

Why TPR Storytelling “works”

TPR Storytelling "works" because the teacher is speaking in the language all period and the kids understand. TPR Storytelling doesn't work if there is not constant assessment and constant involvement by the students.

The constant assessment and constant student involvement come from asking questions. Jillions of questions. Jillions of questions that have the vocabulary word IN THE QUESTION.

Example: my vocabulary word is "autrefois" (in the past) My pms began "Autrefois il y avait un garçon." As soon as the boy waved "hello" to the class, I began asking questions (pretend like this is in French): In the past was there a boy or a girl? In the past was there two boys or one boy? In the past was there a man? In the past was there a boy with long green hair or with short brown hair? What was there in the past?

While I ask these questions I look at individuals in the classroom IN THE EYES. We often tend to scan the crowd with our eyes, monitoring for misbehavior. That isn't good enough. We need to look right in the eyes of a couple of kids and talk directly to them. Teaching to the eyes is more important than potentially missing the passing of a note.

Not only do we need to ask jillions of questions, but we need to increase the number of repetitions of the vocabulary word. A good technique for increasing reps is the "three for one technique." It enables you to get THREE reps of the vocabulary word for one question. Remember that my word is "autrefois." I will ask ONE question yet I will say "autrefois" THREE times! Like this:

“In the past was there a boy or a girl? Yes! Of course! How obvious! **In the past** there wasn't a girl; **in the past** there was a boy.”

I not only got THREE reps of "in the past" but I also demonstrated negation of the past tense verb "there was"

Try this as your "thing to work on for the next few weeks"

Ask an either-or question that contains the vocabulary word. Answer it with the negative of one choice and then repeat the answer with the correct choice. If you can improve on your "three for one" questioning, it may help you to get the reps up!

Questioning technique is the difference between TPR Storytelling working and not working. Remember to vary your questions, using yes/no, either/or, and plenty of open-ended questions. Remember to ask questions that do not (yet) have an answer. Listen for the most outlandish answer, claim that it is correct, and then ask questions about the new information which your students provided. Taking little cakewalks to elaborate something that is outlandish keeps student interest high.

Next, assessment:

1. You need to have kids translate what you said once in a while, including having them translate what the question was. You will be surprised at how much of the questioning they do NOT understand.

2. Retells are the crux of assessment. Do different kinds of retells:

- a) sequential retells. 15-seconds, 2 - 3 sentences, etc.
- b) partial retells (tell me a part of the story with the word "autrefois")
- c) partner retells (but you need to REALLLY listen on these!!)
- d) everyone retells at once (to their hand, table, pencil, wall, etc)

You will not always get good retells. Normally the super-stars can do a lovely smooth, accurate retell. Many the students may retell in a choppy, hesitant manner. They may even have to look at the board to remember the vocabulary words. In step 7, they will have to check the guide words.

Do not be too worried about sloppy output, especially early in the year. Output is the result of acquisition. Acquisition is slow and messy. Trust that your huge volume of input will eventually pay off!

June is when you will see the results!

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