

FILE ABSTRACT FORM

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Abstract:

This materials development project presents a Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) unit created around an authentic Mexican legend. The author wrote and taught ten mini-stories in preparation for using the legend as the main story of the unit.

The author first discusses the theory behind the TPRS approach and its effectiveness in regards to language teaching and learning. An overview of how the TPRS process works, including examples specific to the author's teaching context, is also described.

The paper then presents the rationale and design of the project itself. The author incorporated an authentic legend with the intention of connecting a cultural element to TPRS. The process by which the author chose the legend and created the mini-stories is explained and analyzed.

The final chapter reflects on the project as a whole and the teaching and learning experience entailed. It highlights the learnings that resulted in terms of the language-culture connection, TPRS technique and effectiveness, and the author's personal approach to language teaching.

CONNECTING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE THROUGH STORYTELLING

A Materials Development Project

Sarah M. Anderson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching
degree at the School for International Training,
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ABSTRACT

This materials development project presents a Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) unit created around an authentic Mexican legend. The author wrote and taught ten mini-stories in preparation for using the legend as the main story of the unit.

The author first discusses the theory behind the TPRS approach and its effectiveness in regards to language teaching and learning. An overview of how the TPRS process works, including examples specific to the author's teaching context, is also described.

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CHAPTER I

WHY TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE STORYTELLING?

GETTING HOOKED ON ACQUISITION

“I like how much easier this class has made learning Spanish than other classes.”

Majo

Freshman, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

On my very first day as a high school Spanish teacher I walked into my classroom and tried to teach the preterite and imperfect in one class period. The review section of the text I was to use said the students had previously covered this material and would only need a brief review. It turned out that the text these students used the year before had in fact covered the past tenses, but the blank stares I received in that first hour told me just how much they had actually retained and that I was giving them way too much information at one time. It was my first taste of language teaching, and it immediately opened my eyes to the many questions for which I would later strive to find the answers.

As time went on I was less and less satisfied with covering a textbook curriculum. It felt like I was teaching a lot of grammar rules, and not only were many students unsuccessful, they did not seem to be able to do anything with the language. Even those students who found success memorizing and applying grammar rules on tests were not able express themselves without first sorting through verb conjugations or thinking in their first language (L1). I kept my eyes open, looking for ways to feel more fulfilled by what I was doing both for me as the teacher and for my students. I began utilizing more

communicative and interactive activities with the notion that if my students had more opportunities to use the language, they would become more fluent. I felt the most satisfaction when the class was doing activities with a set of vocabulary words with which they could converse with meaning rather than monitor grammar rules or translate from English. I was constantly taking what I had to cover from the text and finding ways to make it more meaningful and useful for my students. After a few more years exploring the world of language teaching, the opportunity presented itself to try teaching with Total Physical Response Storytelling and I jumped at the chance. I had talked with different people and read about the method, and the theory behind it made a lot of sense to me. Albeit apprehensive about actually giving up the textbook as my crutch, I knew it was worth a shot.

When I first heard Krashen's theory on learning language versus acquiring it, and how it relates to Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS), something clicked inside me. It gave me the means to better understand my frustrations with the traditional textbook approach, and why, after all my hard work, my students still could not speak. I realized a textbook driven class teaches students to make a conscious effort to learn about how the language works. Based on an order that a given text prescribes, students are led through verb conjugation paradigms and various tenses along with many other technical grammar points, moving on once a particular lesson has been covered. These specific grammatical features may be easy to test, but they are not necessarily a natural part of acquiring language. We do not speak in conjugation paradigms, nor do we only speak in one verb tense until it is covered and then move on to the next (Gross 2003). Students are bombarded with too much information to truly process and are constantly trying to

monitor their errors, thus reinforcing the stigma that learning to speak another language is extremely difficult. What is interesting to me, however, is that learning to speak another language this way *is* difficult. I know from my own experience how hard it was to think of what I wanted to say in English, translate each word to Spanish, try to get all the right verb endings and gender markers, and then say it without making any mistakes.

