

TPR and TPRS for all Ages and Stages

Learning Language through Action

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In the 1960's, James Asher developed and studied a teaching method he named Total Physical Response. TPR helps students learn a new languages through performing physical actions in response to commands. Asher's lessons, modeled after children's first language acquisition experiences have been adapted for use with all ages. Asher's lessons followed seven basic steps:

- 1. Preparation.** The teacher prepares a short script, incorporating language appropriate to learners' level and often using props and actions that help communicate the language. Asher recommends that teachers introduce only a few new concepts at once and wait until these are mastered before adding more.
- 2. Demonstration.** Teacher and/or a few individuals demonstrate the actions for the series of commands. The teacher makes every effort to keep the lessons lighthearted and fun. The series is repeated several times with variations in the order of the commands.
- 3. Whole group demonstration.** Now the whole group participates in repetitions and variations of the sequence in order.
- 4. Written copy.** For students who are beginning to read and write in English, the teacher provides written text, which students copy and study.
- 5. Oral repetition and questions.** After listening comprehension has been completely internalized (Asher says that at least 10 hours of initial instruction should require no oral response) students are ready to begin to speak. They practice repeating the series, ask and answer questions about it, and respond to the commands out of order.
- 6. Student demonstration.** Depending on language and reading levels, students recite, or, read the script and perform the actions in front of the class. The teacher checks carefully, and guides students toward correct pronunciation, grammatical usage, and comprehension.
- 7. Pair practice.** Students solidify their learning by practicing as pairs, taking turns in roles as readers/speakers and actors.

Effective adaptations of TPR are a valuable part of a language program, particularly at beginning-level stages. Students benefit from the opportunity to listen first before being expected to speak, from the engagement that physical activities provide, and from the spontaneity of the action-oriented lessons. Teachers can build TPR scripts from language and procedures students need -- anything from "sharpening your pencil" to "procedures in chemistry lab." Other activities that might be adapted for TPR lessons include:

- map activities
- science experiments
- math with manipulatives, like Cuisinaire rods
- cooking
- action games, such as "Simon Says," jump-rope rhymes and other outdoor games
- story songs with actions
- construction: paper folding, building, shop
- drawing and other art activities
- sports and outdoor games
- pointing to pictures and other visuals in textbooks, posters, picture books or wordless books
- classroom routines and procedures

Watch a Soccer Game

1. It's time to go to the soccer game. Put on your jacket and hat.
2. Climb up the bleachers.
3. Sit down.
4. Our team just scored a goal. Stand up and yell, "GOAL!"
5. The other team is making a corner kick. Look scared.
6. It didn't go in. Sigh in relief.
7. You're hungry and thirsty. Go to the concession stand.
8. Point to the soda and popcorn.
9. Pay your money.
10. Go back to your seat.
11. Oh, no! The other team just made a goal. Cry.
12. Oh, no! A forward fell down. Look worried.
13. She's okay. Smile.
14. Our team scored again! Yea! Jump up and down!
15. One minute left.... Yea! We won! Clap!

First Day Rap

Show me a pencil.
Show me a pen.
Show me some paper.
Show me your friend.

Point to the window.
Point to the door.
Point to the table.
Point to the floor.

Raise your hand high
Take it down.
Show me a smile.
Never a frown

Show me a pencil.
Show me a pen.
Show me some paper.
Show me your friend.

Workout

Put your left hand in the air
Put it down

Put your right hand in the air
Put it down

Put both hands in the air
Put them down

Put your left foot in the air
Put it down

Put your right foot in the air
Put it down

Put both feet in the air!

How to Wash Your Hands

Turn on the water.
Wet your hands.
Turn off the water.
Put soap on your hands.
Rub your hands all over.
Sing a song for 30 seconds.
Stop rubbing.
Turn on the water.
Rinse your hands.
Turn off the water.
Shake your hands.
Get 1 towel.
Dry your hands.
Use your towel to open the door.
Throw the towel in the trash.

