



Planning a TPRS® Lesson: Designing the Learning Activities

Once a TPRS® teacher has chosen the focus structure or structures for the day's lesson, they need to devise the learning activities that will move the students toward the goal of using those structures accurately in a conversational context. Most current TPRS® materials suggest between 50 to 100 repetitions of a structure in context for it to be acquired by students. This doesn't mean the student has to merely hear the structure 50 to 100 times, but the structure has to be used in a meaningful way so the brain will see it as valuable to retain.

First, the teacher has to introduce the structure to their students. This can be done in various ways, depending on the structure itself. (*See our article on Establishing Meaning.*) Since the introduction is the first encounter the students will have with this structure, a positive experience at this point will set the tone for the other parts of the lesson. The TPRS® teacher can foster this by reducing ambiguity in the students' minds. Although some people enjoy figuring out puzzles and riddles, this can often cause many language students' affective filters to rise. If they're not sure what the exact meaning of the structure is, students might begin to close their minds off to comprehending the activities to come. Giving students a clear meaning, though, can set the stage for the rest of the lessons.

When the meaning has been clarified, the teacher can use that structure in various ways to begin the acquisition process. At this point, students begin to hear the language used repetitiously in a conversational context through personalized questions and answers (PQA).

Many teachers ask how long the PQA portion of the lesson should last, but that's difficult to say. It depends on how comfortable the students appear to be with the new structures and how engaged the class is in the discussion. In fact, some teachers continue the comparing and contrasting from the PQA through the story time. This opens the door to even more repetitions of the target structures.

From there, the teacher plans a skeleton backup story in case no good story nugget emerges from the PQA time. Rounding out the lesson, another story with the same target structures is written out for use during the reading time.

-- by Debra A Read