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研究論文

A REVIEW OF TPR AND TPRS ENGLISH TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR JAPANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

日本の大学生に対する TPR・TPRS 英語教授法の見直し

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Abstract

How the language teaching tool of Total Physical Response (TPR) has evolved into a language teaching method known as TPR Storytelling (TPRS). In this paper TPR and TPRS English teaching techniques are linked to current language teaching theory, research into how the brains of language learners function and followed by suggestions for further research. This paper is based on a presentation by the author on TPRS in 2011 about the author's research; teaching experience of Japanese college students; and reflections from Susan Gross's workshop on TPR Storytelling in 2010.

Key words : Total Physical Response (TPR), TPRS, Storytelling, Language Acquisition, Natural Approach, Brain Research

キーワード : TPR, TPRS, ストーリーテイング, 言語獲得, ナチュラル・アプローチ, 脳の研究

1. Introduction

This paper expands on a presentation about TPR Storytelling given by the author to a joint meeting of the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) and the English Teachers of Japan (ETJ) on 24 July 2011 in Sendai, Japan (Jones, 2011). It compares the English language teaching techniques of TPR and the TPR Storytelling and suggests areas for further research into their use with Japanese college students.

In 2009 the author became interested in TPR after encountering difficulties in teaching English to Japanese college students with non-English majors. Difficulties arose as English is a compulsory subject at the author's junior college and so all first year students were required to study English whether they were interested in English or not. The classes contained students with multi levels of English ability ranging from poor to low intermediate with only a handful

of students with a higher level of English. Finally, although the students had studied English at junior and senior high school for six years, many of the students had not encountered success whilst learning English. Therefore they did not have a positive mindset for learning languages; in addition the students were generally shy to attempt speaking English, as they were concerned about looking foolish in front of their peers.

Given these problems the author began researching into teaching approaches that would suit his students (Jones, 2009), and decided to use the TPR approach that was popularized by James Asher (Asher, 2009). After using the TPR approach the author found that it is a powerful tool to use in language classes, however its use was difficult to sustain for the duration of the college courses. So the author began investigating how storytelling could be used to supplement the TPR approach. Information was gathered about TPRS notably at the International Forum on Language Teaching, July 2010 in California; and a TPR Storytelling workshop given by TPRS educator Susan Gross held at Shimabara, Japan in September 2010 (Gross, 2010).

2. What is TPR?

TPR is an approach to acquiring language developed by James Asher in the 1960s and is based on previous language teaching methods notably The Palmer Method in the 1920s, which in turn was influenced by the Natural Method of Hennessey and Sauvageur in the 1870s (Smith, 2004). TPR has been influenced by brain research and also language acquisition research.

Brain Research

In TPR Asher (Asher, 2009) originally described the left brain as being the logical area of the brain that was used for language learning whilst the right hemisphere of the brain was used for language acquisition and pattern matching. See Figure 1 showing the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Asher uses the brain research by Sperry (Sperry in Asher 2009), which showed that the brain is split into left and right hemispheres with the left brain controlling production and the right brain controlling comprehension (Asher 2004). Asher also uses brain research by Goodale (Goodale in Asher 2009), and Gazzaniga (Gazzaniga in Asher 2009 p3-84), which showed that the left brain constructs secondary experiences whilst the right brain observes primary experiences. Simply put Asher believes that the left brain interprets data after this data has already been processed by the right brain. However Asher also acknowledges (Asher 2007) that speaking is controlled by the Broca Area of the brain and language comprehension is controlled by the Wernicke Area of the brain, see Figure 2 below, which show these areas as being on the left hemisphere of the brain.

According to Asher (2009) the left hand side of the brain is logical, it slowly analyses experiences and if it believes they are true facts then these facts are stored in long term memory. If the right brain believes they are not true facts then these experiences are only stored in short term memory, soon to be forgotten. The problem is that new language that the teacher is presenting in the target language usually contradicts the student's experiences in their own language. Therefore this new information is subconsciously

rejected by the logical left brain, even when the student consciously accepts this information and wants to remember it.

For example, in an English language class in Japan the student already has lots of experiences about an イス. It knows that you sit on an 椅子 and everyone calls it an 椅子 except for the English language teacher who calls it a chair! Therefore, the left brain logically thinks that the teacher is lying and this 椅子= chair lie will not be accepted. TPR on the other hand focuses on the right brain. The right brain pattern matches at high speed and when it finds a pattern, this pattern can be stored in long term memory. These long term memory facts can be manipulated by the left brain, without the left brain fact checking them, as they have already been validated by the right brain.

