



# WORKSHOP

## Brain compatible language teaching through TPR Storytelling

### Presenters

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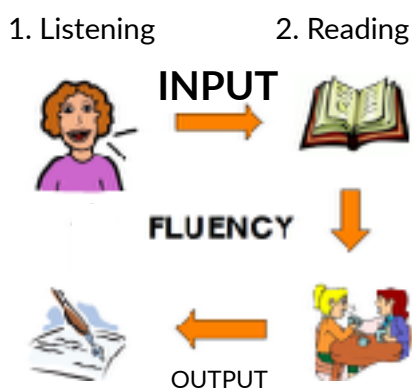
CESAR GONZALEZ PASO

TPR Storytelling, or TPRS, is an innovative approach to second and foreign language education. TPRS uses stories for teaching language structures in context in such a way that they are stored in long-term memory. Vocabulary and grammatical structures are acquired almost unconsciously as the students immerse in and contribute to engaging and personalised stories. TPRS offers the teacher several tools to provide an endless stream of interesting comprehensible input, through which the students can acquire the new language in a natural way.

In this one hour workshop, participants will be a language student in a Mandarin demo-class. After the demo, there will be time to discuss the underlying principles, and for participants to exchange their views and experiences with their colleagues.

## About TPRS

The goal of TPRS is fluency. This means that students can speak and write with confidence at their own level. It also means that they can read and listen, and actually understand what they read and hear without having to guess most of the meaning. To reach this goal, TPRS teachers need to spend the class time on activities that are most effective for language acquisition. According to the TPRS philosophy, these activities should deliver compelling comprehensible input.



**COMPREHENSIBLE,  
COMPELLING INPUT**

Storytelling is what draws attention most in this method. It is fun and different from other methods. However, the core of the instruction is in delivering and repeating large amounts of compelling, rich and interactive input, and also creating grammar awareness in a non-abstract and efficient manner. These principles are the foundation on which the teacher can build stories, conversations and discussions in the classroom.

Recent research on acquisition and processing of language in the brain supports the principles of TPRS, in which the teacher, by means of stories and meaningful communication, provides the students with interesting input in a lively and complex context and stimulates students' creativity and interaction. The constant interaction in the classroom promotes both the social development of the students and their capability to express themselves in real-life situations.

TPRS is a complete – holistic, if you like – method, in which all language skills are equally important and, what's more, reinforce each other. Also, the method is flexible enough to adapt to different teacher personalities and teaching settings.

## Theoretical basis

- There is general agreement on the fact that large amounts of rich, comprehensible input is by far the most important factor in the acquisition of a language. TPRS offers the teacher several tools to be able to provide the students with input that is both comprehensible, compelling, and complex. The input is largely narrative and includes many dialogues, both between characters of a story and between teacher/student or – later on – student/student.

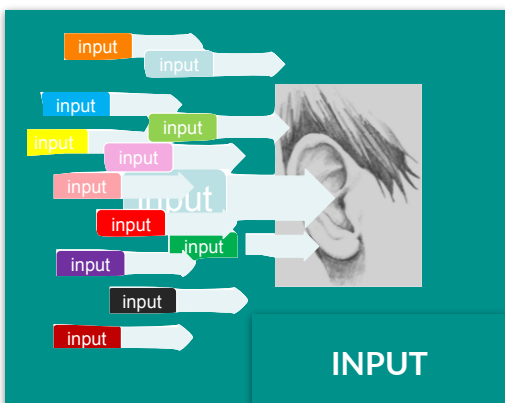


- There is also general agreement on the need for repetition. TPRS, however, strives for fluency, and for fluency students need more than just being able to 'remember' a fact. They need to be able to automatically and very quickly find the correct word combinations to express a certain idea, image or feeling. In order to be able to do this, many repetitions of new word combinations are needed. Depending on the meaning, emotional impact, function and markedness of a word or sentence, the number of repetitions can range from 1 to 500. Mostly, between 50 and 150 repetitions will be needed.

- Recent research in cognitive linguistics on the representation of grammar in the brain suggests that in our brains, grammar is not encoded in rules, but rather in word function networks. Every word is part of different networks, connecting semantics with possible ways to combine the word with other words. The brain uses statistics to figure out which combinations are correct and which aren't. When we acquire our mother tongue, our brain receives enough comprehensible input (20.000 hours before we reach the age of six) to be able to figure out all by itself what the characteristics of every word are and how to form grammatically correct sentences.

In language classes, there simply isn't enough time to allow the brain to find out for itself. Therefore, we need to help the students' brains by making it focus on the grammatical elements in words and sentences. TPRS chooses to do this by short explanations of the meaning of the element in the current context, and by asking repetitive questions about the same element every time it is used. This has proven to be an accessible, non-abstract and efficient way of enhancing grammar consciousness.

- Foreign language instruction should relate to the lives and interests of the students. TPRS takes this literally, and focuses the class on the ideas, interests and experiences of the individual students in the group. One way to do this is to include the students' ideas in the class stories. Another way is building a class around conversations with one or two students, in which the teacher shows genuine interest in every detail of the students' answers, and at the same time making sure that the other students remain actively involved in the 'private' conversation.





- Research on Second Language Acquisition is widely available on the roles that input and output play in second language development, placing them as the foundation of language acquisition and communication in contemporary language teaching. Understanding the roles of input and output in acquisition means foreign language education agents may have to make profound changes in how they approach the classroom if proficiency as communicative ability is the goal of the student's experience.

## Your thoughts from the workshop

During the demo, What helped you to:

....Understand the story?:

...if you got lost...come back to the story?:

...comprehend Mandarin?:

The most important aspects of TPRS for you are: (the words mentioned below might inspire you):

<p>A lot of repetitions. Comprehensible.</p> <p>Limited vocabulary.</p> <p>Natural language. Visual support.</p> <p>Movement/gestures.</p> <p>Real communication (questions – answers).</p>	
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In my classes, I am going to use:

More information:

- [www.kenthouse.es](http://www.kenthouse.es): part time teacher training on TPRS, workshops, lectures.
- [www.yahogroups.com/moretprs](http://www.yahogroups.com/moretprs): discussions, tips & tricks
- Manual: *Fluency thru TPR Storytelling*. Blaine Ray & Contee Seely. Translation in Spanish coming soon.
- <http://www.teawithbvp.com>. Secon Language Aquisition podcast and talk show.