



3 Great Ways to Establish the Structure Meaning

While there are many ways to establish meaning for the structures you are going to use in a TPRS[®] lesson, three techniques have proven to be more effective over the years.

Structures that can be easily understood through movement (like the word “run” or “dance”) are perfect for James Asher’s TPR method. When you combine your students’ muscles in the memory process, the repetition effect will be enhanced and their own bodies will work with you to retain that structure. The physical activity also increases blood flow to the brain which can stimulate the language memory.

Some structures can also be conveyed by use of gestures or symbols. Perhaps to improve the students’ retention of the structure “likes” the symbol of a heart or a gesture of your hands over your heart or a heart drawn in the air might serve the purpose. In some TPRS[®] classes, students suggest the gestures they will use. There are even teachers who know American Sign Language and who teach both the ASL signs and the target language at the same time.

If the structure doesn’t lend itself to movement (like “however” or “therefore”), a quick way to move past this part of establishing meaning is to post the target structures on the board along with the English translation of them. As the lesson progresses, the teacher can ensure student comprehension by pointing to these translations.

Whichever method a TPRS[®] teacher chooses for establishing meaning for the structures, it should move the student further along in the goal of using the structure in a grammatically accurate conversational context.

-- by Debra A Read