How does the right, brain pattern match with TPR? First, the right brain sees the instructor sit on a chair and the student fol-

lows the teacher's commands and sits on the chair. The student's experience of physical movement "sitting down" and new word "chair" is matched into a pattern by the right brain, thus allowing the new word "chair" to be accepted by the left brain and stored in long term memory.

Sousa (2011) in his book on how the brain learns languages talks about the important of the "mirror neuron system" in learning languages by mimicking. In TPR, mimicking or pattern matching is a key part of the lesson.

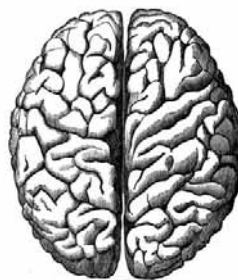
Second Language Acquisition Research

In the research on second language acquisition by Stephen Krashen (Krashen 1982), Krashen outlines five hypothesis, which provide some insight into TPR:

1 - The Natural Order Hypothesis: That learners understand the rules of a language

LEFT BRAIN

Logical
Slower Speed
Secondary Interpret Data



RIGHT BRAIN

Pattern Matching
High Speed
Primary Process Data

Figure 1: Left and Right Hemispheres of the Brain



Figure 2: Language Speaking and Comprehension Areas of the Brain - Left Hemisphere

in a predictable order, regardless of how the language is taught, however, TPR teachers should not limit or "shelter" grammar but expose students to it, even though low levels students will not be able to produce it fluently (Gross, 2010).

2 - The Acquisition versus Learning Hypothesis: Language ability can be improved by both acquisition and learning. Acquisition occurs effortlessly and unconsciously, however learning occurs when students consciously put effort into studying the rules of a language. TPR lessons usually focus on language acquisition and less explicitly on language learning. However once new language is learnt then the instructor is free to spend time on language learning.

3 - The Monitor Hypothesis: Where students use their knowledge they have learned about a language to correct their language use. In the TPR lesson the commands and the physical responses are fast paced so the student has less time to monitor their language use. Later on in TPR lessons when speaking and writing are required, we can see students slowing down to monitor their language output. However, when the students consciously pause before production to check if their language is accurate, they might achieve a small increase in accuracy but lose fluency and increase stress.

4 - The Input Hypothesis: That language is acquired when we understand it, in other words, the language is comprehensible. TPR lessons often contain lots of comprehensible input; however, the students are also challenged to move just behind their language

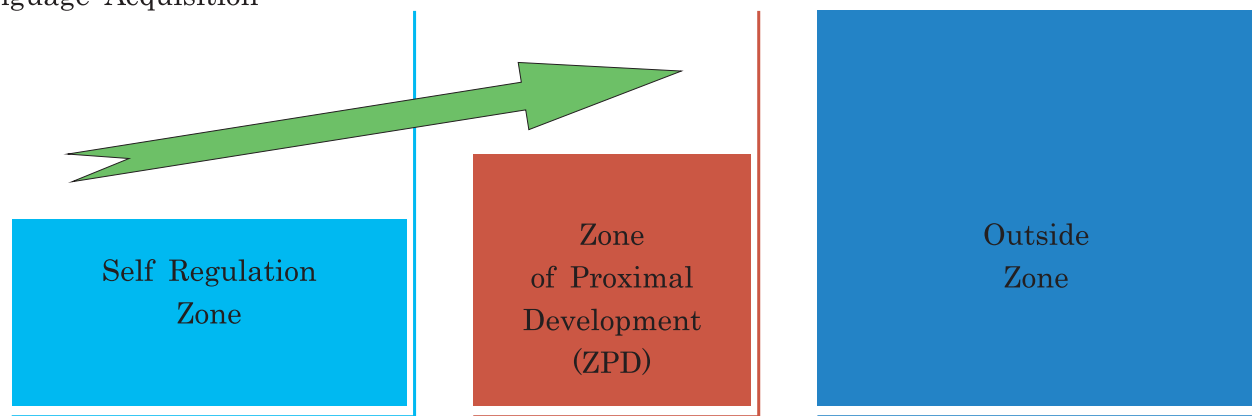
ability level, which decreases the amount of comprehensible input.