TPR Storytelling

Story Guidelines

1. Create and select a character
 - 1-2 main characters
 - Incorporate others in as storyline/grammar goals require.
2. Manage vocabulary
 - Introduce a maximum of three structures
3. Ask students for details about character, location, events, etc.
 - What's his/her name?; Physical characteristics? Age? Likes/dislikes?
 - Location? Country, State, City, Cross streets, Address.
 - Events? When? Where? How?
4. Go slowly and deliberately.
 - Goal: Keep building and building... (keep repeating and repeating)
5. Listen to students.
 - Listen, acknowledge, reiterate, respond, and then select the "best" answer.
6. Designate space.
 - Assign a specific location for every event.
 - Capitalize on spatial memory.
7. Coach actors!

Helpful Hints




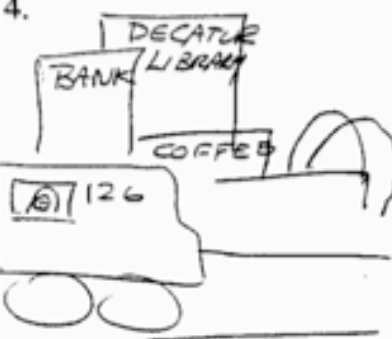





1. Props: Manage props, keeping only a few accessible at one time.
2. Manage vocabulary
 - Post 3 focus structures
 - Post 'Phrase of the Week'
 - Post dialogue phrases
3. Ask for details/next events with 3 kinds of questions:
 - General response
 - Individual response
 - Sm. group response -vote, write on slip and random draw, etc.
4. Voice from Behind (Lip sync)
5. Insist on choral responses – use: Cue cards, sound effects, idiomatic phrases, fill-in-the blank responses, etc.
6. When possible, incorporate music. TV theme songs are a hoot!
7. Use a variety of visuals
 - Google Earth
 - Pictures & Photos
 - Props & Costumes
8. Start with a story skeleton
9. LAUGH!

Carol Gaab & Kristy Placido, *TPR Storytelling* www.tprstorytelling.com

[Here is a link to a nice video example of TPR Storytelling – 6th grade English teacher from Morazán, Honduras “asks” a story.](#)

Wikipedia has a very thorough article explaining [TPR Storytelling](#).

TPR Storytelling: Fortun's Adventure

FORTUN'S ADVENTURE		
<p>1.</p>  <p>Fortun was waiting for bus 125 to take her to school</p>	<p>2.</p>  <p>The bus came. She got on.</p>	<p>3.</p>  <p>But it wasn't bus 125. It was bus 126!</p>
<p>4.</p>  <p>Bus 126 took Fortun to town.</p>	<p>5.</p>  <p>She thought, "What should I do?" She had an idea.</p>	<p>6.</p>  <p>She rode the bus to the end of the line, then back to her stop.</p>
<p>7.</p>  <p>Then, she waited for bus 125 again.</p>	<p>8.</p>  <p>This time, the bus took her to school.</p>	<p>9.</p>  <p>Everyone in the class was happy to see her.</p>

TPR for Intermediate and Above

See: Seth Lindstromberg's Article on TPR for metaphorical language
<http://www.hlomag.co.uk/sep01/lind.htm>

How to make TPR usable at intermediate level and above? Another way of extending TPR is to move from the literal to the metaphorical (e.g., *snap your fingers* -> *a snap decision*.) With intermediate and advanced learners the move from literal to metaphorical can be made quite quickly. For instance, the literal meaning can be introduced on one day, reviewed latter in the same lesson, reviewed the next lesson (on another day), and then a metaphorical use can be introduced in the/a lesson after that (on yet another day).

From intermediate level up, I concentrate on 'descriptive action verbs'. Here is a short list. (Anyone wanting a longer list can email me at SethL@hilderstone.ac.uk).