Although I learned a great deal about how it worked grammatically, all this did for my ability to use the language was heighten what is known as the affective filter (Krashen 1983), the level of intimidation a student feels, and make me even more anxious about my speaking. TPRS strives to lower this filter and allow students to gradually and naturally acquire, or pick up, the language without fear or anxiety. The stress of grammatical correctness is lifted because the emphasis shifts to communication. Through the comprehensible input that TPRS provides, learners begin to pick up on what sounds right in the language. They may not even realize acquisition is occurring because the focus is on meaning rather than form.

Again, I think back to my own experience as a second language learner and remember sitting in the living room with my Spanish brother, arguing over the role of women in society. His speech was just above my comprehension level, and coupling that with the heated topic of discussion, I was completely engrossed for the duration. I was so focused on following his thoughts and expressing my own that I did not give a thought to the accuracy of my speaking, but I went to sleep that night feeling like it was one of the first times I had ever truly communicated in my second language. I see now that this memory is so poignant because it is an example of a highly effective means of language acquisition. I was provided with loads of compelling and comprehensible input that was

just above my level, or at $i + 1$ (Krashen 1983), and therefore I was enticed to express myself and be understood even though my grammar was not completely accurate. TPRS focuses on providing enough comprehensible input so that the learner can develop an ear for the language and internalize the grammatical features that carry the greatest amount of meaning first, knowing that accuracy will come with time and experience.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

“One thing that really helped me a lot was the repetition of the words. I like how when we learn new words you say them over and over because when I leave class that day I feel like it would be impossible to forget them.

Peligrosa

Freshman, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Total Physical Response Storytelling, created in 1988 by Baine Ray, is an approach to language teaching which stems from Krashen’s Natural Approach (1983) and Asher’s Total Physical Response, known as TPR (1977). Grounded in the use of sensory and kinesthetic comprehensible input from these methods, TPRS adds an additional component to take it one step further; storytelling.

The process by which one teaches with TPRS is multifaceted. Although Blaine Ray proposes specific steps to follow in an effort to outline the major components, the process involves much more than following a chart of steps. TPRS begins with the teacher presenting three to four words, or chunks of language, using gestures and mnemonic devices. These chunks can be nouns, verbs, phrases, or any unit of language, not limited by grammar. Attaching a motion or catch phrase to the chunk gives students something to which they can initially link meaning without use of the L1. Encouraging student-generated ideas for this phase creates an excitement for and involvement in their

own learning. Often, students come up with clever gestures that I never would have thought of, or they laugh at my silly mnemonic ideas. Although they smirked when I suggested remembering the word *llegaron* by 'yea, they got there!' along with the motion of opening a door and throwing your hands up as you walk through it, I later heard them using this to remind one another of the meaning of that word. After spending a few minutes working with these memory devices, I assess students by having them close their eyes and do the gesture for the new words as I say them. This lets both my students and me know if they are catching on and ready to move to the next step.

The teacher then begins to use the new chunks of language in comprehensible speech through TPR commands, personalized questions and answers (PQA), and/or telling personalized, made-up situations (PMS). The type of practice depends on the words for the day, but the goal at this point is to get in as many repetitions of the words as possible while keeping it totally comprehensible. If students do not understand the material at this point, it will only become more difficult to follow later in the process. TPRS teachers develop the skill of identifying which type of practice works best with any given word, and how to keep it comprehensible, creative and varied in order to maintain student interest while attempting to get more than fifty repetitions of a single word. It is important to remember that these language chunks are completely new to our students and it is necessary to hear them over and over again before they begin to sink in and sound right. In this way, TPRS does more with less and allows students the time to truly acquire the current material rather than memorize it for the short term. The language is contextualized and students can understand and feel how it is used in meaningful interaction because they are doing something with the language as opposed to learning

about it (Nunan 1988). I believe this crucial phase of the TPRS process should go on for as long as it takes for students to feel comfortable with the new language. The amount of time certainly depends upon the words themselves or on any number of outside factors, such as time of day or even the amount of sleep students got the night before, but it is important to let the pace be student driven

