



Planning a TPRS® Lesson: Determining the Content

One of the first differences a teacher might find between the TPRS® method and using a textbook is how they prepare a lesson.

Traditional teachers often decide on their content by the arrangement in their textbooks. What they cover in any particular lesson will depend on what concepts the text has joined together in a chapter. The learning goals are often written in terms of the pages and grammatical concepts included during that day's lesson.

While TPRS® teachers are definitely concerned about grammar, they view it as more of an outcome than a goal. The goal in TPRS® is to get the students to use the language accurately in a conversational context.

Because of this, planning for a TPRS® lesson requires consideration of how the day's material can come together in a contextual format. A TPRS® teacher focuses on the structures they will need to engage the students in a comprehensible and meaningful dialogue.

The first part of planning in TPRS® is to decide on what the main focus structure (or structures) will be. Many TPRS® lessons include three structures, but one or two is also very common. A structure is an excerpt from the language that is foundational for using the language in a conversation.

As an example, let's say the teacher decides to give the students practice in using the concept of "afraid." In both French and Spanish, this is translated by actually saying, "to have fear." This would be "avoir peur" in French. This is a structure, but it is not really all of the structure that should be included in the lesson. The full structure needs the word "of" (de) because to use the phrase "afraid" in a conversation, you will most likely want to say what you are afraid "of."

When the TPRS® teacher writes their lesson plan, they would list "avoir peur de" as the content of the lesson. The entire lesson is then built around this structure with the goal of finding various conversational contexts to repeatedly use "avoir peur de" in all of its different forms. While it might appear that the lesson covers only one structure, in reality it will cover most of the various permutations of that structure including each form of the verb with the appropriate subject, how "avoir peur de" is used in questions, and a large variety of other vocabulary to support the main structure.

-- by Debra A Read