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**A Pilot Study Comparing Total Physical Response Storytelling™
With the Grammar-Translation Teaching Strategy to Determine
Their Effectiveness in Vocabulary Acquisition Among English as a
Second Language Adult Learners**

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A Pilot Study Comparing Total Physical Response Storytelling™ With the Grammar-Translation Teaching Strategy to Determine Their Effectiveness in Vocabulary Acquisition Among English as a Second Language Adult Learners

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS™) compared to the Grammar-Translation approach for acquiring and retaining new vocabulary in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class. The subjects were adult Hispanic learners with limited literacy.

An experimental design approach was used to gather information on the effect of TPRS™ and Grammar-Translation approaches on student vocabulary retention. A total of 25 participants signed the consent to be a research subject. All participants took two written pretests that examined their knowledge of common words. Following each pretest, the instructor taught three classes using the Grammar-Translation approach and three classes using TPRS™.

Following the treatments, all adults took the written vocabulary test. Pre-test and post-test results were analyzed to note similarities and differences in vocabulary retention. Results indicated that both Grammar-Translation and TPRS™ approaches made an important difference in student retention of vocabulary. The improvements in vocabulary acquisition and retention were 49% using Grammar-Translation and 45% using TPRS™.

Additional research is needed on how to work effectively with adult students who need to learn English under challenging circumstances. These students have complex lives and are trying to survive in addition to studying to improve their language ability.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

I earned my teaching credential in May 2009. My teaching experience, however, started three years earlier when I started working as a substitute teacher in all grades (k-12) and in various subjects. In addition, I spent a school year observing Spanish teachers impart instruction; half a year student teaching in Español para Hispanohablantes (Spanish for Spanish Speakers) II and III; and half a year as a long-term substitute teaching Español para Hispanohablantes I. Finally, I have been teaching an ESL class for adults and a Spanish class in an after-school program since the fall of 2009.

Through my additional observations of English Language Development (ELD) classes, a common challenge I observed was that the students had difficulty remembering vocabulary and grammatical rules well for future retrieval. Despite teachers' attempts to make the students remember vocabulary and grammar, the students often were not very successful at that.

Having a good memory myself, I used to think: "Why can't the students remember better?" I knew that there existed some strategies for helping students increase their vocabulary. For instance, in English classes teachers sometimes had word maps—diagrams where each new word that was introduced would have a root, an example of its usage, synonyms and antonyms, and other related terms. Because of my limited role as an observer and assistant in the ELD classroom I was unable to experiment with any strategies to help students retain words better.

After getting my teaching credential I had time to reflect upon matters related to improving my teaching. Intuitively, I gravitated towards the role of stories in teaching and started to read on the topic. Eventually, I learned that stories have many important benefits in imparting instruction and learning. For instance, one particular advantage of stories is to facilitate the

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acquisition and retention of vocabulary (Casey, Erkut, Ceder, & Young, 2008; Hutchison & Padgett, 2007; Schank & Abelson, 1995; Willingham, 2009).

After I started teaching English as a Second Language to an adult Latino class in the fall of 2009 I realized that I had a great challenge facing me. There was much grammar and vocabulary to teach, which the students needed to learn. The instructional time was only ninety minutes per week and, due to the students' work and other responsibilities, I could not assign much homework. A continuous goal for me has been to teach the students English that is relevant to their lives in a short time span.

Having immigrated from México in the mid-1980s and been close to the Latino immigrant community over the years has provided me with a glimpse into this community's needs and struggles. Many Latino immigrants do not have legal documents to benefit from some services in the United States. Because of their limited English and lack of documents, often, these immigrants are employed in low-skilled jobs that do not require documents and/or a high level of communication skills. This is especially true of immigrants who have not lived in the United States very long or who have not received job training or skills.

However, because many immigrants' essential need is to work for their own survival in the United States or to send money to their families back home, neither acquiring documents nor going to school to learn English are paramount. In fact, many of these immigrants live in the United States for many years without attending a school to learn the language. Inevitably, in the long run, they learn English through exposure to it in their jobs and in other social situations.

It is hard to tell how crucial the need to teach English to adult immigrants is. First, the number of legal and undocumented immigrants fluctuates frequently. Under the current economic recession it is a fact that many immigrants have returned home due to a lack of jobs in

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the United States. Also, many immigrants, especially those recently arrived and the undocumented do not see themselves as permanent United States residents, that is, they do not plan to stay in the United States for long (even though many end up doing just the opposite). Thus, they do not make plans for something other than to work as much as possible to save money and return home and their civic involvement is very limited. For this reason, many choose not to take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. A third reason is a spread belief on the part of some immigrants that they cannot learn English in school.

As a beginning ESL teacher I may say that this belief is more pronounced in students who lack a strong academic background. But I disagree that they cannot learn English. Actually, effective teachers need to use strategies that work better with this type of students. Based on my short time teaching ESL I have found that Total Physical Response (TPR) works well with students who lack a strong academic background.

Despite the many challenges and lack of deep interest in learning English in a classroom environment, many immigrants do attend classes and make a significant effort to learn English. The following figures are only approximations based on interpreting the data from the U.S. Census Bureau in relation to an approximate number of students enrolled in ESL classes. According to the U. S. Census Bureau website (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010), the county in northern California where I am carrying this study has some 39,000 adults who speak a language other than English at home. I found that about 4,000 adults in this county take ESL classes by calling the different organizations that teach ESL throughout the county. Therefore, about 35,000 adults who speak a language other than English at home do not take ESL classes.

It is unknown, however, how many of these adults can speak some English or how well since many people learn English through exposure to it from their jobs. Chances are that there is

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a substantial number of people that could benefit from taking ESL instruction. It is this group of students that teachers cannot neglect. Immigrant adult ESL learners present a challenge that needs to be understood and attended to. They often lack deep motivation to learn the language in school settings, face many legal and social challenges, and have to deal with work situations.

In terms of learning English, many immigrants lack strong academic skills in their native language, which makes learning a challenge. Many also lack resources like having access to dictionaries, if they know how to use them. In my class, some students had to be taught how to use and benefit from dictionaries. Their available time for studying at home or attend class is limited due to fluctuating work schedules. ESL teachers teaching these communities need to be aware of these challenges and prepare to deal with them.

The study in this paper compares the effectiveness of TPRS™ with the traditional Grammar-Translation strategy in helping adult ESL students acquire and retain new vocabulary.

