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Traditional and TPR Storytelling Instruction in the Beginning High School Spanish Classroom

Abstract
This study compares the effects of traditional and TPR Storytelling® instruction on the reading and listening comprehension levels of beginning Spanish students at thev secondary level. A TPR Storytelling® class of similar socio-economic status easily outperformed the traditional classes, while one of lower SES did just as well.

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Introduction

Two schools of thought have dominated recent discussion about foreign language pedagogy. The first, the traditional view, adheres to the idea that first and second language learning are fundamentally different. It emphasizes accurate language production through a concept explanation-concept practice model. The second, the comprehensible input position, views first and second language learning as similar processes and seeks to imitate the first language acquisition experience within the confines of the typical classroom.

Instructors who adhere to the traditional view approach second language learning as a cognitive exercise, treating language as an object, or an "entity to be scrutinized, analyzed, and broken down into its smallest components" (Tedick & Walker, 1994, p. 305) in order to then be built back into accurate communication. Adherence to this philosophy often manifests itself in lessons that teach not with the language but about it (Tedick & Walker, 1994, p. 306). Instructors who apply the comprehensible input position aim to expose students to as much understandable language as possible. The basis of this approach is formed by the work of researchers including Asher (1969), who, in the process of pioneering the Total Physical Response approach, stressed the importance of exposure to contextualized examples of the target language, especially through listening. Krashen (1981) took this assertion further by defining comprehensible input, or large doses of understandable language, as the essential element in both first and second language acquisition.

Comprehensible input theory has stimulated the development of numerous techniques for immersing students in understandable language. Of particular interest in this study is the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling technique, or TPR Storytelling® developed by Blaine Ray (Ray & Seely, 2002). In the typical TPRS classroom, instructors identify high-frequency vocabulary and grammatical structures and teach them through class conversation, storytelling and reading. Grammar explanations are typically very short and content is narrowed to the most useful phrases and structures for real communication. A low-anxiety environment is maintained by keeping the target language understandable.

Fundamental differences in the two approaches necessitate a comparison of their impact on real language learning. The central question explored in this study is how the comprehension level of beginning Spanish high school students taught in a traditional environment compares to that of beginning Spanish high school students taught in a TPRS environment.

Procedure

Spanish teachers from several states were asked to administer a standardized test to their high school students in beginning level classes. The instructors

invited to participate were chosen on the basis of three factors: reputable recommendation, survey score, and personal description of typical classroom activities. The survey score stemmed from teacher answers to survey questions (Appendix A) designed to quantify philosophy of foreign language instruction. Teachers earning scores of 31 or above were considered rooted in a traditional approach to instruction while those earning scores of 30 or below were considered TPRS teachers. To avoid misclassification based on factors like misinterpretation of survey questions, teachers' personal description of classroom activities were taken into account as possible support for or contradiction of survey scores.

Two participating teachers were labeled traditional upon analysis of surveys (mean score 47.5) and personal classroom descriptions, which supported survey scores in these cases. According to the aforementioned sources, this study's traditional teachers tended to elicit practice of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in their classrooms, pointing to the logical observation that consistent practice of a particular skill is necessary to obtain proficiency. Production of the target language in written and spoken form was elicited at an early point in the semester and continued throughout the year. Grammar description and drills played a central role in instruction, as did the study of vocabulary lists and the practice of writing and speaking. Often, correct language production was considered evidence of learned language rules while incorrect language production was interpreted as a need to re-teach specific grammatical points. Students were expected to think about the workings of target language and apply their understanding of those workings to communication. These are the comparison schools, A and B.

Two participating teachers were labeled TPRS instructors when both survey analysis (mean score 23.5) and personal classroom description revealed a high level of implementation of TPRS-based instruction. This study's TPRS teachers tended to spend the bulk of class time on language comprehension activities including storytelling, teacher-led class conversations, and reading, citing target language comprehension as an essential precursor to target language production. Grammar description occurred in short segments built around examples evident within the context of reading samples. Grammar drills were seldom used and vocabulary lists were streamlined into lists of three to four high-frequency phrases to be taught during each lesson. Students repeatedly heard and read those phrases in context during conversation and story activities. English was used to establish meaning of the target phrases and to clarify when conversations, stories, and reading samples included language students did not understand. Accurate language production was valued, but de-emphasized; inaccurate production was seen as evidence for the need for more input. These are the experimental schools, C and D.

Although ten schools were invited to participate in the study, the final results came from only four schools. Their demographics are presented in table 1. Analysis of the table presents a clear picture:

Table 1: Demographics

	A	B	C	D
F/R lunch	19%	30%	29% (dist.)	7%
grad rate	100%	100%	82%	99%
mobility	4.41%	1.23%	38.90%	6.70%

According to reported percentages of graduating students (2006/7), student mobility, and students on free or reduced lunch, the two comparison schools (A and B) and one of the experimental schools (D) educated students with more socio-economic advantage, while experimental school C educated students of lower socio-economic status. Additionally, while the main teachers in all schools were highly experienced, a student teacher experienced in TPRS instructed the class in school C for a portion of the school year.

For this study, participating teachers administered the University of the State of New York's standardized Second Language Proficiency Examination in Spanish from June of 2006 to test the reading and listening comprehension skills of beginning Spanish students at the end of their first year of study. The proficiency test had a reliability of .75 and consisted of three listening sections and two reading sections, each designed to measure comprehension skills. Within the listening portion, section A contained ten comprehension questions written in English, section B contained five comprehension questions written in Spanish, and section C contained five questions prompting a choice of a picture as an answer. Within the reading portion, section A included six comprehension questions in English about realia and section B included four comprehension questions in Spanish about realia. A third reading section (Appendix B) was adapted from a reading portion of the June 2006 version of a more advanced test, the New York Regents exam, in order to examine student comprehension of a longer reading passage rather than isolated words, phrases, and sentences. The adapted portion included the same five comprehension questions as the Regents exam. The text was modified in length to better match the ability of beginning language learners.

The maximum overall score for the exam, including all listening and reading portions, was 35; 20 of those points comprised the maximum listening score and 15 comprised the maximum reading score. Five of the 15 reading points corresponded to the portion adapted from the Regents exam. Because both control and experimental group students were enrolled in beginning Spanish, a pretest was not administered. The exam given to each group in April of 2007 included a list of questions (Appendix C) to eliminate native speakers, heritage speakers, and other false beginners from the sample.

