

USING EASY-READER NOVELS TO TEACH SECOND LANGUAGES

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Who Am I?

- Spanish 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11/12 at Calgary Academy
- comprehensible input and TPRS® (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling)
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Why Read?

- time spent in reading for pleasure is more valuable for foreign language development than time spent in direct instruction
- more than 70% of a literate person's vocabulary in her first language comes from reading
- comprehension and language acquisition increase when a person reads narrowly, because the reader sees the same words used over and over again
- gaining vocabulary through reading is 10 times faster than studying word lists alone

Easy-Reader Novels

- good to change things up
- easy-readers have limited new vocabulary
- good plots and relatable characters
- often includes cultural references or takes place in the target language culture
- students feel so smart when they can read (and understand) a whole "novel"
- can build your curriculum for the year around vocabulary required to read novel
- the goal is not to 'finish' or 'get through' a novel; it is to use the novel as a vehicle for providing a language-rich environment

Stephen Krashen

- prominent second-language researcher
- hypotheses:
 - ▣ acquisition-learning hypothesis
 - ▣ input hypothesis
 - ▣ monitor hypothesis
 - ▣ natural order hypothesis
 - ▣ affective filter hypothesis



Acquisition vs. Learning

Acquisition

- subconscious “picking up” of language
- acoustical
- almost instinctive
- focus on input (message)
- long-term results

Learning

- conscious study of language
- intellectual
- brain power
- focus on output (form)
- short-term results

Input

- learners progress in their knowledge of the language when they comprehend language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level ($i+1$)
- reading and listening
- input should be comprehensible, compelling, contextualized, high frequency, repetitive

Choosing A Novel

- comprehensible and level-appropriate
- interesting
- culturally authentic
- success = students understand, engage in and ENJOY the reading

Where to Find Easy-Reader Novels

- <http://www.tprstorytelling.com>
- <http://www.blaineraytprs.com>
- <http://miracanyon.com>

Other Resources

- many novels have extensive teacher's guides available for purchase
- audio book on CD or digital audio files for downloading
- Pinterest boards with cultural resources and links
- teacher-created activities and handouts

Pre-reading Activities

- teach high-frequency vocabulary
- backwards plan
- teach other vocabulary
- teach background information
- teach culture
- develop characters
- have students make predictions
- embedded readings

High-Frequency Vocabulary

- choose useable chunks of language
- choose based on frequency
- good structures are often verb-driven
- “Super Seven”: location, existence, possession, identity, preference, motion, volition
- limit vocabulary

Spanish Grade 7 (6-Year Program)

- chosen based on novel *Tumba*, by Mira Canion
- hay, se llama, es, tiene, le dice, quiere, va a, habla, mira, agarra, tiene hambre, come, bebe, corre, camina, está en, ve, se pone, le da, busca, compra, le gusta, duerme, se despierta, abre, cierra

Backwards Planning

- make a list of most used structures in a novel
- narrow the list down to a manageable amount
- useable chunks of language
- choose based on frequency
- good structures are often verb-driven
- animals, colours, weather, etc. are NOT high-frequency structures

YEAR PLAN Spanish 7 (6-Year Program)		
MONTH	UNITS TO TEACH	
February 3 weeks	Storytelling Unit #1 Target Structures: hay, se llama, es Thematic Vocab: Self, Basic Greetings, Calendar, Alphabet Grammar Focus: Ser, Subject Pronouns	Storytelling Unit #2 Target Structures: tiene, le dice Thematic Vocab: Question Words, Family, Descriptive Adjectives Grammar Focus: Tener, Definite and Indefinite Articles
March 3 weeks	Storytelling Unit #3 Target Structures: quiere, va a Thematic Vocab: Animals, Numbers 1-10 Grammar Focus: Ir	Storytelling Unit #4 Target Structures: habla, mira, agarra Thematic Vocab: Occupations Grammar Focus: Present Tense -AR Verbs
April 4 weeks	Storytelling Unit #5 Target Structures: tiene hambre, come, bebe Thematic Vocab: Food, Numbers 21-30 Grammar Focus: -Present Tense -ER/-IR Verbs	Storytelling Unit #6 Target Structures: corre, camina, está (en) Thematic Vocab: Community Places/Buildings Grammar Focus: Directional Prepositions, Estar
May 4 weeks	Storytelling Unit #7 Target Structures: ve, se pone, le da Thematic Vocab: Possessive Adjectives, Numbers 31-100 Grammar Focus: Noun/Adjective Agreement	Storytelling Unit #8 Target Structures: busca, compra, le gusta Thematic Vocab: Hobbies and Pastimes Grammar Focus: Gustar + Noun, Gustar + Verb,
June 4 weeks	Storytelling Unit #9 Target Structures: duerme, se despierta Thematic Vocab: House Grammar Focus: Prepositions, Conjunctions (pero, y, o, entonces, porque)	Storytelling Unit #10 Target Structures: abre, cierra Thematic Vocab: Vehicles, Weather Grammar Focus: Por (Transportation)