Statement of Problem

While some subjects, such as science and history, are more apt to engage students in critical thinking, the same is not necessarily true for learning a new language. Memorization is essential in learning a new language (Palmer, 1964). Communicating through oral or written language inevitably involves retrieving memorized units of speech (Palmer, 1964). However, accepting Palmer's declaration only helps partially since teachers would do a disservice to students if they simply asked the students to memorize vocabulary without providing the tools for doing so. Consequently, without helping students memorize vocabulary, the problem of efficient memorization cannot be solved very easily. Thus, teachers should use strategies to facilitate students' memorization of vocabulary.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine two strategies for helping students acquire vocabulary—TPRS™ and the Grammar-Translation approach. The participants in the study are English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) adult learners of limited literacy.

Research Questions

Is there a difference in the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary when the students in this study are instructed using two teaching strategies—TPRS™ and the Grammar-Translation approach? If so, to what extent is that difference? How do the teaching strategies compare in terms of student improvement in retention?

Theoretical Rationale

In developing his ideas to improve the learning of a second language, Asher (1972) took as a model the way that children learn their first language and agreed with the findings of Piaget (1954) and Piaget and Inhelder (1969). Piaget believed that in children, understanding precedes talking, as demonstrated through movement or sensorimotor activity. For instance, before children can utter a sentence, they understand when someone says: “Look at that cat!” and demonstrate that understanding by turning their head to look at the cat in question.

Before children develop language skills, they experience the world through activities like touching, sucking, pulling, listening, seeing—the senses in general (Piaget, 1954; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). In a similar manner, Asher (1972) believed that in adults learning a foreign language, sensorimotor activities involved in demonstrating an understanding of oral language should precede speaking that foreign language. Consequently, Asher’s strategy for teaching a foreign language involves movement on the part of the students. For instance, Asher proposes that students be taught to respond to verbal commands like “please open the door” by actually

opening the door. Because of this connection between sensorimotor activity and language acquisition, TPR emphasizes verbal commands accompanied by corresponding actions.

Furthermore, according to Piaget and Inhelder (1969), language acquisition in children follows an evolution. First, children utter spontaneous vocalizations (approximately from 6 to 10 or 11 months). During a second phase, children differentiate phonemes by imitating the language they hear around themselves (11 to 12 months). Third, children come to the end of the sensorimotor period (about 2 years of age)—this is marked by the children's capacity to internalize schemes. That is, children make sense of the world not only through external stimuli, but also by internalized schemas—mental frameworks, which represent the world—and become capable of uttering simple, one-word sentences (Piaget, 1954; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

TPRS™ is a strategy for teaching foreign languages developed by Blaine Ray in the early 1990s. In the development of the strategy, Ray was influenced by the discoveries of James Asher, who developed Total Physical Response (TPR), another strategy for teaching foreign languages, and by the second language acquisition theories of Stephen Krashen (Ray & Seely, 2009). Krashen (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) developed a theory of second language acquisition, which asserts that languages are acquired primarily by understanding verbal or written messages (comprehensible input)—not by speaking or reading sentences aloud without prior understanding of them. In addition, Ray added the element of stories to devise a strategy to teach foreign languages more effectively.

A thorough investigation of Ray's works does not reveal a strong rationale for his assertion that stories promote a better acquisition of a foreign language. Neither does Ray's website (Blaine Ray Workshops, Inc., 2010) provide a satisfactory rationale. Instead, this website only provides a cursory explanation of the rationale behind TPRS™, namely that stories

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are effective because they can be made to contain comprehensible input and an interesting plot to maintain the students engaged in it; stories can also be acted out repetitively. On the other hand, Ray's website is a rich source for information on teaching materials and workshops. Ray's website seems more commercial than academic. Therefore, since the inclusion of the element of storytelling in TPRS™ is not well explained in Ray's rationale (Blaine Ray Workshops, Inc., 2010; Ray & Seely, 2009), his lack of explanation points to the need for further explanation of the use of storytelling as a strategy for language instruction.

Since antiquity, storytelling has been used as a method of education (Mello, 2001). In all cultures, storytelling has served as an essential way of transmitting important knowledge (Collins & Cooper, 1997; Gordon, 1978; Leeming & Sader, 1997).

A survey of the literature reveals some advantages about the role of storytelling in the classroom from which a theoretical rationale can be constituted. Among those benefits that relate to improving memorization are the following: First, it can help in the understanding of concepts and retention of information (Casey, Erkut, Ceder, & Young, 2008; Hutchison & Padgett, 2007). Second, it can improve literacy skills such as building vocabulary and enhancing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills (Collins & Cooper, 1997; Egan, 1986). Third, stories are a very effective method of memorization (Egan, 2005; Schank & Abelson, 1995; Willingham, 2009).

Kosa (2008) suggests that storytelling is beneficial to student learning because it reaches a wider variety of students with different perceptive preferences; it addresses kinesthetic, tactual, auditory, and visual modalities. Kieran Egan also asserts that stories have an almost-universal appeal:

Nearly everyone responds well to stories—that's why even the news is given in story shapes. ("What's the story on the fire downtown?") This is because the story is simply the main tool we have for organizing content in a way that brings out its emotional force, and delivers information to engage the emotions of the hearer (personal communication, October 10, 2009).

Similarly, in his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner (2006) advances the notion that students are more effectively taught when they receive instruction that addresses their different kinds of intelligences. Furthermore, by engaging the senses more actively and creating an emotional reaction through the telling or writing of stories, people are better able to retain new knowledge, including vocabulary (Willingham, 2009). Willingham further declares that stories are easy to comprehend because the audiences who hear the stories often know the structures of those stories. In addition, stories are easy to remember due to the causal structure of stories where a part of the plot in a story helps people remember other parts of the same story. It follows that by comprehending and remembering stories people can better retain vocabulary from stories as well. In fact, according to Schank and Abelson (1995), people remember by telling stories especially when the telling of stories is rehearsed. Through the act of storytelling, memory is constituted, and conversely, the stories we tell are based on the memories we have.

Assumptions

A component of teaching a foreign language using TPRS™ consists of acting out ministories. So an assumption is that all or most of the students will respond positively to acting out stories. Aspects of self-consciousness or shyness are not fully considered. It is assumed that even a minor involvement in acting out a ministory will have a positive effect in the students.

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Another assumption is that the students will learn the vocabulary taught through their participating in the lessons and not through their conscious effort to memorize the vocabulary. Since the students will keep the vocabulary lessons with them prior to taking the post-tests, chances are that some of them may attempt to memorize the vocabulary beyond the exposure of this vocabulary exclusively during the instructional time.

