

TPR STORYTELLING: HISTORY AND THEORY

Total Physical Response (TPR) Storytelling is an instructional strategy based on Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrel's work in developing *The Natural Approach* and James Asher's work in developing Total Physical Response. The goal of both of these strategies is to allow students to learn a second language in much the same manner as we learn our first language—through the senses and comprehensible sensory input.

Total Physical Response (TPR) involves language learners kinesthetically: commands and modeling provide the basis by which students act out verbal cues, establishing an immediate physiological connection of a word with its corresponding action.

The Natural Approach focuses on providing language input that is immediately comprehensible to the listener: visual cues and gestures allow for rapid comprehension without the need for translation.

Both *The Natural Approach* and TPR rely on exposing students to as much comprehensible language as possible and allowing students to absorb that language much as they absorbed their first language.

More in-depth information on the theory, research and results of these two strategies may be found in the books *The Natural Approach* by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrel, *Learning Another Language Through Movement* by James Asher, and *TPR Is More Than Commands* by Contee Seely and Elizabeth Romijn.

In evaluating instructional strategies for teaching language, by far the most important consideration is that of retention. In his book *Brain Switching*, James Asher addresses the question of short- vs. long-term retention of language. He explores the reasons behind the success of movement, rhythm, songs, stories and pictures in promoting long-term retention. All of these modes of instruction stimulate the right side of the brain—which is where long-term memory is stored. One of the main reasons why TPR Storytelling is so effective is because it promotes long-term retention of meaningful language.