

- Teaching Proficiency through Reading & Storytelling (TPRS)
- Comprehensible Input (CI)

## Research on TPR Storytelling

A handout for teachers, parents, students, and administrators

### What is TPRS?

TPRS is a language teaching method designed to develop real fluency. Students and teachers spend class time speaking in the target language about interesting, comprehensible stories.

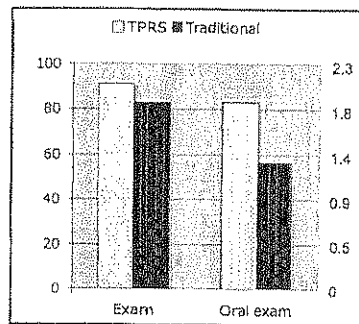
### Has any research been done on TPRS?

Yes—articles have been published in the *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *CATESOL*, *Dimension*, and ProQuest Digital Dissertations.

### What do the studies show?

Varguez (2009) compared four beginning high school classrooms with different teaching methods and socioeconomic status, using a standardized Second Language Proficiency Examination. Her study showed that when socioeconomic status was held constant, the **TPRS classroom outperformed the traditional classroom**, and disadvantaged students who were taught with TPRS equaled the traditional students in the more affluent school district. This tells us that **TPRS is effective in both rich and poor schools**, and can be used to close achievement gaps caused by socioeconomic status.

Watson (2009) compared two beginning high school TPRS classrooms and one traditional classroom by testing the students with a final exam and an oral exam. Results showed that **the TPRS classes outscored the traditional students on both tests**, and that the distribution was wider in the traditional classes. This means that when taught with traditional methods, some students fail and others succeed, whereas **more students can succeed with TPRS**.



Spangler (2009) found that middle school and high school students in **TPRS classrooms significantly outperformed classrooms using Communicative Language Teaching on speaking**, and that the two groups of students performed the same on reading and writing.

Davidheiser (2001) reports that **TPRS improves pronunciation and vocabulary memory, reduces anxiety, is a natural way to learn language, promotes active learning, and is good for different types of learners**. He discusses the integration of grammar instruction with TPRS at the college level.

Braunstein (2006) found that even adult ESL students, who expected more traditional instruction, **responded positively to TPRS**. Students were enthusiastic about the class and reported that the methods helped them to remember vocabulary, and understand English.

**Every empirical research study on TPRS to date has found that TPRS students outperform traditional students on some measures of language skills—particularly on speaking.**

**No study has found that TPRS students underperform traditional students.**

Braunstein, L. (2006). Adult ESL learners' attitudes towards movement (TPR) and drama (TPR Storytelling) in the classroom. *CATESOL*, 18:1, 7-20.

Davidheiser, J. C. (2001). The ABCs of TPR Storytelling. *Dimension*, 2001, 45-53.

Spangler, D. E. (2009). Effects of two foreign language methodologies, Communicative Language Teaching and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling, on beginning-level students' achievement, fluency, and anxiety. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (854554814)

Varguez, K. C. (2009). Traditional and TPR Storytelling Instruction in the Beginning High School Classroom. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 5:1 (Summer), pp. 2-11.

Watson, B. (2009). A comparison of TPRS and traditional foreign language instruction at the high school level. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 5:1 (Summer), pp. 21-24



## TPRS and comprehensible Input Training

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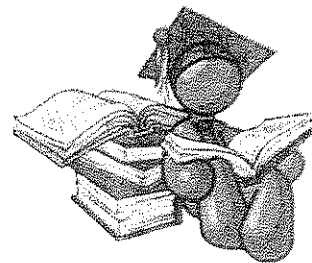
## How We Learn Languages

### How We Learn Languages

Since languages are not really an option any more, and since they are connected to our national security, things must change in our nation's foreign language classrooms.

Please take a moment to look over the following brief descriptions of the work of Stephen Krashen and Bill Van Patten on how we acquire languages. Both researchers are of gigantic importance in the world of foreign language acquisition.

If school officials were to familiarize themselves with their work, along with ACTFL, which is the national parent organization for all foreign language teachers regardless of level (>[www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)), would also be a prudent move in the current national discussion.