Background and Need

Krashen's (1983) theories laid out in *The Natural Approach* also played an important role in the development of Ray's TPRS™. Ray paid special attention to Krashen's input hypothesis, which postulates that second language acquisition is helped by the notion that a second language learner acquires knowledge of a new language that is just above his or her current level of competency, a concept which Krashen referred to as $(i + 1)$. Krashen makes a clear distinction between acquiring a language and learning a language. According to him, acquiring a language is an unconscious process while learning a language is conscious. Krashen believed that children learn their first language unconsciously and that adults should learn a second language in the same way—unconsciously.

Summary

In my research I did not find studies conducted with adult ESL learners that shows the effectiveness of TPRS™ in facilitating vocabulary acquisition and retention. This study may fill that gap. The results of the study may also help future teachers teaching ESL to a class composed of students similar to those in this study.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Historical Background

A theorist in the field of teaching English, Palmer (1959) who taught English in Japan in the 1920s, wrote *English Through Actions*. In this book, Palmer anticipated the theory of teaching English by issuing commands to students, a common practice in TPR, at least thirty-five years before Asher developed TPR. Reportedly, Asher, who experimented with teaching English through issuing commands to his participants in the studies, was not aware of Palmer's contribution when he developed TPR.

Review of the Previous Research

During the 1960s and 1970s Asher conducted experiments that showed the effectiveness of TPR (Ray & Seely, 2009). At the time, Asher was working as a psychologist at San José State University and, in developing TPR, was influenced by the work of Jean Piaget on first language acquisition in infants.

In 1977, Asher's first edition of *Learning Another Language Through Actions* was published (Ray & Seely, 2009). And after the years, it is not entirely clear where Asher's theory stands in the historical perspective. For instance, TPR is mentioned favorably in the introductory pages of *Methods That Work: Ideas for Literacy and Language Teachers* (Oller, 1993). More specifically, Oller declares that evidence, perhaps the most convincing one, about the effectiveness of TPR is that students taught under TPR are able to carry out commands voiced in the target language (Oller, 1993). On the other hand, Brown (1994) treats TPR just as a technique among many others rather than a complete system. Brown also believes that TPR can be effective in the early stages of learning a language, but that faces limitations when students are ready to learn more advanced aspects of a foreign language. At present, a brief survey of the literature shows that TPR has lost some of its importance making room for TPRS™.

Judging from Ray's experience using TPR it can be explained that the transition from TPR to TPRS™ grew more out of need rather than research. The authors of *TPR is More Than Commands—At All Levels* (Seely & Romijn, 2001), report that after employing TPR for about a month to teach Spanish in a high school, Ray found that the students began to lose interest in the lessons and started to get agitated. So after trying different ways to get his students to participate verbally in the lesson, Ray discovered TPR storytelling. Thus, TPRS™ evolved from TPR; it is essentially TPR with the element of stories in it.

Currently, it is not fully known to what extent TPRS™ as a teaching strategy has been adopted in schools. Through personal communications and interviews with teachers who work in the North Bay of San Francisco I found that some schools in Marin County seem to favor TPRS™ for teaching foreign languages. At a San Francisco Bay Area high school in California where I observed some foreign language teachers, only two out six Spanish teachers used it. At another high school only one of four teachers used it.

Reactions towards using TPRS™ as a teaching strategy generally fall under three categories. First, there are teachers that feel very enthusiastic about it because of the great results they see in their students' learning. Then, there are teachers who feel that TPRS™ has some disadvantages. A main problem, for instance, has to do with the scope of curriculum teachers have to cover. In the opinion of one teacher, TPRS™ teachers do not cover much grammar and the material they cover is not covered in a linear manner, that is, students do not learn how to conjugate verbs or learn other grammar that will place them in a good position to advance to the next Spanish level course. In sum, the material taught under TPRS™ can be at odds with the material taught under other teaching strategies. Finally, there are teachers that see TPRS™ only

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as another teaching strategy that can be used together with other strategies. These teachers do not defend nor diminish the value of TPRS™. Rather, they implement it as they see fit.

In “Children’s first language as a model for second language learning,” Asher (1972), tested the hypothesis that the acquisition of a foreign language could be significantly accelerated if the teaching of the foreign language was based on how children learn their first language. The participants in the study were 11 adults, whose ages varied from 17 to 60. The classes were part of an 8-week, non-credit course to learn German. The teaching consisted of the instructor’s spoken commands in German involving common words such as the names of objects in the classroom, the names of body parts. After hearing verbal commands the participants were instructed to demonstrate their understanding of the commands by physically carrying over the commands. For instance, if the instructor uttered the command “Open the door,” then the student(s) would actually open the door of the classroom to demonstrate understanding, and so on. In the case of words for objects that were not present in the classroom, “egg” or “plate” for instance, the instructor provided flashcards with the words printed on them. Subsequently, the participants were instructed to treat the flash cards as actual objects. So, if for instance, the instructor commanded “Cindy, please put the egg on the plate,” Cindy was expected to place the flashcard “egg” on top of the flash card “plate” and so on.

Asher’s study proved his hypothesis correct. The participants in the study acquired significant listening comprehension skills when instructed in a manner similar to the way children learn their first language—the participants’ orientation, location, and movements were manipulated through the instructor’s commands. The most significant finding was that listening comprehension could be achieved in about a half of the usual training time.

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In a subsequent study “Learning a second language through commands: The second field test” (Asher, Kusudo, & de la Torre, 1974), the researchers sought to answer the following questions that many foreign language teachers had considered:

1. Can the entire linguistic code of the target language be learned with a format in which the students physically respond to commands?
2. Can listening fluency for the target language be achieved without using the student’s native language?
3. Will there be a large amount of positive transfer of learning from listening comprehension to other skills such as speaking, reading, and writing? This transfer should vary depending upon the fit between orthography and phonology. In Spanish, for instance, there should be a large amount of positive transfer because Spanish utterances are written the way they sound.

The study initially involved 27 participants who took Spanish for college credit 3 hours per evening per week for two consecutive semesters. In the second semester, however, the experimental group was reduced to 16. The students who dropped the course identified external causes for dropping out.

The strategies used to teach the students Spanish consisted of verbal commands by the instructor to the students. The students were asked to demonstrate understanding on the commands by physically acting upon them. For instance, at the teacher’s utterance “Corran,” (run), the students were to run in the classroom. Other commands included “Stand up,” “Sit down,” “Walk to the window,” and so on. After about 10 hours of teaching by issuing commands, the students were asked to reverse their role. In this case, the students ordered the instructor to perform the same routines that they had done previously. There was no systematic

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teaching of reading and writing even though there was a little practice on it, about 10% of instructional time, whereas listening training through commands took up about 70% and speaking about 20%.