5 - The Affective Filter Hypothesis: In this hypothesis, Krashen describes how the students' negative attitude to learning will become a barrier to their language learning. As the input of the lesson becomes less comprehensible or the students feel pressured to speak or write in English then the students' stress levels rise and their ability falls. In the case of many Japanese college students, they have a very high affective filter and resemble "battered language learners" a term coined by Ben Slavic, Steve Sternfield and Linda Li according to Krashen (2010). In Krashen's Keynote Address in 2010 (Krashen, 2010) he hypothesizes that compelling input, that is "input that is so interesting that the acquirer temporarily forgets that it is in another language" destroys the affective filter.

TPR is one technique that can lower the affective filter of students. This is especially apparent in the beginning lessons where the students do not have to talk any English or read any English. They can relax and just respond to the comprehensible commands.

In TPR language is acquired by understanding input that is a little beyond our current level of competence. That is after learning a chunk of language then a little more is added. Not too much or the students will not be able to comprehend it and not exactly the same language as before or else the students will get bored of the lesson. This idea of gradually teaching the students is known as scaffolding. This idea of how to teach was researched by the Russian educational theorist Vygotsky (Van Lier 2001, p96)

Language Acquisition



- Self Regulation Zone - language that the student understands.
- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) -acquiring new language just above their current level if the student is helped or "scaffolded" by the teacher.
- Outside Zone - language that the student cannot understand even with help.

Figure 3: Vygotsky's Zone Theory

who described three zones of language acquisition, See Figure 3:

Student language acquisition in Vygotsky's ZPD is similar to Krashen's ideas of comprehensible input and Asher's TPR ideas of teaching just above the student's current comprehension (Jones, 2009).

As the student learns, the amount of English that is comprehended increases and new material that was previously in the Outside Zone (that the student could not do even with scaffolding) comes into the ZPD for language acquisition.

Vygotsky and TPR both warn not to repeatedly use the same commands after comprehension has been achieved. In doing so adaptation occurs (Asher, 2009), this is when the students can become bored of the lesson and their language ability starts to decline, boredom sets or it leads to teacher dependence.

The basic premise of TPR is that comprehension comes first and this is followed by speaking and reading and writing skills. This comprehension before production is the same way that students learned Japanese as children. The students gain comprehension from understanding small chunks of concrete language before moving onto more abstract language.

Blaine Ray (2001) talks of Asher's metaphor of an expanding balloon of student comprehension, this balloon increases in size from a tiny sphere to a gigantic circle. Inside the balloon of comprehension, three tiny balloons in different colors will appear. Each of the tiny balloons represents the appearance of speaking, reading and writing. Although the outside comprehension balloon will always be the biggest, the three colored balloons will continue to expand as your students get more fluent, more literate. See Figure 4:

