Contents

keep everything comprehensible to every student all the time. Chapter 6 deals with how to provide repetitions, first orally, then in readings. Students must hear and understand the same grammatical structures and other grammatical features and words and phrases many, many times while they remain attentive to the material they are listening to. So Chapter 7 deals with various ways we use to keep students interested.

Our main aim is the development of early fluency, the ability of students to express themselves in speech. Therefore, in the first year or so we limit the material we teach to basic structures and vocabulary, the essentials needed to converse in a language. We concentrate on **R**epetition, **I**nterest, **C**omprehension and **H**igh Frequency grammatical features and vocabulary — **RICH**. We also use proper names and cognates (also known as loan words). Lists of the highest-frequency words in English, in Spanish, in French, in German and in Mandarin are on pp. 275-280in Appendix A.

Among the main techniques we use to keep a class fully comprehensible are:

- **speaking at a speed that is comprehensible to all students** at any given time
- conscientious limitation of the grammatical features and the vocabulary that we use
- making sure at all times that the **pace** of the class is **not too fast** for any of the students
- paying attention to how quickly they are understanding spoken language
- writing and leaving new words and phrases on the board with their translations in the first language

Further explanation about these comprehension techniques and many more is in Chapter 5, pp. 91-118.

To provide both aural repetitions and reading repetitions in sufficient quantity, the techniques we utilize the most are:

- "asking stories" orally, co-creating them with a class

- orally asking lots of a variety of questions about stories of various lengths

- asking students oral questions about themselves

- having students read stories similar to the stories that we co-create with a class

- having students read short novels

- discussing readings with a class

For much more detail about repetition techniques, see Chapter 6, pp. 119-149. For detail about numerous ways of providing repetitions about students, see Chapter 8, "Personalization," Section III, "Personalization in PQA and Storyasking," on pp. 176-192.

To keep interest high, we do many things, the principal ones being:

- making students' own lives and interests the main content we deal with, both in stories and in discussions

- having students contribute amusing content to stories as we ask questions to co-create stories with them

- continually adding unexpected, surprising details and events to stories as we co-create them with students

- displaying a variety of short rejoinders and encouraging students to shout them out whenever appropriate

- having students enact scenes from stories in very dramatic ways

- accepting and having students accept as "true" everything, even the most outrageous details, in stories

For much more about keeping interest high, see Chapter 7, "Interest," pp. 151-163, and Chapter 8, "Personalization," pp. 165-197.

How Early Fluency Develops in the Classroom

We get early fluency in TPR Storytelling® classes because our students hear the basic structures of the target language repeatedly while

they understand the content. (Examples of basic structures are on pp. 36-37 in Chapter 3.)

We make sure they hear the structures over and over again so that they get a feeling for how words fit together in the target language. A constant goal in our TPRS® classes is to have students hear a sentence enough times so that they don't have to mentally translate. This may happen rather quickly with specific sentences for a particular student. But in TPRS®, the teacher wants the students to go beyond just fast processing.

From Slow Processing to Fast Processing to Confident Fluency

At first a student is a slow processor. Later, the student is a fast processor but can't produce or at least feels like s/he can't produce. With more practice, the student can produce the language without confidence. In other words, s/he can produce but is not sure s/he is saying it right. After more practice the student can produce the language with confidence and some errors. In a final stage, s/he produces with ease of expression and with very few, if any, errors.

Students move through the levels of processing and of fluency at different paces. The most important goals are fast processing and confidence to speak (highlighted in the chart below). The subsequent goals of speaking without hesitancy and speaking with accuracy are significant but less important. Actually being able to speak, communicating what one wants and needs to, is especially significant and it does not happen without fast processing happening first.

Every student moves at her/his own pace. For some structures some students never reach the goal of accurate fluency with confidence and without hesitancy. In the chart below, the column entitled "How to Get to This Level" shows what is necessary to do to help students to get to the level described in the first column. Once students begin to produce orally, the amount of time they spend in conversation (comprehensible input and oral production) becomes an important factor in their progress.