Table 2: Mean Scores on Comprehension Tests for Individual Schools (standard deviation in parentheses)

Test	School A Comparison N = 32	School B Comparison N = 16	School C Experimental N = 13	School D Experimental N = 22
Overall	23.28 (22.72)	23.81 (19.22)	22.30 (38.23)	32.00 (4.66)
Listening	14.56 (9.28)	15.62 (4.25)	14.84 (9.14)	18.86 (0.98)
Total Reading	8.71 (4.72)	8.18 (8.96)	7.46 (16.10)	13.13 (2.40)
Regents Reading	1.43 (1.09)	1.81 (1.49)	2.15 (2,14)	3.72 (1.25)

Results

Table 2 presents means from each of the four participating classes while tables 3 and 4 present statistical comparisons of performance scores. Because of the similar performance of comparison schools A and B, their results were combined for

Table 3: Statistical Comparison of Control and Experimental Group C Scores on Comprehension Tests

Test	Combined Comparison Group A and B (N=48)	Experimental Group C (N=13)	t score
(Level of Significance)			
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)	
Overall	23.45 (21.19)	22.30 (38.23)	t=-0.62 (p<0.27)
Listening	14.91 (7.73)	14.84 (9.14)	t=-0.76 (p<.470)
Total Reading	8.54 (6.04)	7.46 (16.10)	t=-0.92 (p<.185)
Regents Reading	1.56 (1.23)	2.15 (2.14)	t=1.35 (p<.097)

Table 4: Statistical Comparison of Control and Experimental Group D Scores on Comprehension Tests

Test	Combined Comparison Group A and B (N=48)	Experimental Group D (N=22)	t score (Level of Significance)
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)	
Overall	23.45 (21.19)	32.00 (4.66)	t=10.56 (p<.0001)
Listening	14.91 (7.73)	18.86 (0.98)	t=8.70 (p<.0001)
Total Reading	8.54 (6.04)	13.13 (2.40)	t=9.47 (p<.0001)
Regents Reading	1.56 (1.23)	3.72 (1.25)	t=7.52 (p<.0001)

statistical analysis. In contrast, the performance of experimental schools C and D was markedly different, thus necessitating the separate comparisons recorded in tables 3 and 4. The comparisons show that experimental group C's performance was not significantly different from that of the combined comparison groups, and that experimental group D easily outperformed the combined comparison groups.

Summary and Conclusions

When demographic factors were similar, TPR Storytelling® students easily outperformed comparisons in traditional foreign language classes. This provides clear support for the efficacy of TPRS and the validity of the underlying theory.

Perhaps even more impressive is the finding that the TPRS students who worked with a less experienced instructor and had lower SES performed just as well as students in the traditional classes. Their performance is especially noteworthy because SES is such a powerful predictor of all test scores in education, to the point that, on tests of English and math, ESL students with higher SES do as well as or better than low SES fluent speakers of English (Krashen & Brown, 2004). Any treatment that can close such a significant gap is indeed remarkable.

Since the 1960's, studies have consistently shown comprehensible input methodology to be effective (for a recent review see Krashen, 2003). Although an obvious problem with this study is the small sample size, the results provide clear evidence consistent with the hypothesis that humans acquire language when they understand what they hear and read. Further research will test the reliability of this study's results.

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Appendix A

Research Study Part One: Initial Survey

Read the following statements. Then, indicate your level of agreement with each one by using the scale below. To indicate your choice, please type an X in the parenthesis that correspond to your chosen number:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 =Strongly Agree

1. Beginning Spanish students should participate in a wide variety of speaking, reading, listening, and writing activities every week.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

2. Beginning Spanish students should be expected to speak and write with grammatical accuracy.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

3. Beginning Spanish students benefit from learning grammar in a logical order, beginning with easier concepts and moving on to harder ones.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

4. Beginning Spanish students need to practice speaking in Spanish early in their instruction.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

5. Beginning Spanish students benefit from ample access to grammar exercises.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

6. Beginning Spanish students benefit from spending class time practicing speaking skills.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

7. Beginning Spanish students benefit from spending class time practicing writing skills.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

8. A textbook is an important component of introductory level curriculum.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

9. Beginning Spanish students benefit from learning numerous vocabulary terms each week.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

10. When students write poorly, grammatical concepts should be re-taught.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

11. Beginning Spanish students need detailed information about the grammatical concepts they study.
( )1 ( )2 ( )3 ( )4

Read the following descriptions of in-class activities. Then, indicate how many times per week your students participate in each one by typing an X in the parenthesis that correspond to your choice.

12. Do vocabulary drills.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

13. Translate text from Spanish to English.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

14. Do grammar drills.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

15. Give presentations to peers in Spanish.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

16. Listen to stories told in Spanish.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

17. Take quizzes over grammatical concepts.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

18. Participate in class discussions in Spanish.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

19. Read texts written in Spanish.
( )Less than 1 ( )1-2 ( )3-4 ( )5 or more

Please provide the following demographic information by typing in your answer.

20. How many years have you been teaching?

21. How many students do you teach total this semester?

22. Describe your school's schedule – how long are your class periods? Do you meet with every student every day?

23. What textbook series do you use?

24. How many hours of homework do you assign per week?

25. Have you completed any graduate education? If so, how much?

26. Briefly describe a typical week in your classroom. For example – what are your typical learning objectives? How do activities progress from day to day? What can students expect to spend time doing?

Appendix B

Adapted from the University of the State of New York's Regents High School Comprehensive Examination in Spanish from June 2006.

El grupo Maná fue de gira con su nuevo álbum "Revolución de amor"

Maná era una de las bandas de rock latino más populares de México en los años noventa y todavía es muy popular. Sin perder los elementos especiales de la música rock, con su música la banda se expresa acerca de la ecología, la pobreza, y la justicia.

Maná estrenó su álbum más reciente "Revolución de amor" en el año 2004. Su álbum anterior, "Sueños líquidos" salió en el año 1997. Su público esperó el álbum por mucho tiempo. Fher el cantante principal del grupo expresó, "Nosotros no participamos en el concepto de lanzar discos cada año solamente para hacer dinero. Para nosotros, es más importante dedicarle el tiempo necesario a cada uno de los discos que creamos." Según Fher, él y sus compañeros son "anti estrellas de rock." Ellos dan más importancia a la música que al estilo de vida.

Para el disco "Revolución de amor" el grupo grabó baladas, canciones con ritmas salsera, y rock and roll puro. También, trabajó con dos grandes estrellas de la música latina para hacer el álbum: Carlos Santana y el legendario Rubén Blades. Hicieron una gira con ellos y después descansaron por un año para crear más canciones poéticas y expresivas. Sin duda, "Revolución de amor" fue un éxito porque es una vigorosa declaración melódica, rítmica, emocional y política, sobre una música que tiene su foro en las fiestas de barrio y las calles.

38. Según el artículo, ¿qué les importa más a los miembros del grupo Maná?

al. producir muchos álbumes

am. vivir la vida loca de una estrella

an. ganar dinero

ao. expresar sus ideas con la música

39. ¿Por qué no producen discos cada año?

al. porque tienen muchas obligaciones familiares

am. porque es más importante hacer buena música

an. porque su contrato no lo permite

ao. porque tienen muchos conciertos

40. ¿Por qué es diferente el nuevo álbum de Maná?

al. porque tiene canciones en muchos idiomas

am. porque participaron dos artistas famosos

an. porque contiene canciones y poemas

ao. porque habla de la historia de México

41. ¿Qué hizo el grupo después de la gira?

al. Descansó por doce meses.

am. Grabó un nuevo disco.

an. Hizo un viaje a España.

ao. Escribió un libro de poemas.