<i>shrug</i>	<i>(shrug off an insult)</i>
<i>turn/spin around clockwise</i>	<i>(My head was spinning, in a spin)</i>
<i>rock</i>	<i>(rock the boat, be rocked by bad news)</i>
<i>bend over</i>	<i>(bend over backward to help someone)</i>
<i>scratch</i>	<i>(scratch the surface of an issue)</i>
<i>stretch</i>	<i>(stretch the truth)</i>
<i>squeeze</i>	<i>(a financial squeeze)</i>
<i>seize</i>	<i>(seize an opportunity)</i>
<i>swing</i>	<i>(mood swings)</i>
<i>shake</i>	<i>(shaken by the news)</i>
<i>flinch</i>	<i>(flinch from a responsibility)</i>
<i>wriggle</i>	<i>(wriggle out of a responsibility)</i>

Using TPR to Illuminate Stories: Reenacting the Rosa Parks Bus Protest

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Many teachers are familiar with the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, developed by James Asher in the 1960s. In its most basic form, TPR consists of learners responding to commands to demonstrate their understanding of the language sequences. TPR Storytelling has developed as an offshoot of TPR, whereby stories are created within the classroom and reinforced in the learners' minds through a series of focused questions. The questions provide comprehensible input for the learners while assessing their understanding at the same time. In recent years, I've begun experimenting with variations of both of these methods, and found that I can take my class to many interesting places using these vehicles.

Whereas many teachers find that TPR is limited in its use to teaching basic language such as command forms, action verbs, and nouns, I have found it serves as a lightning rod between my students and their comprehension of more sustained and sophisticated meaning, especially when we are reading stories, real or fictional.

For example, the death of Rosa Parks just happened to coincide with my receiving an easy biography about her from Scholastic Books, *Let's Read About Rosa Parks*, by

Courtney Baker, so I took the opportunity to read the book to my class. The learners are 3rd and 4th graders from Japan, who have no background knowledge about segregation or even slavery in America, let alone who Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks are.

It often is up to ESL teachers to include, as part of our studies, social studies, history, geography, and so on, because if they are covered in other classes, the language is too difficult for students to comprehend or a prior understanding of basic facts is assumed. So, I feel an obligation to include some study of the civil rights movement as part of my class.

The book was very basic in its language, but even so, I could tell as we read that the students did not actually understand the scenario of Rosa Parks' protest on the bus. In the midst of trying to explain, I realized that TPR would be a great way to illustrate the events of the book.

We set up the chairs like a bus. I got a volunteer to be Rosa, another to be the bus driver, the riders, the policeman, and so on. I set up the scene with enough chairs to match the number of student "riders," so that the "bus" would be full. Then, as I narrated the story, one action at a time, the students responded by performing the actions. (As always with TPR, if the learner doesn't understand the "command" (in this case, the narrative), you, the teacher, gesture, model, or physically guide them to the correct thing to do.) I insisted that the students do only the action that had been narrated, so their actions were sure to correspond with the language, to make sure that they understood what was happening, instead of just acting out the whole scene with the narrative running in the background.

Here's a simple version of how our reenactment went:

The driver was driving the bus. (Our "driver" had a hat and steering wheel.)

Rosa got on the bus. (She did it.)

She paid the driver. (Rosa mimed this.)

She was tired. (She made a "tired" face and body language.)

She sat down. (She did so.)

Other people got on the bus and paid. (They did so.)

They sat down.

All the seats were full.

A white man got on the bus.

He paid the driver.

He looked for a seat.

All the seats were full.

He saw Rosa.

She was black.

He was white.

He said, "Stand up." (The students deliver their characters' lines by repeating them after the teacher.)

She said, "No."

He said, "Stand up!"

She said, "No."

*He went to the bus driver.
He told the bus driver, "She won't stand up."
The bus driver stopped the bus. (Passengers and driver can lurch.)
The bus driver went to Rosa.
The bus driver said, "Stand up."
Rosa said, "No."
The bus driver called the police.
The police came.
The police arrested her (gently pull the arms behind the back for handcuff action).*

In my case, I stopped the TPR part of the story there and continued reading the book, gesturing and scaffolding as much as possible.