Level	How to Get to This Level
Slow Processing / Mental Translation / No production	(This is where beginning language students start.)
Fast Processing / No Translation / No production	Massive Comprehensible Input with Circling
Fluency without Confidence / with Hesitancy / with Errors	Comprehensible Input with Circling
Fluency with Confidence / with Hesitancy / with Errors	Comprehensible Input & Conversation
Fluency with Confidence / without Hesitancy / with Errors	Comprehensible Input & Conversation
Fluency with Confidence / without Hesitancy / with few Errors	Comprehensible Input & Conversation

The Fluency Circle

In TPRS® we refer to the basic structures and vocabulary as the fluency circle (or the small circle). We limit vocabulary to a few hundred words. The fluency circle is a concept. It starts out very small and expands as students understand more and more language. We spend class time practicing the fluency circle. When language learners speak, they nearly always use the easiest way they know to say things. For lower-level learners, trying to use more advanced words or structures requires mental editing and therefore hesitancy. So they use the easiest structures and vocabulary possible. That's why we generally teach just one way to say things. We could teach the word *wants* or the phrase *would like to*. Both mean basically the same thing. But in lower-level classes we always teach *wants*, since we are teaching fluency. We would rather practice a high-frequency word or structure than one that students wouldn't really need or would likely never use.

In the series preface of the book *A Frequency Dictionary of Spanish*, editors Anthony McEnery and Paul Rayson say: "60 percent of speech in English is composed of a mere 50 function words" (Davies, 2018: vii). A look at the first 100 words in the Spanish list — and the frequency

However, there was still some confusion on the part of students between the past and present forms.

So I began experimenting with a new approach to the present tense, and I have found that this approach has accelerated the development of fluency. I now believe that it is best to input only the present tense forms for the first 10 to 20 hours of class and then to gradually introduce past tense forms. Therefore, what we present below is initially only in the present.

At the end of this chapter you will see an example of how we start to input the past once students have achieved a certain degree of fluency and confidence in speaking in present tense with a very limited vocabulary and a limited set of sentence structures and other grammatical features. Once we are inputting both past and present, students become more and more comfortable about when to use each tense.

Focusing on a Sentence

For me teaching with oral stories is more powerful and interesting than any other way I have found to help students to develop fluency. The main key, I believe, is that I am able to stay on a sentence and ask many, many questions about it. Some teachers wander. They don't stay on a sentence. I can teach with very few sentences. I see this recently more and more with my online classes. It is the feedback I get from students' talking that lets me *feel* where to go. I either stay on the same sentence or go on to another sentence. (A recent workshop participant quipped, "The sentence in front of you is the curriculum.") I am always a parallel character in the story, so I can practice a variation of a sentence by asking about myself as well as asking about other parallel characters. Triangling — talking at times to the class and at times to the actor who is playing another character — is so powerful. I love it.

I do realize that not everyone is me and some people want more activities than an oral story. That's why we describe a variety of activities in this book.

in the first language, explaining grammar out of context, having students memorize conjugations and declensions, doing grammar drills, having students do worksheets, paying little or no attention to whether students understand the language they are hearing and reading… We try our best to keep on target, using 90% or more of class time to provide interesting, comprehensible, repetitive aural input and reading input in the target language.

To keep a class fully comprehensible, our main techniques are:

1. Taking care to **speak at a speed that is comprehensible to all students** at any given time. This is really important. Train your students to let you know with an agreed-upon hand signal (such as crossed fingers, a time-out sign or punching a fist into the palm) when you speak too fast for them to keep up with the meaning of what you are saying. A chosen "pacesetter" student (number 9 below) helps you with this. As proficiency progresses, students can comprehend faster and faster, as long as you stay "in bounds" (see number 2 below). Still, you must always take care that everyone is understanding you.