At the end of the study the researchers found that most linguistic components of a language could be taught through the imperative form. Researchers also found that there is a large amount of transfer from listening comprehension to speaking and even reading and writing. In addition, all instruction of the target language occurred in that language without translation to the students' native languages without affecting target language acquisition.

Asher has carried out other studies to prove the effectiveness of his teaching strategy TPR. The curious reader may find other studies in Asher's website (Sky Oaks Productions, Inc., 2008). So far, all of his studies as well as TPR studies by other researchers have yielded similar results. In all cases, TPR has been proven as an efficient strategy to accelerate the fluency of students learning a foreign language. TPR has been shown to be effective at different levels of language and with students of different ages.

In light of such a positive review of TPR, what can possibly be a criticism of it? Perhaps, the best advice consists of asking future TPR practitioners to maintain interest of students in the class activities. A complain about TPR is that instructional time devoted exclusively to the imperative form can be tedious. Even Ray, an experienced foreign language teacher and developer of TPRS™ has reportedly said that at some point, students are just not anymore eager about performing commands issued by the instructor (Ray & Seely, 2009). In fact, student lack of interest following TPR instruction was a major reason Ray developed TPRS™. Thus, future TPR practitioners should consider creativity in planning lessons. To be clear, the criticism is not on TPR itself, but any teacher that intends to instruct using only TPR should consider the

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possibility of students getting tired of the repetitive drills and plan to avoid that. After all, creating a suitable environment for learning was important to Asher. Indeed, he envisioned teaching foreign languages in the absence of stressful environments and situations.

There are also studies, which have measured the effectiveness of TPRS™ as a teaching strategy. However, compared to the number of studies involving TPR, TPRS™'s studies are far fewer. From an unpublished study from 2003 by Mark Webster, a Spanish teacher at Spring Lake High School in Spring Lake, Michigan Ray and Seely (Ray & Seely, 2009) report: “[Webster’s] research also found unusual success on the Advanced Placement exam by students of TPRS™ teachers” (p. 271), and “[Webster] concludes, ‘TPRS™ students are more than prepared for college. At campuses all over the country, professors are frustrated with the lack of communicative skills students have in their classes. ... TPRS™ students can communicate in the target language’” (p. 271). The important part of Webster’s study as reported by Ray has to do with TPRS™’s effectiveness to teach overall language acquisition and oral and listening fluency.

In another TPRS™ study, “The effects of total physical response by storytelling and the traditional teaching styles of a foreign language in a selected high school” (Kariuki & Bush, 2008), the researchers found similar results to Webster’s findings. The authors set out to test the effectiveness of TPRS™ vis-à-vis traditional teaching strategies in teaching overall foreign language skills and vocabulary acquisition.

The study was carried out in a Northeast Tennessee public high school with a student body of about 450. The student participants were mostly Caucasian, approximately 98%; they belonged to the low-to-middle income socioeconomic tier. The sample consisted of 30 randomly selected students out of 60 taking Spanish I.

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The results from a summative test following the teaching of a unit in Spanish I to both the experimental and control groups are as follows: First, students taught using TPRS strategies scored significantly better overall than students taught using traditional strategies. Secondly, students taught using TPRS™ strategies scored significantly better in vocabulary acquisition than students taught using traditional strategies.

So in both TPRS™ studies mentioned TPRS™ proved significantly more effective in teaching Spanish in two areas: Overall language acquisition and more improved vocabulary acquisition. A minor drawback or weakness common to both studies is that they were conducted with high school students learning Spanish. In the present study, the author seeks to find out the benefits of TPRS™ vis-à-vis traditional teaching strategies in teaching ESL to adult Hispanic learners in a non-classroom setting, but in an improvised area in the back, interior section of a church.

Another criticism not of the TPRS™ studies above, but of TPRS™ is that it seems to lack its theoretical basis for the inclusion of stories in its teaching strategy. Whereas Asher did much research in developing TPR and wrote about it in several media, the same cannot be said of Blaine Ray in his development of TPRS™. In fact, Ray and Seely's (2009) *Fluency Through TPR Storytelling—Achieving Real Language Acquisition in School* only mentions TPR and Krashen and Terrell's (1983) *The Natural Approach* or more specifically Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis as his basis for TPRS™. For the present study I believe it is important to establish the role of stories in teaching and learning. To start with, I will present a study showing the benefits of stories in learning. Later, under the section dealing with summaries of major themes I will provide more information.

In “Use of a storytelling context to improve girls' and boys' geometry skills in kindergarten,” Casey, Erkut, Ceder, and Young (2008) proved that teaching mathematics using storytelling had a greater impact on the students’ learning and retention of geometry skills than just teaching mathematics in a de-contextualized format.

The participants in the study were 63 kindergarten students from different ethnic backgrounds, about 81%, and a lower socioeconomic status where 4% received free or reduced price meals. While boys benefited with the incorporation of storytelling in the teaching of mathematics, girls improved even better with that approach. No explanation in the study exists to explain that difference. Furthermore, the results of the study are consistent with other cognitive literature (Graesser & Ottati, 1995).

Summary of Major Themes

From the discussion up to this point two major themes arise: First, the manner in which children learn their first language acquisition serves as a model to teach a second or foreign language to others. Second, narrative serves an important role in memory aspects, including vocabulary acquisition.

As stated before, Piaget and other researchers influenced Asher’s development of TPR. In addition, a reportedly unknown to Asher, Palmer had made use on strategies for teaching a foreign language that would have a striking similarity to TPR’s strategies years before Asher’s discoveries while teaching English in Japan.

Nevertheless, Asher’s writings remain the clearest explanation of the way children learn their first language and how this model can apply well to teaching other individuals a foreign language. According to Asher (2009), there are three key elements in the way children learn their first language: first, listening comprehension precedes speaking; second, listening

comprehension is developed through physical movement of the child; and third, speaking follows a natural progression after listening comprehension, which is accompanied with body movement. The speaking stage occurs after children have internalized mental schemas of their first language. The following examples may illustrate the three elements: first, before a child is able to produce words, he or she is able to understand phrases like “Don’t touch that!” Second, children demonstrate understanding of the language by physically acting on orders like “Come here,” or “Don’t go there.” Finally, using the analogy that children do not start walking until their bodies are ready to do so, Asher says that the development of listening comprehension in children activates the development of speaking.

Asher not only presents his writings clearly, he also backs them with various quantitative studies that attest to their veracity. On the hand, TPRS™, which evolved from TPR, does not present a solid rationale for the role of stories in learning. This is not necessarily a negative criticism of TPRS™ since great results may result from the implementations of strategies based on empirical findings and observations. However, inquisitive teachers may wonder about the importance of narrative in teaching languages. Neither can important findings on the role of stories in learning be ignored.