42. ¿Por qué tiene éxito este grupo musical?

al. Usan ropa exótica.

am. Utilizan las ideas de su público.

an. Tocan diferentes estilos de música.

ao. Solamente tocan música romántica.

Appendix C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What grade are you in?
    a. 7th or 8th
    b. 9th
    c. 10th
    d. 11th
    e. 12th
2. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
3. Have you taken this same Spanish class in the past?
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. How many years have you studied Spanish NOT counting this year?
    a. None
    b. Less than one (a few months)
    c. 1-2
    d. 3-4
    e. 5+
5. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
    a. Yes
    b. No
6. Do you communicate in Spanish on a regular basis with your parents, grandparents, or guardians?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. What other world language do you study?

    a. None

    b. French

    c. German

    d. Latin

    e. Other

Determining the Crucial Characteristics of Extensive Reading Programs: The Impact of Extensive Reading on EFL Writing

by Sy-ying Lee, Ph.D. and Ying-ying Hsu

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Ying-ying Hsu, MATESOL, Senior Lecturer of English at Nanya Institute of Technology. She collaborated with Syying Lee in a three year longitudinal project tracing how in-class sustained silent reading effects English acquisition and has had several publications coauthored with Prof. Lee.

Abstract

This one-year study examined the impact of in-class extensive reading or sustained silent reading on writing with a group of Taiwanese vocational college students. These students had been less successful in academics, including English. While many researchers and practitioners believe that less proficient ESL/EFL students need more direct instruction, sustained silent reading has been gaining support from research. The design attempted to avoid the weaknesses in the design of previous studies by having a longer duration, an appropriate comparison group, providing more access to books, and requiring less accountability. Subjects devoted part of the class time to in-class reading and followed the same writing curriculum as the comparison group did. Pre and post essays were graded following Jacobs et al.'s (1981) measurement of writing, which included five subscales: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Results showed significant differences in gains on all subscales in favor of the experimental group.

Some scholars have hypothesized that writing style, the special language of writing, is acquired, or subconsciously absorbed, through reading (Krashen, 1984, 2004; Smith, 1988, 2004). The language of writing, it is argued, is too complex to be consciously learned, and there are compelling case histories of those who developed high levels of competence in the written language through reading alone, without instruction (see review in Krashen, 2004).

Correlational studies confirm that more reading is related to better writing in both first and second language research (Alexander, 1986; Applebee, 1978; Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1986; Lee, 1995, 2001, 2005; Lee & Krashen, 1996; Lee & Krashen, 2002; Huang, 1996; Gradman & Hanania, 1991; Janopoulos, 1986; Kaplan & Palhinda, 1981; Mason, 2004).

A few classroom experiments have been conducted to determine whether self-selected, extensive reading in the classroom effectively enhances writing ability among EFL and ESL learners (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Elley, 1991; Tsang, 1996; Lai, 1993; Hafiz

& Tudor, 1990; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Four of these studies (Tsang, 1996; Lai, 1993; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989) examined the effect of a reading program on the writing performance of subjects who learned English as a foreign or second language and who had a similar educational background, and in all four of these studies, students were evaluated on descriptive writing, writing on topics such as "My family," "Coming to School," etc.

These studies have, in general, produced positive results, with readers outperforming comparison students on measures of language use: percentage of syntactic and semantically acceptable sentences (Hafiiz and Tudor, 1989; Tudor and Hafiz, 1990; Tsang, 1996); spelling and fluency (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Tudor and Hafiz, 1990; Lai, 1993); accuracy, percent of error-free T-units (Lai, 1993); variety of vocabulary used (Tudor and Hafiz, 1990); content (Tsang, 1996); and overall impression (Lai, 1993; Tsang, 1996). But readers did not significantly outperform comparisons on spelling in one study (Tsang, 1996), on vocabulary in two studies (Tudor and Hafiz, 1990; Tsang, 1996), and on organization in another (Tsang, 1996).

It is surprising that the results were so positive, as all the studies suffered from serious design flaws due to practical constraints:

Participants in previous studies had little to read. Tudor and Hafiz (1989) provided only 104 books for 16 students, Hafiz and Tudor (1990) provided 106 books for 25 students, in Lai (1993), each class of 20 students had 40 books, and Tsang's students (Tsang, 1996) were required to read only eight books.

In each study, students were required to make thorough reports on what they read, which may have extinguished some of the pleasure of reading. Students were required to make oral reports (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Tudor and Hafiz, 1990; Lai, 1993) or had to fill out "review forms" which were graded for "details and persuasiveness" (Tsang, 1996).

The duration of all previous studies was short, ranging from four weeks (Lai, 1993) to three months (Hafiz and Tudor, 1990).

Our hypothesis is that access to more reading material, less accountability, and a longer duration would show a larger and more consistent impact of self-selected reading on measures of writing.

Procedure

The subjects were eighty-six (86) students in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at a vocational college in Taiwan. Mandarin was the language of instruction in nearly all courses. All students were in the third year of a five-year program in vocational education, were 17 and 18 years old, and had studied English previously for five years. These students were in general less successful than other university students in Taiwan, with most having failed the nation-wide senior high entrance examination. There were forty-three (43) students in the experimental, extensive-reading, group and forty-three (43) in the comparison group. The number of subjects, however, varied slightly in each analysis because some students did not complete all the tests.

All subjects were taking a general English class and a writing class. All subjects had been taking general English classes since their first year of their five-year college education and started the writing class in their third year, the year this project was conducted. The study was conducted as part of the general English class, which met twice a week, one session for 100 minutes and one for 50 minutes. The duration of the study was one academic year, two semesters, much longer than the duration of any of the studies discussed above.

The General English Class. In the general English class, the comparison group had traditional instruction, which included vocabulary and grammar study, and reading passages followed by comprehension questions. Some time was also devoted to group discussion. Quizzes, a mid-term, and final examinations were given as required by the

curriculum. The experimental group also followed the same traditional instruction for 100 minutes per week, but did self-selected reading for the 50-minute period each week. The experimental students were required to take the same quizzes and examinations as the comparison group. Both groups had the same instructor, the second author.

The Writing Class. Both groups met twice a week, one session for 100 minutes, the other for 50 minutes and both used the same textbook, *First Steps in Academic Writing* by Ann Hogue. Different instructors taught the two writing classes, but both instructors followed the chapters in the text, aimed at acquainting students with the composing process, providing practice producing basic sentence structures, and helping students develop grammatical and mechanical skills. Both groups were required to write three to four essays each semester. No changes were made in the usual practice in the writing class for the purposes of this study.

Reading Material. The instructor provided about 530 graded readers and titles from the Penguin and Oxford reading series, more than 12 books for each student, a ratio considerably higher than in previous studies. Penguin Readers are divided into six levels ranging from 300 headwords to 3000 headwords. Oxford readers also have six levels containing headwords up to 3000. Experimental group students were allowed to choose materials to read according to their own interests and language proficiency level, and it was suggested that they read at least one book per week.

