

Research on TPR Storytelling (TPRS)

A handout for teachers, parents, students, and administrators, updated summer 2016

What is TPRS?

TPRS is a language teaching method designed to develop real fluency. Students and teachers spend class time speaking in the target language about interesting, comprehensible stories.



Is TPRS supported by research?

Yes—there have been 24 studies to date directly comparing TPRS with traditional foreign language teaching (using a textbook and grammar-based syllabus). In every study, TPRS students outperform traditional students on some or all of the language skills tested (see table below). There have also been 17 studies on the efficacy of TPRS by itself, which show that it significantly improves motivation, vocabulary, and fluency.

Research Results on TPRS (comparative studies)			Lichtman, 2016
TPRS outperforms another teaching method	TPRS equals another teaching method	Another teaching method outperforms TPRS	
Garczynski (2003), Perna (2007), Kariuki & Bush (2008), Jennings (2009), Spangler (2009), Varguez (2009), Watson (2009), Castro (2010), Nijhuis & Vermaning (2010), Beal (2011), Foster (2011), Oliver (2012), Dziedzic (2012), De Vlaming (2013), Murray (2014), Roberts & Thomas (2014), Safdarian (2013), Blanton (2015), Cubucku (2014), Demir & Cubucku (2014), Merinnage De Costa (2015)	Garczynski (2003), Perna (2007), Jennings (2009), Spangler (2009), Varguez (2009), Castro (2010), Beal (2011), Foster (2011), Holleny (2012), Dziedzic (2012), Murray (2014), Roberts & Thomas (2014), Safdarian (2013), Blanton (2015), Cox (2015), Pippins & Krashen (2016)	Perna (2007), Beal (2011), Foster (2011), Murray (2014), Blanton (2015), Merinnage De Costa (2015)	

What benefits can I expect from TPRS?

The strongest benefits of TPRS over traditional teaching are on **reading** (8 studies), **vocabulary** (7 studies), **grammar** (6 studies), and **speaking** (6 studies). TPRS students typically outperform traditional students on these skills on a variety of assessments. For the skills of listening and writing, TPRS students sometimes equal and sometimes outperform traditional students.

Why does TPRS outperform traditional language teaching?

TPRS is an input-based method: students hear and read larger amounts of *comprehensible input* in the target language in TPRS classes than in traditional classes. Class time is spent using the language for real communication, primarily in the interpretive and interpersonal modes, but also in the presentational mode. TPRS focuses on the most useful vocabulary, and is highly engaging.

How can I learn more about research on TPRS?

For references and more information about the above studies, see page 364-379 of *Fluency Through TPR Storytelling*, Ray & Seely, 7th edition (2015) or visit forlang.niu.edu/~klichtman/tprs.html.