The process then continues with a mini-story, the means by which the teacher is able to provide even more comprehensible input for acquisition. Presented through drawings or actors, often with props, the story is a silly tale that grabs students' attention and is just slightly above their comprehension level. An outlandish story at $i+1$ creates the desire to pay attention in order to find out what happens next. This doable challenge is the hook of TPRS. Students are interested in what will happen next in the story, or rather, in the meaning and use of the language instead of its form, and are therefore acquiring language through all of this comprehensible input without hardly realizing it. The sillier the story the better, as emotion is a driving force behind memory (Kessler 2000) and it is relatively easy to remember bizarre, exaggerated, and personalized (known as BEP) information that has the class laughing. Whereas in the past my students struggled to remember the preterite tense endings, they now *use* the past tenses to remind me of the BEP details to the stories we have told in class.

Although the realm of possible story lines is basically wide open, there is specific technique involved in telling a story in order to ensure that it is comprehensible. A number of my students tell me that they are visual learners, and that the way we utilize actors, props, and the space in the room helps them understand the story. In this way, TPRS activates spatial (Caine and Caine 1994) as well as bodily kinesthetic intelligence.

All stories have two to three different locations that are designated to specific areas in the room. These areas remain the same for the entire time we work on a particular story, thus creating a visual layout of the storyline. It is also efficacious to *ask* the story rather than simply tell it. Comprehension questions can be utilized as informal assessments, beginning with basic information on the storyline and eventually scaffolding into more open-ended and creative inquiries. In this way, students use the new language as well as what they already know in order to add details and extend the storyline. This student-generated material is not only a great way to recycle language but it also promotes involvement in one's own learning. I often go in with a planned story but ask questions all the way through about what is happening, encouraging my students to have a hand in deciding what twists and turns a story may take. Sometimes their responses become part of the story but other times I surprise them with BEP ideas of my own. It gives students a way to take more responsibility for their learning and also creates a positive and creative atmosphere, lowering the affective filter. Students feel less hesitant to speak because they know their ideas will be listened to in terms of content rather than error correction. Because of this atmosphere students can easily feel that the teacher cares about their success as learners, and are therefore more willing to get involved.

After a series of mini-stories have been presented, students are ready to put it all together with a main story. The main story is the culmination of all the language from the series of mini-stories presented in one, longer and more involved story. After being presented in the same way as mini-stories, various comprehension activities can be used to reinforce and recycle the material. A TPRS text will often provide this type of exercise, but they are also easy to create. Pictures that depict the story can be used for

retelling the story, writing it, ordering the scrambled story, and adding new details and more description. Furthermore, activities such as *Dos colas*, *Tic tac to humano*, *Treinta segundos*, *Toca*, *Manos arriba*, or *¿Cuál es la oración?* (see appendix) all lend themselves well to this phase. Through all of these activities students are strengthening their abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a gradual and natural manner.

Although grammar is not the focus, it is certainly a factor in comprehending a story. Concise explanations in the L1 give students the information they need without taking away from the flow of the story in the target language. A conjugated verb, for example, is analyzed in terms of its meaning in a quick and simple manner. If one of the words in the story is *vivo*, I explain how it is close in meaning to *vive*, a word they already know. I also point out that words that have ‘o’ at the end express things ‘I’ do. This approach looks at grammar from a functional standpoint; it looks to explain what grammar does in the language. The grammatical rule holds less significance than the actual meaning of the word. In this way, instead of learning to memorize rules, grammar gives students a means to express themselves meaningfully.

At the beginning of every year I ask each student to write to me about why they are taking Spanish. I ask them to be honest and speak from the heart. Over and over again I read, “because I have to for college” or “because I want to be able to speak”. Although the former is somewhat out of my hands, I can respond to the latter. I can teach in such a way that empowers my students and gives them the tools necessary to reach that goal.

CHAPTER II

THE PROJECT

WHAT WAS MISSING

“This year I have been doing a lot better in Spanish because of the teaching method – we actually use the words so I understand them so I don’t have to figure them out the last minute before an assigned test or quiz.”