2. Conscientious limitation of the input, specifically the grammatical features and the vocabulary. Another way to say this is that we carefully "shelter" vocabulary and grammatical features. This means that (a) when a new item is introduced, it is clarified immediately and (b) care is taken not to introduce extraneous items. We call this **"staying in bounds."** The "boundaries" are (a) the language that the slowest processing student has already mastered, (b) the guide phrases or words of the day, and (c) completely comprehensible cognates. Common cognates and loan words are very useful in TPRS®, because we can usually use them without having to translate them. You can find lists of them for many languages on the internet. We use them and translate them whenever their meaning is not obvious to students. Note that sometimes a cognate is not understood by some or all students because the

pronunciation is quite different in the first and target languages.

This is not to say that we never stray "out of bounds." We do. Things come up. When we do stray, we write the out-of-bounds word or term on the board with its translation and quickly move on, continuing our work on in-bounds material. We keep the out-of-bounds material to a minimum. (See number 5 below.)

3. Making sure at all times that the **pace** of the class is **not too fast** for any of the students. The teacher must slow down to ensure comprehension for every student. Comprehensible input is made comprehensible by pacing the class at the pace-setter student's pace. Never pace the class by teaching to the top of the class. Likewise, don't pace it by the very slowest members of the class. While some students are understanding fully, some others may be understanding, but not to the same extent. Some will require hearing more reps (see numbers 5 and 6 below) than others and more time and a slower pace. For all students, the more compelling each one finds the content of what they are hearing, the better their attention will be and, therefore, the fuller their comprehension.

4. We are always paying attention to the **processing speed** of students, how quickly they are understanding spoken language. This shows up in the speed of their responses. This is the primary indicator of how well they are acquiring the target language. Our goal is for all students to achieve instantaneous comprehension of normal-speed speech without mental translation. See "From Slow Processing to Fast Processing to Confident Fluency" on pages 14-15.

5. **Whenever a new item is introduced**, the teacher **write**s the **word(s)** on the board **and** also **write**s the first-language **translation** next to it/them. This helps us to keep everything 100% comprehensible and interesting.

Normally, each language is written in a different color. One advantage of using two colors is that it takes a little extra time

to switch from one pen to another, giving students time to focus on the meaning before the next thing happens.

You can use any word you want. Just translate it and provide comprehensible "reps" (oral repetitions). (Notice that we don't have students repeat after us. The teacher provides the reps in context orally and, later, in readings — all for the purpose of getting students so accustomed to particulars of the target language that they will at some point be able to produce them, expressing themselves with some degree of ease.) Whenever you introduce a new word, you want to provide reps of it unless it is a low-frequency word. Of course, you don't want to introduce too many new words in one class session.

In many languages many words have different forms — forms of verbs, nouns, pronouns. The words we put on the board are in the form that we are using at the time. Often the form has a particular meaning, which we write next to the word in the first language and point out. An example is irregular past verb forms in English, of which there many. Sometimes a form is required by custom, in which case we write the meaning and say that this form sounds right to speakers of the language in this sentence. For instance, the personal pronouns in "*She* gave it to *him*" would be written on the board with the translations beside them. We wouldn't use grammatical terms in explaining unless a student asks.

6. We provide lots and **lots of "reps" of high-frequency grammatical features and structures and of high-frequency vocabulary**. The reason for doing this is to gradually help students improve their processing speed to the point where they are so familiar with these elements that they understand them instantly (without translating mentally) and that they seem natural and correct to them. When they reach this point with particular structures and grammatical features and with suffi-

cient vocabulary, they are able to produce sentences that express what they want to say with some degree of fluency. See Chapter 6, "Repetition," on pages 119-149.

7. We have **all students in a class respond** out loud about a developing story to questions with a short answer (often *yes*, *no* or a single word) and also to statements which provide new information about the story by exclaiming "Ohhhh!" This is one way we assess their comprehension. Strong, loud responses from the class indicate general good comprehension of the question or statement. When there is **no response, only silence**, or a very weak response, you have to determine why.

   a. Your first thought is: Did the students not understand?
      For example: The boy wants to play.
                     Silence.