Experimental students were asked to fill out a reading log recording how many pages they read and how much time they spent reading. In addition, students were encouraged to write a brief reflection paragraph or summary after they finished reading each book, either in English or Chinese, far less accountability than was required of participants in the studies reviewed above. Those who wrote reflections and summaries typically wrote only a few sentences. The instructor made suggestions on book selection based on students' comments and requests in the logs.

Measures. Two writing samples, written without feedback and revision, served as pre- and post-tests. The pre-essays were the first assignment at the beginning of the first semester and the post-essays were collected at the end of the academic year. In both cases, students were asked to do descriptive writing, with "The Moon Festival" and "Your Summer Vacation" as the topics for the pre- and post-tests. Two raters read the writing samples, both senior professors of English with many years of experience in grading compositions for the nation-wide university entrance examination. Essays were evaluated based on criteria established by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfield, and Hughey (1981): content (points awarded ranged from 13-30), organization (7-20), vocabulary (7-20), mechanics (2-5), and language use (5-25).

Following Jacobs et al., overall impression was calculated by totaling the components, but with different weightings for the subscales, with more value placed on content (13-30) and structure (7-20), and less on mechanics (2-5). The total number of words written was used as a measure of fluency. Inter-rater reliability based on the pre-essay scores was .87 using Kendall's W.

In addition, grades for the four examinations for the general English class were collected to ensure that both groups were at a similar English proficiency level before treatment (CONTENT EXAM 1, based on material covered the previous semester), and also to observe how extensive reading affected academic performance in the class (MIDTERM, CONTENT EXAM 2, given at the end of the first semester, and CONTENT EXAM 3, given at the end of the second semester).

Moreover, an attempt was made to evaluate subjects' reactions to the reading program by questionnaire and by noting the number of pages they read each semester. We assume that an increase in the amount students read reflects a positive attitude.

Results

The two groups had very similar grades on their final examination for the general English class in the previous semester (CONTENT EXAM 1) before treatment (experimental = 81.4, SD = 9.9; control = 80.5, SD =.7; t = .37; p = .71). There were also no significant differences on pre-test measures of vocabulary and reading[1].

For the comparisons of the measures related to writing, a multivariate method, Hotelling's T- Square, was used. This method allows a comparison of the mean values of two groups with more than one pair of dependent variables. In this study, six pairs of variables were compared: fluency (number of words written), content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics, and language use. Results indicated that the groups were not significantly different on the pre-essay (Hotelling's T = .12, p = .16), and the individual p values obtained from the multivariate analysis showed that there were no differences between the two groups on all subcomponents, including fluency (Table 1).

Table 1. Scores of the Pre Essays and Multivariate Analysis between Groups

	Exp	Con	Mean Diff.	p
Fluency	98.47 (34.86)[a]	97.76(30.14)	.71	.92
Content	16.65 (2.39)	16.65 (2.36)	.00	.99
Organization	9.79 (1.52)	10.04 (1.52)	.25	.46
Vocabulary	9.76 (1.52)	10.23 (1.46)	.47	.15
Language Use	9.76 (2.63)	10.65 (2.28)	.90	.10
Mechanics	2.99 (.54)	3.12 (.69)	.13	.33

N = 43 for the experimental group and 42 for the control group
a. The numbers in the parentheses denotes the standard deviations for raw scores

At the end of the second semester, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the post-essay (Hotelling's T = .62, P < .000), performing better on all subscales (Table 2) and made larger gains than the control did (Table 3). The inter-rater reliability of the post-essay using Kendall's W was .82. It is reasonable that reliability was lower in the post-essay than on the pre-essay, because of the greater variability in scores caused by the greater gains made by the experimental group.

Table 2. Scores for the Post Essay and Multivariate Analysis between Groups

	Exp	Con	Mean Diff.	p
Fluency	123.02(37.06)	82.17(34.86)	40.85	.000**
Content	19.34 (2.46)	16.88 (2.73)	2.46	.000**
Organization	12.79 (1.87)	10.54 (2.09)	.2.26	.000**
Vocabulary	11.62 (1.44)	10.10 (1.74)	1.52	.001**
Language Use	12.73 (2.51)	10.78 (2.52)	1.95	.001**
Mechanics	3.33 (.61)	3.02 (.61)	.31	.026*

Note: ES = effect size.
N = 41 for both groups in the post essay test.

Table 2 also presents effect sizes, based on mean scores, for all sub-measures of writing used in this

1 In this one year project, subjects were also tested on vocabulary using Nation's measure (1990) and reading using Mason's cloze test (2003). Details were described in detail in Lee (2007).

study. The effect size shows the magnitude or impact of a treatment. According to Cohen (1988) an effect size of 0.2 represents a small effect, 0.5 a medium one, and 0.8 a large effect. The results in this study show effect sizes mostly larger than 0.8 in favor of the experimental group, meaning that the experimental group was clearly superior to the control group on nearly all of the subscales in Jacob et al's writing measures.

Table 3. Gains on Each Subscale for Both Groups

	Exp	t / p value	Con	t / p value	ES
Fluency	23.05(36.04)	4.10/.000**	-14.4 (31.84)	-2.92/.006**	1.11
Content	2.62(2.75)	6.10/.000**	.28 (2.81)	-.62 /.54	.85
Organization	2.94(1.90)	9.86/.000**	.50 (1.89)	1.67/ .10	1.30
Vocabulary	1.78(1.55)	7.34/.000**	-.11(1.77)	-.40 / .69	1.15
Language Use	2.85(2.58)	7.07/.000**	.18(2.47)	.45 / .66	1.07
Mechanics	.33(.57)	3.73/.001*	-.11(.67)	-1.06 /.30	.72

Note: N = 41 for the experimental group and 40 for the control group

Table 4. Comparisons of the Course Required Examinations for Both Groups

		CONTENT-1 (before treatment)	MIDTERM (during the first semester)	CONTENT-2 (after one semester)	CONTENT-3* (after one year)
Con	Mean (SD)	81.35 (9.87)	71.09 (11.30)	70.43 (11.43)	69.27 (11.27)
	N	43	43	43	42
Exp	Mean (SD)	80.51 (10.72)	75.63 (13.21)	72.13 (14.35)	74.74 (11.89)
	N	43	43	43	43

The two aspects for which the effect sizes were below .8 (language use and mechanics) still represent a modest victory for extensive reading over traditional instruction on writing.

The reading group improved significantly on all aspects, while the control group did not, a rather frustrating outcome for those who believe in the efficacy of traditional instruction. Table 3 presents the results of t-tests comparing pre and post-essays for each group on each subscale, as well as effect sizes based on gain scores.

Note that the control group even declined significantly on the indicator of fluency (number of words written), and regressed slightly on the measures of content, vocabulary and mechanics. What is even more intriguing is that the reading groups outperformed the control group on the course required examinations (Table 4).