Other Vocabulary

- some vocabulary can be taught briefly right before reading each chapter
- some vocabulary may not need to be taught
 - eg. El teléfono suena: «ring, ring»). El doctor exclamó: «Yo soy especialista en trasplantes»).

Background Information

- what information do students need to know in order to understand the plot/storyline?
- build background knowledge and interest about topic, setting, etc.

Culture

- geography
- history
- possible to make connections even if the novel doesn't take place in the TL culture

Character Development

- do some pre-engagement activities that help students identify with and connect emotionally to characters

Predictions

- create questions in the TL to use as prediction prompts
 - ▣ general prompts
 - ▣ language-specific prompts (can help you recycle vocabulary, as well as highlight new vocabulary)

Embedded Reading

- can create these for novels
- made up of multiple versions of a text
- each version has the previous one “embedded” within it
- students are exposed to repeated versions of the text and engage in a variety of activities with the text
- create a clear visual
- are “easy” so students feel successful
- offer variety

Base Version

An ant went to the ocean.
He saw many fish.
The fish swam away.

Second Reading

An ant went to the ocean to find a friend.

He saw many fish swimming in the ocean.

He said, "Hello fish!"

The fish swam away.

The poor ant!

Who will be his friend?

Third Reading

One day a lonely ant went to the ocean to find a friend. He saw many fish swimming around in the deep blue waters of the ocean. The ant thought, "Great! New friends!" He said, "Hello fish!" Unfortunately, the fish swam away. The poor lonely ant was alone again! He walked down the beach thinking, "Why did they swim away?" He was so discouraged. Would he try again another day?

Fourth Reading

One day a lonely ant decided to make some new friends. He was tired of the ant hill. He was tired of the ant hill and tired of being just like everyone else. He decided to leave the anthill to find a new life. So, he moved to Hawaii. The first day, he went to the beach to find a friend. He saw many fish swimming around in the deep blue waters of the ocean.

The ant thought, "Great! New friends!" He said "Hello fish!" Unfortunately, the fish swam away. The poor lonely ant was alone again! He walked down the beach thinking, "Why did they swim away?" He was discouraged, but he wanted to try again.

During Reading Activities

- read and discuss
- ensure comprehension
- make connections
- teach grammar

Read and Discuss

- read aloud in TL
- choral translation
- talk about content by circling important information or sentences with key structures
- personalize content by relating it to the students

How to “Circle”

- easy way to get tons of repetition on target structures
- read a sentence from the novel out loud
- ask a question to which the answer is YES
- ask questions to which the answer is NO by substituting other subjects, verbs, and predicates
- follow them up with either/or questions
- ask open-ended questions to which students know the answers
- ask open-ended questions to add more details that are not known

Bianca Nieves y los 7 toritos

Marcos quería ser un torero. Quería ser un torero como 'El Julí', el nombre profesional de Julián Nieves. ¡En España, los toreros son más famosos que los actores! y Marcos quería ser un torero famoso. Admiraba a todos los toreros, pero admiraba más a 'El Julí'... y a su talentosa hija, Bianca.

Circling Example

- Statement: Marcos quería ser un torero.
- YES: ¿Marcos quería ser un torero?
- NO: ¿Marcos era un torero?
- EITHER/OR: ¿Marcos quería ser un torero o quería ser un abogado?
- OPEN-ENDED: ¿Quién quería ser un torero? ¿Qué quería ser Marcos? ¿Por qué quería ser un torero? ¿Qué quieres ser? ¿A Marcos le gustan los toros?

