# TPR Storytelling®

Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling

Language Acquisition vs. Learning

- Language is acquired through comprehensible input. It is an unconscious process; it happens when the learner is focused on the meaning of the message rather than the language.
- An important difference between classroom acquisition and "baby acquisition" is: Students have greater cognitive ability than babies. However, they have significantly less time in the language than babies do. Therefore teachers must make the best use of precious classroom time.
- Classroom language must be repetitive, interesting, and varied. Without these elements, we are not using class time in the best way possible. Our challenge is making the language comprehensible while at the same time making it repetitive and interesting.
- Language "learning" refers to understanding how language works. Learning is enhanced by study.

Left circle (purple):
- Effortless
- Understand message
- Subconscious
- Feels like nothing is happening

Center overlap: *Get better in language*

Right circle (green):
- Study
- Understand mechanics
- Practice structures
- Know the rules
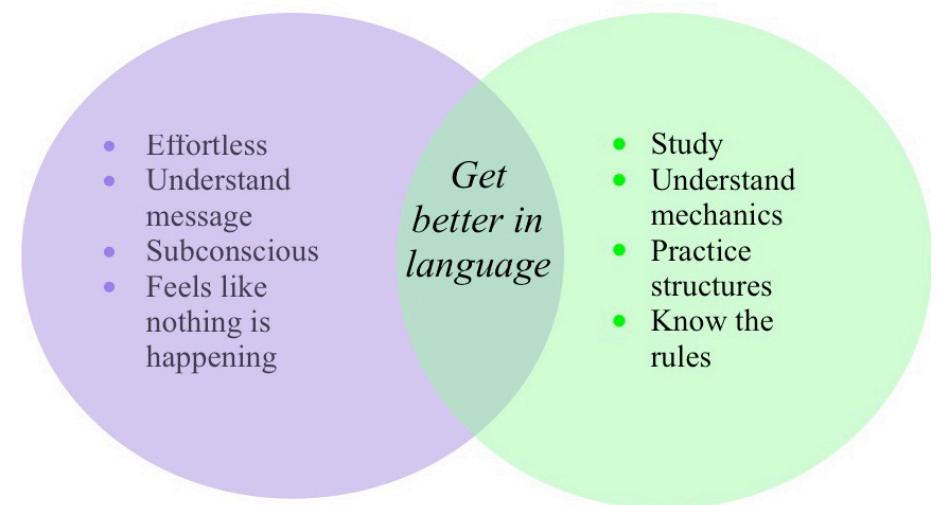
- Learning enables a student to edit language for accuracy. Acquisition means relying on what sounds right.
- In order to use learned rules in speech, three conditions must be met:
  - The speaker must know the rule.
  - The speaker must be focused on the rule.
  - The speaker must have sufficient time to edit.

Lesson Planning

If you use a TPRS textbook, the lessons are already made for you. But if you want to tell a folk tale or use a different book, the following format applies for teaching ANY structures:

Focus on teaching structure (she gives it to him) rather than vocabulary (single words.) List the structures that you **need** to teach in order to tell the story. Typically a chapter "structure list" will have about 20 phrases, with variations on the same structure repeated many times. (he sent them to us, she offered it to them.)

Break the list into daily lessons of two or three phrases per day. Sometimes the phrase is a sentence, such as "The dog runs."

A lesson consists of three steps: ***establish meaning***, ***story, literacy***. Each step of the lesson revolves around using the three phrases in as many ways as possible, in an interesting context. Lesson plan for each lesson:

STEP ONE: Introduce the three phrases:

- Written on the board in L2 and English.

- Pronounce and teach a gesture for each phrase.

- As you say the phrases, watch students' gestures to see if they recognize the phrases.

- Use the phrases in context. (When a student needs help in understanding, simply do the gesture or point to the board.) Use your students as the topic of conversation:

    o Ask questions such as "Rachel, do you have a dog?"

    o Talk about the students, using circles to reinforce the words. "Does Rachel have a dog?" "Does Rachel's dog run fast?" (circle) "Does Rachel run fast?" (compare and contrast)

    o Build on what you have learned about a student so that you can talk about that student. "Class, Rachel has a big brown dog. Rachel's dog is named Al. Al runs very fast."