There are a few reasons why stories can help memorization. Graesser and Ottati (1995) and Wood (2003) assert that stories have a structure that helps retrieval of information. They report that in a study from 1969, Bower and Clark showed that participants who arranged vocabulary words into story form were five times more able to remember new vocabulary than participants in the control group. Read and Miller (1995) not only accept Graesser, Ottati and Wood’s arguments, but also provide an explanation of the privileged role of stories in memory. According to Read and Miller, stories are richly connected because they contain social concepts

that are essential to human functioning. Thus, given the importance of social interaction between humans, it is inevitable to forget stories that relate the actions of the self and others. In addition, Willingham (2009) asserts that stories, not just some words in them, are easy to remember because of their causal structure. That is, remembering part of a story often helps in remembering other parts of the same story because of their interconnectedness.

Another reason why stories can aid in memorization is that stories are often packed with emotional content. According to Willingham (2009), situations that provoke an emotional response are better remembered. Stories usually have interesting content as well. Willingham (2009) reports that stories are consistently ranked as more engaging than other types of writing in various studies.

To sum up, stories provide an excellent medium for memorization because of their innate characteristics: story structure, causality, social and emotional content, and interesting potential. And if they are infused with enthusiasm, stories can keep the students engaged in the instruction.

How Present Study Will Extend Current Literature

While there are a few TPRS™ studies in the literature, there are no studies conducted with adult ESL learners with limited resources and academic skills. The current study may prove useful for teachers or individuals acting in the role of educators who teach ESL to similar students as those described in this study. “Limited resources” refers to teaching in a room with no props and imparting 90 minutes of instruction weekly.

Chapter 3 Method

The research study followed a quasi-experimental design approach. Adult students were given a pre-test, instruction and post-test on vocabulary words. Additionally I took notes on how students approached learning vocabulary, to provide qualitative information on student learning.

Sample and Site

The sample for this study is a sample of convenience. It consists of 25 adult, Hispanic, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students. The group included 14 men and 11 women and students attended class once a week for 90 minutes. In order not to interfere with the regular instruction that students were receiving before the research study began, I decided to teach the lessons that were directly related with the study for 60 minutes per class only. The participants were students in my beginning ESL class. TESOL has classified ESL literacy into six levels: Beginning ESL Literacy, Beginning ESL, Low Intermediate ESL, High Intermediate ESL, Low Advanced ESL, and High Advanced ESL. The learning center where I teach only offers instruction in three different levels: Beginning ESL, Low Intermediate ESL, and High Intermediate ESL. Beginning ESL students should understand common words used in context and simple phrases spoken slowly; they should also be able to read and print numbers and letters, but overall, their writing is disorganized and unclear. As far as functional and workplace skills, these students experience difficulty in situations that are related to immediate needs or in social situations (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2003).

Due to a lack of academic resources, the placement process for students at the learning center where the study takes place consists of informal oral interviews involving common language and expressions and filling out a registration form. Also, new students are asked whether they have studied ESL before and what level they believe suits them better.

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A majority of the participants have an education below twelfth grade. Prior to the study, I instructed the students for about four months. The instruction included exposure and direct translation of words and grammar from English to Spanish (approx. 50%), phonetic pronunciation of all words (approx. 35%), speaking sentences (approx. 10%), and various related activities and suggestions like why, and in which contexts, to use a dictionary; and reading and extracting meaning from written text (approx. 5%). The students have not had a written assessment—formative or summative, but they have been assessed verbally on material taught and have responded satisfactorily according to the ESL level. The students have not been exposed to the TPRS™ instructional strategy.

The site where the study took place is the same site where I teach beginning ESL. It is not a regular classroom, but rather the back section of a church where a table, chairs, and a small writing board are set up for the purposes of teaching.

Access and Permissions

The sessions for the study occurred during one of the regular weekly classes. In an effort to get as much participation as possible in a setting where attendance is not very regular, I announced to the students that they would be receiving instruction for which they would be assessed later.

The participants received a letter to participate in the study written in Spanish in order to verify their understanding and their right to remove themselves from the study at any time. The director of the ESL program was notified of the study in writing, accepted the research plan, and signed a document granting her approval.

Data Gathering Strategies

The results of the study were analyzed by comparing data from two pre-tests and two post-tests that illustrated how well students acquired and retained new vocabulary using two different teaching strategies. I collected and graded all data.

Procedures

Pretests

The two pre-tests included general, common vocabulary. Most of the words came from a website list of the 500 most commonly used words in the English language (World-English, 2003) and *1001 Palabras Inglesas más Útiles para Hispanoparlantes* (Resnick, 2000). The first pre-test included 124 words; the second pre-test included 123 words. I gave each pre-test for the purpose of identifying the 24 most unknown words by the students for each of the teaching approaches.

Instruction

After the first pre-test yielded the 24 most unknown words, I taught those words for three consecutive classes—eight words per class—under the grammar-translation strategy. The activities included direct translation and phonetic pronunciation of each word, sentences using the vocabulary words in context, incomplete sentences where the students had to choose from the vocabulary words, and one segment in which students volunteered to make a sentence in Spanish, which I translated into English, using one vocabulary word. On the fourth week I gave a post-test of the 24 vocabulary words. Then, I gave another pre-test to select the next 24 most unknown words, which I subsequently taught in three consecutive classes—eight words per class—using the TPRS™ approach. On the fourth week, I gave a post-test of those 24 vocabulary words.

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I paid special attention that teaching under each strategy involved approximately 60 minutes per class. Both post-tests were analyzed to find out under which teaching strategy helped the students learn and retain vocabulary better.

Analysis

Each question (a vocabulary word in English) of the test included 5 possible answer options. The first four (a, b, c, and d) were direct translations of the English words into Spanish. The fifth answer option (e) provided the students the choice of explaining the meaning of the word to me. If the oral explanation of the word was correct, I marked the answer as correct. Explaining the meaning of the words in Spanish was a valid way in which the students showed understanding without jeopardizing the results of the tests because the students might have known the meaning of the English words, but could not understand the written answers in Spanish or knew the word by another Spanish term. The following example should illustrate:

The word for “Turkey” in Spanish (Mexico City) is “Pavo.”

1. “Turkey”

a. Pollo b. Libro c. Jamón d. Pavo e. Explicame.

(a = chicken, b= book, c = ham, d = turkey e. Explain it.)

“d. Pavo” would be the correct answer. However, some Central American students may know “pavo” as “chompipe.” So if one student told me (in Spanish) that he or she could not find the correct answer, but that “turkey” is a large bird that people eat on Thanksgiving, his or her answer would be marked as correct.

Data Analysis Approach

After all the data was collected and graded I analyzed the results using a quantitative approach. I compared results between pre-tests and post-tests for each student identifying the students only by a numeric code.

Ethical Standards

I determined that all the tests would be indicative of student knowledge and learning. The director of the ESL program believed that the pre-tests were longer than necessary and that they could induce unnecessary stress to some students with limited reading skills. I agreed that I could not determine before hand which vocabulary would turn to be the most unknown by the students—especially since the vocabulary was taken from a list of very commonly used words. I also thought that by informing each student of their evaluations, they would be inclined to eventually learn the words they missed in the tests that would not be included in the lessons for the purposes of the study. The participants were informed of all the procedures involved in the study and were asked to give their consent for all their participatory activities. Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects reviewed the research proposal. It approved it and assigned it a review number of 8058.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The following results were found in comparing data from pre-test 1 and post-test 1. Students were assigned a number and the pre-test and post-test results were calculated and compared. There were 24 vocabulary words used for comparison purposes. The percentage difference between the pre-test and the post-test was calculated. Also included in the analysis was the number of classes that the student attended with a maximum of 3 sessions. In order to provide the students with all the lessons in the sequence, I gave a copy of lesson #3 to students who attended class on the night when I taught lesson #2 using the Grammar-Translation approach so if any students were to be absent for lesson 3 at least they would have the instructional content on paper. I followed the same procedure when I taught vocabulary using TPRS™.

Table 1. Grammar-Translation Approach (n=13)		
Test Words	Pre-Test 1 Incorrect Responses	Post-Test 1 Incorrect Responses
Few	12	6
Late	10	2
Near	10	6
Deep	12	2
Thing	10	5
Place	11	4
Land	11	3
Road	11	3
Field	11	5
Wheel	11	5
Find	12	4
Let	11	7
Seem	12	4
Hear	12	10
Happen	12	6
Hold	12	6
Appear	12	6
Notice	11	5
Rest	12	3
Heat	10	5
Fill	13	7
On	11	4
Through	11	5
During	13	6
Wrong answers	273	119
Right answers	39	193
Average % correct	13	62

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Out of a total of 13 participants taught under the Grammar-Translation approach, 3 had some difficulty reading and writing. I read the questions and possible answers to these students when they took pre-test 1 and post-test 1. Out of 13 participants, 4 took the three lessons in class, 5 took two lessons in class, 3 took one lesson in class, and 1 participant did not take any of the three lessons in class or had a hard copy of any of the lessons. All the participants that took at least 1 lesson in class were provided with the lessons on paper. Out of the 13 participants, 5 studied for post-test 1 and/or reviewed the vocabulary words outside of the classroom. During pre-test 1 the average grade was 13% correct. During post-test 1, the average student grade was 62%. There was a positive difference of 49% (or 154 more correct answers) between pre-test 1 and post-test 1.

Table 2. Total Physical Response Storytelling™ (n=13)		
Test Words	Pre-Test 1 Incorrect Responses	Post-Test 1 Incorrect Responses
Most	11	3
Several	12	8
Great	9	1
High	11	4
Far	8	3
Main	11	5
Top	12	4
True	11	5
Sentence	8	1
Ground	8	4
War	10	2
Engine	12	3
Foot	9	2
Lose	9	3
Borrow	10	3
Want	9	3
Ask	9	9
Own	12	5
Answer	7	2
Begin	9	4
Carry	9	1
Reach	8	10
Teach	11	5
But	9	3
Wrong answers	234	93
Right answers	78	219
Average % correct	25	70

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Out of a total of 13 participants taught under the TPRS™ approach, 3 had some difficulty reading and writing. I read the questions and possible answers to these students when they took pre-test 1 and post-test 1. Out of 13 participants, 2 took the three lessons in class (2 fewer students than in the Grammar/Translation approach), 6 took two lessons in class (1 more than in the Grammar-Translation approach), 3 took one lesson in class (the same number of students as in the Grammar/Translation approach), and 2 participants did not take any of the three lessons in class (1 more than in the Grammar/Translation approach). Out of the 2 participants who were absent during the three lessons, only 1 received a copy of all three lessons, the other received no lessons at all. All the participants that took at least 1 lesson in class were provided with the 3 lessons on paper. Out of the 13 participants, 5 studied for post-test 2 and/or reviewed the vocabulary words outside of the classroom (these were the same students who studied ad/or reviewed for post-test 1). During pre-test 2 the average grade was 25% correct. During post-test 2, the average student grade was 70%. There was a positive difference of 45% (or 141 more correct answers) between pre-test 2 and post-test 2.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Summary of Findings

The following is a discussion of the patterns of confusions that I observed the participants making when they answered all the tests. To facilitate the understanding of the mistakes made in the tests and the possible causes I categorized the types of errors.

1. Some students did not recognize the word “happen.” However, when they looked at “feliz,” one of the multiple choice answers, whose English translation “happy” is spelled similarly to “happen” they chose the incorrect answer. Other examples of this type of error are listed below.

Vocabulary Word	Word Confused with	Incorrect response based on the word that was confused
Mile	Smile	Sonrisa
Step	Stop	Parar
Short	Shirt	Camisa
Build	Bill	Enviar un pago
Boy	Buy	Comprar

2. Some students did not know how to pronounce the words and were not familiar with the spelling either. When they took the test, they pronounced the vocabulary word as it would be pronounced in Spanish. Pronouncing the word in Spanish sounds like a different English word. Therefore, students chose the meaning for the word they pronounced, not the target word.

Vocabulary Word	Word Confused with	Incorrect response based on the word that was confused
Sun	Sounds like “soon”	Pronto
Run	Sounds like “room”	Cuarto

3. Students had trouble identifying the meaning of English words that are similar in spelling and/or pronunciation to other English words.

Vocabulary Word	Word Confused with	Incorrect response based on the word that was confused
Heat	Hit	Golpear
Wood	Good	Bueno
Fill	Feel	Sentir
Hear	Here	Aquí

4. Some students guessed correctly the meaning of some words that are cognates.

Vocabulary Word	Cognate	Correct response based on the cognate
Front	Frente	Frente

On the other hand, some students guessed incorrectly the meaning of other words that were false cognates...

Vocabulary Word	False Cognate	Incorrect response based on the false cognate
Inch	Hinchar (to swell)	Hinchar
Rest	Restar (to subtract)	Restar
Road	Rueda (wheel)	Rueda
Late	Lata (can)	Lata

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5. Some students did not quite exactly identify the meaning (translation) of a word in English, but identified a meaning related to the English word.