Group Activity

- in partners or small groups, come up with a basic sentence in English
- fill out circling template for that sentence
- practice doing it out loud in your TL with a sentence from a novel

Ensure Comprehension

- use L1 when necessary to ensure students understand
- do frequent comprehension checks
 - short, quick questions (in L1) that the teacher presents to students in order to ensure complete understanding of meaning, understanding of grammatical structures and ultimately complete acquisition of specific language structures
- pay attention to their faces
- notice responses or the lack thereof

5 Keys to Comprehension Checks

- Check for comprehension continually.
- Check for comprehension in English.
- Check for comprehension in different ways.
- Check for comprehension quickly.
- Modify instruction as needed based on students' responses.

Types of Comprehension Checks

- Student Feedback
 - 5 Fingers
 - Signals: I Don't Understand, Slow Down, Speed Up
 - Gestures with Eyes Closed
 - Yes/No/So-So
 - Choral Response

Types of Comprehension Checks

- What does _____mean?"
- What did I just say?
- What part of this language means _____?
- How do you say _____ in the language?
- Ask them to repeat or retell pieces of the story or draw it

Barometer Student

- the barometer student is the student who has the most difficulty understanding the language in any given class, but who is actively trying
- teachers should go slow enough for this student to understand 100 percent

Making Connections

- Do students personally identify with any of the characters or events?
 - ▣ If a student were Character 'A', would he/she...
 - ▣ If a student were in the same situation, what would he/she do?
- What do students think will happen next?
- What do students WANT to happen next?

Making Connections

- What could be a conversation had by characters in the novel with other characters?
 - ▣ main character and a distant friend or relative
 - ▣ secondary character and a distant friend
 - ▣ add an imaginary character
 - ▣ write a letter to a counselor/classmate/friend of the main character

Making Connections

- Does a specific phrase in the novel remind students of any other stories/movies?
- Can students describe a scenario in which they would/could use a phrase from the novel?
- What if a different character said ____? Would you interpret it the same? What if you or your mom, friend, etc. said it?

Pop-Up Grammar

- extremely short, contextualized explanations of grammatical concepts
- focus on meaning rather than form
- are frequent and repetitive to aid acquisition
- don't use grammatical terms (eg. indirect object pronoun, 3rd person plural)
 - If the story says, "She gave him a dollar," ask for a translation of "him."
 - Ask questions that get students to focus on verb endings: Class, what does the "n" in "miran" do?

Post-Reading Activities

- ❑ draw a 6-square story frame
- ❑ answer comprehension questions (in English or TL)
- ❑ CLOZE activity
- ❑ sequencing activities
 - ▣ eg. scramble events in story and students put in order
- ❑ silent acting
- ❑ students read and put unknown words on Post-It notes
- ❑ write alternate version of story; students compare and contrast

Post-Reading Activities

- ❑ write erroneous version of story; students identify errors
- ❑ students match illustrations with events from story
- ❑ fill in the gaps
- ❑ reader's theater
- ❑ justifying/minimizing the protagonist's or antagonist's actions
- ❑ identifying main events
 - ▣ eg. identify the four main events of a chapter
- ❑ T/F pencil game
- ❑ running dictation

Note

- Excerpts taken from Carol Gaab's "Using Reading to Enhance L2 Acquisition" handout, "Blazing the Reading Trail" article, and "Using Novels to Optimize Acquisition" article. Used with permission by Carol Gaab/TPRS Publishing, Inc. Copyright© 2009 and 2012. TPRStorytelling.com
- Please visit her website for more information and to purchase some great easy-reader novels.
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Note

- Excerpts taken from Martina Bex's blog and Betsy Paskvan's "Comprehension Checks for Comprehensible Input" handout. Used with permission.
- Please visit Martina's website for more information and her Teachers Pay Teachers store to purchase entire storytelling units in Spanish.
www.martinabex.com
www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/The-Comprehensible-Classroom-By-Martina-Bex

TPRS & CI Websites

- tprsteacher.com (My blog)
- tprstorytelling.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- blaineraytprs.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- miracanion.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- martinabex.com (Blog)
- benslavic.com (Blog and forum - \$5/month)
- brycedstrom.com (TPRS resources and handouts)
- mjTPRS.com (Blog)
- groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/moretprs (Listserve)
- embeddedreading.com (Collection of embedded readings)
- kplacido.com (Blog)
- somwheretoshare.com (Blog)

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