I have been astounded on more than one occasion to find that there are a significant number of teachers working in classrooms nationally who have never heard of Krashen or VanPatten or ACTFL. This will change.

#### Stephen Krashen

If one takes a close look at them, it is clear that many of Krashen's hypotheses fully support communicative activities in the classroom. They imply that reaching kids, and not just teaching kids from a book, is a key factor in building fluency:

1. Communicative Competence, for example, is defined in sociocultural terms, meaning that interacting in L2 is more than just a mental exercise, but a participatory, social one. Robots cannot converse.
2. The Affective Filter Hypothesis states there is a "filter" or "mental block" that keeps L2 from "getting in" – the lower the filter, the easier it is to learn L2. Thus, human contact of a relaxed nature, i.e. reaching kids in a way that is meaningful to them, increases acquisition of L2.
3. The Affective Hypothesis states that factors of motivation, interpersonal acceptance, and self-esteem deeply affect learning L2. Thus, we reach students by focusing on them and valuing them as human beings in our classes.
4. The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis states that the learner can only acquire language by connecting it to prior knowledge. Language that is not understood is just L2 noise. Thus, we cannot just teach students, we must reach them by making sure that we speak to them in a way that they can understand us.
5. The Monitor Hypothesis states that the learner unconsciously corrects his or her speech to conform to the correct spoken and written speech of fluent speakers. Thus, we reach students by speaking to them in the target language, not by speaking to them in English. By speaking to them in L2 in ways that carry meaning and interest to them, we reach them.
6. The Natural Order of Acquisition Hypothesis states that structures of L2 emerge in much the same order as they do in L1, an order that cannot be re-arranged. This implies that the mind is selective and learns what features of a language it wants to learn when it wants to learn it, as it hears L2 on a daily basis. This calls into question the "grammar syllabus." Thus, we reach students by offering them the target language in forms that it can grasp, and not in ways that confuse them.

#### Bill Van Patten

Bill Van Patten's main point is that in order for input to be successful in teaching languages it must be of a communicative nature, which means that the focus must be on meaning. In this sense, he supports Krashen's concept of comprehensible input. Another major aspect of Van Patten's message is that language acquisition is different from any other kind of learning. Van Patten suggests that the brain treats language differently from normal human cognition and therefore should not be studied cognitively, which is how it is typically taught.

# **The Eight Intelligences (and how they relate to TPR- Storytelling)**

**By Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.  
(and Denise Bertagni)**

- 1.) Linguistic - storytelling (listening), reading, writing, and speaking**
- 2.) Logical - Mathematical - use numbers in stories and grammatical patterns (verb-endings, direct object placement)**
- 3.) Spatial - use visualization to teach vocabulary, all stories told in class have spatial orientation**
- 4.) Bodily-Kinesthetic - TPR involves learning hand motions for each word, the students also act out the stories in plays**
- 5.) Musical - songs are an excellent source of comprehensible input and easily remembered, a good reinforcement for vocab.**
- 6.) Interpersonal - students act out the stories, students tell stories to partners, students retell story to class**
- 7.) Intrapersonal - the stories are etched on the students memories, the stories involve student personalities and current events from their lives**
- 8.) Naturalist - stories are about people and often animals, stories take place in weird places**

## **Teaching Languages through TPR Storytelling**

- TPR-Storytelling allows students to acquire vocabulary in a manner similar to how a child learns their first language.**
- TPR-Storytelling teaches for long term-memory, helps students build**



**fluency with remarkable speed, and gives students confidence in speaking a foreign language.**

**- TPR-Storytelling allows students to develop an "ear" for the language through consistent and comprehensible exposure to grammatically correct language.**

**- Visualization has been demonstrated to be a key component in the memory system. Memory is enhanced by images that involve ACTION, COLOR, and EXAGGERATION. Visualization is a key component in TPR-Storytelling**

**- Jean Pierre Chiguex, of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, has found that simple movement of the muscle stimulates the growth of axons, which carry messages between neurons. The number of axons is directly related to intelligence, and people (infants as well as adults) who move about more benefit from greater axonal developments. TPR is movement!**

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