Vocabulary Word	Word related with	Incorrect response based on the word that was confused
Feet	Measure (measure can be given in feet)	Medida
Size	Large (large is a size)	Grande
Round	Fight (a boxing fight has rounds)	Pelea

6. In cases where the students had no clue what the English word meant, they seemed to choose the word in Spanish that had a similar spelling.

Vocabulary Word	Word Confused with	Incorrect response based on the word that was confused
Few	Looks like “feo” (ugly)	Feo

7. In many cases where a word can be a noun or a verb, students only knew one meaning.

Vocabulary Word	Knowledge of word limited to its noun meaning	Incorrect response based on the limited knowledge of the word
Miss	“Señorita”; Miss is also a verb that translates as “fallar.”	Señorita
Notice	“Aviso”; Notice is also a verb that translates as “percatarse.”	Aviso

8. Some students did not know the actual meaning of a vocabulary word, but retrieved from their memory a translation of the word, which was associated with the vocabulary word.

Vocabulary Word	Word confused with	Incorrect response based on the word that was confused
Quick	“Quik” is the name of a brand of an instant chocolate beverage	Chocolate

Out of the students who performed well in the post-tests some reviewed or studied for the post-tests. However, some students who reviewed or studied for the post-tests did not do well in those tests. In one case, one student who reported having reviewed and/or studied the vocabulary words outside of the classroom did worse in the post-test 2 (vocabulary words were taught using the TPRS™ approach) than she did in the pre-test, which points to two possible situations: one, the student was incapable of retaining the meaning of the vocabulary both from the explanation in class and from her own efforts to memorize it. Second, the student may have guessed or copied some answers from another student taking the test—I do not believe that the student “un-learned” some vocabulary words between pre-test and post-test, however, that could be possible too. Paradoxically, this student reported having enjoyed TPRS™ instruction better and thinks that she learned better under TPRS™ as well.

On the other hand, there were students who did not review and/or studied for the post-tests who did really well in those tests. Likewise, there was one case in which a student missed some classes and did not have access to a copy of the lessons, but who nevertheless did better in the post-test than she did in the pre-test. How this student managed to do better in the post-test without having had access to the lessons or copies of the lessons remains unexplained.

It is inconclusive from the results of this study to determine that one teaching approach (Grammar-Translation or TPRS™) proved more effective than the other in teaching vocabulary. In general, students did better by 4% in the post-tests after being taught using the Grammar-Translation approach 49% versus 45%. However, the small percentage in gain may also be due to the fact that slightly more students partook of the lessons under the Grammar-Translation approach than under TPRS™. For example, 4 students received the 3 Grammar-Translation lessons in class; only 2 students received the TPRS™ lessons in class. Similarly, only one student was absent during all the Grammar-Translation lessons; however, 2 students were absent during all the TPRS™ lessons. It may be tentative to attribute a little more success to the TPRS™ approach. However, the results are not very conclusive to state that.

The inconclusive results of this study do not prove worthless though. In addition to the results yielded by the quantitative results, I was able to understand better the approach by which students become familiar with vocabulary. I was able to observe that the students' knowledge of vocabulary is only peripheral. I was able to see how some vocabulary words are confusing in the mind of the students. The vocabulary presents a challenge because of its spelling, pronunciation, association with an image or memory, or because the vocabulary is a false cognate or the students only know one meaning of the word.

In general, more students (9 versus 1) enjoyed TPRS™ instruction better than Grammar-Translation. Two students did not respond to this question in the survey and one student missed all the classes when TPRS™ was used. However, the preference of TPRS™ over Grammar-Translation was smaller when the students responded which teaching approach they believed was more effective for their learning of vocabulary. Four students preferred TPRS™ instruction; three students preferred the Grammar-Translation approach. Two students did not believe that

one approach was more effective over the other for their learning of vocabulary. Four students did not respond this question in the survey. Among the reasons given for the preference of TPRS™ were: there was more interaction in the group, losing the fear of talking in front of the class, a feeling that there was a better understanding. Among the reasons given for the preference of the Grammar-Translation approach were: it was easier to follow the lesson (the student who gave this comment is a student that showed confusion during the acting out of the TPRS™ dialogue when I gave the lesson), the teacher explained (the vocabulary) very well (the student who gave this comment attended two classes under the Grammar-Translation approach, but only one class under the TPRS™ approach), learning was more practical and the vocabulary taught under the Grammar-Translation was easier than the vocabulary under the TPRS™ approach.

By far, written vocabulary—out of context—presents a great challenge to many students at this level. This highlights the urgent need to encourage students to read more. It also points to the need of teaching vocabulary in a more comprehensive way. Teachers should teach pronunciation, spelling, meanings, and usage of words. Teachers should also teach students to read.

How Findings Compare to Previous Research

Even though there are several studies showing the efficacy of TPRS™ in teaching foreign languages, I did not find a study that was similar to this present study. Many TPRS™ studies involve participants learning Spanish in secondary schools. Also, those studies are more often focused in the efficacy of several aspects of a foreign language. By contrast, the present study was carried over to find the efficacy of TPRS™ in the teaching of English vocabulary among adult ESL learners.

One aspect in which the present study agrees with previous studies is in the enthusiasm that the instruction using the TPRS™ approach creates in the students. Most of the participants in the present study enjoyed the TPRS™ approach over the Grammar-Translation approach. However, only a slight majority of the participants believed TPRS™ helped them learn vocabulary better. The reasons defending one approach over the other were equally important. On one hand, participants believed that TPRS™ gave them the opportunity to interact more and speak (also pronounce) publicly. On the other hand, one student found the dialogues acted out during TPRS™ instruction confusing even though a translation of the dialogues was explained orally and so preferred the Grammar-Translation approach better.

Limitations of the Research

There are several limitations in the current study. First, the sample was small (13 participants). Among these participants, some missed some classes when the lessons were imparted.

Secondly, the TPRS™ lessons used for instruction were not exactly like those used in typical TPRS™ lessons. In the present study there were stories that were acted out by students, the teacher, and an assistant. However, these stories were in the form of a dialogue—as opposed to narrative form.

A third, possible limitation is that typical TPRS™ lessons start out with stories written using very simple vocabulary words, including many nouns and objects that can easily be physically manipulated. In the case of the present study, the vocabulary words that were used in the dialogues included some function words and prepositions. In addition, in typical TPRS™ instruction, the lessons are first written and the students are expected to understand the stories as a whole. In the present study, I started with the vocabulary words (8 per lesson) and wrote a

coherent dialogue based on the vocabulary words. The vocabulary in the dialogues was only important to the extent that it served in the writing of the dialogues, but I was more concerned that students learned the vocabulary words without much regard for the rest of the words in the dialogue.

Fourth, my instructional approach was a variation of TPRS™. I wrote a story in the form of a dialogue, so that there were only two people participating. The typical format is a story in narrative format. It was difficult to weave all the vocabulary into a narrative form, which made it difficult to follow the standard approach.

A final limitation is that TPRS™ is an approach generally used to teach comprehension of a foreign language in all of its aspects—comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. In the present study, I was only concerned with students learning the meanings of particular vocabulary words. In other words, the teaching approaches used only served as vehicles for students to memorize better the words taught.

Conclusions

A concluding thought that agrees with the current literature is that no one approach is conclusively the best approach in teaching a second language including teaching vocabulary. Gass and Selinker (2008) and Mary Pozzi (personal communication), an experienced ESL teacher, are of the same opinion. Neither TPRS™ nor the Grammar-Translation approach proved more efficacious in vocabulary acquisition and retention, but there was far more enthusiasm in learning under TPRS™. Furthermore, some of the objections about TPRS™—confusion about the language and being somehow impractical can be overcome by spending more time explaining in more detail the meaning of the dialogue or ministory that is acted out in the classroom. Also, other benefits can be obtained by teaching using TPRS™: instruction is more

engaging and, at least in one case, a participant was glad that being in front of the class acting out a dialogue helped him overcome shyness about speaking in public.

Implication for Future Research

It is important to study effective ways to teach language with adult students who have complex lives. In this situation I learned what my students' lives were like. Their stories had an effect on me. One of my students has only worked occasionally, and he is just surviving. He could not pay for his cell phone, and his contract was cancelled. In today's world a cell is not a luxury; it is a necessity to connect people to work opportunities among other things.

Other students were dealing with poor health and personal problems. A main problem is lack of jobs and money. These students are struggling to be in one place. Many had to move out of the area.

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Appendix: Interview

To gather more information about the benefits of storytelling for improving learning I interviewed Dr. Kieran Egan—Professor of Education at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia and recipient of the 1991 Grawemeyer Award in Education. As one of the most prominent experts of the role of storytelling in the curriculum, Dr. Egan was a top candidate to provide relevant knowledge on the topic.

I contacted Dr. Egan by e-mail with my request to send him a written interview. He agreed reluctantly explaining that he was not broadly available because of pending and on going commitments. In the end, however, he answered me back with the responses.

Since Dr. Egan has written several books on using storytelling in teaching school children I didn't want to ask questions whose response would be found in one of his books. Also, I had some very specific questions, as the interview below will show, for which Dr. Egan may have had no response or limited knowledge.

In the end I feel that Dr. Egan's responses were very close to what he has written on the subject. Perhaps, a close reading of all of his work would have produced the answers to my questions. But, I still benefited from his expertise by realizing that trying to obtain different benefits from using storytelling in the curriculum than those benefits obtained by Dr. Egan is my own hypothesis and it may not yield very positive results.

1. In the literature there seems to be only a scant amount of studies proving the positive impact of storytelling in the classroom, especially qualitative studies. Do you think storytelling as a pedagogical tool should be more popular? Is storytelling becoming a past practice?

Well, as with all such questions, one has to say “It depends what you mean by storytelling.” My work has been about using the structure of stories to shape regular curriculum content to make this more emotionally and imaginatively engaging to students. If that is the sense meant, then of course I think it should be much more popular. If you mean storytelling as in fictional tales told to children, then there is clearly an important role for that. The story can help us understand how it feels to be another—and this is only one among its social and psychological benefits. I’m not sure what is meant about “best practice.” Better than what?

2. What are some notable negative criticisms against the notion that storytelling can be an effective pedagogical tool? And what are some reasons for this?

One can do it badly, inappropriately, etc. I can’t think of any relevant general principle.

3. Does storytelling have more impact on children, teenagers, or adults? Is storytelling more effective with some socioeconomic and ethnic groups or does storytelling affect more or less people to the same extent?

*Different forms of stories influence different people in a myriad ways. I don’t think ethnic or socioeconomic groups are significant categories to address in this regard. Some few people seem to find stories of any kind not especially engaging—e.g. what are sometimes called “buildy boys”—nearly always males who are more interested in building, taking apart machines, etc. Stories affect us throughout our lives, but the forms of stories that engage at different ages change. This is something I explore in my book *The Educated Mind*.*

4. In your opinion, what kind of stories would have a positive impact in an English as a Second Language adult class composed mainly of Hispanic students? Could you elaborate and give examples?

I have no idea. Again, I don't think such social categories are significant in the choice of stories. It's more a matter of psychological differences within groups.

5. As far as you know, are there any storytellers specialized in writing specific stories for specific demographic groups?

I don't know.

6. Should stories be tailored to the group that you are going to tell the stories to for achieving a greater impact? For instance, would a contemporary story with vocabulary like "Facebook," "I-Pod," "texting," "YouTube," and the like resonate better with teenagers than a story containing traditional vocabulary?

This seems to be generally assumed, and there is an obvious superficial attraction for stories about one's own time, place, culture, context, etc. But a good story has the power to reach across time and place. Consider the universal appeal of such fairy stories as the Grimm tales. Cinderella is as popular in China today as in Germany. What makes stories engaging, that is to say, has much more to do with depth and resonance and other features of a good story than the particulars of audience-association. That's superficial, and if people rely on such things, it's usually a sign that they are not very good at telling stories well.

7. Can stories produce a negative effect or an unintended effect on the group one is telling the stories to? Please elaborate.

Of course. Telling a story about Nazi "supermen" to a Jewish group would hardly be expected to have a positive effect. The same would go for many such grossnesses.

8. Is the stories' power of persuasion ineffectual with some individuals? What kind of individuals? Why? (What I have in mind here is that storytelling may not have a very positive

effect on students who may be suffering with serious physical or psychological conditions...). Is this true? If so, are there other types of individuals who may not respond positively to stories?

Nearly everyone responds well to stories—that's why even the news is given in story shapes. ("What's the story on the fire downtown?") This is because the story is simply the main tool we have for organizing content in a way that brings out its emotional force, and delivers information to engage the emotions of the hearer. As I mentioned above, there do seem to be some people who are somewhat immune to this appeal of stories—the "bulldozers" types. I don't think suffering from certain physical or psychological conditions has anything much to do with the appeal of stories.