Table 4 shows that the experimental group did better on all content examinations after the pre-tests, and the difference was statistically significant on the final test given at the end of the year ($t = 2.22$, $p = .03$; $d = .84$)[2].

In addition, the experimental students reported reading more pages in the second semester than they did in the first semester (525.36 pages vs. 357.52 pages, $t = 5.93$, $df = 41$, $p < .000$), suggesting that they enjoyed doing the reading.

2 The lower grades on the examinations following CONTENT TEST 1 was most likely due to the fact that 30% of the items on these tests were on material not covered in the textbook. These items were drawn from the GEPT practice test. The GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) was developed by the Language Training and Testing Center in Taiwan, an organization responsible for test development and awarding certificates indicating one's English proficiency level. The finding that the reading group performed better in these examinations suggests that extensive reading works no less effectively, or even more effectively, than instruction in preparing students to take GEPT.

Students in the reading section also filled out a brief questionnaire, in Mandarin, at the end of the first semester for us to evaluate the program and seek ways to improve the program in the second semester. They were asked if they felt that they had improved in different aspects of language competence, and were also asked what activities they felt needed to be strengthened or included in the class.

Table 5. Students' Reflections on In-Class Extensive Reading after One Semester

Aspects felt improved	N	%
a. reading ability	31	72.1
b. reading rate	30	69.8
c. vocabulary	17	39.5
d. grammar	7	16.3
e. writing	7	16.3
Activities felt needed		
a. more grammar teaching	16	37.2
b. more story analysis	20	46.5
c. more books	33	76.7
d. more discussions	9	20.9
e. others	3	7

As presented in Table 5, students clearly felt they had improved in reading and vocabulary, but were less certain about writing and grammar. Our results, however, confirm that they did indeed improve in writing after one year of reading, as previously shown. In addition, most students recommended more books, which confirms that they were enthusiastic about reading.

Some, however, felt a need for more traditional instruction, grammar and story analysis.

At the end of the program, an open-ended questionnaire was distributed to determine if students still felt that the in-class reading program helped. There were some unexpected results (Table 6). Students reported that they felt they struggled less in figuring out the meanings of unfamiliar words, i.e. they developed better strategies for guessing word meanings without consulting the dictionary, taking advantage of context as an aid to comprehension. A few students mentioned that reading helped them with their listening comprehension, that they began to think in English when reading, and that they even progressed on pronunciation.

Table 6. Students' Reflections on Extensive Reading after One Year

Aspects felt improved	**N**	**%**
a. vocabulary	16	37.2
b. reading comprehension & speed	15	34.8
c. strategies for guessing unknown words and expressions	12	27.9
d. grammar	9	20.9
e. thinking in English	1	2.3
f. listening in English	1	2.3
g. pronunciation	1	2.3

Only the reading group did the questionnaire. The results are therefore only suggestive.

Table 7. Comparison to Tsang (1996) Using Effect Sizes

	this study	**Tsang**
organization	1.32	0.32
content	0.96	0.75
vocabulary	1.15	0.32
language use	1.15	0.63
spelling/mechanics	0.75	0.14

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine whether an improved design would result in a greater impact of self-selected reading on writing. This study, therefore, provided far more access to books, lasted longer, and did not require extensive and potentially stressful post-writing activities.

In this study, the practice of extensive reading was the only activity in which experimental subjects

differed from comparison subjects. All did the same number of writing assignments in writing class, all followed the same regular syllabus, and there were no pre-test differences. As the results indicated, reading clearly had a strong effect in this study, with readers showing a clear and strong superiority in fluency, as well as in all the subscales of the Jacobs et al. writing assessment tool.

Table 8. Comparison to 4 Studies Using Statistical Significance

	this study	Tsang	Hafiz & Tudor	Tudor & Hafiz	Lai
organization	sig	ns			
content	sig	sig			sig
vocabulary	sig	ns	ns	ns	
language use	sig	sig	sig	sig	
spelling/mechanics	sig	ns		sig	sig
fluency	sig		sig	sig	sig

Sig = readers significantly better than comparisons

Ns = readers not significantly better than comparisons

We were able to compare our results directly with those of Tsang (1996), because the same measure was used in both studies. Students in our study made greater gains, as shown by a comparison of effect sizes (Table 7).

It was not possible to compare our results using effect sizes with the other three studies, as measures were often only roughly comparable across studies. Students in our study, however, did as well as or better than students in all four studies, as shown in Table 8, which uses a cruder measure, statistical significance rather than effect size.

Table 9. Total Duration, Total Time in Reading

Study	Duration	Total Time
The present study	30 weeks	25 hours
Tudor & Hafiz	3 months	42 hours
Hafiz & Tudor	23 weeks	90 hours
Lai	4 weeks	50 hours
Tsang	24 weeks	

These results are consistent with our hypothesis that longer duration, increased access and/or less accountability make a difference. They are also consistent with Lee (2007) who found that these were the key factors of a more successful extensive reading program after three consecutive studies with Taiwanese university students. Our results, of course, do not allow us to specify which of these aspects is crucial or the most important.

This study confirms that longer term studies produce better results, consistent with Krashen (2004). It is of interest, however, that the duration of our study was longer, but the total time devoted to reading was not. In fact, our subjects devoted less total time to reading (25 hours; 50 minutes per day for 30 weeks) than subjects did in any of the studies reviewed here (Table 9). This could mean that distributed rather than massed reading sessions are more efficient, that is, shorter sessions more spread out over time.

The results are also consistent with the studies that show that greater access to reading material results in more reading, and in turn better achievement on tests of reading and writing development (Krashen, 2004). Our students had access to more than 500 titles, about five times as many as Tudor and Hafiz' subjects were provided with and more than ten times as many as Lai's. In terms of books per student, our ratio was 12.4 to 1 (534 titles/43 students), far greater than the ratio in any of the previous studies.

Our results extend the research on self-selected reading to vocational college students, providing evidence for the reliability of the efficacy of extensive reading. One possible flaw in our design was the fact that two different

topics were used as prompts in the pre- and post-essays. It is possible that students react differently to different prompts. Few studies, however, have used the same topics for both pre- and post-tests because of the concern about student familiarity with the topic, and both the pre-essay prompt,The Moon Festival, and the post-essay, Your Summer Vacation, were similar in that students were required to describe how they spent their time during the holiday and vacation. Neither asked for special background knowledge and terminology to complete the task. Most important, both the experimental and comparison group wrote on the same topic.

Our results do not, of course, demonstrate that reading is the only source of competence in writing, but it is doubtful that formal instruction makes a substantial contribution, evidenced by the results of the comparison group as well as the fact that the written language is so complex. The results are, however, consistent with the hypothesis that the source of good writing style, the vocabulary, syntax and discourse structure of the written language, is reading.

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A Comparison of TPRS and Traditional Foreign Language Instruction at the High School Level

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Introduction

TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) was developed by Blaine Ray in the early 1990's (Ray and Seely, 2008). It is the most recent comprehension-based method to emerge in the US, preceded by TPR (Total Physical Response, Asher, 2000) and the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). It is similar to previous methods in emphasizing comprehensible input, not forcing students to speak at levels beyond their current competence, and not engaging in heavy grammar instruction or error correction. TPRS goes beyond previous methods by emphasizing stories, a powerful means of developing language and literacy (e.g. Trelease, 2006).