Obstinada

Freshman, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

As a TPRS teacher I have found both success and frustration. My first year teaching with TPRS, the 2002-2003 academic year, brought both of these along with a host of other emotions and reactions toward the approach. Of my five classes that year, four of them used a traditional textbook approach and one was taught with the TPRS text ¡Cuéntame más! by Christine Anderson and Valeri Marsh. This TPRS class was a first year Spanish course, with about twenty freshman and sophomore students, many of whom had specialized education plans and/or were taking Spanish I for the second time. Some days were amazing and the students would hang on every word. Other times, however, it was very difficult and draining to try to captivate my audience of fifteen-year-olds who were much more interested in the upcoming party than the words of the day. It was obvious to me however, that overall my students were enjoying TPRS much more than a traditional textbook approach and therefore were getting more out of it. They could actually communicate with me in the target language without thinking in English first, unlike students in my traditional textbook classes whose halting speech

indicated that they were working hard to translate and monitor for errors. But I did feel that TPRS was lacking in some respects. The stories from the books I was using were often too juvenile or too BEP, and the approach as a whole lacked coherence. It was story after story and it felt as though there was nothing holding it all together. I was looking for some underlying glue that would eventually build into something more meaningful. Knowing I would have the opportunity to teach with TPRS again the next year, both the successes and the failures of my experience motivated me to go further with the approach and push its limits. My students were gaining fluency with TPRS, but I needed to find the glue to make it all stick together.

For me the glue was a connection to culture. I was using TPRS because I wanted my students to get more from their language class than merely memorizing words and pasting them into learned language structures. However, I also wanted them to see past the words alone. I wanted them to see that the way one uses language is greatly affected by the culture from which it comes, and that this use is malleable yet still very real and true in its different forms. I remember trying to understand the use of *usted* and *tú* when I lived in Spain. Although the explanations were quite simple, I continued to struggle with the reality of it. I had to make a conscious effort to say the right word based on the rules I had learned because these words were arbitrary to me. My realm of language had only one concept of ‘you’ and I could not quite grasp the feel of the difference between the two Spanish words. When the concept comes up in class, my students often ask why Spanish has the two words and why they do not just have one like English. I want to show them that there is much more behind *usted* and *tú* than just saying ‘you’, and that this concept is part of something bigger. These words go way back in history and involve

showing respect and friendship. The difference must be felt because there is no English equivalent to which they can be compared. Our way seems easier to my students because it is the only way they know; the way their society has taught them to be right. I want them to see that if we open our minds and look at it through a different lens, we may realize that what is *right* to us is merely one way of looking at things based on what our own cultural expectations have led us to believe. I want to show them that language goes beyond the dictionary and is rooted in culture (Agar 1994), and that understanding and respecting this connection is the only way to truly know another language.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

“I like the fact that the little stories led to the real legend because now I have something stuck in my head that is part of history, and not something made up. Now I can tell this historical legend to others easily.”

Taco

Sophomore, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Dissatisfied with the lack of cultural substance in the stories I had been using, I aspired to find a means of connecting a cultural element to TPRS. I knew the efficacy of the approach resided in providing comprehensible input in an engaging manner, but I felt this could still be done effectively through use of an authentic cultural story. My idea became to choose a Hispanic legend to use as a main story and from it pull out all the new words that would need to be taught. I could then create my own mini-stories for these words and teach them in preparation for learning the legend. In this way my students would still have the success of fluency that TPRS brings about, but also feel the true connection between the language they are learning and the culture from which it comes.

When the next year's schedule was being planned, I spoke with my department leader about my idea and she was very supportive. Of my five classes in the 2003-2004 academic year, I was asked to teach two Spanish II classes with TPRS. The school's curriculum documentation stated that these courses would follow the second half of Blaine Ray's Look I Can Talk (LICT) TPRS text, but my department leader granted me the freedom to spend one term, about ten weeks, teaching my own TPRS material. Given this situation, I decided it best to start the school year with my material rather than get involved with LICT and switch back and forth. I would therefore be able to dive right in and not grow more and more anxious with my project waiting in the wings.