STEP TWO: Ask a story.

- Using actors (or puppets or dolls or pictures). Once again, use your students as the topic of the story. Circle each statement that contains one of the lesson's focus phrases.

- (Optional) Retell the story without actors. You may take the place of the actors or you may have everybody in the class act at the same time! You may **slightly** change or embellish the story to keep interest high.

- (Optional, can be homework) Students tell or write the story from illustrations. In class, they tell to partners. As homework, they tell to their parents.

STEP THREE: Read passage aloud to them.

- Students follow silently while listening

- Invite them to translate the story.

The above lesson plan may take 90 minutes. Repeat the same procedure for each group of two or three phrases. After three or four lessons of this type, tell a story that uses most (or all) of the words from the preceding lessons.

Then begin again with two-three phrases per lesson, doing a review story after three or four lessons.

After you have taught all of the phrases on the list, you are ready to tell the chapter story (or the fairy tale or whatever story you originally intended to teach.) It is helpful to use a cartoon strip of the story. Point to each illustration and ask plenty of questions about it.

The chapter test will give students a chance to prove to you that they know it all!
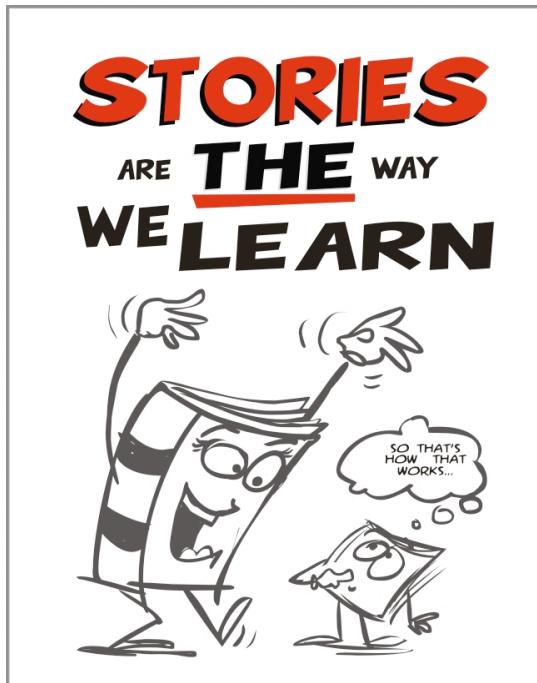
A culminating activity might be to have students tell the story to their families, to have students perform the story (for their families, for the rest of the school, for the video camera) to have students make their own story books, or to have students write their own stories.

Make grammar useful!

1. Students acquire grammar by understanding how changing things in the language affects the meaning. They do NOT acquire grammar by learning and practicing rules. One effective tool for promoting accuracy is retelling from **perspective**--with guide words at first and then without. Be demanding of your better students by requiring them to retell without help.

2. Always explain grammar from a **meaning** point of view. For example, let your students know what the "le" or "se" does in the sentence. Teach them the past tenses simultaneously by translating the sentence. Make your explanations very quick (15 seconds MAXIMUM).

3. Pepper every lesson with quick **"pop-up" grammar** questions. If the story says, "She gave him a dollar," ask for a translation of "him." Also ask questions that get students to focus on verb endings: Class, what does the "r" do in "mirar?"

4. Use **essays** to focus on accuracy, especially with upper-level classes. Correction methods:
   a. Correct all instances of one or two important errors in each essay, explaining these corrections in detail. Concentrate on verb accuracy and agreement. Your corrections must show that their errors cause confusion. (Yo habla = "I he talks" or livres important = is there one book or more than one?)
   b. Use a rubric.
   c. Find and highlight only ten errors in each composition.

5. Speak the language as much as possible in the classroom and **speak it naturally**. DO NOT shelter grammar when speaking to students! If they do not hear natural language they are unlikely to acquire it.

6. English is used only to guarantee comprehension (such as translating readings) or to clarify meaning as quickly as possible (such as in pop-ups).