A number of studies have shown that students in comprehension-based methods typically outperform traditional students on measures of communication and do as well or better on tests of grammar (Krashen, 1982, 2003). TPRS, however, has not yet been put to the empirical test. That is the goal of this study.

Method

Two methods were compared. The TPRS class was typical of what is described in Ray and Seely (2008), with a focus on stimulating language acquisition by providing comprehensible input through storytelling. The version of TPRS used in this study is what Krashen (personal communication) calls "modified TPRS/natural approach," with each story containing a certain amount of target vocabulary and grammar, in this case three to four new words and one point of grammar.

The focus of the traditional class was on conscious learning, with a great deal of the instructional time dedicated to helping students understand grammatical concepts through explanations in English. Other techniques were also used such as short interviews, student-to-student question and answer exercises and the flyswatter game to identify and review vocabulary. This teacher also incorporated technology into lessons and had students work on photo or video projects. Technology was also used to present information and to explain grammar. Questioning techniques and personalized questions were used, but TPR Storytelling® was not used in class.

Both groups read every week and had reading assignments outside of class. The traditional class read *Pobre Ana* by Blaine Ray. The TPRS class read both *Pobre Ana* and *Patricia va a California* by Blaine Ray as class readers.

To determine the fidelity of the treatment, four sessions of each kind of instruction were audio-taped. The tapes were analyzed to probe the use of questioning techniques, vocabulary repetition, the amount of group work done, and the teacher's language when doing whole-group teaching. One class period that was considered the most representative of that teacher's typical teaching style was analyzed in detail.

Subjects

Subjects were seventy-three high school students enrolled in first year Spanish in 2007-2008. Twenty-three were enrolled in the traditionally taught class, and fifty were enrolled in two sections of a TPRS class. The same teacher taught both TPRS classes, and a different teacher taught the traditional class. All classes were in a high-income area school, with only 3.2% of the students classified as low-income, compared to the state average of 40.9%.

Only 4% of the students in the TPRS classes spoke Spanish at home or used Spanish frequently outside of school. Fifteen percent of the traditional students spoke Spanish at home or used Spanish frequently outside of school.

Measures

Two measures were given at the end of the school year, a final exam and an oral examination.

The final exam consisted of the following sections:
Listening: Students viewed and listened to a video and indicated whether statements based on the content were true or false and chose answers to statements based on the video.
Vocabulary and Grammar: Students were required to fill in the blank in sentences, choosing from several options.
Reading: Students were asked to read ten sentences and decide whether the statements were probable or improbable. They were also asked to read two passages and answer comprehension questions.

The reliability of the final exam using the KR-21 formula was a modest .67. This test, the only one that could be used with this data, typically underestimates reliability (Brigham Young University, 1997).

The oral assessment was the same as the measure used district-wide. For the oral examination, students were asked to randomly choose a card with an English word (object or activity) and explain it in two minutes. Students were allowed to pass on cards up to three times if they felt they could not explain the word.

Students were rated on a scale of zero to three on overall communication efficacy, including vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, on a zero to two scale on "strategic competence" (use of verbal and non-verbal strategies to negotiate meaning), and on a zero to two scale for sociolinguistic competence (e.g, appropriate use of informal tu/formal usted). The students' overall score was then used to arrive at an overall rating ranging from zero to three (native speaker level).

All students in each class were tested by the same rater, and different raters were used for each class. No student was rated by his or her own teacher.

No measure of inter-rater reliability was possible because each student was rated by only one rater, but all raters had attended training sessions on the use of the scoring rubric and had agreed on the criteria used.

Students were also asked to estimate how much homework they did for their Spanish class on a questionnaire administered with the final examination.

Results

Fidelity of Treatment

Analysis of the audiotapes confirmed that the traditional and TPRS classes were very different.

The TPRS teacher asked 141 questions throughout the analyzed class period. The traditional teacher asked eighteen questions during the first ten minutes of the class session and did not ask questions for the remainder of the period.

The TPRS class was teacher-fronted 68% of the time, with input nearly entirely in the second language. The traditional class was teacher-fronted 29% of the time, with the language of instruction a mix of Spanish and English.

The frequency of questions, as well as the consistent level of comprehensible input throughout the class period by the teacher are characteristic of a TPRS class, as described in *Fluency through TPR Storytelling* (Ray and Seely, 2008).

Language Proficiency

The two TPRS groups performed nearly identically on both the final and oral tests, so their scores were combined for statistical analysis. Table one presents sample sizes and table two presents the results.

Table one: Sample Size

	Final test	Oral test
Traditional	23	23
TPRS	49	50
Total	72	73

Table two: Result

	Final Test	Oral test
Traditional	58.2 (7.9)	1.26 (.54)
TPRS	63.9 (4.03)	1.84 (.55)
t	4.06	4.21
df	70	71
p (2 tails)	0.0001	0.00007
effect size	1.04	1.08

As presented in table two, the TPRS students outperformed the comparison students, scoring about one standard deviation higher (see effect size in table two).

Homework

Students estimated how much homework they did for Spanish class choosing one of the following: 1 = less than one hour per week; 2 = one to one and a half hours per week; 3 = more than one and half hours to two hours a week; 4 = more than two hours a week.

Responses of TPRS and traditional students were nearly identical (TPRS = 3.67, sd = .72; traditional = 3.52, sd = .68) and not significantly different (t = .74, df = 69, p = .46, two-tail).

This result eliminates homework time as a potential confound.

Discussion

The results show that the TPRS students outperformed the traditional students on both the final and oral examinations.

There were no obvious reasons for the superiority of the TPRS group other than the treatment. Although few students in either class had any exposure to Spanish outside of class, a larger percentage were enrolled in the traditional class, which suggests that the TPRS superiority was actually larger than what was reported here.

There was no reason to hypothesize any difference in attitude or motivation between the groups. Such difference might have been present, however. The sample size was modest, but the results were significantly different. Nevertheless, additional studies of this kind are called for to confirm the reliability of these results.

The finding that TPRS students outperformed traditional students is consistent with previous reports of the superiority of other comprehensible-input based methods (Krashen, 1982, 2003). Whether TPRS, with its additional emphasis on stories, is superior to other comprehensible input methods remains to be seen, but this study shows that TPRS has passed a very important empirical test of its effectiveness.

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Desire + Attitude + Effort Successful Acquisition of English as a Foreign Language - A Real Life Story

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Abstract

This article presents the real-life experience of language acquisition in situations that are quite unusual and unconventional in learning EFL in the Indian context. It occurred in the life of two children who are below the age of ten years. It was a serendipitous discovery for the children's mother who incidentally happens to be a teacher and a researcher of ESL and has observed and recorded the whole story, thereby becoming the author of this piece.