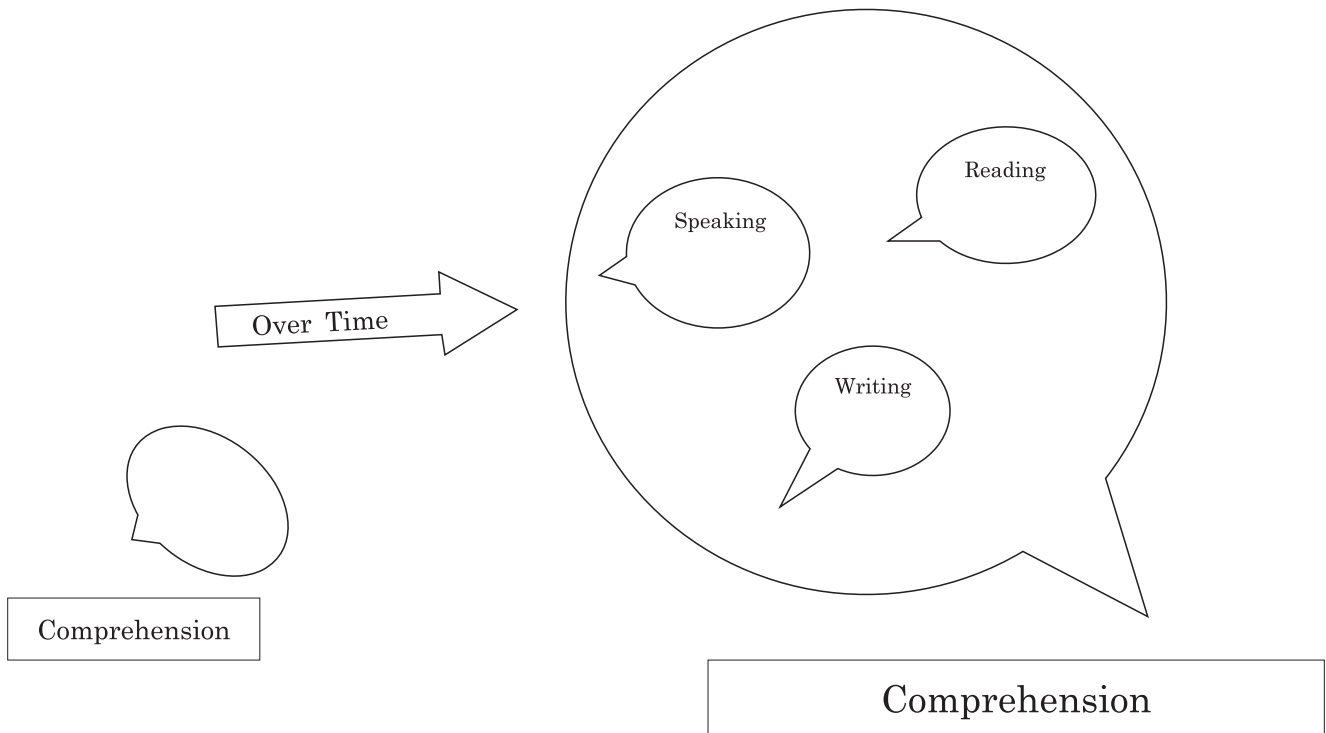


Figure 4: Comprehension Precedes Speaking, Reading and Writing

TPR Lessons

A TPR lesson involves the teacher giving verbal commands often supported by gestures. Students gain comprehension of English by listening to the English commands and pattern matching the sounds they hear and gestures they see against their life experiences. The teacher requires that the students follow the teacher's commands, and the teacher can immediately see if the students have comprehended the commands by monitoring if the students follow the commands successfully. This "language body conversation" shows that comprehension has taken place (Asher 2009).

The author used the classroom sitting plan as recommended by Garcia (1996) which involved the students sitting facing each other in two sections facing into a central corridor where TPR actions can be demonstrated. See Figure 5:

The above room layout helped to focus the students on the lesson as well as providing a space known as the central corridor for the students to physically act out the gestures. It is not necessary to have every student physically acting out the command, often only two students at a time will be physically responding to the commands such as "Run to the door, touch it three times, turn around and sit on the floor". Typically two students would be asked to sit flanking the teacher in one of the three home base chairs, situated at either end of the central corridor, from there they would move in response to the teachers commands (Garcia, 1996).

The other students are required to listen to the commands and either act them out by gestures or simply by visualizing themselves doing the actions. In the beginning, the commands do not require the students to speak, they only have to follow the teacher's commands. For example, the teacher will say,

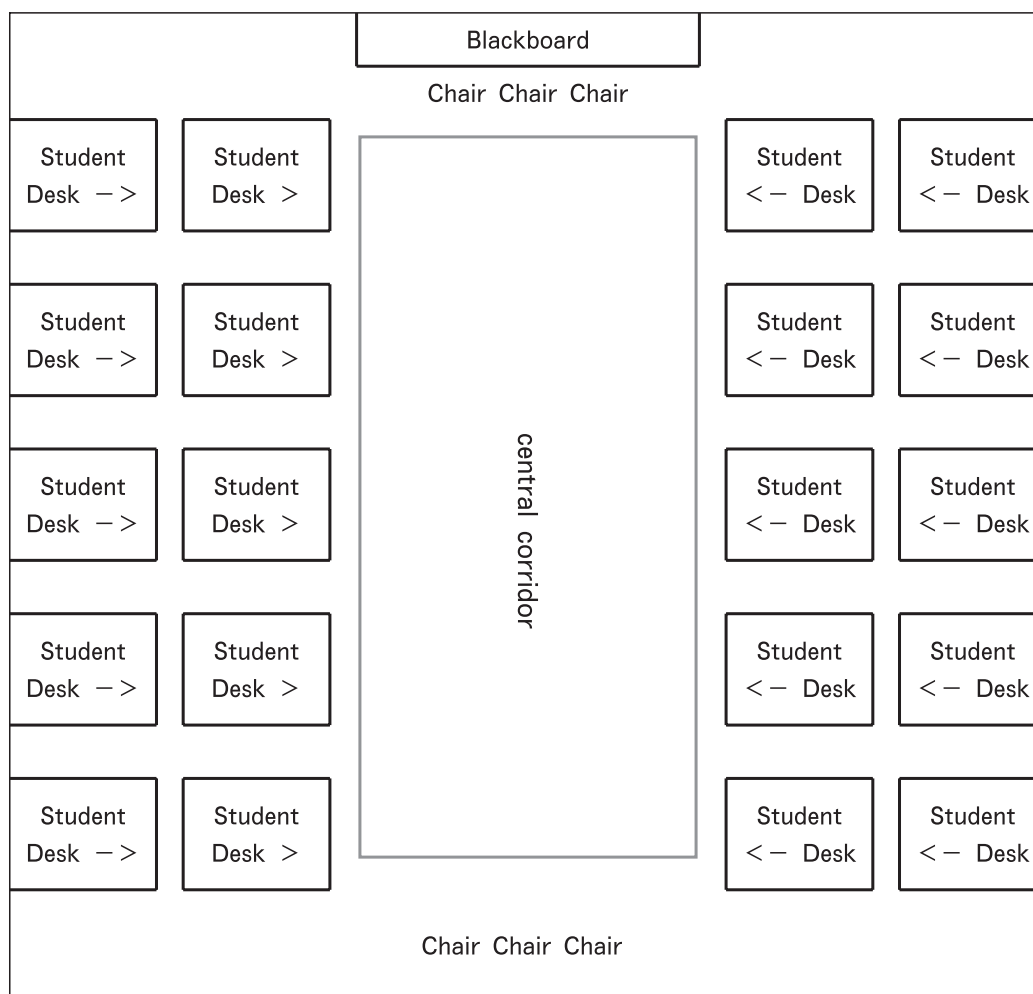


Figure 5: TPR Classroom Layout

"Stand up" and if the student stands up then the teacher knows that the student comprehended the command.

The TPR lesson will introduce three new language items at a time, and then the teacher will say many commands based on these three language items. After many repetitions the teacher will then add some more language items be they new vocabulary or a new action word. The beginning classes start easily "TPRable" words (Gross, 2010) such as everyday objects, classroom objects and concrete verbs such as walk, point, touch, and throw.

In the TPR lesson, the instructor does not want to repeat exactly the same command but instead will vary slightly the command.

This can be done by adding new language items, combining commands together in a chain or varying the order of the chained commands.

If the teacher repeats, the same command the students can get bored of the lesson, a phenomenon that is referred to as "adaption" by Asher (2010). Therefore an essential skill of TPR is to come up with lots of new commands, often these commands are humorous or bizarre to keep the students entertained. As commands and their execution by the students can only take a few seconds, a typical language class of 45 minutes will have dozens of commands or more, so to avoid repeating the same command the teacher usually prepares a teaching script, with the

commands they intend to use that lesson. The author found this to be a time consuming process.

In a TPR lesson, the imperative tense is known as the "Golden Tense" (Asher, 2009) and is often used to give commands, however, the full range of grammar can be used in a TPR lesson. One way to do this is to use conditional commands. For example, if you are teaching the past progressive tense "was ___ing" the following command could be used: "If Machiko was walking to the door touch your head, but if she was opening the door then raise your left hand." The students then practice the past progressive grammar and the instructor can easily check if the students' comprehension by watching their physical response.

As the students demonstrate comprehension of spoken English the teacher can then move onto speaking skills, this is done at first by choosing a student to become the command giver. Later on commands such as SAY, ASK, SHOUT, WHISPER, and so on can be used to encourage the students to speak.

The next skill that is taught is reading. The students are given a list of commands that they have consistently physically responded to and now they are asked to match the written commands to pictures of those commands. This activity can be scaffolded by first asking the students to touch the words written on the board. For example "Walk to the blackboard and touch the phrase [run to the park]." Again with repetition of this activity the students will be able to pattern match the written English with the spoken English that they are already familiar with. Finally written English can be taught as well

using the English that the students have learned to listen to and read. Sousa (2006) empathizes that new language is acquired as students compare the target language with existing first language patterns.

TPR is a tool that is effective at teaching new language to the students and aiding in the long term retention of that language item. After the students demonstrate comprehension of the language then teacher is free to choose from any teaching method that they want to use to continue the lesson.

3. What is TPR Storytelling?

TPR Storytelling (TPRS) is a teaching method that was invented by Blaine Ray in 1990, that used Asher's TPR techniques in the classroom and added stories created from the language acquired in the TPR lesson as a vehicle for the students to continue practicing the language. TPRS like TPR is also influenced by language acquisition research and brain research

Language Acquisition Research

TPRS continued to stress the importance of comprehensible input as the major factor in how students improve their language ability. According to Gross (2010) language learning will also make the students better at learning however in the TPRS lesson a ratio of 90% language acquisition tasks versus less than 10% Language learning activities is the goal.