      Go to the pacesetter student and assess through translation. Ask her/him what each part of the sentence means? Did the student understand *The boy…. wants to…. play*? If the student didn't know *wants to*, point to it and its translation on the board. In case the words are not already there, write them so that students who need to can check the meaning whenever they need to. Then provide reps of *wants to* with the class with a repetitive circle of questions with short answers. For instance:

      Does the boy want to play? … Yes.
      Yes, the boy wants to play.
      Does the boy have to play? … No.
      Right, the boy doesn't have to play.
         The boy wants to play.
      Does the boy have to play, or does the boy want to play?
         … Want (to).
      Correct, the boy wants to play.
         The boy doesn't have to play.
      Does the boy want to play? … Yes.
      Yes, the boy wants to play.

Circling
(Circle of Questions —
the main TPRS® questioning technique)

In order to maximize acquisition of grammatical features and high-frequency vocabulary by your students, it is essential to provide them with lots and lots of aural comprehensible input of every grammatical feature and of each item of vocabulary so that they internalize and master this material thoroughly, establishing it in their long-term memory. Not only must you give them a lot of comprehensible input, but you must provide it in interesting ways so that they will stay engaged. The most effective and efficient way that we have found to do this is to provide "repetitions" of the grammatical feature and the vocabulary items through questioning techniques that focus on meaning. To do this, it is essential to make a single statement as part of a story and then to ask several questions about that statement before making the next statement that moves the story along. This means that you must stop the action of the story again and again as you are presenting it for the first time.

Whenever you add a new detail to the story, you go back and ask various questions about that detail and all previously presented details. "Scaffolding" is what we call this gradual process of adding a detail at a time and then asking numerous questions about all details presented up to and including the latest one.

Circling was an innovation of now-retired Colorado French teacher Susan Gross's. It always starts with a statement. You train your students to always shout "**Ohhh!!!**" with interest when they hear a new sentence in the story or a new detail in a previously introduced sentence:

> El chico quiere tener un gato.
> The boy wants to have a cat.

We then ask a question that gets a **yes** answer:

> ¿Quiere el chico tener un gato? Sí.
> Does the boy want to have a cat? Yes.

You confirm with the full sentence:

> Sí, el chico quiere tener un gato.

Yes, the boy wants to have a cat.

Generally such simple questions would seem silly, but to beginning language learners it feels good and seems normal to hear questions they can answer easily.

We follow up with an **either/or** question:

¿Quiere el chico tener un gato o un perro? (Un) gato.
Does the boy want to have a cat or a dog? (A) cat.

We confirm again:

Sí, el chico quiere tener un gato.
Yes, the boy wants to have a cat.

We then follow up with a question that gets a **negative** answer:

¿Quiere el chico tener un perro? No.
Does the boy want to have a dog? No.

We then **state the negative and restate the positive**:

No, el chico no quiere tener un perro. El chico quiere tener un gato.
No, the boy doesn't want to have a dog. The boy wants to have a cat.

We then ask any *who*, *what* and *where* questions[1]:

¿Quién quiere tener un gato? (El) chico.
Who wants to have a cat? (The) boy.
¿Qué quiere tener el chico? (Un) gato.
What does the boy want to have? (A) cat.

And we **restate the positive** again after each class response:

Correcto, el chico quiere tener un gato.
Right, the boy wants to have a cat.

Now we have completed the circle in the traditional order.

In circling we have to learn **some other skills**:

these in your classroom in your target language with a translation on each one in smaller print in a quieter color. Use just a few early on. You can add more at different times. Here are examples:

English positive: Great! Super! Terrific! Fantastic! Awesome! Wow! Interesting! Beautiful! What a beautiful girl! What a handsome guy! Of course! What a coincidence! Obviously! Oh, yes! Wonderful! I like it! I love it! Marvelous! Amazing! Incredible! Cool! Good luck! Let's hope. Of course! I hope so. Yay! Hooray! Yippee!