7. Write a **class story** every month or so. Teacher writes the story on the overhead while the entire class invents the story line. Continually ask about spelling, gender, conjugations, anything relating to accuracy. Students answer questions about all of the structure they know while copying the entire story. Praise them for their knowledge; praise them for asking questions about how the language works. Students are more likely to learn grammar from multiple mini-lessons than from a five-minute lesson that has an explanation and drill. To see an example of a class story, see the DVD "TPRS in the 90's" by Susan Gross.
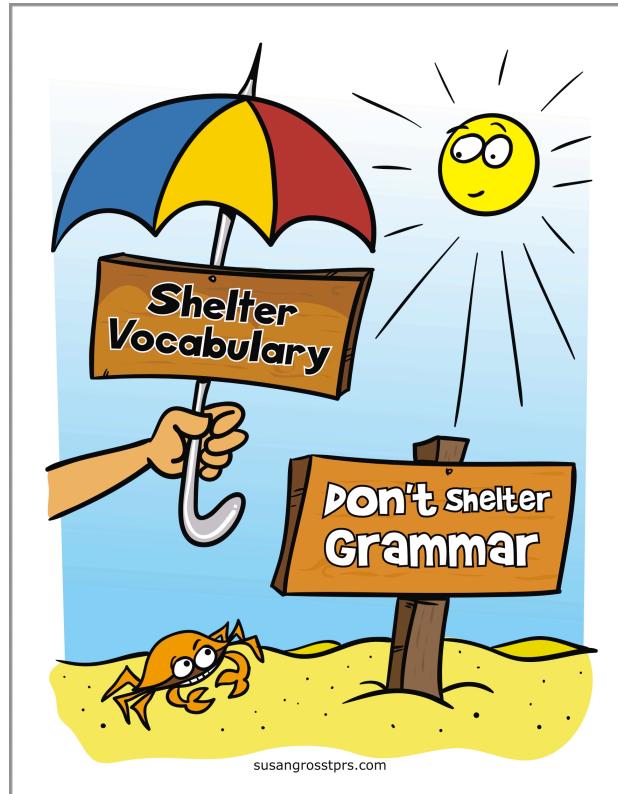
Grammar Schedule

While the teacher uses **all** of the language accurately **all** of the time, it is helpful to have a grammatical focus in mind for the students. Certain features like affirmative/negative are obviously essential to understanding. These are the first things that must be clarified. In level one, I used the following "point of view" plan:

Aug - Oct 3rd person singular and plural.
Nov - Dec 1st person singular.
Jan - Feb 2nd person singular.
Mar - Apr 1st person plural.
May 2nd person plural.

At the conclusion of a story, we quickly retold from the point of view that I was working on. Each point of view included possessive adjectives; direct object, indirect object, disjunctive, and reflexive pronouns; regular, irregular, and reflexive verbs. Some years I did not make it through all of the points of view because I moved to the next point of view once the students demonstrated mastery of the current point of view.

Since I used all forms correctly whenever appropriate in our storytelling and conversations, they heard all points of view all year long. The above plan simply guided what grammar I chose to **emphasize** each day and to **assess** in the chapter test.

Reading

A well-developed reading program is **essential**. A reading program is not an ancillary; it is crucial. A good reading program includes the following reading activities:

- **Kindergarten day**. Teacher reads a children's book to the class.

- **Free Voluntary Reading**. Students select their own reading material from the classroom library. Classroom materials should include brochures, magazines, baby books, children's books, storybooks, and novels. An abundance of high-interest materials is required. These materials need not be geared to the student's vocabulary or grammar lessons; they should simply be appealing to the students.

- **All-class translation (TPRS reading)**. Everyone reads the same material. Students translate (individually or as a group.) Students need to know at least 75% of the vocabulary for this activity to be successful. In addition to pop-up grammar and vocabulary, discuss the reading in the target language. Personalize the discussion by connecting the events and characters to your students.
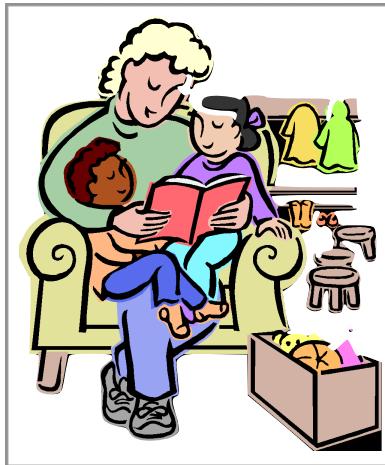
- **Homework reading**. Once they know 90 to 95% of the vocabulary, students can read a chapter as homework. Reading is the best use of homework time for levels 3 and above. You may choose to assess with a quick quiz.