With this plan in mind I began looking at the students I would have in my two TPRS classes. Some of my students had come from a TPRS teacher they had worked with for the past two years that they really enjoyed, and I was worried that my TPRS style, which was and is still developing, would not live up to their standards. Other students had never experienced TPRS before so I did not know what to expect from them. Moreover, there were senior football players mixed in with freshmen half their size, along with every other age group and type of learner. More than half of the students had special education plans and/or needs, and along with that came the reputation of behavior and discipline problems. The only thing they all had in common was that they had been thrown into our department's lowest tracking level, labeled CP for College Preparatory, and therefore believed that they were not 'the smart kids'. I knew I would have my hands full at first just trying to learn their names, never mind breaking down the CP stigma and instilling a belief in themselves as learners. Nevertheless, my ten weeks began on the first day of school and I would have to use my project as a means to bring us all together.

CHAPTER III

THE PROCESS

CHOOSING A LEGEND

“I liked the Mexico story because it was interesting learning about Mexican history, and I had fun doing it because of all the characters and twists and turns of the story.”

Sabio

Freshman, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Now that my project is complete, it is eye opening to look back and see how it unfolded. I clearly remember sitting up one night in early September scanning through books of legends from Spanish speaking countries, not sure exactly what I was looking for and certainly not sure if I would find it. I knew I needed something engaging, but also something simple enough to be comprehensible and short enough to be done in ten weeks. At this point I was just hoping that my idea for this project would work; hoping the right legend would reveal itself so I could begin to pull it apart.

And then, from a text entitled ¡Dime! Dos published by D.C. Heath and Company, I came across the Mexican legend of the nopal cactus and knew almost immediately that I wanted to work with that story. The legend, which explains the Aztec origins of what is today's Mexico City, combined history and culture in a succinct yet engaging tale. Not only did it have the potential to be a story that my students could really enjoy, but it also could lend itself well to further study of the history and culture of Mexico. After this wave of relief, validation, and excitement at finding a legend around

which I could base my project, I quickly became disillusioned when I looked a little deeper into the language of the story.

Although it seemed that the legend was concise, when I started making a list of the words that I would need to teach through TPRS, I quickly realized that it still included a fair amount of detail and complex language. I knew that it would have to be simplified or it would not work. Consequently, I rewrote it, eliminating some details and using simpler language structures, and again made the list of words. This time it seemed more doable and comprehensible, with about thirty words. My mind began racing with thoughts of where my students were at the time, how I would need to prepare them for this project in terms of culture and language, and how I would need to prepare myself as well. Not only had I never created my own TPRS material before, but I had focused my collegiate studies on Spain and had never studied Mexican history. My project had begun to take shape, but my journey was just beginning and I had a long way to go.

THE FIRST STORY

“The most helpful thing about this class is how the stories catch my attention and encourage me to understand them.”

Majo

Freshman, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

The daunting task of writing original mini-stories that would teach my students the thirty or so words for the legend was upon me. In my TPRS class the previous year I had reworked many of the stories I used, but since I was teaching from ¡Cuéntame más!, a TPRS text, I knew I could rely on those prepared stories for ideas. The book had already organized the words to be taught into short mini-stories, so I merely added details or silly endings to make the stories better geared toward the interests of my students.

Moreover, the book was there to take the blame if a story did not go over well in class. Now I was on my own, overwhelmed by the endless amount of possible stories I could create from these thirty words, hoping to prove to myself and my department that I could make this project work

Thirty words may not seem like a lot to teach, but it breaks down into ten TPRS mini-stories to create. Writing the first few stories was by far the most difficult because the thirty words became overwhelming. I could only choose three for the first story, and my eyes just kept bouncing from word to word as I grew more and more anxious and the hours went by. Instead of the perfect story to start my project, my goal became to just put *something* together for that first week of class. I was also intimidated because I would be teaching in the past tense, using both the preterite and imperfect, for the first time with TPRS. All along I thought that teaching the past would be easier with TPRS because of the nature of its perspective on grammar, but now that I was trying to do it questions flooded my mind. If I wanted to use ‘they lived’, for example, would I have to teach it as a new word since they already knew ‘they live’? And since my students were a mixed bag of both ability and experience, how could I compensate for the fact that some would get this easily and some might be seeing it for the first time? I decided that I could not try to answer these questions at that point. It was the beginning of the school year and I did not even know my students’ names, personalities, or style. I would have to allow the process of teaching my stories be the guide.