*The black people in that town were angry.
They were angry because Rosa Parks was arrested.
She broke the law.
They thought the law was not fair.
They thought the law was bad.
They decided to try to change the law.
Martin Luther King helped.
He said, "Don't ride the buses!"
Black people didn't ride the buses.
They walked and drove cars.
They helped each other.
They didn't ride the buses for a year!
The bus company was sad.
When the people get on the bus, they pay money.
The bus company didn't get money from any black people.
The law finally got changed.
The black people could sit down.
They didn't have to stand up for a white person.
Rosa wasn't the president.
She wasn't a rich person.
But she changed the country.
She is called "The Mother of the Civil Rights Movement."*

After we finished the story, I switched to TPR Storytelling questioning techniques to recycle the vocabulary and check the students' comprehension. The questioning technique uses *yes/no*, *either/or*, and *wh-* questions (*where, when, who, what, why, how*, etc.) in many combinations. The *yes/no* questions and *either/or* questions are easier, requiring a reply of only one word or a word that is supplied by the question ("Was Rosa black or white?"); they can be used with beginner or low-level students. Comprehension can still be checked without requiring much output. The *wh-* questions are more difficult, as information needs to be supplied by the student. If a student has trouble with a *wh-* question, it can easily be changed to an *either/or* question. (Where did Rosa live? [Silence.] Did she live in Alabama or in New York?) *Why* questions, in particular, require a high level of output. Generally, *why* questions focus on higher level students. Typically, I type out the questions I want to ask for a story before class, as they can be hard to generate on the spot. I often print these out and give them to the students at the end

of the class as homework review and as reading practice. I find doing so complements the aural practice, as the questions are the same but in written form. Students can zip through the questions if they understood the story.

Here is an example of the second part of the story being reviewed with the questioning technique.

Who was angry?
Were the black people angry?
Were they angry or hungry?
Why were they angry?
Were they angry because the bus was late?
Were they angry because Rosa was arrested?
Were they angry because the law wasn't fair?
Who was arrested?
Was Rosa Parks arrested?
Was the bus driver arrested?
Why was Rosa arrested?
Who arrested her?
Did Rosa arrest the police officer?
Did the police officer arrest Rosa?
Did Rosa break the law?
What law did she break?
Did the angry black people think the law was fair?
Do you think the law was fair?
Was the law fair or not fair?
Why wasn't it fair?

I often go through 50 or more of these questions to review a part of a story. The trick is to use them quickly and painlessly. You can ask some questions for the whole class to answer, and call on individual students with a card method for others. (I have each student's name on a card and quickly zip through the cards, altering the difficulty of the question if necessary.) The speed of the questioning keeps the kids on their toes and keeps the activity from becoming tedious. It provides lots of comprehensible input and really increases their listening comprehension, as they have to listen to the exact words, but in natural-speed English. "Did the man want to stand up?" has a different meaning than does "Did the man want Rosa to stand up?" My class, even the very low level learners, has gotten very good at distinguishing these kinds of differences, because they get immediate feedback after answering.

Before doing an enactment like this, vocabulary needs to be pretaught. Hand gestures can be used to demonstrate the meaning in many cases, such as the hands behind the back gesture for "arrest." I demonstrated the concept of "fair" by doling out pennies: "10 for Student A, 10 for Student B, 10 for Student C, 1 for Student D." Their surprised faces told me that they understood the concept; then I asked, "Is this fair?" We talked about the term *law* in the same kinds of ways. "Can you drive a car? Why? Can I take something from a store without paying for it? Why?"

These techniques can be used with any story the class encounters, fiction or nonfiction.

When Martin Luther King Day came this year, we studied more about the Civil Rights movement. The seeds planted from the 10-minute activity weeks before yielded a wonderful harvest. They remembered very well and were able to articulate the names, events, and issues involved! “My” kids demonstrated a deeper level of understanding of the events than they would have had we treated the book on only a linguistic level. It occurred to me that these techniques could easily be incorporated into content classes as well, as even English-proficient students can benefit from “experiencing” stories and historical events as actors.

An electronic mailing list exists for TPR Storytelling teachers at the elementary level. Many of the contributors are foreign language teachers (for example, Spanish teachers in American elementary schools), but the ideas shared are often completely transferable to ESL scenarios. To subscribe, go to elementarytprs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

I encourage my fellow teachers to explore the possibilities of TPR and TPR Storytelling. For me and my students, they have opened the door to many meaningful and productive classroom experiences.

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