- **Reading a novel** promotes fluent reading skills. Fluent reading means *without dictionaries*. Our students will not start out as fluent readers; they must be guided. Begin with a novel that is almost totally comprehensible. Students translate out loud, while the teacher assists as needed. All students follow along in their own books. While there are many opportunities for pop-up grammar, remember that reading is a language acquisition activity, not a hidden agenda for grammar lessons. Focus on the plot, the characters, what will happen next, and enjoyment of the story.

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In levels 3 and above, students can read novels as homework. Once they understand at least 90 to 95% of the vocabulary, students can read independently. Begin by translating the first few chapters in class. By grouping the students and letting each group run their own translation while you move among the groups, you will know when they are ready to read independently. Assign the next chapter for two or three days later. Most teachers have them write summaries or give them quizzes over what they have read.

Because it is difficult to find novels that are appropriate for level one and level two students, you may choose to order the novels on the order form. If you would like to see more novels for German, French, and Spanish reading programs, go to http://www.susangrosstprs.com and click on "Lessons." There are

teacher-recommended reading lists for kindergarten through seniors in high school in French, Spanish, and German.

Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to know how well you are teaching. If you don't know how much of the material has been mastered, you don't know what to do tomorrow!

Constantly assess students by listening for instant, unanimous responses to all statements and questions. When the response is low, do not move forward until the cause of misunderstanding has been cleared up.

Formal assessment includes quizzes, tests, and exams:

Frequent unannounced ten-point **quizzes** tell you which items need to be re-taught.

Chapter tests (secondary level) may include vocabulary, listening, reading, culture and an essay.

Semester exams should assess proficiency: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture.

Student Rapport

In order to maintain an appropriate classroom atmosphere, teachers need to be in control. They need to create a safe environment. Very often, student resistance stems from the fear of being rejected or ridiculed. A negative student atmosphere has a negative impact on learning. We must eliminate ALL negativity in our classes. This includes comments, facial expressions, smirks, and overt behavior. It also includes teacher impatience, sighs, and sarcasm.

Show respect for your students. Accept them for who they are. Show them you care. Know about their lives and talk about their lives in class and in mini-stories. Shake their hands and ask them about their friends, family, or hobbies.

"Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."
-- *Anonymous*

TEACH STUDENTS NOT CURRICULUM

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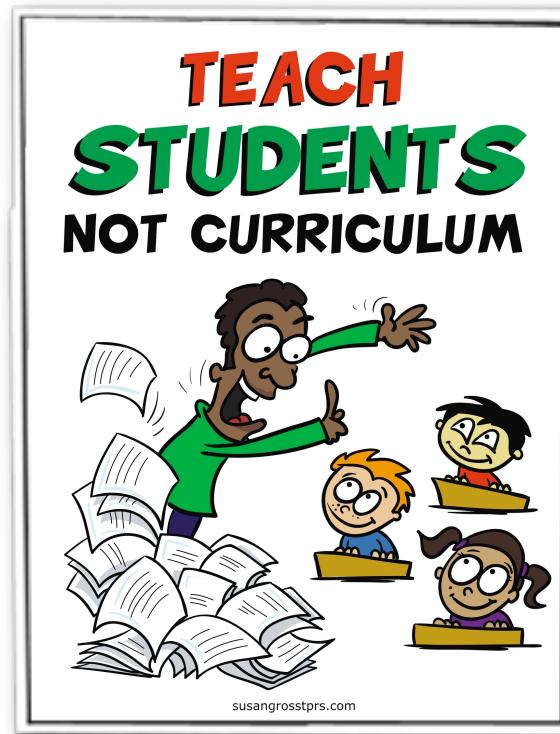
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Two essential skills for storytelling

Essential skill #1: REPETITION

Technique # 1 Circling questions

In order to acquire the structures that you are teaching, learners must hear them over and over. Simply putting the structure into a story is not enough; abundant repetition is key. By asking a wide variety of questions that contain the structure, we require that students pay attention and answer the questions. Here is a list of the types of questions/ statements that help us to get repetitions, followed by a blank to indicate student choral response, and then the *teacher responses*:

Statement: **The dog runs** fast.
"Yes" answer: Does **the dog run** fast? __ *Yes, the **dog runs** fast*.
Either/or: Does **the dog run** fast or slowly? __ *That's right. The **dog doesn't run** slowly; the **dog runs** fast.*
"No" answer: Does **the dog run** slowly? __ *That's right. The **dog doesn't run** slowly; the **dog runs** fast.*
Question word: Who **runs** fast? __ *Right! The **dog runs** fast.*

Notice that there are many possible either/or questions: Does the dog run fast or does the dog dance fast? Does the dog run fast or does the boy run fast?

By the same token, there are many possible "no" answer questions: Does the dog dance fast? Does the boy run fast?

* It is often helpful to script all of the possible questions for a given statement. A simple glance at the list of possible questions will enable the teacher to keep the questions going in a random order. (**see circling template p.12**)

Technique #2 Add details to the original sentence and recycle.

Any new words you use are out of bounds. Bring those new words "in bounds" by asking 2 – 3 circling questions and then add another detail:

Question: What is the dog's **name**?   (Students suggest names)
Statement: The dog's **name** is Arrow.
"Yes" answer: Is the dog's **name** Arrow? __ *Yes, the dog's **name** is Arrow*.
 "No" answer: Is the dog's **name** Spiderman? ___ *No, the dog's **name** isn't Spiderman, it's Arrow. And Arrow **runs fast***!
Question: What color is the dog?   (Students suggest colors)
Statement: The dog is **black**.
Either/or: Is Arrow brown or **black**? __ *Yes, Arrow the dog is **black**. He's not brown.*
"No" answer: Is the dog brown? __ *That's right. The dog Arrow is not brown, he's black. And he **runs fast***!
Question word: How big is Arrow?

Now the story has begun:
"Arrow the tiny black dog who is the size of an insect runs faster than a Porsche."

By the time all of these details have been added, students have begun to figure out how the structure of the language works. They can see where modifiers go and how they are pronounced, they see how a dependent clause is inserted into the statement, they understand negation when they hear it, and they have begun to lay the foundation for how the language works. With each sentence and each story they hear, they will solidify and improve on this basic foundation.

Technique #3 Recycling the story

After adding a new detail, go back a few sentences and integrate the new detail into the story.

"There is a girl named Sheila who has a tiny black dog named Arrow. Her dog runs fast."

Technique #4 Asking the story:

Avoid making too many statements in a row. Ask a few questions before continuing with the next statement. This keeps students involved all lesson long. They respond to everything you say:

> If you made a statement, they respond with "Ohh!" or "Wow!"
> If the question is something they know the answer to, they all yell out the answer.
> If the question calls for information that we don't know yet (Like what is the dog's name or color) then they all guess.

Essential skill #2: COMPREHENSIBILITY

Technique #1 Teaching to all students

Check for comprehension with the slower students during every statement. Don't move on to new sentences until all students comprehend completely.

Encourage students to tell you every single time they don't understand. Often they will be hesitant to signal, so ask them for a translation anyway. The job of the slower students is to make you a good teacher. If they don't slow you down, then they are helping the entire class to fail! (Do not pace the class by teaching to the top students.)

Technique #2 Pause and Point

Say a question word. Pause and point to the question word. Then continue with the rest of the question. You may need to offer a quick translation during the pause.

In a long sentence, pause after each phrase so that students can process. In the beginning you will need to silently count "One thousand one, one thousand two" before continuing with the next phrase. This feels too slow, but it is actually just right! Gradually increase speed by saying "One thousand one" after each phrase. While your goal is to get students to understand normal speech, it is necessary to speak VERY slowly at first!

Technique #3
Handling silence

You ask, "To where does the black dog named Arrow run?" Instead of shouting out a bunch of clever answers, the whole class is silent! Yikes! Normally this means that they are taking time to figure out what you just asked.

One of the following techniques will keep your class actively participating:

1. Change your question into an "either/or" question: Does the dog named Arrow run to WalMart or to Pizza Hut?

2. Comprehension check by asking for a translation **of the question!**

CIRCLE OF QUESTIONS

YES

WH...   STRUCTURE   OR

NO

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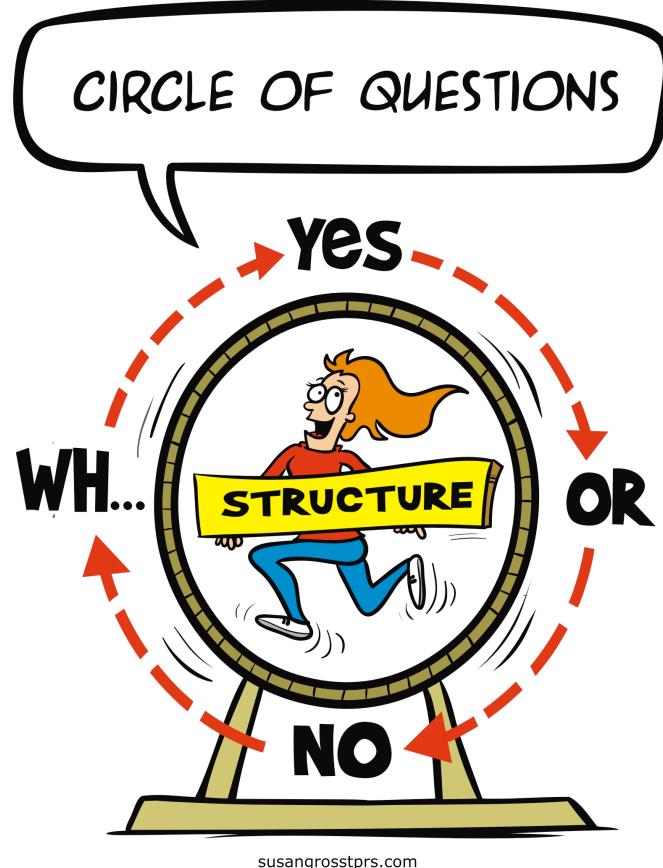
Technique #4 Staying "in bounds."

The boundaries are anything that the students already know plus the phrases that you are teaching today.
When adding a new detail to the story, that new word must be brought in bounds with a couple of questions. A good way to add details is by using proper nouns such as Toyota, Crest, WalMart, Chicago, Frank. For example, if you want to add "shoes" to the story, say "Nikes" instead of "shoes." That way you stay in bounds!

Expand on the boundaries by using cognates (like "automobile"). HOWEVER, students may not recognize "automobile" ; you must tell them what it means. Once you have brought that word in bounds, you may use it.
As the year progresses, the boundaries get bigger. Each time you meet with your students, use as much of the language as they already know.

The 3 Steps of TPR Storytelling®

Step 1 <u>Establish Meaning</u>

Write the English meaning on board
Gesture
Personalize the phrases:
  Ask questions using the new words.
  Ex: If the word is a noun, ask if a
  student likes it. If the word is a verb,
  ask if he does it.
  Show interest with follow-up
  questions.
  Ask whole group about the first
  student.
  Get reactions from whole group.
  Ask similar questions of another
student.
  Compare and contrast students.
Tips for success:
1 Always look for confusion (hesitation
or no response) and use translation to
clear it up.
2 Make sure that **every** student
understands everything.
3 Show interest and enthusiasm.
4 Capitalize on the comparison between
students to make a little story about
them.

Step 2 <u>Story</u>

Actors dramatize the story. They
perform after each statement.
Spend plenty of time on the story (do
NOT hurry.)
Follow each statement with questions.
Use a variety of questions: translation,
  low-level, open-ended, and creative.
Use translation to clarify grammar and
  structure. (Pop-up frequently.)
Creative questions (that have no answer
  yet) invite unexpected or personalized
  details.
Students respond to statements with
  "Ohhh!"
They must answer all questions.
Use the information that you learned
  about students to personalize the story.
Recycle parts of the story.
Retell the story (without actors, or
  everyone acting with a partner, or
  illustrating) if you need/want to.
Teach to the eyes! Look at the audience,
  not at the actors.
Enjoy the sparkle students.