English negative: Too bad! That's horrible! Yuck! Oh no! Ridiculous! That's awful! That's terrible! That's disgusting! That's nasty! Gross! Whatever! It's not fair! How sad! What a pity! I don't believe it! You must be kidding! No way!

Other English: Really? Seriously? Be careful! Maybe. Perhaps. Just kidding. Forget it. I'm sorry. It doesn't matter. It's obvious! Watch out!

Spanish positive: ¡Fantástico! ¡Chévere! ¡Estupendo! ¡Fabuloso! ¡Qué bueno! ¡Qué interesante! ¡Qué linda! ¡Qué guapo! ¡Por supuesto! ¡Qué casualidad! ¡Es obvio! ¡Síííííííííííííííííííí! ¡Me gusta (mucho)! ¡Increíble! ¡Claro! ¡Claro que sí! ¡Buena suerte! ¡Que te vaya bien! ¡Me encanta! ¡Me gusta! Ojalá. Espero que sí. ¡Qué maravilla!

Spanish negative: ¡Qué malo! ¡Horrible! ¡Qué asco! ¡Qué feo! ¡Oh no, oh no! ¡Qué horror! ¡Qué barbaridad! ¡Qué lástima! ¡Qué pena! ¡Qué triste! ¡No lo creo! ¡Claro que no! ¡No es justo! ¡No puedo más! ¡Mentira! Ojalá que no. Espero que no. ¡Cuidado! Lo siento. Olvídalo.

Other Spanish: No importa. Es broma. Estaba bromeando. Quizás. Tal vez. ¡No me digas! ¿En serio? ¿De veras?

French positive: Formidable ! O là là ! Mais oui ! Chouette ! Génial ! Super ! Hyper super ! C'est dingue ! Bien sûr ! Impec ! (short for *impeccable*) Quelle joie ! J'hallucine ! C'est l'hallu ! J'éspère.

D'accord. J'aime ça ! Très cool ! Bonne chance ! Bien sûr ! C'est évident !

French negative: Tant pis. Quelle horreur ! Quel malheur ! C'est terrible ! C'est épouvantable ! Le pauvre ! Quelle cata ! (short for *catastrophe*) Misère ! C'est moche ! Ça craint ! Dégoûtant ! Quel dommage ! Je ne pense pas. Ce n'est pas juste ! Je ne le crois pas ! Attention ! Désolé(e) ! Laisse tomber. C'est pas vrai ! C'est bizarre !

Other French: Vraiment ? Tu plaisantes ! Peut-être. Je blague ! Ce n'est pas important.

German positive: Fantastisch! Sehr gut! Sehr interessant! Wie schön! Toll! Prima! Super! Großartig! Offensichtlich! Wunderbar!

German negative: Schade. Schrecklich! Igitt! Ach nein! Achtung! Ich glaube nicht. Bizarr!

Other German: Wirklich? Vielleicht. Es macht nichts.

Mandarin positive: 了不起！(liǎobùqǐ!), 好极了! (hǎo jí le!), 太明显了 (tài míngxiǎn le), 哇! (wā!), 好酷! (hǎo kù!), 我的天哪! (wǒ de tiān na!), 加油! (jiā yóu!), 太棒了! (tài bàng le!), 厉害! (lìhài!), 当然! (dāng rán!)

Mandarin negative: 可怕! (kěpà!), 小心! (xiǎoxīn!), 荒唐! (huāng tang!), 哎呀! (ài ya!), 糟糕! (zāogāo!), 恶心! (ěxīn!), 真可怜! (zhēn kělián!), 开玩笑 (kāi wánxiào), 我不信 (wǒ bú xìn), 真麻烦! (zhēn máfan!)

Other Mandarin: 真的吗？(zhēn de ma?), 没关系 (méi guānxì), 随便 (suíbiàn), 算了 (suàn le), 不行 (bù xíng)

Designating One Responder

In the first weeks of a class, it helps to bring attention to a particular word or expression in certain circumstances by assigning someone to shout, for example: