

## Chapter 2

### Acquisition

When I first started *teaching* Spanish, in Los Angeles, in 1995, I had some great students. They did really well. They studied. They paid attention. They got good grades. They could speak Spanish. But something was missing. They just weren't retaining the language. They struggled to speak the language. On Mondays they'd forgotten a lot. After winter break, it just wasn't there. Even worse, the next school year, the language they had learned was practically non-existent? Where had it gone and why were they forgetting so much? They were struggling to say the least. We had to relearn almost everything. What a waste of time I thought!

Truth be told, I never learned Spanish. I acquired Spanish, working in a restaurant in Southern California, at the age of 17 and I forgot very little. But my students seemed to be forgetting everything. The difference is, I acquired the language. My students were learning the language. They were studying grammar, translation, memorizing vocabulary and taking exams. I was "picking up the language." I wasn't even studying Spanish. In fact, most of what I was acquiring I couldn't even spell.

After a year of working in a restaurant with Spanish speakers, mainly from Mexico and El Salvador, I was near fluent in Spanish. The truth is, I was studying "Spanish 1" at the same time, as a junior in High School, but I was acquiring the language at the restaurant. In fact, I paid very little attention in my Spanish class. At the restaurant I worked as a cook, a prep guy, a fish cutter, and a busboy. I spent hours listening to stories from my new Spanish-speaking friends. I listened to their stories. I spent hours with them. I became best friends with several of them. The time we spent together was a God-send. My parents and teachers were amazed at how much Spanish I had acquired in one year.

But what about my students? Why weren't they acquiring the language? How could I get them to acquire the language and how could I recreate the experience I had in the restaurant in the classroom. My students were struggling with the language. But I had never struggled. I wanted them to acquire the language as seamlessly as I had.

One thing I remember working with my students was TPR, or Total Physical Response. That is, when we added movement to vocabulary, they got it and remembered the vocabulary. For example, if I said, "Jugar al beisbol" they pretended they were playing baseball. If I said, "lavar los platos," they pretended to wash the dishes. It was a miracle. They were remembering the language. It was going to their long term memory. They were acquiring the language, albeit, very little at a time.

While doing TPR with my students it brought me back to my studying of Mandarin Chinese at UC Berkeley some 2 years earlier. The class was a disaster. It was extremely

difficult. We learned Chinese, memorized characters, translations, and tones. The one thing I do remember from that class was, “Ching ni gei David,” or please give this to David. My teacher probably didn’t know it but each time she’d pass back our homework she’d say to me “Ching ni gei David” and I’d hand the paper to David, sitting behind me. This was TPR!

So, when I discovered TPR, I knew this was acquisition. I knew I was onto something. I did as much research as I could on TPR. I bought books on TPR and we did TPR. In fact, we did tons of TPR. In fact, we did so much TPR that my students probably would have screamed bloody murder if we did any more TPR. So, I was stuck. I had read that TPR would not work forever. (Imagine a baby growing up only hearing commands. Sounds sort of like my house, with mom constantly yelling at us). So, that was it.

### **Day 1 through Week 5 with your Language Parent (LP)**

In this section I'm going to tell you exactly what to do and what not to do with your language parent(s). I'll show you what to do each day for the first ten weeks or so.

#### **Day one (2 hours)**

There is nothing more exciting than acquiring a new language and the first day of your language acquisition session should be fun and fruitful. I'll show you what to do, step-by-step to maximize your time.

Materials you'll need: Pen/Pencils, paper, magazines.

#### **Step I. Greetings**

I always start my sessions with greetings. I tell my Language Parent (LP), I'd like to do 'greetings.' I simply ask him or her how to say, “How are you? How's it going,” plus answers, such as, “I'm fine. I'm well. I'm tired” and my favorite, “I'm busy.” On the first day, I keep it as simple as possible. Later, I'll add things like, “I'm sick, sad, happy, hungry, thirsty, etc.” My LP asks me these questions every time we meet. At the end of the session, I'll say, “good-bye” or “see you later.” During this first meeting, I'm not trying to memorize anything. I know that after doing greetings several times, they will become automatic to me. Eventually after 3 months or so I should have a repertoire of close to fifty things to say. I should be able to talk for at least 10 minutes without stopping. (Most greetings will revolve around my weekend or previous day's experience.)

#### **Step II. Magazines**

Magazines should be the bread and butter of your LA program. In the beginning, they are going to be the most important part. I've done this thousands of times and I swear by magazine pictures for language acquisition. I own over one hundred magazines and usually count on doing about one magazine per hour.

I'll hear about 100-200 words per hour and at the end of the day, I should remember about 10% of them, depending on the language. As a native-English speaker, if I were acquiring German, I'd probably remember about 20%. For Japanese or Arabic, I'll probably remember about 10%, maybe less.

The important thing is, I'm not going to stress. I don't care how many words I will remember. I know that the more I hear a word in a natural meaningful conversation, via CI (Comprehensible Input) the more chances I have of remembering, or acquiring that word.

On day one, I like to use a travel magazine or a woman's fashion magazine or both. Before I begin with a magazine, it's important I give my LP some very important instructions. I will usually say something like this, "We are going to use these magazines and these pictures to teach me. Please tell me all about these pictures. Don't just say, 'car, boy, mountain, etc' but give me a thorough explanation of everything and don't skip anything." At this point, I usually do an example in English for about one minute, going into great detail about each picture (see below).

Also, I'll give him or her my rules, which are very important. I usually say, "Before we start, I have some rules. First, please don't use any English during this time. Don't speak any English except during emergencies or if I ask you. Also, don't teach me any grammar. I can learn grammar later, on my own. Plus, don't ever correct me. I know this sounds strange, but please don't correct me. Don't correct my grammar or my pronunciation. Studies show that correction is a waste of time. Of course, if I say something incorrect, like, 'this a dog' and it's actually a cat, please, tell me. That's different. Also, if I don't understand something, please try and draw what you're trying to say. Here are paper and pencils. We're going to be drawing a lot. I like drawing for language acquisition. But, if after drawing, gestures, or physical pointing I still don't understand, then of course, let's use English."

(Plus, if the language I'm acquiring doesn't use the Roman alphabet, I'll tell my LP no reading or writing.)

Lastly, I ask for some super important survival vocabulary. On day one, I like to ask how to say, "yes/no, I understand" and "I don't understand." Plus, I might ask how to say, "What's this?" or "it's not important" or "let's move on." Again, at this point, I'll just write down the words so I know them but I'm not going to try and memorize them. If I have to look at my notes to remember them when I need them,, that's ok.

So, using the camping picture (below). I'll give an example of day one of an English as a Second Language session. This should normally last about ten minutes per picture. (You'll notice that as the teacher, I'll be doing about 98% of the speaking).

### Option I: Travel magazine



**Teacher:** this is a magazine. In the magazine there are many pictures. (Point to magazine. Point to pictures). This is a picture or photo (make a gesturing camera, take a picture, make shutter sound of camera). Photo or picture. (Point to picture).

This is a van. (Point to Van). We call these vans. This is a Volkswagen van. Right here you can see the symbol for Volkswagen (Point to VW sign in front of Van).

I don't have a van. (Point to myself) I have a car. I have a Toyota Prius. A Toyota Prius is a car. (I draw a car and write, "Toyota Prius" inside the drawing of the car) This is not a car. This is a van, a Volkswagen van. Some people like to call this a bus, a Volkswagen bus.

This Volkswagen bus is blue. I like the color blue. My eyes are blue (point to my eyes). Are your eyes blue?

**Student:** No

**Teacher:** No. Your eyes are brown. (Point to student). My eyes are blue (point to my eyes) and the Volkswagen bus is blue (point to the bus. I repeat 'blue' and point to everything and anything that is the color 'blue')

I like this Volkswagen bus. (make a love sign with my two hands and put it over my heart). Do you like this Volkswagen bus? (Draw a heart. Point to heart. Point to VW bus).

**Student:** Yes.

**Teacher:** Here you can see this is a tire. (Point to tires). There are two tires. Actually there are three tires (Count to three. Point to tires) on this bus. There are two tires here (Point with pencil) and one tire in front of the bus. (Point)

Actually this Volkswagen bus has five tires. One, two, three here (point) and two more on the other side. This tire in front we call a spare tire. In my Prius there is a spare tire too. All cars have spare tires. (Point to spare tire).

This looks like a camping scene. Do you like camping? (Translate camping to target language)

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** I like camping but I love to travel. (Translate travel) . (Draw a big heart or many hearts to symbolize 'love') Do you like to travel? (Point to a small heart. Point to travel).

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** I love to travel (Point to big heart. Point to travel). Do you love to travel?

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** This is a man. I am a man.(Point to myself). You are a man. (Point to student). My father is a man. (Draw stick figure man. Point to stick figure man). My girlfriend is a woman. (Draw stick figure woman). Is this a man? (Point to man)

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** Is this a woman (Point to drawing of woman)?

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** Is this a man (Point to VW bus)?

**Student:** No

**Teacher:** That's right. This is a VW Bus. The man is wearing a jacket. (Point to man wearing a jacket).

He is wearing a red jacket (Point to red things and say "red"). Plus he's wearing a backpack. His backpack is brown. The man is wearing a red jacket and a brown backpack. He's wearing pants. He is wearing black pants. (Point to his pants).

Am I wearing black pants? (Point to my shorts). No, I'm wearing shorts. These are not pants, these are shorts. The man is wearing pants. I am wearing shorts. (Point to man. Point to me).

The man is wearing black pants and I'm wearing brown shorts. (Point to man. Point to me). The Volkswagen bus has black tires. These tires are black tires (point to tires). His pants are black. The man is also wearing a hat. His hat is black. His pants are black, His hat is black, and the tires on the Volkswagen bus are black. (Point, point, point, point).

I think he has black hair too. (Point to my hair). Maybe his hair is brown. I think his hair is black. I have brown hair. (Point to my hair).

Do you have brown hair? (Point to student's hair)

**Student:** NO

**Teacher:** Do you have black hair? (Point to student's hair)

**Student:** YES

**Teacher:** Yes you have black hair. I have brown hair and you have black hair. (Point to my hair. Point to student's hair).

**Teacher:** The Volkswagen bus is blue and white plus the tires are black (Point to VW Bus). The bumper is white and the top is white. The spare tire is blue. Actually the cover for the spare tire is blue while the spare tire is black. (Point, point, point).

**Teacher:** These two tires are black. The man's pants are black, the man's hat is black, and these two tires are black. (Point, point, point).

**Teacher:** The sky is blue. The Volkswagen bus is blue and the sky is blue. (Point, point, point).

**Teacher:** Is the Sky Black? (Point)

**Student:** NO

**Teacher:** No, the sky is blue.

**Teacher:** Is the Volkswagen bus black? (Point to anything black)

**Student:** No

**Teacher:** Correct. The Volkswagen bus is blue. (Give thumbs up sign for 'correct')

**Teacher:** is the man wearing black pants? (Point)

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** Correct. The man is wearing black pants.

**Teacher:** Is the man wearing a black hat?

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** Correct. The man is wearing a black hat. And is his backpack black? (Point to backpack)

**Student:** NO

**Teacher:** Correct, his black backpack is brown. (Point and give thumbs up)

**Teacher:** This Volkswagen bus is beautiful. (Translate beautiful to target language). It looks like an old Volkswagen bus (translate old). I think it's probably from 1970 or 1980 (write the numbers '1970' and '1980'). My Toyota Prius is new. (Translate new). My Toyota Prius is from 2005. (write '2005'). That's not very new but it's not old. 2005 is not very old. 1970 is old. (Point to 1970 and the word 'old')

**Teacher:** Do you have a new car? Is your car 2005? Is your car 2010? Is your car 2020? (Write these numbers until you write the year of your student's car). Oh your car is new. my car is old and your car is new. This Volkswagen bus is very old (Point to VW and the word 'old'). My Toyota Prius is not very old. Do you think this man is old? (Point to man). No, I don't think this man is old. I think this man is probably around 30 years old (write the number '30'). I am 51 years old. I am not old. (Write the number '51' plus the word 'old' now use the symbol  $\neq$  for not equal. Write, '51 $\neq$ old')

**Teacher:** These are mountains. (Point). These mountains are beautiful. The sky is beautiful. (Point to sky). This Volkswagen bus is beautiful. My girlfriend is beautiful (draw stick figure of pretty girl). Her name is Noemi. (Write 'Noemi' under stick figure). I love my girlfriend. (Point to

heart. Point to girl). I love my Toyota Prius. (Point to heart. Point to Prius). I love my girlfriend more than my Prius. (Draw big heart above girlfriend. Draw a small heart above Prius. Repeat).

**Teacher:** Here there is a lot of light. (Point to light). The light is from the Sun (draw sun. point to light). This Volkswagen bus has two lights. (Point to headlights). There's a light here and there's a light on the other side. All cars have headlights. All cars have headlights in front and red lights in the back. (Point, point, point).

**Teacher:** This is a mirror. All cars have three mirrors. There is a mirror here. (Point). There's a mirror inside of the car. (Point) And there's a mirror on the other side of the car. (Point) All cars and motorcycles have mirrors. Bicycles don't have mirrors. I have a bicycle. (Pretend to ride a bicycle and ring the bell). It doesn't have a mirror. Do you have a car?

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** Does your car have a mirror? (Point to mirror. Pretend to mirror).

**Student:** Yes

**Teacher:** Does your car have one, two, or three mirrors?

**Student:** Three\* (Notice this was the first time that the student said something besides yes or no.)

**Teacher:** Yes, your car has three mirrors. All cars have three mirrors.

**Teacher:** These are rocks. (Point). There are many many rocks. These are bushes. (Point) There are bushes here and here and here. These are plants. (Point) I don't know what plants they are. There are rocks and plants and bushes.

This is the ground. (Point) This is the sun. (point) This is the light from the sun. (Point) These are mountains. (Point) This is the Volkswagen bus. This is the man. These are his legs. This is his head. These are his hands. (Point, point, point).

The man is wearing a red jacket, black pants, and a black hat. (Point, point, point). The man is looking at his blue Volkswagen bus. (Gesture like you're looking at something).

I think this Volkswagen bus is worth a lot of money. (gesture money sign. Draw money sign). In fact I think this Volkswagen bus may be worth \$100,000. (write this number). Many people like these old Volkswagen buses. I like my Toyota Prius. (make a heart sign with two hands. Point to drawing of Prius).

Repeat.



Here is a link with the actual lesson.

### **Option II: Women's fashion magazine**



In my video, I stated, “Always start with clothing and colors.” Even though that’s a great idea, it’s not a hard and fast rule. If you want to start with a travel magazine, or a food magazine, that’s perfectly fine. Eventually I would encourage you to do a woman’s fashion magazine and a food magazine. From the picture above, doing the same things as with the camping picture, these are just some things you could talk about:

*Pants, shirt, scarf, sweater, jacket, jeans, colors, hair, eyes, beard, long, short, pretty, beautiful, cute, fat, ugly, blonde, brunette, smile, look, hands, legs, feet, head, cold, street, sidewalk, sunny, door, shadow, etc.*

Just make sure your LP is giving you a very detailed description of the picture. If you’d like to hear the entire lesson in English, for this picture, click here:

### **Option III: Food magazine**

There are tons of food magazines out there. I always include food magazines as part of my language acquisition program because food is a huge part of our lives. Here is an example of a picture from a food magazine. Once again, I do about one magazine per hour.



Things to talk about using just this picture:

*Hamburger, cheese, bread, lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise, table cloth, napkin, egg, onions, pickles, meat, beef, sesame seeds, lunch, dinner, barbecue, grill, etc.*

To hear the entire lesson in English for this picture, click here:

### **When to turn the page?**

You can turn the page anytime. But, to get the most out of the lesson, stay on the page as long as you can. Don't leave anything out. I ask my LP everything. For example, in the camping picture, I want to know things like, "dirt, rocks, tires, rims, clouds, snow, belt, front, tail-lights, head-lights, rack, etc."

For the woman's fashion magazine, I want to know details like, "smile, teeth, white, beer belly, etc.

For the food magazine photo, I'll ask for things like, "juicy, hot, fresh, calories, fat, carbohydrates, etc."

You don't have to go into specific details but know that you can. It's better to ask for more than less and don't worry if you'll remember these words. Chances are you won't, but you will remember them after plenty of repetitions.

### **What pictures should you focus on?**

All of them. There is no picture that will not provide great CI, including ads, both front and back covers, the small pictures at the end of the magazine, etc. Everything that you can see can be described in CI. (Some of the best words I've acquired have been from ads.)

### **Vocabulary lists and flashcards**

I know a lot of you like to make vocabulary lists and flashcards. In fact, in my video, I said, if you make flashcards, be sure to draw the word and write the word in the target language, instead of simply translating. Since I've acquired Arabic and now Farsi, I have changed my mind about flashcards and wordlists. I'm now convinced that wordlists and flashcards are essentially a waste of time. I stopped doing them while acquiring Arabic. I strongly feel that wordlists and flashcards are ending up in our short term memory and are not being acquired, like memorizing words for an exam. If you want to do them, fine, but I'm just not convinced they are worth the time making them or studying them. Lots of repetitions of high frequency vocabulary is what's important and not memorization. Studying flashcards is like reading a book with one word! There is no rhyme or reason and your brain knows that.

### **Sweet-16 verbs**

One reason I do well at language acquisition is I know intuitively which words are most important. I could probably easily name the 1,000 most common words in any language. More importantly, I know the "Sweet-16 verbs". These are the 16 most used verbs in any language. When I'm acquiring a language, I try and get tons of repetitions of these verbs. I don't push them and I don't hurry them. I know if I'm getting lots of good CI I will get these verbs naturally. Here are the Sweet-16 verbs in English:

1. Go
2. Be
3. See
4. Hear

5. Come
6. Leave
7. Have
8. Bring
9. Can
10. Put
11. Want
12. Know
13. Give
14. Say
15. Be (existence)
16. Make

#### **Option IV: Other magazines**

You can use any magazine you want, but for beginning sessions, use a travel magazine, food magazine and or woman's fashion magazine. Stick to these three types of magazines for about 20 - 30 hours, depending on your target language. After you've done several, feel free to venture out into magazines that interest you.

For example, if you like bicycles, use a bicycling magazine. If you like boats, use a boating magazine, etc. Keep in mind, these magazines will contain less words than a general purpose magazine. The first time I used a Yoga magazine with my Arabic teacher, it was very difficult to talk about Yoga for an entire hour. We finished the entire magazine in about 15 minutes since every other picture was about Yoga. Same thing with a motorcycle magazine I had gotten. There are just so many things you can talk about on a motorcycle. If you decide to venture out into different "specialized" magazines, be sure and get more than usual and count on spending less time on each magazine.

#### **When does the student start speaking?**

The student can speak as soon as possible. If you want to speak immediately, go ahead and speak. Just make sure your teacher is doing about 90% of the talking. If you're doing more than 10%, you're talking too much. Relax and listen. If you want to jump in and say something, do it. These are the things I like to say during the first few sessions. (In most cases, I'll just try one or two during the first session and then slowly add after each additional session).

1. I like
2. I have
3. I want
4. I need
5. I am

For example, if I see a car I like, I'll say, "I like (that car)." If I see a pretty girl, I'll say, "I like her. She's very pretty." If I see my car, I'll point to the car and say, "I have (that car)." If I see a teacher, I'll point to the teacher and say, "I am a teacher too!" If I see a man, I'll say, "I am a man." If I see a juicy hamburger, I'll say, "I want it." etc. I can pretty much begin speaking on day one. But, I know that I need tons of input before I can "output." Again, I make sure and get 90% input before and 10% output. If you don't want to speak, you don't have to. If you never want to speak, you never have to.

I recently heard a story about a boy in a Spanish class who didn't say anything all year and at the end of the year spoke fluent or near fluent Spanish, even though he never spoke. Language acquisition is all about hearing and not speaking. It's all about input!

## **Day 2 - Day 5 (4-10 hours)**

- I. Greetings**
- II. Magazines**

### **Yes/No questions**

If your LP is not yet asking you questions, you need to ask for "simple yes/no questions." If I have to, I'll usually do an example in English.

Using the hamburger picture from the above, I'll say, "Do you eat meat? Are you a vegetarian? Do you like hamburgers? Do you like onions? Do you like tomatoes?, etc."

I don't want my LP to spend the whole time asking questions but a normal amount of questions, as if we were having a normal conversation. Make sure your LP is NOT asking you questions that require more than a "yes/no." A lot of LPs will say things like, "What's this? What color is that? What's he doing," etc. I have to remind them, "whoa, whoa, whoa, those are not 'yes/no' questions. Please only ask questions that require a 'yes/no.' Most don't even realize they're doing it.

**What's this?**

**What's that?**

**What's he/she doing?**

**Why?**

Eventually, you'll want to add the above questions. As a student, as soon as possible, I'm going to ask my teacher, "What's this?" and "What's that?" usually, on day 2 or 3. I use these questions for two main reasons: one, I need lots of repetitions, so, before moving onto the 'next page' I'm going to point to things, over and over again, and say, "what's this" and "what's

that?" I'll probably do an extra minute or two for each page. I want repetitions on just about every picture or word. If the word is extra difficult, I'll point to it over and over again, and say, "What's this" or "What's that?" I don't spend too much time on each word because I'm sure I'm going to see the word again but I want to hear it at least five to ten times.

For example, if I see snow and the word for snow is hard, I'll keep pointing at the snow and ask, "what's this?" and before turning the page, I'll go back to snow and say, "What's this?" I might spend an extra minute or two just pointing to things in the picture and saying, "What's this?" until I'm reasonably sure I've heard each word about 5-10 times, knowing that I'll probably forget the word in five minutes.

After about 5 hours of input, I'll add, "What's he/she doing?" (In the target language). This is super important because now I'm concentrating on verbs, which are the building blocks of any language. Again, I'll point and ask, "What's he/she doing?" And, before turning the page, I'll go back and ask again, "What's he/she doing?"

After about 10 hours, I'll start asking, "Why?" In fact, "why?" is the best and most powerful word for language acquisition. I use "why?" constantly. The word 'why' can be used to 'rewind' and adds logic to any picture, idea, or story. (Our brain likes to rewind and really likes order and logic).

If I see an ad for dog food, I'll ask, "why is the dog eating dog food?" Of course, my teacher will say, "because he's hungry." I might say, "why is he hungry?" or "why does he like this dog food?"

If I see a couple holding hands, I'll ask, "Why are they holding hands?" and my teacher might say, "because they are married," or "they like each other."

When I begin storytelling or story-listening (i.e., children's books), I'll use 'why' over and over again. For example, "why are the children sad? Why do they want to watch TV? Why doesn't mom want them to watch TV? Why is too much TV bad? Etc." I use "why" during almost every storytelling session, whether it's my fourth session or my four hundredth session. I constantly ask 'why' to elicit more information, rewind stories, put things in order logically, and make connections. Again, our brains like logic and the word 'why' helps us get that logic.

## **Day 6 - Day 10 (12-20 hours)**

- I. Greetings**
- II. TPR (commands)**
- III. Magazines**

After about 20 hours of acquisition with your LP, you'll want to add TPR. (If you're not a true beginner, for example if you've studied the language in HS or College, you could add TPR anytime.) I like to start TPR after about 10 - 20 hours.

TPR, or "Total Physical Response" is super simple. It's a fancy way of saying commands. TPR was pioneered by James J. Asher, of San Jose University, in 1977. Professor Asher noticed that when words were acquired using movement, students remembered the words longer. I use TPR extensively both as a student and as a teacher. (We do TPR in my beginning Spanish classes almost every day).

For TPR, your LP is going to give you a list of commands and you're going to act them out. If she says, "cry," you'll pretend you're crying. If she says, "eat," you'll pretend you're eating. If she says, "pet the dog," you're going to pretend to pet a dog while barking humorously. If she says, "pet the cat," you'll pretend to pet a cat while meowing comically. (I'm a huge fan of sound effects.) Eventually, get up to about 200 words and short phrases.

Here is my list of 501 TPR words that I use in all of my classes and with my LP:

Eat	Explore the internet	Cut your hair
Eat cereal	Touch the table	Point to the clock
Eat soup	Touch your nose	Point to the door
Drink	Touch your stomach	Point to me
Drink water	Touch your mouth	Point to yourself
Drink wine	Pet your dog	Take a shower
Drink beer	Kiss your dog	Wash your hair
Drink hot coffee	Hug your cat	Comb your hair
Drink iced tea	Tell your dog and cat "I love you."	Brush your teeth
Sleep	Laugh	Look in the mirror
Wake up	Buy something	Smile
Stand up	Put on a shirt	Leave the house
Walk	Put on pants	Get into the car
Turn around	Put on your sunglasses	Start the car
Jump	Take off your shirt	Drive the car
Write	Take off your sunglasses	Change gears
Read	Make coffee	Stop the car
Study	Make tea	Turn left
Yell	Cook	Turn right
Cry	Cook pasta	Turn on the music
Swim	Cut a tomato	Turn off the music
Work	Cut cheese	Pray
Watch TV	Cut beef	Thank God
Watch a movie		Call your mom

Call your dad  
Call a friend  
Write a text message  
Read a text message  
Hit the table  
Knock on the door  
Stick your tongue out  
Smoke a cigarette  
Cough  
Sing happy birthday  
Open the book  
Close the book  
Think  
Dive in the ocean  
Go surfing  
Eat pizza  
Eat meat

Give me the book  
Give me money  
Order tea in a restaurant  
Tell the waiter you want  
coffee with milk  
Pay the waiter  
Ask for the check  
Drive the car to work  
Listen to music  
Put your shoes on  
Take your shoes off  
Tell your mom goodbye  
Answer the phone  
Call a friend on the phone  
Prepare a cake  
Sing happy birthday  
Blow out the candles

Say thank you  
Open gifts  
Throw the paper in the  
trash  
Travel  
Fly  
Touch your knee  
Point to the camera  
Ride a bike and ring the  
bell  
Tell your friend, "be  
careful."  
Watch a movie and cry  
Study and look bored  
Run 100 kilometers  
Wake up tired  
Go to bed early  
Dream  
Dream about all of your ex  
girlfriends/boyfriends  
Dream in Spanish  
Dream in Arabic  
Yell "I love you."  
Cry, "I don't love you."  
Look at your watch  
Look at the ceiling  
Clean your desk  
Grab the knife  
Cut your fingernails  
Try on clothes / shoes  
Wave at someone  
Flush the toilet  
Brush your teeth/hair  
Comb your hair

Frown at  
someone/something  
Take a shower  
Text someone  
Cook lunch/dinner  
Chop onions//vegetables  
Slice tomatoes  
Write your name in the  
sand  
See a doctor  
Make a cake / the bed  
Have something to  
eat/drink  
Work out  
Sail a boat  
Surf the web  
Peel potatoes  
Boil water  
Withdraw money (at an  
ATM)  
Greet someone  
Bow  
Paint a house / the walls /  
a picture  
Chew gum  
Get angry/nervous  
Spit  
Yawn  
Burp  
Snap your fingers  
Call someone  
Relax at a spa  
Rest on the couch  
Daydream

## Day 11 - Day 15 (22-30 hours)

- I. Greetings
- II. TPR
- III. Magazines
- IV. Children's stories



## **Children's stories**

As soon as I know about 100-200 words, I'll expand to children's stories. Every language acquisition program should include tons and tons of children's stories. Even after 800 hours of Arabic acquisition, I was still using children's stories. (I was using Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck comics during the last three months). The use of children's stories is by far the most powerful tool you have to acquire any language. I cannot say enough good things about children's stories and storytelling in general.

Our brains love stories. They follow a logical path and are easy to follow. We predict or guess what's going to happen next and that's exciting. They are new and exciting. (Our brains crave novelty.) Also, we can compare and contrast them to our own lives. They remind us of our childhood. There is nothing better.

### **What to do and what not to do.**

The first time I hear a story is always magical. I always use Berenstain Bears stories since I own close to 100 of them. You can use any children's story you want, as long as it has lots of pictures and less text. I like Berenstain Bear books because each story is 18 pages long and the stories usually contain a moral or lesson. I like stories that have a good ending because I can constantly ask "why" and sort out the logic of each story.

I like to wait until I know about 100-200 words in the target language, so I'll be able to more easily understand the story and acquire tons of new words at the same time. As a rule of thumb, I ask my LP to tell me each children's story three times.

# I Can Share



Karen Erickson and Maureen Roffey

## First storytelling

Using the above book, "I can share." I'll ask my teacher to tell me all about the cover and the title. If we have to translate the words, "Can share," or "share," that's fine. Using the cover, my teacher will say something like, "This is a children's book. It's called 'I can share.' It's about a little girl who likes to share. Maybe she doesn't like to share. Most children don't like to share? Do you like to share? (I answer, "NO. I don't like to share" or "Hell no. I don't like to share") Here you can see, the little girl has a teddy bear, a doll, a toy train, a ball, and a stuffed animal. She has lots of toys. All of these are toys. Do you have toys? (I answer,

“Yes. I have a car, a motorcycle, a motorhome, and I want a boat”) The authors are Karen Ericson and Maureen Roffey. They wrote the book. They are authors. (Teacher makes typing gesture like she’s typing or writing a book)”

After about 10 minutes of talking about just the cover, we’ll open up the book and get to the actual story. In this case, it’s probably about a little girl who at first doesn’t like to share and eventually learns how to share.

My LP will tell me the entire story WITHOUT translating anything. If my LP tries to translate, I’ll put my hand over the text so she’s forced to just tell me the story. (This works every time).

### **Second time**

The second time hearing the story, my LP will close the book and tell me the same story again. During this time, I’ll ask very few questions. I’ll just sit back, relax, and take in the story. I’ll follow the plot in my head and I’ll ask questions if I don’t understand at least 90%. If there’s some noise going on (things I don’t understand), I’m ok with that. The noise will eventually disappear after more hours of input. I don’t push it and I don’t fret. In the beginning, my goal is about 10% “noise”. If you don’t understand 90% of the story, you’ll need to go back and do the story again and ask more questions or stop your LP. Don’t let him/her go on unless you understand 90%. If you still don’t understand 90%, then you’re probably not ready for storytelling and should go back to magazines.

### **Third time**

The third time, I’ll have my LP ask me easy yes/no questions about the story. The questions should be in order as they appear in the story. This is not a time to test me but just get me used to hearing lots of great questions, of which I probably know the answer. If I get stuck, she can help me and that’s ok. Again, these are just yes/no questions and this is not a test.

### **Present tense or Past tense?**

Should your LP tell you the story in present or past tense? During the first telling of the story, it doesn’t matter as long as you know if she’s in the past or present. Your LP will naturally switch back and forth from past to present, just like most of us do when telling a story.

However, when she retells you the story the second time it will most likely be in the past tense, sprinkled with facts that are in the present tense. Don’t ever assume you’ll be acquiring the present tense first and the past tense later. This is what’s done in traditional teaching and it’s wrong. There is not a child on earth who acquires the present tense from ages 3-4 and the past tense during years 5-6. Acquire the present tense and past tense as soon as possible,

simultaneously. Knowing the present and past tenses allows you to speak so much more than if you only knew the past tense.

### **Do not attempt to retell the story!**

At no time should you be expected to retell the story. If you want to retell a story, you can, just know that it's not CI. There is no CI in retelling a story. In fact, retelling a story will not really help you. Your need to hear as much CI as possible. Simply put, retelling is not CI.

### **How much magazine and how much children's stories should you do?**

As a rule of thumb, I spend one hour per magazine and one hour on a children's story (including all 3 retells by my teacher). If you have a 2 hour class, then by all means, do both. If you only have one hour, do a magazine one day and a children's story the next day.

### **Buy or borrow?**

Libraries have tons of children's books for free. However, at the library, I usually don't find a lot of books that are language worthy. Most are stories written for young readers. The majority are actual books with only a few pictures, written so mom or dad can read to a young child, with maybe one picture here and there. Or, the books are too basic, written for babies, with maybe 10 pages and about 20 words. They work, but they're just too short and don't have enough vocabulary words. You'll have to search around at the libraries and see what you can find. For me it's always been hit or miss.

If you want to buy books, you can find children's books at garage sales, flea markets, second hand stores, and Ebay. My favorite books for language acquisition are: *Anything Disney, Berenstain Bears, and Amelia Bedelia.*

### **Day 16 - Day 20 (32-40 hours)**

- I. Greetings**
- II. Past Tense**
- III. TPR**
- IV. Magazines**
- V. Children's stories**

### **Past Tense**

At this point, you're going to want to add 'Past Tense' to the activities you do on a daily basis. 'Past Tense' is just what it sounds like. You're going to be acquiring the past tense and talking in the past tense with your LP.

Acquiring the past tense is super easy and this is how I do it. Every day, my LP tells me what she did last night and this morning, all in the target language. I make sure she uses lots of gestures, i.e., pretends to brush teeth if she tells me, "I brushed my teeth last night." And, she's going to draw if I don't understand something. Let's say she took a shower last night and I don't understand her gesture for 'I took a shower.' She needs to draw a stick figure and a little shower, point to it and say, "I took a shower last night." Chances are that will be enough.

If I still don't understand, she'll translate to English and we'll move on. First, I'll need to know the vocabulary "last night" and "this morning." These words we can translate straight away.

After my LP tells me what she did last night *and* this morning, I'll tell her what I did last night and this morning. Again, if I don't know how to say something, I'll try to act it out or draw it. If she still doesn't understand, we'll translate it and continue on.

Finally, after I tell her what I did last night and this morning, she'll tell *me* what I did last night and this morning too. That's right. You heard correctly. She'll tell me what I did last night and this morning too. Why? Because she can. Plus, chances are when I tell her what I did last night and this morning, I butchered the pronunciation and the grammar. She on the other hand, will have impeccable pronunciation and grammar, exactly what I need to hear.

Do this at the beginning of EVERY session and for years to come. This is something I never skip. Eventually, this will become such a big part of your sessions, that you'll end up spending hours on it. For example, did your LP get married? Did she get arrested? Did she get in a fight with her boyfriend? Do tell. Forget about the children's stories. These are the real stories that you want to hear. Not only is this CI, but it's *compelling* CI, the best.

## **Day 21 - 25 (42 - 50 hours)**

- I. Greetings**
- II. Past Tense**
- III. Children's Stories**
- IV. TPRS (Crazy Stories)**

### **Where did TPR go?**

After about 50 to 70 hours, I tend to get bored with TPR, doing the same commands over and over. Truth be told, you can only hear the same 500 words so many times. By this time, I've probably heard the same 500 TPR words close to 100 times. If you want to continue

with TPR you can. But at this time, I pretty much put them away. However, if you don't know the 500 words nearly perfectly then don't put them away yet. Continue working on them until they are second nature to you, or you can do them quickly and effortlessly.

### **Where did the magazines go?**

Just like TPR, at this point, I'll usually stop using magazines and concentrate mainly on children's stories. If you want to continue with magazines, or you have a couple of magazines that you really like, then by all means continue. For me, I like to do almost exclusively children's stories. By now, I should know about 1,000 words. Using children's stories will strengthen those words and I'll be acquiring lots of new words with every new story. Again, I'll do about one story per hour and make sure to hear each story three times. And, I never retell. I don't need to and it will be extremely difficult if I try.

### **Use the stories as a springboard for natural conversation**

As you get more comfortable with the language, as your LP tells you a new children's story, use that story to talk about your own life and that of your LP. For example if the Berenstain Bear family goes on vacation, interrupt and talk about the last time you went on vacation or the vacations you took as a child. If the Berenstain Bear family goes to the doctor, talk about your pains and ailments or those of your LP.

At this point, the stories should become a starting point, or hook, to your own natural conversations. Just like 'Past Tense' often a children's story can be the starting point of an hour long conversation that revolves around the story. This is the natural conversation and compelling CI we are looking for. This should already be happening naturally, but if it's not, now's your chance to start.

### **TPRS (Crazy Stories)**

If you're like me, you may get bored with children's stories or you might just run out of them. One solution is TPRS, or crazy stories. I love TPRS.

TPRS stands for "Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling." It was invented by Blaine Ray, a high school Spanish teacher from Bakersfield HS in the 1980s. I first heard about TPRS in 1997 while in my third year of teaching. I went to my first TPRS workshop in 1997, where we were told a story in Hebrew.

It was a story about a fox who tries to eat a bird. But the bird is too smart. She gives the fox a peanut butter sandwich and the fox leaves the bird alone.

We were told the story using lots of gestures and actors. Plus we gestured a lot of the words (acted them out). Listening and participating, I couldn't believe how much of the story I

was following and could understand in Hebrew. During most of the workshop, my mouth was wide open. I was convinced. The stories they were telling brought me back to the restaurant where I first acquired Spanish as a teenager in 1986.

They talked a lot about acquisition versus learning. Plus they quoted Krashen and the Monitor Hypothesis. They said that grammar should be acquired naturally through storytelling. In the end, I was convinced. Because of that workshop, I am a huge believer in the Natural Approach and Storytelling for language acquisition.

Since its beginnings in the 1980s, TPRS has added “Reading” to the acronym. Not only do students acquire language through storytelling but they acquire language through reading. I couldn't agree more.

TPRS adds craziness and novelty to language. We know for a fact that the brain craves novelty. If you make a story about a woman at a friend's house drinking tea, and the friend puts too much sugar in her tea, and the woman yells, “this tea has too much sugar in it,” you have created your first TPRS story. That's it. It can be as boring as you like or as exciting as you like. The key component is the conflict. Every good story has a conflict. The conflict in this story was ‘too much sugar.’

If you want to create an elaborate story with several conflicts you can do that too. My favorite story ever was about a “Robot who couldn't love.” We created it in my first year Spanish course at OCC in 2017.

The Robot was made by a girl in the class. Her name was Adelita (Spanish name). She made the robot in Japan because Adelita is Japanese. The Robot was made in Kawasaki Japan. Adelita bought the parts for the robot at Fry's in Orange County, CA. It was a Robot kit. All of the parts were there. But, Adelita forgot to install the robot's heart. She forgot because while she was building the robot she drank too much sake (this was a college course). The robot was sad because he didn't know how to love.

So one day the robot went to church and spoke to the priest. His name was “Big Papi.” The priest immediately knew that the robot couldn't love. He had the robot kneel down and he touched the robot. Later the priest and the robot ate bread and drank wine. But neither had a wine opener so they had to open the wine with the priest's shoe. Finally the robot knew how to love. The end.

The story took about 20 minutes to create and another 10 minutes for the teacher retell. (We always do a retell afterwards). Most of the story came from student suggestions. They suggest things in Spanish or English and if I like their suggestion we use them. For example, I knew it was going to be about a robot who didn't know how to do something. A student suggested “love,” so I went with it.

In the end the story was a huge success. Students got to hear tons of repetitions of great vocab, including the sweet-16 verbs. Plus they have a recording of the story to listen to later at home or in their car.

### **How to create a TPRS story with your LP**

Assuming you're with your LP, this is how you're going to create a TPRS story. The story you're going to create is a "Picture Story" because you're going to use a picture, any picture, and make a story out of it. (The stories I do in my class are "ask stories" since I ask the students for suggestions).

**Step 1: Choose any picture from a magazine or from the internet.**

**Step 2: Create the back story. (Name, age, home, family, job, etc.)**

**Step 3: LP asks you lots of questions about the back story.**

**Step 4: Create the conflict. (Sad, no money, too many girlfriends, broke a nail, bored, in love, etc)**

**Step 5: Recycle the story. Keep going back. LP asks you lots and lots of questions.**

**Step 6: Try to solve the conflict.**

**Step 7: The end**

**Step 8: LP tells the story again in its entirety**

**Step 9: LP asks you yes/no questions about the story**

### **Example of a TPRS picture story.**

Below, I've created a TPRS story from the "Women's fashion magazine picture." This is a small example of what a finished story would look like. Normally, my LP and I would spend about 20 minutes "creating" the story and then she would spend another 10 minutes "retelling" the story two more times.





*Here is a couple. The woman's name is Francine and the man's name is Bob. Francine is French and Bob is German. They have been dating for 17 years. They met at a discotheque in Alaska. The discotheque was called "Bob's disco." Bob was the owner of the disco. Bob owns discos all over the world and this one is his favorite.*

*Francine went there with her best friend, Celine Dione. She and Celine are best friends because they have the same hobby. They like to smoke hookah and play backgammon. At the disco, Francine saw Bob first and flirted with Bob. But Bob was super shy. Francine could tell that Bob was shy. So she asked him out. She asked him for his phone number. Later that night, at midnight, Francine called Bob and they spoke on the phone for 8 days. They had their first date at Taco Bell in Anchorage Alaska.*

*But there was a problem. Bob was sad because he wanted to lose weight. He always thought he was fat. But Francine didn't care. She loved Bob the way he was. But Bob wasn't happy. So Bob went to the gym every day for 18 days. He couldn't lose weight. But Francine didn't care. Every morning she told Bob, "I love you just the way you are. Never change." She told Bob 18 times a day the same thing, "I love you just the way you are. Never change." Later Francine and Bob got married and had 11 children. One of those children was Bill Gates. The end.*

This is a story you could easily create even after 10 hours of CI. If you want to experiment with TPRS early on you can. I do a TPRS story in my Spanish courses beginning on day one, partly because I don't use children's stories and mostly because students love them. So Instead of using children's stories, I use TPRS.

### **After the story**

During the creation of the story, you and your LP are probably going to be using lots of English and and that's ok. In my courses, we do that too. I allow my students to give me suggestions in Spanish or English. Just make sure your LP goes back and puts it all in the Target Language (TL).

Therefore, after you've "created" the story your LP is going to retell the story in its entirety. At this time, you can chime in, ask questions, clarifications, etc.

After the second retell, your LP should ask you questions about the story, making sure the questions are in order in which they appear in the story. This is not a time to test you. It's not an exam. This is to get you to hear lots of great questions in the TL and get lots of repetitions of super important vocab.

### **Recording the stories**

Just like when you and your LP do children's stories, you're going to want to audio-record all of your TPRS stories and listen to them again later. I love listening to my TPRS stories because they're usually fun and crazy. I try to listen to them at least once a day by myself.

### **The basis of every good story**

Every good story includes a character, a conflict, and an attempt to solve the conflict by going somewhere or doing something. The conflict can be solved or not. Every good story written since the beginning of time has all these same ingredients.

### **Favorite conflicts**

Here is a list of my favorite conflicts that I go to on a regular basis:

1. Love, in love, looking for love, breaking up
2. Needs, money, friends, car, work, etc.
3. Bored, sad, jealous, happy, mad, sick, worried, tired, etc.
4. Too much, too much money, too attractive, too many girlfriends, too rich, etc.

These are just some examples. For an extensive list, click here:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p2dAgc3FOokdCUOjw99hhPrcifSU\\_gfdqX96luIOFqQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p2dAgc3FOokdCUOjw99hhPrcifSU_gfdqX96luIOFqQ/edit?usp=sharing)

### **What if your LP is not a natural storyteller?**

Most LPs are probably not natural storytellers. It takes time. If that's the case, don't worry. You can do most of the talking during the creating stage. Also, your LP might not be good at recycling, going back or asking lots of questions. That's ok too. The important thing is that you finish the story and your LP tells the story back to you. I like to use a pen and paper to draw the story line, using arrows, facts, dates, numbers, etc. That way it'll be easier for my LP to retell the story.

### **Self-Study?**

I have two things that I do to self-study. Number one is reading (see my chapter on reading). Two, I recommend listening to the audio-recordings that you and your LP have created (see my chapter on reading).

### **Pay or Trade? Language Parents**

For years, I did trades. That is, I met with people from around the world and traded languages. In most cases, I traded English for some other language, or Spanish for another language. Whatever the case, I traded one-for-one, an hour of English for an hour of whichever language I was acquiring.

Recently, I've decided to hire a tutor instead of trading. For one, it's faster. I don't have to work an hour to get an hour. I don't mind, because I can afford it. For the most part I hire young students to teach me. I prefer young people in their twenties because they're smarter and better guessers (better at guessing what I want to say). Also, I prefer female teachers. I've hired both men and women and for the most part, I prefer women. In my experience they are naturally better teachers and better storytellers. They speak more and seem to intuitively know what I need while acquiring their language. I have had several good male teachers but they are by far a minority.

Another advantage of hiring a tutor is reliability. In California, a very expensive state, I currently pay \$15 per hour. I believe it's a fair amount. In my experience, if I make an appointment to trade with someone, they don't always come through. People get busy. They get sick. Sometimes they cancel, etc. Paid tutors rarely cancel.

### **How many hours per week?**

I like 8-10 hours per week. My sweet spot is probably 8. I don't like the idea of 5 hours per week. I just don't think it's enough. Partly because I see my own students 5 hours per week and I just don't think it's enough. They forget. They lose motivation. Etc. When I was acquiring Arabic I did 10 hours per week because I was pushing myself. Now that I'm acquiring Farsi, I do 8 hours per week and love it. If you can afford it, do more than 5 hours per week.

### **What if your LP does not speak English?**

If you're fortunate enough to have found a LP who doesn't speak English, first off, congratulations. I dream of having such a problem. (I wish my girlfriend didn't speak English, but she does). You're going to have to do a lot of "modeling." That is, you're going to have to teach your LP English, very slowly, and very lovingly and then invite your LP to do the same. Begin with a magazine picture. Open the magazine, or use the cover, and give your LP a very slow, detailed, loving explanation of the picture, saying what you see and what the people are doing. Ask your monolingual LP easy yes/no questions. Use the thumbs-up sign for "yes" and the thumbs-down sign for "no." Eventually your LP will understand.

If your LP still doesn't understand, you'll have to get someone to translate your needs for you. For example, if Grandma is not "getting it," get your Aunt or Mom on the phone and have them explain to Grandma in the TL what you need. Eventually Grandma will get it. Be patient. Do more modeling if you have to and then give Grandma the sign, "Now it's your turn."

### **Should I start over?**

A lot of students tell me they studied their language in the past but never really acquired it. They studied grammar, memorized vocabulary, took exams and can't really speak it. Many say they did quite well, but still can't speak it. Many ask me if they should start over? If this is you, yes. You should start over. I recommend you start with magazine pictures and go from there. If you want to go right to children's stories that's ok too. If you want to do TPRS immediately that's fine too. But my gut feeling says, start with magazines. Chances are the vocabulary you have is in your short-term memory if it's there at all. Therefore, by starting over with magazine pictures, the vocabulary will be acquired and will go where it's supposed to go, inside of your long term memory, accompanied with a picture or an idea.

If it turns out that you already have a lot of vocabulary pent up, then you'll be able to move on faster.

### **Can i acquire a language through self-study?**

With all of the resources at our fingertips, of course you can acquire a language through self study, but will it be as strong? Do people who acquire languages through apps and YouTube videos do well? Can they speak the language well? I can't answer this question but my gut feeling says NO. I know for sure that Apps like Duolingo teach language via

memorization. I've heard recently that Duolingo has added stories and I couldn't be happier. I hope it works. I can't imagine learning or memorizing a language for 150 "days" and then be able to understand the stories in the TL. I've seen a few YouTube videos of people who have done "1000" days of Duolingo and I wasn't impressed. In the YouTube video "1000+ day Duolingo streak. Was it worth it," the student didn't speak any French at all. He was only able to solve translation exercises. All I can say is wow!

If I had to acquire a language by myself I would probably scour YouTube for videos that I could understand. Steve Kaufman, on YouTube, has great suggestions on how to self study. (Steve is a polyglot whose specialty is self study). Also, currently there are several "language learning communities" on Reddit and Facebook.

### **Question words: Who, what, where, when, how, why, which, and how much?**

Without a doubt, Question Words are the most important words to acquire when acquiring any language. Question Words keep a conversation going and elicit more information. These are paramount to acquiring any language.

You could easily memorize these words in less than 10 minutes, but as I've said several times, **memorization is not acquisition**. It won't be as powerful as if you were to acquire them through natural conversation and comprehensible input. Your brain just doesn't work that way. They must be acquired.

To acquire question words naturally, you have two choices: you can ask your LP to use them more with you (ask you more questions) or you could ask him/her more questions using these words. A good language instructor should know to use these words throughout, but most LP will probably not know how to do this intuitively. A little bit of reminder is probably all that you'll need. Simply ask your LP if he/she could ask you more easy questions, using these words.

However, most likely, you won't be able to do this in the beginning. I wouldn't start playing with question words until you feel ready and I certainly wouldn't ask my LP to use them either until I felt ready. Reason being, most of these question words require more than just a simple yes/no answer. For example, if my LP asks me, "How many people were taking pictures of the pretty girl" but I don't know my numbers well, I'll have to ask my LP for the answer. If I'm constantly asking my LP for the answers, I'm not ready for the questions. If this is the case, wait off on the Question Words.

However, you could ask your LP question words as soon as you're comfortable. Using the same example from above, if I don't know my numbers well but I know how to ask my LP, "How many people were taking pictures of the pretty girl?" and she answers, "One-thousand" that's a home-run. In most cases, I ask my LP many more question words than he/she asks me because he/she can answer a lot easier than I can. Eventually, of course, I'll work my way to

be able to answer all of his/her questions and I'll be acquiring the Question Words at the same time.

### **Language Acquisition Online**

During this pandemic, I get lots of students who ask me how they can acquire languages online via the computer instead of face-to-face. Specifically, how can they use Zoom and or Skype to acquire languages and have it be a success.

First off, languages were never meant to be acquired online. Acquiring a language is best acquired with lots of nonverbal communication, gestures, natural pauses and a good amount of personal connection, all of which are difficult but not impossible to imitate online. It's normal to be hesitant. None of us expected we'd be doing this. Truth be told, I don't like it, but I do it because I don't have any other choice. I've learned to make the best of it, and for the most part, it works.

If face to face meetings are not an option, here are some good ideas on what to do.

#### **Step I. Train your Language Parent**

The most important thing about online language acquisition is going to be training your Language Parent. Most people, including myself, are not used to teaching online. Chances are your language partner, tutor, or language parent will not be a seasoned language teacher, let alone an online language teacher.

It's paramount that you teach your LP how to teach you via Zoom or Skype. Just like teaching your LP how to teach you in person, you'll be doing the same things, but online. To begin with, you'll need some good digital tools. Here are the digital tools you'll need.

- I. Digital versions of magazines. I suggest subscribing to a digital version of a magazine of your choice, like Sunset, People, Vogue, Travel and Leisure, etc. or visiting a website like archive.org where you can "checkout" magazines free. You'll be using the digital versions of these magazines, just like you would if you and your LP were doing a language session face to face. Use the pictures in the magazines to acquire vocabulary, ask questions, and tell stories. Most digital versions of magazines offer the entire magazine with easy to turn pages and full color picture. For the most part, these are exactly like the print version. You'll be sharing these with your LP.
- II. Digital versions of children's books. I suggest getting children's books from the library (if they're open) or buy children's books and then scan them. I have over 60 Berenstain Bears children's books and I've scanned them all to use in my own Spanish classes. I'm allowed to do that since I own them and I don't share them with anyone else. When I scan a book, I use the App "CamScan" from my phone. (You can also use Google Drive to scan just about anything). After I scan them I make PowerPoint presentations out of

each book. Plus, using PowerPoint's edit features I "erase" the English text. I don't want my students reading the English text while I'm telling them the story in Spanish. If you have the time, get rid of the English text. It will force your LP to tell you the story in a more natural way. (Never allow your LP to translate the text. If he/she does it will be choppy and the vocabulary will most likely be way over your head). I always scan two pages at the same time so it seems more like reading an actual book.

- III. TPR lists. Here are my TPR lists for you to use.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1whl11JaL3h8FmAK8M0dsoQD5QUF8XcOex3ZkH10pT2E/edit?usp=sharing> Remember, TPR is just a fancy name for "commands." You'll be giving your list to your LP and he/she will give you those commands in the target language. As he/she gives you the commands, you'll act out the commands the best you can using your hands and body. Don't hurt yourself.
- IV. Props. It's good to have a few props to have something to point to. I like to use props to do colors and sizes, at least. For example, if I have a multicolored ball, I'll point to different colors on the ball and ask my LP to tell me how to say different colors in the target language. With the same ball I could practice words like, "little, ball, soft, colors, many, bounce, throw, hit, squeeze, smell, eat, etc." You'd be surprised how many words can come from just one prop. Also, if I want to work on clothing that day, I'll grab at least 5-10 pieces of clothing from my closet. If I want to talk about food and drink, I'll grab a bag of real food from my kitchen. (If you're a language nut like me, buy plastic food and props from flea markets and garage sales).
- V. Zoom or Skype? I've tried both Zoom and Skype for language acquisition and I prefer Zoom. I like Zoom's "share screen" and "white board." Plus, I think it's much more user friendly. Whichever program you use, spend a couple of hours with it before meeting with your LP for the first time. It's not as easy as you think. I still get hung up looking for and uploading files. Practice "sharing" your digital magazines and your digital children's books.
- VI. Mobile phones to audio-record the stories and to look up words using the dictionaries and translators on your phone. Zoom and Skype will automatically record your sessions for you but I prefer to have an audio recording. I prefer to listen instead of watch. I like riding my bike and listening. I like driving my car and listening. Therefore I prefer to audio record the story telling sessions only. If your LP doesn't speak English use Google translate as your personal translator. It actually works pretty well.
- VII. Pictures from your phone plus Google Photos. If you don't already do so, start taking pictures of some of the things you do on a regular basis. You don't have to take pictures of everything you do. But make it a habit to take pictures of your activities knowing that you'll be sharing these with your LP. Plus, tell your LP to do the same. The reason being, after about 20 hours of language acquisition, you're going to begin to acquire the past tense. The way you'll be doing this is you're going to be telling your LP what you did yesterday, last night, and this morning, and even more importantly, your LP is going to be doing the same. What better way to do this than to have pictures of everything? Make sure you have Google Photos installed on your phone. Google photos works by automatically (well sort of) uploading the photos from your phone and then allows you to

see them on any computer you are signed into. You'll need a google account obviously. (Google photos used to be automatic. That is, when you opened Google Photos on your computer all of your pictures from your phone would automatically be there already. But now, you have to actually open "Google Photos" on your phone and then they will be uploaded after some time. It can take up to 30 minutes, so make sure before your language session you open Google Photos on your phone so your photos can upload to the cloud.)

- VIII. Pen and paper. Just like a normal face-to-face session. You're going to want to have a pen and paper ready to draw. I like to draw rather than go straight to translation. There's something about drawing and working for it that makes it feel like the words will stick more. (Recently, at a workshop, I learned that drawing is a waste of time. That is, one should go straight to the English translation whenever possible).

## **Step II. Online Lesson Plan (What to do?)**

Your online lesson plan should be the same as if it were a face-to-face lesson plan. I'll explain what to do and give you some online tips and pitfalls you might encounter.

- I. Training your Language Parent. Just like a face-to-face lesson, your first job is going to be to train your LP. Just like always, I take the initiative and I tell my LP the following rules. (1) No English. (2) No grammar. (3) No corrections. Plus, if I'm doing a level four or level five language, that doesn't use the Roman Alphabet (A, B, C, D, E, etc.), I'll tell my LP I don't want ANY reading or writing. (See my "Rules" in chapter 1 for more on rules). Then, I'll train my LP how to teach me using magazines and children's books. (Remember, if your LP is an actual language teacher, it's going to be much harder to train your LP since most language teachers are very resistant to change. I don't recommend getting a LP who is an actual language teacher).
- II. Greetings. I'll ask my LP to teach me some greetings. I always start with simple greetings and eventually get to more advanced stuff. Greetings are easy to do online. I like to use lots of gestures, pictures, and drawings.
- III. Magazines. Just like a face-to-face language session, start with magazines. You'll need to train your LP how to teach you using magazines. Do this by first showing him/her a digital version of a magazine cover. Tell your LP you want him/her to give you a loving detailed explanation of everything in the magazine. Using English, show him/her how to do it. Pretending he/she is acquiring English, I use the digital front cover of the magazine and go into great detail about every picture on that front cover. I use lots of gestures and ask yes/no questions, reminding my LP that I want him/her to use lots of gestures and ask me yes/no questions about the pictures. I quickly forgive him/her if he starts asking me questions that are not yes/no questions, like, "What's this? What color is that? Etc." I simply remind him/her that those are not yes/no questions.



- IV. Past tense. (After about 20 hours). Using the computer version of Google Photos, tell and show your LP what you did yesterday, last night, and this morning. In fact, always have him/her go first. (For more on past tense, see the chapter “Past Tense”). Remember, he first tells you what he did first, later you tell him what you did and then lastly he again tells you what you did. The reason being is when you tell him what you did last night, yesterday, and this morning, you’ll most likely sound terrible. By him telling him what you did, he’ll be able to “clean it up” and make it sound perfect. :)
- V. TPR (After 10 hours). TPR online is pretty straight forward. You shouldn’t have any problems having your LP give you commands and you act out those commands via the computer.
- VI. Children’s stories (40 hours and on), Using your scanned copies of your children’s books, you’ll upload these to Zoom and show them via, “Share Screen.” Again, this will be much easier if they are made into PowerPoint presentations. Your LP should tell you each story three times. First time, he/she will tell you the story, slowly, stopping to ask questions, and giving you a chance to ask easy questions. During the second reading, your LP will close the book and tell you the story with the book closed. You follow along in your head. Don’t hesitate to stop your LP and ask questions at any time. For the third and final retell, your LP should ask you simple yes/no questions in the target language. Try to answer in complete sentences. Studies show that students who answer in complete sentences do better later (Ray, 2020).
- I. TPRS (60 hours and on). TPRS means you and your LP are going to choose any picture from a magazine or from an image online and make a funny, witty, wacky, interesting, bizarre, and unbelievable story about the people in that picture. To make it easier, have your LP keep notes of the story if he/she can; or you could keep notes. I like to draw the story using stick figures so we can both follow along and it’ll make it easier to review later, especially when the stories get convoluted and we add several characters (that’s a good thing).

For example, in my story about Hilary Clinton falling in love with her plastic surgeon, I would draw a stick figure of a doctor (mask, stethoscope, etc.) and put his name above his picture. Then I’ll draw a stick figure of Hillary and put hearts above both stick figures so I know who is “in love.” If two characters hate each other I might draw sad faces on both of them and cross out a heart. Plus I like to draw arrows for where the action of the story takes place. For example, if Hilary Clinton goes to Walmart to buy a special motorcycle for her fat plastic surgery ass, I’ll draw arrows and draw a building and call it Walmart. Just like with children’s stories, I have my LP tell each story three times: First time, we create the story together. Second time, he/she retells the story in its entirety. Third time he will ask me questions about the story.

### **Using the Whiteboard for Zoom**

Zoom has a feature called “whiteboard.” It’s like a digital blackboard or a digital chalkboard. I like it and I don’t like it. It’s not as user friendly as I’d like it to be and it’s hard to scale. I have trouble typing all the way across. It usually only lets me type two or three words per sentence, so my paragraphs end up looking like squares. If you can get the hang of it, try it out. It’s better than nothing.

### **Chatting with Zoom**

I much prefer to use Zoom Chat than to use the “Whiteboard.” It’s easy. It works every time. I can upload things. I can type things. If your LP wants to type out sentences, I’d use the chat function instead of the Whiteboard.

### **Sharing the Screen with Zoom**

For magazines and children’s stories, I use “Share screen.” But, it takes a little getting used to. By using “share screen” you’re able to share an entire website, like Google Photos, or anything else on your desktop, like a PowerPoint. It’s not as easy as it sounds so practice with it before your first meeting. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve used it with my students only to find out I’m the only one who could see the file or website.

### **Zoom mobile versus Zoom on the computer**

I’ve taught using both and they both have their advantages. I use Zoom for the computer for greetings, TPR, vocabulary, magazine pictures and children’s books. I use Zoom mobile for TPRS. I prefer Zoom mobile for TPRS because I like to put the mobile phone on a tripod which allows me to stand up, walk around a little bit, jump around if I have to, or pretend like I’m magically taking things out of my ass. (We did a story about Kim Kardashian who worked at a car wash, washing cars with butter. She stored the butter in her ass, of course).

I do NOT like Zoom mobile for screen sharing and uploading files since it’s often hard to find where the files or photos are on my mobile phone. Even photos can take up to 5 minutes to find and upload using Zoom for mobile. If it’s just you and your LP I wouldn’t bother with Zoom for mobile unless you have to. (In many countries teachers and students don’t have computers so they will have to use their phones).

### **How to teach using Comprehensible Input**

I created this language acquisition program not only for students, but equally as important, for those who teach languages and who want to teach using Comprehensible Input (CI). Everything I’ve done to acquire Arabic in one year, can easily be duplicated by instructors around the world, to teach any language. Clearly, teachers need to provide as much CI as

possible in the target language, include as much humor as possible and work towards lowering the affective-filter (the fear level of any student, when acquiring a new language.)

Some of the best instructors I've seen are Sign Language instructors and English as Second language (ESL) instructors in the US. I like these instructors for one simple reason: they provide huge amounts of CI and it's entirely in the target language. (Why so many other instructors veer from the target language on a regular basis is beyond me.) Whenever I take a language course at a college or university in the US, I'm almost always disappointed when instructors use so much English. I believe that students are smarter than most teachers give them credit for. Students can and should learn grammar at home. The teacher's job should be to supply as much CI in the target language; and, for the most part, leave grammar instruction for home.

In my own classroom, students learn grammar at home. They are given grammar textbook pages to read at home. They have grammar exercises to do at home. But for the most part these grammar exercises and grammar pages count for very little of their final grade. In fact I tell the students that as for myself, I don't care about grammar.

I have a number of students who could be considered a "grammarian," that is, they enjoy learning grammar. Many of these students crave grammar. Most students remember their language courses in high school or middle school and enjoy learning and studying grammar. I completely understand. If a student wants to learn grammar I completely understand, and I actually encourage it.

I explain to them that I'm not interested in grammar at all. My goal is to acquire grammar naturally and by acquiring the language naturally, the grammar will come and will be much stronger. I explain to them Krashen's monitor hypothesis, that if they learn too much grammar, too soon, it will hinder their natural production of the language. I make a big deal about "browsing grammar" and not spending too much time learning grammar.

On the first day of class we spend a great deal of time talking about the differences between acquisition and learning. I do the best job I can convincing them that acquisition is so much more powerful than learning. In the end most of my students accept this and sit back and relax. I explain to them that my class is a "Natural Approach" classroom where they will be acquiring the language "naturally." Of course I do all of this after having done an easy natural approach lesson during the first hour of class. (I never go over the syllabus during the first hour of class. I always teach during the first hour of all of my classes.)

As the semester unfolds, I have a system I use which I believe gives students the most comprehensible input allowable during the short time we have together. Most of these I've learned from CI workshops that I've attended. Many of them I've invented myself. This is more or less what I do on a daily basis in all of my classes. feel free to use all of these or pick and choose.

## **Saludos (greetings)**

Everyday I do saludos (greetings.) I make a big deal about this, a very big deal. I use plenty of pictures, drawings, slides, props, and anything else I can come up with. I spend a great deal of time just talking about how the students are feeling. Little by little I get to know my students and I add little things as the year goes on. Ideally, I would spend 30 minutes or an hour just doing saludos. There is nothing more important than how my students feel on any given day. I try and make them the most important thing in the class, such as, how they're doing, how their family is, how their job is going and anything else I can come up with, and of course I do it all in the target language. You'd be surprised how many things students want to talk about. You may have to draw, mime, guess, or gesture to find out what they're trying to say, and that's ok. It adds to the fun.

## **Weekend Chat**

Every Monday I make a big deal about what my students did over the weekend. Even in my beginning classes, where students are not expected to know the past tense, I still teach the past tense. (I introduce the past tense in all of my classes as soon as possible. I think a big mistake teachers make is to wait teaching the past tense until the second or third semester. Weekend Chat is an ideal way to teach the past tense early on and in the most natural way possible.

Using as many pictures and models as possible, I tell the students what I did over the weekend. I make a big deal about it and don't spend more than 10 minutes. At the same time I ask my students if they did the same things that I did. I try to come up with funny things like drinking, smoking, or even getting arrested (not me, them). I don't expect students to answer in complete sentences. I simply asked them if they did this or that last weekend. I usually choose three students first, and then I do what's called "triangulation."

For example, I ask student A if she went to the beach. If she says yes, I'll ask the class "where did student A go? Did student A go to the restaurant? Or, did student B go to the beach?" Then I'll ask "who went to the beach student a or student B?" I'll do this with two other students and continually repeat over and over again, "where did student A go? Where did student B go? Where did student C go? Who went to the beach? Who went to the restaurant? Who traveled to Las Vegas?" etc. I will circle around and around for about 10 minutes. I generally don't do this for more than 10 or 15 minutes because students will get bored if it's more than 10 or 15 minutes. I'm always aware that students get bored easily. Students' brains, just like my own, are constantly seeking and craving novelty. They want new things just like I want new things.

## **Class Introductions**

Every year on the first day of class I give my students a questionnaire. On the questionnaire I ask students simple questions, like why are you taking this class? Or, would you like to be fluent in Spanish? Or, tell me something interesting about yourself. The last question is key, because I'm going to use their answer to that specific question, or anything else they've said on the questionnaire, to talk about them during the next class. I don't expect my students to be able to introduce themselves. That would be foolish. But I use this time to give them tons and tons of comprehensible input and I do this by talking about each student individually in front of the class, all in the target language.

Armed with fresh knowledge about my students, first, I read each questionnaire with great detail, at home. I make a note at the top of each page with something interesting about the student. Students usually write things like, I have nine brothers and sisters, or I spent the last three months traveling through Europe, or I play in a rock band called "The greasy Toes," or I'm a single mother, or my husband and I have been married for two years, or I speak five languages, or I was born in Sri Lanka. It doesn't matter what they say. The important thing is I've got something to talk about the next day in class. (Actually, I do this on the third day of class, after they've returned them to me to read).

On the third day of class, I tell them how wonderful and interesting they are and I tell the class in the target language something new and interesting about each and every student in class. Since Spanish has a lot of cognates and or borrow words, it's super easy for me to talk about them in the target language.

The students love it because they want to know as much as they can about their new classmates and they're amazed at how much they understand. In some cases I'll translate difficult words into English. I have no problem with that. This is one of my favorite activities of the entire semester as we get to learn and hear about super crazy things about our classmates. In most cases we remember these unique, interesting things about our new classmates and in many cases we "use" and remember these new facts for the rest of the semester.

### **New Vocabulary**

In any world language class, the teaching of new vocabulary is paramount. Like many world language courses, we use a textbook. I use our textbook about half the time, maybe even less. I use the textbook to teach vocabulary plus it helps me to keep in line with my other colleagues who also use the textbook at our university. If there's a chapter on family, I teach family. If there's a chapter on food, I teach food. I do most of my teaching using pictures, props, models, and PowerPoint presentations with funny pictures. All of the vocabulary and all of my questions revolve around students in the class. Generally I talk about myself, and then talk about the students.. I do a lot of circling and triangulation. I constantly pick three students and then ask the entire class about those three students. We spend about 45 minutes everyday on new vocabulary. I provide the students with a vocabulary list from each chapter and if they want to study on their own at home, they can. I don't make a big deal about memorization because I

don't believe in memorization. They know this and we talk about it: Languages cannot be memorized. They must be acquired.

### **Grammar and Pop-Up-Grammar**

My students know I don't teach grammar. They know their job is to learn grammar if they choose, at home using the grammar textbook pages and the grammar exercises that go along with those pages. However, I do make one exception, and that is **pop-up-grammar**. Thanks to Alina Filipescu and the TPRS workshops I've been attending recently, I've decided to include **pop-up-grammar** in all of my lessons. Pop-up-grammar means I'll teach grammar as if it pops up, and I only do it for one minute or less. If I have to teach the same pop-up-grammar two or three times per semester, that's ok. I usually do PUG about 2-4 times per hour. I inform my students on the first day that they're going to be learning grammar via PUG a little bit each day. I don't plan which grammar I'm going to teach. I teach it literally as it pops up. Most of the time it lasts around 30 seconds and sometimes it may last up to 5 minutes. By not focusing on grammar and not explicitly teaching grammar, my students are getting the most amount of CI possible.

### **TPRS**

During the last couple of years, I have embraced TPRS more than ever in my teaching career. I've been using TPRS off and on for the last 25 years, but not exclusively, until now. It wasn't until I attended another TPRS conference 2 years ago that I decided to embrace TPRS wholeheartedly. TPRS has changed enormously in the last 25 years and I wasn't aware of that. (My First TPRS Workshop was 25 years ago) .

Now, in my own classes, the last hour of every class is dedicated entirely to TPRS. (Classes are 2.5 hours, two days a week). This is, without a doubt the most engaging, entertaining, an effective time during the entire two and a half hour class we have together.

My students know that the last hour of class is dedicated to TPRS or "storytime.". We take a short break before the last hour, so students come back fresh. (Just a little secret. Don't tell anyone, but the first hour of class is extremely boring compared to the last hour of class). I even do a TPRS lesson on the first day of class, so students know what they're getting into and see how fun it can be. They often applaud that first day, after experiencing their first TPRS story.

For those of you who may not be familiar with TPRS, it stands for "Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling." Students acquire language through storytelling and to a lesser extent, reading.

In my level one courses, in the beginning, I start with a scripted story. That is, I have a story, mostly already written, in my head. I provide a number of keywords to go along with the “scripted story” on the chalkboard or the overhead screen, usually five to ten new words,

For example, every year, during the first or second week of class, I like to do a story about a vampire or an angel. If this is the case, I'll write down five words that have to do with vampires or angels. Plus, I'll write down three verb structures, in the target language and translated to English, for example, “is, wants, and has.” I try not to teach more than three verb structures at a time.

Even though I've only given my students about eight new words, I know we will probably create a story that has more like 20 words. If any of the new words that pop up are difficult for my students to grasp, I translate them as they can up.. If the words are easy cognates, I usually don't translate them. (If students don't understand anything, they are to pass their hand above their hand giving me the signal, “Over my head. I don't understand. Some teachers have students stomp on the ground).

All of my TPRS stories include at least one actor. I usually choose the most active student or I'll choose a volunteer. I invite the student to the front of the class, introduce him/her in the target language, and we start our story.

The story always revolves around the student actor. In the case of the vampire, I'll ask the class, “who is this? What's his name? He's a vampire. Is he a good vampire or bad vampire? Where does he live? Is he old or young?” I allow my students to call out suggestions in English or Spanish. As a rule of thumb, I'm always thinking one or two steps ahead of my students and I almost accept the craziest answers or I create a crazy answer. For example, if one student says “this is a bad vampire” and another student says “he's a good vampire,” I'll say, “No. On Monday he's a good vampire and Tuesdays he's a good vampire.” Rarely do I accept the first answer.

The rest of the story depends on the class and myself (and how much sleep I got the night before). I'll ask the class about the backstory of the character. In this case the vampire, I'll ask them, “Where does he live? Does he have a family? Does he have a car? What kind of car does he drive? Does he speak English or Spanish?” etc. During the first weeks of school I try to keep the backstory short, including just things like, “what's his name? Where does he live? Is he good or bad?” Eventually, the backstory will grow and in some cases take up half the story. The important thing is: I'm constantly repeating the details about the story and constantly asking them yes/no questions about the character we just created.

At some point, we need a conflict. Every good story in the history of time has a conflict. Otherwise, it wouldn't be a very good story. Your conflict doesn't need to be a homerun conflict. There is nothing wrong with creating a mini-conflict and then solve it. A short, simple story with a simple conflict is recommended for beginning courses. Don't worry, your stories will naturally

grow and progress. The easiest conflicts are: wants something, needs something, is in love with someone, is angry, sad, lonely, happy. Some positive conflicts could be, "has too much money. Is too attractive, is too friendly, is too smart, is too tall, is too generous." Any superlative or hyperbole will work. Some of my favorites are: addictions, jealousy, and revenge.

As the semester progresses, I go from scripted stories to "ask stories." An ask-story is the most exciting, entertaining, and effective way to teach and supplies copious amounts of CI at the same time. An "Ask-Story" is a story with no script in which I have no idea where it's going and I have no idea where it's going to end. For Ask-Stories, I always start with three verb structures. I write the verb structures on the board in both the target language and English. For example, I might decide to teach "brings, returns, and buys." ( In every case I include the present tense and the past tense all translated to English.) I inform the students that we are going to *try* and use these three verbs structures in our daily story. Half the time at least, we never even use these verb structures. We end up using completely different verb structures since the student usually steer the story in a different, and often more interesting direction. (Most of our best stories are "Ask-Stories")

To begin an "ask-story," I first choose an actor or actress and he or she stands in front of the class. I ask the class, "Who is this? Is this a person, an animal, or a thing? (Some of the funniest stories are about things. if you'd like to hear some of the stories we've done, check them out on my YouTube channel). After we establish who the character is, we create the backstory of the character. The backstory can include just about anything such as family, children, work, love interest, age, home, nationality, sexual orientation, height, weight, etcetera. I try not to include everything because we might uncover new things about our new character later.

Again, the most important thing about any story is the conflict. A conflict can be just about anything you can imagine. Some of the most common conflicts include, love, hate, money, jealousy, rage, desire, etcetera. Recently, I've become very good at creating conflicts and having my characters try to solve them. One thing I've started doing is creating *extra* conflicts to any story. For example, while trying to solve one conflict, another conflict arises unexpectedly. You can do this as many times as you like and it never gets old. If somebody is driving to the Grand Canyon to find their long-lost teddy bear, I'll have the character get a flat tire, hit a deer, pick up a hitchhiker, or fall in love with a waiter/waitress (or two waiter/waitresses) at a restaurant. There's no limit to adding conflicts to any main story. If you feel like the story is getting boring, add a conflict.

### **The sweet 16**

Most of my teaching, especially in my beginning classes, revolves around the Sweet-16 verbs, those verbs most used in any language. The Sweet-16 verbs are *to be, to, want, to have, to exist (location), to to leave, can, to hear, to come, to give, to make, to say, to bring, to put, to get (sick, mad, etc.), to like, and to go.* (I have this list of verbs on my desk and look at it



while lesson planning). My students know them and know they need to hear them as many times as possible during a story. Eventually, after I introduce all of the Sweet-16 verbs, I choose other high frequency verbs, but it's almost impossible not to use the Sweet-16 verbs during any story. I don't ask my students to memorize the Sweet-16 verb.. I tell them that memorizing them is not acquisition.

### **The Rule of Four**

The Rule of Four was recently introduced to me at a TPRS conference by Blaine Ray, the inventor of TPRS. The rule of four means that for each story, my goal is to have four characters at least. (This doesn't always work out but it's always my goal.) The four characters are: a student from the class. This student will be the main character, for example possibly a tree, a bird, George Washington, Donald Trump, or anything. The second character will be an actual famous person, dead or alive, such as Mike Pence, Babe Ruth, Zombie Michael Jackson, Etc. The third person will be me.. By adding myself to a story, students are able to hear the first person singular as much as possible. In Spanish, different from Chinese or Japanese, the first person singular and the third person singular are different. So, it's important that the students hear the first person singular as much as possible. The fourth person is an actual student in the class; or, this is super funny, a student who is absent from class.

By adding a student from class, it almost always makes the story incredibly funny. Remember, one of my goals for every story is to add novelty and laughter.

### **Circling and Triangulation**

During any story, I'm constantly asking questions about the characters in the story. "Where did he go? Who is she?" etc. Plus I'll ask the class personal questions that have to do with the story. for example, "do you believe in vampires? Is baseball your favorite sport? Did you have a puppy as a child? What was his or her name?" This is called circling or triangulation because I'm asking the class as a whole, or I'll choose one or two students and ask just about those one or two students.

### **Retelling the Stories**

After we as a class create a story and conclude the story and after a short one minute break (for them to recharge), retell the same story, but in the past tense, so students hear the story a second time. Retelling a story in the past tense is super easy because it takes much less time. We've already created the story therefore retelling it takes much less time. Of course during this time I'm not just retelling the story, I'm asking students questions. In beginning courses, I'll ask them simple yes-no questions. For example, "Did the vampire go to Walmart? Did the vampire buy chocolate?" In a more advanced class, I might take this time to teach the subjunctive or the past subjunctive, such as, "Did the vampire's mom want him to go to Walmart? She wanted him to buy chocolate right?" During any retell I'm constantly asking the

students question. If there's time, I'll embellish the story, I'll add things to the story that we never talked about. I'll argue with them, "yes this happened I told you this happened." They usually argue back and it's all good and fun. (You can embellish any story for as long as you want depending on how much time you have.) All in all, creating a story and doing a retell, take approximately 45 minutes.

### **Reading**

TPRS stands for "Teaching Proficiency through Reading and storytelling." Therefore, every day, after we create a story, we read a new story. That means, every day, I have a story already written and ready to go for my students to read. Usually this is a simple story that uses vocabulary that we've been acquiring or words from the previous day's story. (Every story is exactly one page long). The stories I write are as crazy as the stories we create during our ask-stories or scripted stories. Crazy is the rule. I can make the stories as crazy as I want because I have time. It usually takes me about 15 to 20 minutes to write a good crazy story.

During the last 15 minutes of every class we read this story, the story that I created the day before. We read the story together, and any words students don't know or understand we translate. Any verb structures the students don't know or understand, we translate.

### **Homework**

Like most instructors I assign homework. But unlike most instructors, 99% of my homework is CI. Each day in class, as we create a story, I audio record that story and after class, I email students the story via Dropbox so they can listen to it at home. Therefore while we're creating a story in class, I wear a microphone and record the story. My students know this and they know their homework is to listen to the story again outside of class. Their homework is to listen to at least one story everyday. Most stories are around 30 minutes including the retell. Any word students don't remember or understand they should jot down the best they can and ask me the next day. By the end of the semester students have 32 stories they can listen to on a daily basis.

For my second year students, they have two choices for homework: they can read or listen to stories.. All of my second year students have a novel that they read at home. These are short novels, in most cases written by other TPRS instructors (They can be found at <http://tprsbooks.com>). Students choose a novel from my collection of over 100 novels that I have in my class library. Students are instructed to choose a novel in which they understand 90% of the story. Their homework is to read that book at home for 30 minutes each night or they can listen to a story the class created.

**For those wanting to acquire Arabic!**

Acquiring Arabic is different from almost all other languages in the world. The truth is, there are two Arabic languages. The first is Modern Standard Arabic. This is the language of the Quran, the language of the individual governments around the world, the language of textbooks, the language of academics, and the language that all Arabic speakers can understand around the world. Hence the name, Modern Standard Arabic. The second is the local Arabic dialect spoken by any group of people, such as Egyptian Arabic, Lebanese Arabic, Jordanian Arabic. The name for any local dialect of Arabic is "Amiya," while MSA is referred to as "Fusha."

The problem is, nobody really speaks MSA, outside of the mosques, government seats, or university settings. MSA has been kept alive by countries and governments around the world, so all Arabic speakers can understand each other, (sort of like if France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy got together and decided to speak a unified language.) Also, Arabic is the language of the Quran and according to Muslim law, the Quran cannot be translated into any other language. It must remain in its original Arabic. The Quran is written in MSA. In fact, Modern Standard Arabic should really be called traditional Arabic.

Therefore, when one goes to a school or university to study Arabic, whether it be in the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia, in almost every case, the only choice will be Modern Standard Arabic. As of this writing, there are schools around the world that are teaching local dialect Arabic, but in most cases, unless one asks, the courses will be taught in Modern Standard Arabic. Only in Arabic speaking countries will one find courses in local dialect Arabic,

For example if one takes Arabic courses at UCLA or Yale or the University of Miami, one will undoubtedly be taking Modern Standard Arabic. I have argued with Arabic Scholars and Arabic teachers, often until I'm blue in the face. Almost unanimously, Arabic instructors and scholars insist that Arabic students should learn both. (Imagine me telling my Spanish students that they should learn Latin and then Spanish if they want to speak Spanish?) It troubles me that there are no courses available for students who want to study local dialects.

I've met several students of Arabic who have majored in Arabic and then went on to study abroad in Jordan. They've all told me that studying Modern Standard Arabic was a waste of time, because they had to learn the local dialect when they arrived. But how do so many children learn Modern Standard Arabic? While in Egypt I investigated and did a lot of research on Modern Standard Arabic. It turns out that children in Arabic speaking countries begin to learn Modern Standard Arabic at around age 10. All books are written in Modern Standard Arabic and most classes are conducted in Modern Standard Arabic. In the universities, all classes are conducted in Modern Standard Arabic and all textbooks around the world are written in Modern Standard Arabic. In fact I was told that in many cases, students ask questions in local-dialect Arabic "Amiya" and the instructors answer in Modern Standard Arabic. I have never seen anything quite similar to this.

Therefore, one needs to decide how important it is to learn Modern Standard Arabic. But, know that nobody speaks it, outside of the mosques and the government buildings. For me it was an easy decision. I chose Egyptian Arabic for several important reasons. Egyptian Arabic is the most common around the world. Egypt has over 90 million inhabitants, more than all other Arabic speaking countries combined. Also, Egypt is the center of the Arabic-speaking film industry. Arabic speakers around the world watch Egyptian television and movies. This is not to say there are no wonderful Lebanese music or Lebanese movies, it's just a fact that Egypt has dominated the film and music industries over the last 50 years. The huge population combined with this fact, for me, made Egyptian Arabic an easy choice. Many of my Arabic-speaking friends tell me they can understand Egyptian Arabic, while my Egyptian friends tell me they cannot understand Arabic from other countries.

For those who are serious about speaking and acquiring Arabic, I don't believe taking Arabic at a college or university is the right choice, unless one is taking Arabic for religious or devotional reasons. Unfortunately, I don't think you're going to find any colleges or universities who teach a local dialect of Arabic, unless you actually go to the country where you want to speak that country's Arabic. There you will find courses in local dialect Arabic. But even there, most classes are taught in MSA.

For those of you who have seen my video, all of my Arabic acquisition was done with the help of magazines and children's stories. I can't read or write a word of Arabic, and I don't want to. I honestly believe if I hadn't acquired Arabic naturally I would never have learned it. If you are serious, I would do what I did, use magazines and children's stories. This cannot be done alone. You must find a tutor or a language parent to assist you. Given that Arabic is such a difficult language, I would spend at least one hundred hours just on magazine pictures and have your language parent describe those magazine pictures in great detail with lots of yes-no questions.

After about a hundred hours of acquisition through magazine pictures, I would graduate to children's books. My rule of thumb is, I do one magazine an hour and one children's book for an hour. I make sure that my teacher speaks very slowly and points at the pictures. I make sure that I understand at least 90% before going on. I always have my teacher tell me the children's stories three times. The first time, I have her tell me the story and I make comments as she asks me easy yes or no questions. The second time, she closes the book and retells the story. This forces me to follow the story in my head. (It's actually a lot easier than it sounds). I ask lots of questions if I need to and use English if necessary. The third time, I have my teacher ask me questions about the story. He or she will ask me questions in order, so it's easy for me to answer. I make sure I understand 90% of the story before we go on. I always make sure to audio record the story so I can listen to it later while I'm by myself.

Once again, MSA is not spoken in any Arabic speaking country. If you acquire MSA and try to speak Arabic, you will be understood. Everyone understands and can speak MSA. But in normal conversations, you will never hear MSA. With that said, if you are with a group of Arabic speakers, at a party, in a restaurant, at a local event, etc, they will NOT be speaking MSA and

you will not understand what they are saying. The only way you will be able to communicate is if you are in a one-on-one conversation with only one other Arabic speaker. I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound at all fun. I prefer to acquire the local dialect so I can communicate with everyone in any situation.

Learning a language because you have to take an exam

Recently somebody wrote me and they asked how can I do well on a Chinese exam given by the Chinese government? At first I was hesitant to answer. I thought to myself I'm not teaching people how to pass exams, I'm teaching people how to acquire languages. I've always been against exams. In fact my own Spanish University classrooms, I give exams based on reading comprehension. In my opinion exams are just games to see who can memorize the most amount of material in the least amount of time. Exams have been given for centuries possibly thousands of years, and I still don't believe in giving exams.

In any case, my first instinct was to write him and tell him hey I don't teach people how to pass exams I teach people how to acquire languages. But then I thought of a colleague of mine Donna from Tennessee. she has the highest grade of any french AP exams students in the state of Tennessee. She's the most decorated French teacher in the entire state of Tennessee. She has the most students pass the AP French exam. one thing I love about Donna is she does this using tprf. I know this because I saw Donna during a tprs conference in Boston Massachusetts. she's one of the strongest eprs instructors I've ever seen. she was teaching beginning course on tprs and she blew me away with her stories about Russian presidents writing a tiger and drinking vodka.

So when some I responded to my new friends and I told him to do it exactly what Donna Thomas. That is I told him to do tprs. in fact I told him to do 33% listening 33% green and 33% per cent talking. I don't know if I should have told him to do 33% talking because as I've mentioned several times speaking is not comprehensible input. I'll say that again speaking is not comprehensible input.

Millions of children around the world Champs language exams every year. in the United States it's called the AP language exam. other countries have different names for it. you have two choices. you can learn the material, learn the grammar, memorize the material, memorize the vocabulary, memorize the grammar, and regurgitate the answers on an AP exam. (however I've heard that they are now requiring a speaking portion on the exam and.) your other choice is to acquire the language and passed exam at the same time. If you choose to acquire the language and concentrate on input, reading, comprehensible input, stories, and sparse amounts of grammar, not only will you pass the exam oh, but you're actually have a choir the language and take something with you, something that most students don't take with him after the AP exam.

If you don't believe me, ask your friends who've taken the AP language exam. Take out your contacts look at your contacts and decide who here is taking the AP language exam. then ask

yourself, which one of these persons speak language fluently or semi-formal only? Which one of these people still remembers what they learned or acquire? In my case every one of the people I know who I'm taking the AP language exam including my nieces, friends children, Neighbors, can't remember hardly anything from the AP language exam. there's no secret why they don't remember anything from the AP language exam. the fact is it didn't acquire the language. they learn a language. in fact most AP teachers I know of give workshops on Fridays and Saturdays. the teachers provide fresh hot pizza and the student spend hours and hours on ends memorizing rules, grammar, vocabulary, tricks, Etc. Basically every AP language student I know studies and learns the language. except for that one exception Donna from Tennessee. Christians don't have to cram for the exam. Her students has been acquiring the language all along. So my number one recommendation for those of you who have to take an exam or are going to take an exam, foremost acquire the language. Acquire the language using all of the tools that I've laid out in this book. first and foremost the student should concentrate on comprehensible input. the student should get as much listening practice as humanly possible. The student should read as much as possible. (don't forget the 90-10 rule students were reading should understand 90% of what they're reading or the comprehensible input won't be affected) . ideally student shouldn't have to tram for an AP exam oral stage given exam. In fact if you have to cram to take an exam you're not ready for that exam. But if you want to study for an exam and you have enough hours behind you to take that exam, I would suggest the following:

1. Get as much comprehensible input as you can (tpr, tprs, reading, listening)
2. To study for the exam I would read as much as possible.
3. If your grammar is weak then by all means study grammar.

### The Power of Magazines (and pictures)

Magazines and picture work becuase your brain like pictures. When we're children, most of what we acquire is done via pictures. Therefore, by using pictures while you acquire a new language, this new vocabulary, new concepts and even grammar structures end up exactly where you need them, in your long term vocabulary. The more times you hear the words accompanied with the pictures, during a real life conversation about these pictures, your memory is exapanded and you remember much more. So when you go to recall this vocab, it's almost always accompanied with a picture, in your long term memory, making it easier to recall and easier to use.

What's wrong with memorization?

Memorization is NOT acquisition. Memorization almost always ends up in your short term memory. In fact, most students like memorization because it's easy. Anyone can memorize thousands of words. Memorization is forcing language. It doesn't go into the long term memory and it doesn't work. I have met hundreds of students who know thousands of vocabulary but cannot speak the language. Many Japanese students in Japan spend hundreds of hours memorizing English vocabulary but can't speak English. When I was in Egypt, my Arabic teacher knew thousands of vocabulary words in English but couldn't speak English. She continued to amaze me with the varied English words that she knew. For example, she knew how to say things like, "Adventure, freedom, stubborn, rebel, etc." but for the life of her, she could not speak English. Quickly, my spoken Arabic became better than her English but she consistently knew more vocabulary than me.

Yes/no questions

Your teacher should be asking you yes/no questions from the very start. Just make sure it's not every other sentence. It should appear like you're on a first date or an important interview. The questions should revolve around the magazine pictures and or children's stories. Also, if you or your teacher want to go on a tangent, which I highly recommend, you'll probably need to draw the sequence of the story or tangent you're on. For example if we see a picture of a dirtbike type motorcycle, I like dirtbikes. So, I might say I had one. I bought one ten years ago, then I sold it and bought a bigger one. Then I sold that one and bought a bigger one. I'd illustrate this story with arrows and dates, plus after I tell my teacher this story, or in many cases, struggle to tell my teacher this story, I'll have her repeat my story back to me. (I usually say, in the TL, "OK, what happened? Tell me the story I just told the story you just told me, please")