I walked into the room a nervous wreck but left, thankfully, feeling positive and a little more confident. I had taught the first story and my students bought into it. I had actors up during the story, a few laughs along the way and, most importantly, their

attention. I knew these students were not going to study at home, and for TPRS to work I really needed to captivate them with lots of comprehensible input during class. Even with the diverse class, the constant assessment of the TPRS process allowed me to verify that my students were comprehending the language. After two class periods I could see they had internalized the three words and understood the storyline. Retelling was difficult, but I quickly realized that my story was simply too involved. On top of the three new words, the story incorporated language to supplement the storyline that students did not know very well. Albeit comprehensible within the context of the story, it was too unfamiliar and made output difficult. The words were basic, such as *estaba*, but it was evident that based on prior experience, some knew words that others did not. In the case of *estaba*, it seemed that there were students who knew this word right away, some who were confused by it, others who guessed based on the context of its use, and some who connected it to the present tense version, *está*. I just kept working with the material, allowing time for students to grasp the words they needed in order to comprehend the story. In this way that first story helped to put us all on the same page and give me a more accurate idea of how I would need to approach the next few mini-stories.

MORE STORIES

“Another helpful thing was the symbols and gestures because it kind of organized the words in my head and if I forgot what the word meant, then I would just remember the gesture.”

Último

Freshman, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

I continued with the next two mini-stories in this same fashion; pulling out three words from my list I thought would work well together and trying to create a plot around them. After struggling to write a simple yet funny story, I prepared the rest of the lesson by planning gestures for each of the words and brainstorming ways to use TPR commands, PQA, and/or PMS's in order to get as many repetitions of the words as possible. I also prepared an extended version of the story that students could read after the words and story had been taught. By the end of the third story, however, I was tired of the overwhelming list of words from which to choose in order to create stories. It felt as though I was wandering all over the place without an organized plan for how I was approaching these thirty words.

Over the next few days I simplified the legend even more with the help of a colleague, and solidified my word list. I worked on grouping some words into themes such as geographical places and time frames that I could teach outside of stories. I then read mini-stories from other books and sources in hopes of opening my mind and getting past the frustration I was feeling. I also paid particular attention to the interests and motivating factors for my students. Although I was still getting to know their personalities, I did know they were all students who lived and attended a public high school in an upper middle class town in suburban Massachusetts. What characters and plots will grab their attention? What will interest them and motivate them to learn? At that point I realized that my method for writing stories thus far was actually quite limiting. I had been trying to choose the right words and write the perfect story in one shot, one story at a time. Knowing that the writing process involves much more than a final draft on the first try, I went back to square one. Instead of worrying about which

words would go best together or using too many extra words that students would not know, I just brainstormed. I wrote down all the ideas that popped into my head, whether they were fragments of a story, silly endings, or just ideas for characters and plots. The ideas flowed for quite some time and when they slowed, I read and organized what I had come up with. I found that I had some really good ideas for stories and had used almost all of the words on my list. Some words ended up in more than one story, so I was able to decide on an order in which to teach the stories knowing that words would be recycled later in the process. Suddenly I found myself with a well thought out plan for grouping the words and ordering these groups, along with enough story ideas to even use for revisions and assessments. Allowing myself the room to explore the many options helped clarify and strengthen my plan.

THE DAILY GRIND

“It was helpful practicing the words in so many different ways because by the time we needed them for the legend, we all knew them.”

Poderoso

Senior, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

As the days progressed I continued teaching words and stories. Sometimes I finished with a feeling of success whereas other times I chalked it up to an off day. My students, except for the occasional behavior problem or lack of sleep the night before, were receptive to my stories and assessments showed that they were acquiring the language. The stories often involved students from my class as main characters, along with their favorite famous stars from American pop culture, getting into trouble or traveling the world. As many of the stories were silly, I always took care in choosing appropriate students for the jokes in class.