Article

Human beings, whether they are children or adults, learn more rapidly and effectively if they have a strong reason for doing so. The reason may not be consciously known to the learner but simply another feature of social pressure that impinges on every individual in a community and impels him to develop as he does (M.A.K. Haliday, et all. 1964).

The case elaborated here concerns two small children who are presently in their primary classes. One is a boy who has completed seven years, and is in Class III, and the other is his nine-year-old sister in Class V at an ordinary matriculation higher secondary school with classes from kindergarten to Class XII (intermediate level) run by a private management under the jurisdiction of the state government of Tamil Nadu, India. This school is located in a rural area, a small village, removed from the nearest urban centre by a distance of forty-five kilometers, in Tuticorin district in the southern part of Tamilnadu.

The teaching-learning environment available in this institution is just like that in a majority of such institutions found across the state, where much of teaching as well as human interaction happens only in the regional language, Tamil, in spite of the declared medium of instruction being English. A major chunk of the student population of this school hails from the peasantry of the tiny hamlets nearby. Therefore, all these children are first-generation learners. Here, most of the teaching including that of the target language, English, is done through Tamil. This may be due to the fact that here, the teachers are not proficient enough in English to use it in their daily transactions. Obviously, the two children of this school under our study do not enjoy or experience a favourable learning environment of the target language at the school. But, at present, these two siblings can use English with great ease and enthusiasm in their daily life.

How has this been possible?

It all started two years ago, when both the children were in classes I and III respectively. Then, they happened to accompany their mother, a teacher of English at a local college, to an international conference on English grammar held at BIT, Sathyamangalam in India. There, they happened to watch most of the participants conversing with their mother only in English most of the time. This made them feel neglected and even a bit alienated as both of them could not understand anything being discussed. At one point, the boy became so impatient and annoyed that he yelled at a faculty member of the host institution who was chatting with his mother in English. He asked that person why he had frequent hiccups while talking and expressed that it would be better for him to talk in Tamil. The mother was a bit embarrassed at this unexpected interruption.

Exactly a year later, the two children happened to be with their mother at the next international conference on English grammar at SCT, Salem, India . But this time, the situation was totally different: both the siblings conversed freely and confidently with those around them in English, feeling quite at-ease. They enjoyed a better rapport with the participants there, and they even found a couple of delegates complimenting their good English. From then onwards, these children looked forward to such intellectual outings with their parents.

What made this possible?

In the case of the two children under our study, the social pressure exerted by the speech community of the target language was so intense, and their urge to identify themselves with the target language community was so strong, that they experienced optimum cognitive and emotional arousal, a crucial prerequisite for successful language acquisition (Kaplan, 1997). This pressure impelled them to explore and harness the available opportunities that could enable them to learn the target language. In this process, the kids' programmes they happened to watch frequently on the satellite television channel, POGO, for mere fun became resources for them inadvertently. Particularly, the kids' programmes such as *Miffy and Friends*, *Make Way for Noddy*, *Oswald*, *Teletubbies*, *MAD*, and *Shakthimaan* -- the ones which they watched avidly -- helped them immensely. They watched a couple of these programmes every day for an hour or two. The repeated telecast of the various episodes of these serials ensured them of a considerable exposure to the use of the language in real-life situations at frequent intervals.

Thus, these children received an input which was comprehensible, interesting, relevant, not grammatically sequenced, in sufficient quantity and experienced in low anxiety contexts, which are most essential for language acquisition to occur, as stated by Krashen (1981) in his "input hypothesis" and "affective filter hypothesis." Having received such an input over a period of time, they started using the language meaningfully between themselves in their own limited contexts, like play, without any kind of ulterior motive. In fact, first, they began the game with imitating the activities and the language they were exposed to through the television serials. Later on, in their leisure time, they enjoyed playing the roles of the different characters that they watched on the television. This happened very often as days passed. Gradually, it became a part of their regular play. In the meantime, some of the expressions that these children were exposed to frequently became a part of their own vocabulary. All these things had happened without their consciousness. But, it was discovered by the mother accidentally one day, when the boy spontaneously quipped in response to an entreaty of hers in Tamil, the language of their use at home, "Mama, I will be back in a jiffy." Indeed, it was an awakening for the mother, and thus began her careful observation of the children's English language acquisition process.

In due course, these two siblings were able to act the various episodes of the serials as they watched on the television. They played the roles of characters such as Enid Blyton's cute little boy, Noddy; Martha Monkey; Mr. Plod; the police man; the bumpy dog, Dick Bruna's bunnies such as Miffy, Melanie, Barbara and others, and many other television characters: Oswald, the blue octopus; Henry, the penguin; Whinny, the dog; Daisy, the flower; Shakthimaan, the saviour; Killwish the destroyer; Jackal, the evil scientist; Geetha Vishwas, the journalist and so on. In their role-play, these children reproduced all the dialogues of these different characters verbatim with the exact pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation as they had heard on the television. They even tried to replicate the different scenes by placing these characters against backdrops similar to those presented in the stories. In this regard, they strewed and showered tiny white pieces of Thermo Cool, an insulating material, all around them in their play area, their living room, so as to recreate the scene of a snowfall, planted an umbrella on the floor under which they nestled together in order to recreate the scene of a summer camp on the beach and the like. They became so involved, perhaps even immersed, in the television programmes that after a few months, they went to the extreme of identifying themselves with the target language culture, like developing a fancy for its delicacies: banana pie, marshmallows,

strawberry muffins, fish steaks and so on, which are quite alien to or unheard of in their native culture.

Presently, these two children have acquired considerable proficiency in the use of English in speaking and writing as well, which includes delivering speeches extempore, writing short stories and composing poems all by themselves. In fact, they have developed a near-native accent, accuracy, fluency, and a wide range of vocabulary and structures. As well, they have improved their interpersonal and social skills. Incidentally, these two children have acquired a similar proficiency in their third language, Hindi, as well, simultaneously, despite an unhelpful learning environment of Hindi prevailing in and out of their classroom.

Thus they have gained proficiency in two different languages in a similar fashion by receiving comprehensible input through television programmes. Undoubtedly, the whole process has been quite incidental and hence subconscious, which is why, perhaps, it has yielded such good results. After all, incidental learning is more effective than intentional learning in the acquisition of any language.

This case study demonstrates the crucial role of "comprehensible input" in language acquisition. It further illustrates the point that the "elusive quality -- ,strong motivation" (Allen, J.P.B.,1973), combined with the right attitude towards the target language and its culture (Gardner,1972), sustained by appropriate intellectual and physical efforts taken by the learners themselves (Kaplan,1997), though serendipitous in this case, can lead to successful acquisition of English as a foreign language.

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"A lover who speaks the language is a faster route to fluency than any tapes or courses, but perhaps more expensive"

--Katherine Russell Rich,
Dreaming in Hindi

Top 5 List of New Discoveries This Year
A Few of My Favorite Things

by Karen Rowan

1. *http://www.bookmooch.com*
Unload books you have already read and ship them at your expense to someone who is looking for that very book. Each book trade earns you credits toward the books you are looking for. Find them and the owner ships them to you at his expense. International.