One way of increasing the amount of Comprehensible Input is to increase the time in the lesson spent on reading tasks. Krashen (2004) in his book the power of reading makes the case for increasing the amount of time spent reading and argues that

reading of language that is comprehensible is very good for language acquisition. Susan Gross (2010) made the same observation in her TPRS workshop "Reading teaches language better than teachers do." However, this is the case when the texts selected contain at least 75% of words that the student already knows, ideally the students should know 95% of the words in the book to maximize comprehensible input (Krashen 2004).

In TPRS repetition, which takes advantage of the brain's "mirror neuron system" (Sousa, 2011), is an integral part of the TPRS lesson. The teacher aims to get multiple repetitions of key phrases of the target language.

Brain Research

TPRS was also influenced by Susan Gross a TPRS educator who monitored how brain research had answers to help teaching language acquisition (Gross, 2010). TPRS teachers use Bertie Segal's maxim "Language is acoustical... not intellectual" to emphasize that a ratio of over 90% language acquisition activities versus only 10% language learning activities is preferred. Acquisition occurs in the Broca Area (acoustical processing) and

Wernicke Area of the left hemisphere of the brain; whilst learning occurs in the Frontal Cortex of the brain. See Figure 6 below.

TPRS teachers are interested in how new information is retained in memory. A basic memory model has immediate memory, working memory and long term memory (Sousa 2006). The goal of language teachers is to move new information to the student's long term memory (Jones, 2011). How is this done? At first when a student encounters a new word it is kept in the immediate memory - which only lasts a few minutes, when this word is practiced using comprehensible input it goes into working memory - which can last for a few days. However to enter long term memory it has to be accessed or practiced multiple times at spaced repetitions of usually 1 day, 7 days, 30 days. If the new language is recycled like this then there is a higher probability of entering long term memory. Sousa (2011) expresses this idea that information is perishable - use it or use it.

Another factor that influences memory is the likelihood of the new information being

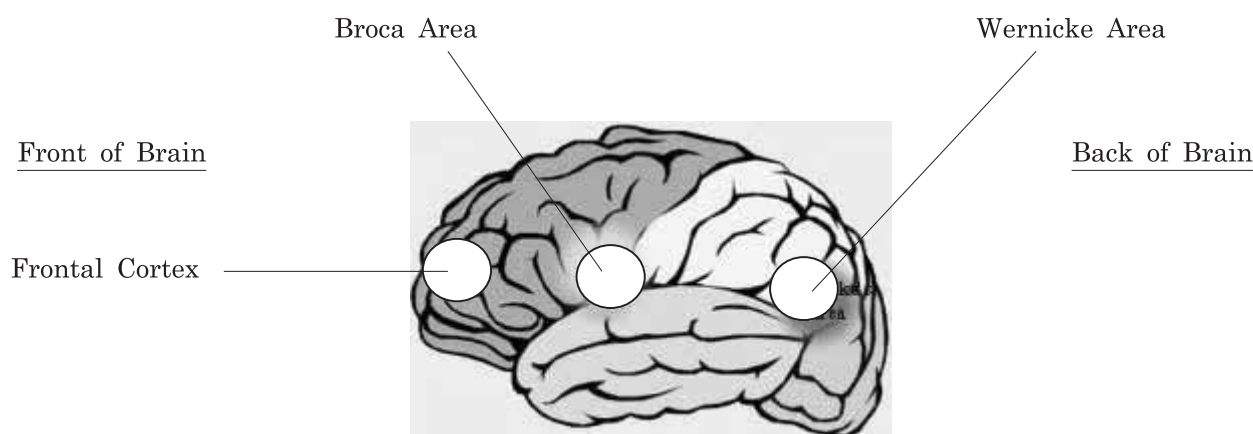


Figure 6: Language Acquisition and Learning Centers of the Brain - Left Hemisphere

stored. The brain prioritizes new information according to Sousa (2006) in the following hierarchy: Survival, Emotional Connection, Meaning then Sense. If the information is about your survival it is remembered easily, however the classroom rarely has life or death situations. This is followed by information that has a strong emotional connection to you. For example, a single terrifying incident can be remembered forever as seen by sufferers of post traumatic stress disorder whilst experiences that do not have an emotional connection to the students are forgotten quickly. In the classroom it is difficult and usually undesirable to create a strong emotion reaction in students. So the TPRS teacher focuses on meaning and sense. Meaning is achieved when the TPRS teacher uses personalization in the lesson. The teacher chooses topics that the students are interested in and talks about the students' lives. This has meaning to the students. Finally sense is achieved by making the aiming to make the lesson 100% comprehensible to the student.

So the TPRS teacher tries to maximize the emotional impact of the target language and also provide multiple repetitions in a single lesson and also recycle the language throughout the language course to maximize the chance that the new language will end up in long term storage.

Action Research

According to Gross (2010), TPR and TPRS teachers were sharing the results of their classroom teaching experience and also investigating how effective TPRS was when they varied the amount of comprehensible input in the lesson; or changed the ratio of language

acquisition to language learning techniques; or changed the amount of reading in the lesson.

Combining the findings of brain research, language acquisition research and action research resulted in TPR plus storytelling changing into TPRS. TPRS stands for Teaching Proficiency Through Reading & Storytelling (Gross 2010). Currently, the TPRS teaching method comprises of three steps. Step One: Establish Meaning for approximately 25% of class time; Step Two: Ask a Story for approximately 25% of class time; and Step Three: Literacy for approximately 50% of class time.

TPRS Step One: Establish Meaning

According to Gross (2010), the TPRS lesson begins with the instructor choosing three phrases in the target language and writing them on the board with the translation in the students' first language. The instructor confirms the students understand the meaning of the first phrase by asking the students its meaning in their first language. The teacher then assigns a gesture to correspond with the key phrase. The students are then expected to perform the gesture when they hear the key phrase.

The teacher can begin to use the core TPRS technique of circling to attain multiple repetitions of the lesson phrase. Circling basically involves asking questions about the key phrase - where the answer is contained within the phrase. In other words no new information is required by the student. The first questions elicits a "yes" answer; the second question is an either/or question; the third question elicits a "no" answer; and the final question can either confirm a known

detail of the phrase or elicit a new detail. Once a new detail has been elicited it is then added to the key phrase. Thus the key phrase becomes longer, and then new longer key phrases can be circled again. Then the instructor checks for understanding by asking the students what the question or response mean in their first language.

When a detail is added and it is a new vocabulary item, then the instructor writes the new word on the board in both the target language and its translation. These additional words will not be assessed as only the three key lesson phrases are tested formally by exams. As a result of reducing the amount of material on a test, the students become less stressed and their affective filter is lowered. The instructor wants the students to succeed as "nothing motivates like success" (Gross, 2010).

The teacher uses the TPRS technique of personalized question and answer (PQA), which involves asking students information about their lives. This new personalized information is then circled. PQA is one way to get compelling input according to Krashen (2010) that removes the "affective filter" allowing for direct acquisition of the target language.

Later on, a second student is chosen to provide information on the same topic via PQA. The teacher can now use the contrast technique of TPRS, to contrast the two student's different answers. The contrast technique can also be used to compare and contrast information from a textbook with personalized information from a student.

The teacher can then use the key phrases in a mini story, which is a very short skit using students to act out the script. The

story takes place in three physical locations around the classroom to help aid the students to recall the mini story. The teacher will now coach the students on how to act melodramatically. After the students respond to the teacher telling the mini story the lesson can move into Step Two.

TPRS Step Two: Story Asking

Step Two involves the teacher asking a story, that is both the teacher and the students collaboratively construct a story using the key phrases from Step One. The main story is usually different from the mini story (Gross, 2010).

Again, the teacher will introduce the first phrase of the story and use the same circling, PQA, add a detail and comprehension check techniques to add to the story. The key principle of TPRS stories is that they continue to recycle the story. That is when the story adds a detail or the instructor perceives that the class is losing comprehension, then the instructor goes back to an earlier part of the story to provide more repetitions of the key phrases.

The teacher again designs a story that has three locations. In location one the character has a problem. For example they are hungry. The story then moves to location two, where the problem fails to be solved. For example they find some food but the character does not like that food. The story then moves on to the third location where the story is usually solved (Gross, 2010).

The teacher will use some bizarre or unexpected details in the story to keep the students interest. However, Gross (2010) cautions not to over use this technique but to use unexpected information sparingly as a

chef uses spices in cooking. In addition the teacher continues to check the students' comprehension of the story. One way to do this is to use a barometer student. This is usually the slowest processor in the class. If the teacher confirms that the slowest person in the class understands the story, then the other students will be fine.

According to Gross (2010) a good technique to increase student comprehension is to slow down the speed of your language. Consciously pause for two seconds between each word. This will give the slower processors more time to understand your speech.

After the story is finished, the teacher can get the students to retell the story. This is usually done chorally at first and later on can be done in pairs. When retelling the story the teacher would physically move to the three locations of the story. This helps the students to recall the story, as according to Sousa spatial information is linked to memory recall (Sousa, 2006).

TPRS Step Three: Literacy

After Step Two is completed, the teacher can then move onto Step Three - Literacy. In this step, according to Gross (2010), each student is given a copy of the story that was asked in Step Two. At first the story is translated paragraph by paragraph. The teacher can use PQA to discuss the story amongst the class. Other techniques of discussion include giving a quiz about details in the story; and acting out key parts of the story again. When the students read the story their brain will automatically be trying to work out the grammatical rules and structure of the language. The teacher can aid this process by using the technique of pop-

up-grammar (Gross 2010). This involves explaining in the students' first language in approximately five to ten seconds a key grammatical feature of the story. The teacher would write this pop-up grammar on the board as a reference for the students during the class. This explicit focus on the language is language learning as opposed to acquisition and so is limited to just a few seconds, in order to get the 90% of acquisition per class as recommended by Gross (2010).

In addition to the class story, the students are also given the opportunity to read other texts in the target language. However these texts must be comprehensible so a general guideline is to have at least 75% of the words in the text known to the student (Krashen, 2004).

The final language skill of writing is developed in the TPRS class room after the skills of listen, speaking and reading have been taught. Writing skills need to be scaffolded; one way of doing this according to Gross (2010) is as follows: At first students can make a picture dictionary, where they copy phrases and draw their own picture to help explain it. The next stage is to copy the class story that was "asked" in Lesson Step Two. The next stage is for the students to be given a cartoon strip detailing the Step Two story and they have to re-write the story following the visual prompts. The next stage is to encourage creative writing. A technique suggested by Gross (2010) is to give the students a quiz about the Step Two story where they have to write three answers for each question; the first answer is the true answer for that story. The second and third answers would be correct for a different story. For example: In the Step Two story the monkey is

black. A question could be "What color is the monkey?" The first answer is "The monkey is black." The second answer could be "The monkey is green." the third answer could be "The monkey is yellow." This technique trains the students to think of different possibilities for the different variables in the story; this in turn will help the students to start writing creatively.

The general rule about writing in a particular genre is that the students must have heard that genre before, they are able to understand that genre and they have read many examples of that genre. After doing all of the above, the students according to Gross (2010) are ready to write in that genre.

In summary, the tenets of TPRS are that the lesson should be 100% comprehensible and that translation is often the easiest way to check for comprehension. TPRS lessons provide an excessive amount of repetitions of the key phrases per lesson. According to Gross (2010), two hundred repetitions would not be unusual in an elementary school lesson and even a hundred plus repetitions in an adult lesson. The lesson needs to be personalized to your students. Your students are motivated by success, to this end the explicit goals of the lesson is for the students to just learn three short phrases in one lesson. This seemingly low standard will be easily achieved by the students, so they will experience success. Also as Gross demonstrated in her TPRS workshop (Gross, 2010) unbeknown to the students they will have actually acquired a lot more target language than only three phrases, much more than they realize.

5 . Conclusion and Options for Further Research

TPR can be seen mainly as a language teaching tool to introduce new vocabulary, whilst TPRS is a four skill teaching method. Indeed in the forward of his book Asher cautions the TPR teachers to remember that "TPR is a tool, not a method" (Asher, 2009).

TPR is time consuming for the teacher to prepare novel command scripts for the lesson, whilst in TPRS repetition of the same language is encouraged.

TPR uses physical movement to check for comprehension and attempts to limit the amount of first language translation in the classroom. Whilst in TPRS translation is the preferred method of quickly and accurately checking for student comprehension.

The author considers that foreign language lessons for Japanese college students should contain a combination of TPR and TPRS techniques whilst striving to maximize the comprehensible input by encouraging the students to read outside of the lesson time. However, further research is required to investigate how a combination of TPR and TPRS could be used to teach English to Japanese College students.

Research is also required into how to replicate the success of TPRS in secondary education as talked about by Gross, where TPRS classes continue daily in the school curriculum (Gross, 2010) compared to the relative short contact time that teachers have with the students of non-English majors in Japanese colleges, typically only 15 or 30 x 90 minute classes per year.

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