual support and respect among all of the students.

When a structure seems difficult to personalize, have students create sentences that use the structure. They can work with a partner for a minute or two -- then you use their sentences to create a conversation.

### Step two:

Enhance the performance of stories by using props and costumes. **Vocal variety** is a tool that is always handy!

The joy of making abundant random connections is another way of making class playful. Take



## Grammar



some time at each stage of the story to connect everything to everything! Connect today's story to yesterday's story; connect the story to the full-class conversation from step one; connect the structures to songs, chants, vocal inflections, TV shows, movies, school events, or news stories.

Remember to get student input for details, new characters, or even for solutions to problems.

### Step three:

Besides translating the TPRS readings and popping up grammar, compare the reading to the PMS that the class performed.

Compare the reading to a student in class, using similarities and differences to stimulate the discussion.

Dramatize some reading passages, personalize them, change a detail and ask, "What would you do if...?"

Many teachers like to vary the extended readings by allowing small-groups to read together or by using them for homework. Beware of doing this too much, because the readings often contain some valuable teachable moments!

The order of acquisition hypothesis tells us that students will acquire structures as they become ready. Their readiness develops as a consequence of abundant comprehensible input.

When teaching a structure or a concept, teach meaning rather than grammar rules. This guarantees success and nothing motivates like success!

If you are teaching grammar based on meaning, then these are the questions you will ask:

1. What does it mean?
2. What if I said \_\_\_\_\_?
3. How would you say \_\_\_\_\_?

Question 1 is for the barometer student. If the statement you just made (in the target language) was "He gave his mother a book." then the barometer student tells you in English what you just said.

Question 2 is for the average student. In the target language, ask: What if I said, "I gave my mother a book." The average student

tells you in English, just like the barometer did. The question is a bit more difficult because you have made grammatical changes.

Question 3 is for the super students. **In English**, ask: How would you say "He will give his mother a book." This question is quite a bit more difficult because the student is asked to come up with the correct grammar in the target language.

Write down grammatical changes and point to each word, explaining its impact on the meaning of the sentence. In the above example, "He gave to his mother" would be a target structure, so it would already be on the board. But if you were teaching first person, then you would write "I gave to my mother" directly above or below the target structure, using a contrasting color for the first person forms.

Be meticulous about writing the grammatical structures and changes every day. Point to the crucial changes, asking questions in the style of questions 1, 2, and 3 with great consistency. No matter what the grammatical focus is, this procedure enables students of all abilities to make progress.

**How to get 10 questions from one statement!**

**The man** drove to the store

+

or

—

?

The man **drove** to the store.

+

or

—

?

The man drove to the **store**.

+

or

—

?

Randomly combine the above questions with:

- Open-ended questions (get details and elaborations)
- Affirmative/negative assessment questions to determine output readiness (Did he drive to Jupiter or didn't he drive to Jupiter?)

## Add some pizzazz to your TPR Storytelling®

### Questioning techniques:

- Ask for creativity

- Teasing

- Getting back to the story

### Repetition techniques:

- Repeat the answers to questions

- Chants, songs

### Accuracy:

- Write on the board

- Use color

- Levels of correction

- Levels of pop-ups

- Compare and contrast grammar

### Gimmicks:

- Laugh at yourself!

- Dialog in stories

- Sound effects

- Students provide ideas for using structures

- Link word, location, characteristic to individual

- Music

- Enjoy the kids

- Ventriloquist Actors

- Vocal Variety, Accents

- Gestures

- Rhythms, chants

- Spontaneous TPR

- Associations with TV, movies, songs