Step 3 <u>Literacy</u>

Give students a printed story.
Students **translate** the story, (either as a
  group or one at a time.)
Make sure that students understand each
  paragraph.
Use translation to explain grammar so
  that grammar is tied to meaning, not to
  a grammar rule.
Discuss in the language:
    • Relate the situation, characters,
    and plot to students.
    • Ask if they have ever been in such
    a situation.
    • Capitalize on the cultural
    information in the story.
    • Use the story to teach life lessons.
    • Give a short quiz on the reading.
    • Act out a scene from a novel.
    • Discuss character development,
    choices and values.

Repeat step 3 for as many readings as
you have. Extended readings and novels
can also be translated in this manner.

It is the teacher's job to show enthusiasm and to be supportive at every step of every lesson.

Circling chart = four possibilities for every word!

Statement: Charles reads Harry Potter

Charles	reads	Harry Potter

+

or

–

?

Does **Charles**….	Does Ch. **read**….	Does Ch read **HP**?
Does **Charles** or **Tony**….	Does Ch. **read** or **eat** ….	Does he read **HP** or **Superfudge**?
Does **Superman**….	Does Ch. **eat**…	Does he read **Superfudge**?
Who ….	**What** does Ch **do**?	**What** does he read?
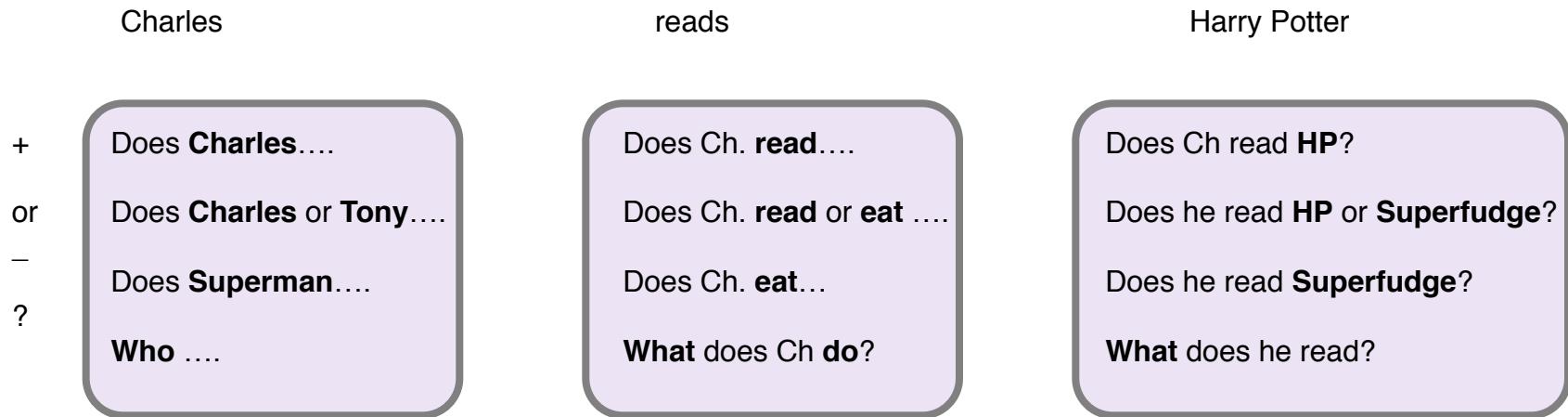
Keep the questions interesting! Add a detail every 2 - 3 questions. (When, where, how, what day, what time, for how long, with/to/for whom, how many, what color, how big, how often, what weather, why)

Circle with each new detail, so that the sentence becomes long and complex (and interesting)

EXAMPLE: On Thursdays at 2:37 PM Charles reads Harry Potter in the school library with Sasha Obama.

Want some output?
When you want a complete statement rather than one word answers, try these questioning structures:

Does he read HP or doesn't he read HP?
Does Charles read HP or does HP read Charles?