

TPRS IN ACTION

Clark Middle School - 1 February 2013

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What are you seeing today?

I teach Spanish using a technique called TPRS, or Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. You will learn much more about this later. While there are many, many techniques that fall under the TPRS/Comprehensible Input umbrella, the classes that you will observe today are going to focus on the actual storytelling technique. You will see me introduce several new structures (vocabulary terms) to each class, use them in a discussion, tell a story that includes them, and read a short story that features them.

What is storyasking?

Storyasking is when a teacher has a story in mind, but the details have not yet been decided. For example, I might know that the story is about a girl that goes somewhere and sees someone she knows. The students decide who the girl is, where she goes, and who it is that she sees and knows at that place. You will see this in all three classes. You will see how this leads to a personalized story for each class since the last two classes will use the same story frame.

What essential TPRS strategies will you see?

1. *Repetition* - When learning new vocabulary, we want students to hear the new structures as many times as possible. We aim for 70-100 repetitions of new structures before we assess students on them (this might occur in one class period, or it might be spread out over several).
2. *Point and pause* - When learning new vocabulary, we need to remind students of the meaning of the new words when they hear them and give them time to process the meaning.
3. *Comprehension checks* - The teacher must always make sure that students know what s/he is saying, and s/he does this by asking questions to the students in English about the meaning of what is said.
4. *Circling* - Talking (or asking) in circles about one statement: asking many questions about one statement and manipulating it to get more repetitions of the structures, clarify meaning, and check for understanding.
5. *Personalization* - Connecting the structures to the students' lives by asking them personal questions that include the structures. For example, if you want them to learn the word "goes", you could ask, "Where do you go (in the winter/with your family/when you're sad/etc.)?"

What elementary strategies should you look for?

I have tried to incorporate some elementary strategies into today's lessons, so we will see how it goes! My students are not used to them because we do not need as much structure and visual support as is needed in elementary. I geared my Spanish 2A lesson

more toward elementary than I did for my last two classes, so you will see more of these strategies applied during the first period that you observe than in the last two. There are many more elementary strategies available to you, but these are the ones that I chose to employ today:

1. *Images* - On the board, I have posted pictures of the structures as well as their Spanish and English meanings.
2. *Visual responses* - Students will all have personal copies of the images that they can use for games and responses.
3. *Limited, easy-to-understand options* - When deciding which detail to include in the story, students will choose from a set of options that I have pre-determined. The suggestions are cognates or words that they already know. Typically, upper-level students are allowed to call out any suggestion, and I would choose one of their ideas, translate it, and incorporate it into the story. This is too chaotic and too much new information to process for most elementary learners.
4. *Lottery* - Fairness is a bigger concern for elementary students, and so all participants will be chosen in an impartial manner. Often, I just pick a student that hasn't participated recently and wants to participate.
5. *Physical responses* - Give students the opportunity to move around so that their minds can focus better. Students will be able to "speak" the answers to some questions by moving in some way instead of verbalizing the response.
6. *Gestures* - Each structure will have a gesture associated with it so that students have additional visual support and create a muscle memory for each new structure.