2. *http://www.livescribe.com/*
It's a pen. (Not excited yet?) We learned about the pen through a French teacher in Southern California, Carol Sutton. Use this special pen on special paper and the pen takes a picture of what you're writing. Simultaneously press the record button on the pen and record what is being said while you're writing. Press the playback button on the paper while touching a word on the paper and and the pen plays back what was being said. Load the written and audio portions up to a web site for later retrieval. (Excited yet?) We found it at Target. Depending on how much memory you want, you can purchase one for between $100 and $200.

3. *http://www.couchsurfing.org*
A year ago my Aunt decided she wanted to travel the world for free. Couch Surfing is a free service that connects travellers with couches to crash on all over the world. Register on-line and host travellers in your home as they pass through town or log on to visit with the natives rather than hotel staff when you're travelling. We have now hosted a family from South Korea and three college students from Texas. My Aunt continues her travels across the world and is currently in Montenegro. Couch Surfers vouch for each other, by the way, and only people who have been vouched for should be hosted.

4. *http://www.tomsshoes.com/*
Toms Shoes gives away one pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair it sells. Most of the time their Shoe Drops are in Africa, but they have had at least one in New Orleans.

5. *http://www.donorschoose.org*
This charity web site allows donors to choose the classroom projects they would like to fund. Teachers apply for grants on-line for classroom libraries. Donors fund them. The teacher and students write a thank you note to the donor. Most grants are for around $500.00.

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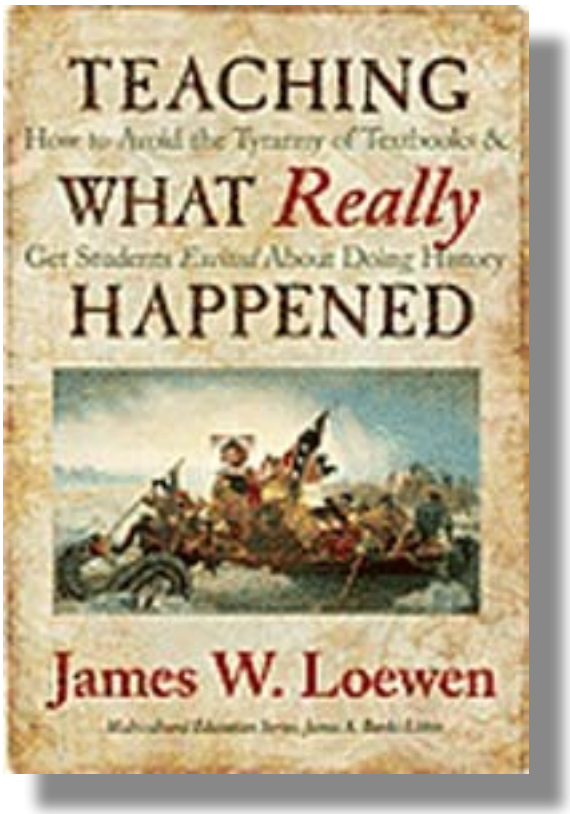

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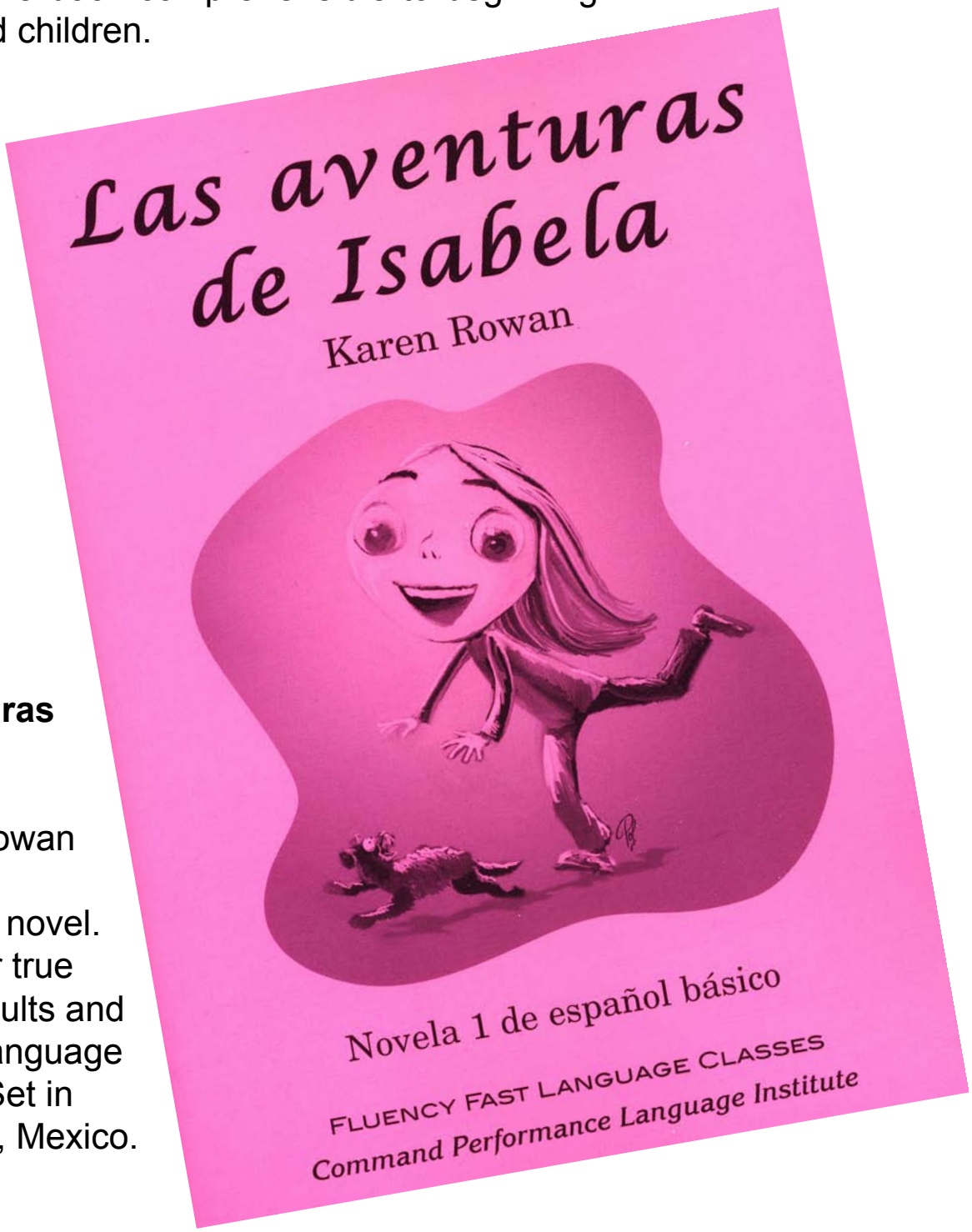

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