Although TPRS outlines a specific set of steps to follow as a daily plan, I concentrated on the continual development of my own style. I never worried about how long I should spend on one particular aspect and instead let the story run its natural course. I focused on providing my students with as much comprehensible input as possible. If we were having fun making up gestures and mnemonic devices for the words, I was happy to let my TPR, PQA and PMS sessions run until the end of the period. I even had students counting how many times I said the words of the day, not only for my knowledge but also to get them more involved in and aware of the process of their learning. I found that my students had trouble focusing for the entire class period so it worked well to finish class with a game and save the story for the next day. It became apparent that certain stories lent themselves well to using actors and props while others were best told with drawings. Sometimes I would focus on getting strong retells, while other times we would create a new ending to a story, read an extended version I had prepared, or write new ones that incorporated the new words. In between stories I supplemented with various games and activities that focused on the past tense or simply provided more comprehensible input. No matter what I was doing, I never stopped the flow if it was going well and my students were comprehending the input. I therefore honed my skills at reading my students and thinking on my feet. Essentially, I would plan out an overview of how I thought it best to approach a particular set of words and mini-story, including supplemental activities, and then I would proceed through, letting students' needs dictate the pace.

THE LEGEND

“The thing I’ll remember most is why there is an eagle with a snake in its mouth on a cactus on the Mexican flag because now I know the story behind it.”

Chévere

Senior, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

About eight weeks and ten mini-stories later, the process of teaching the 30 words was complete. I was confident that my students were truly acquiring the new language and ready to see it used in an authentic, cultural legend. At this point I was more than ready to dive into the meat of my project, not only in terms of the legend itself but also to explore the study of Mexico. Because this legend involved so much rich cultural history, I had been looking for ways to broaden our study and tie the history, art, music, food, and beauty of another culture to my language class. I brainstormed for ideas, sought out videos and books, discussed the matter with other teachers, and found myself with a plan incorporating various elements that would connect with the different learning style preferences of my students.

I wanted to begin by laying a foundation of general information about Mexico so my students would have a base from which they could work. We began by reading a children’s book in Spanish about Mexico through a jigsaw activity, and followed that with a video. I then presented a research project that students would be preparing on their own time while we would be learning the legend in class. We created a list of possible topics based on what we had learned thus far, and students were required to give an oral presentation with a visual on their chosen topic. After two days researching in the school library, my students were on their way and I was ready to start teaching the legend.

The legend was far too involved to use actors in class, and my stick figure drawings would not do it justice either, so I asked an artistic friend of mine to put together some sketches that would depict the major happenings of the story. These pictures turned out to be amazing and were extremely useful in capturing students' attention and engendering excitement for their learning. They loved the fiery eyes of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of war, and the dripping heart of Cópil raised up in the air before it was to be buried in the ground. These pictures helped give life to the story and bring the culture right into our classroom.

Because the story was more complex than what my students were accustomed to, I made sure to take it slowly and only do a small piece each class. I was careful to not move ahead until I thought every student had comprehended what we had done that day. I utilized PQA to assess their comprehension, as well as simply asking them to tell me in English what had happened in the story that day. Although they could answer my comprehension questions, I found that my students were only able to retell small pieces in very simple language. This, however, began to change as we spent more time working with the material. The more opportunities I provided to reuse the same chunks of language, the more the legend came pouring out of them. The process was really a testimony to how much time is truly needed for language acquisition.

Knowing these students had difficulty focusing for too long on one activity, however, I was careful not to spend an entire class period on the legend alone. I also realized it was helpful to leave them wanting more. When students started coming to class early asking if we were going to find out what was going to happen to Cópil, I knew I wanted to keep that energy flowing. So along with learning the legend itself and the

activities I had prepared to go along with it, we spent time in class broadening our cultural knowledge. Among other activities, we talked about stereotypes, listened to music, researched on the internet, and learned even more about Mexico through the oral presentations and visuals the students had prepared. When all was said and done, these 'low level' Spanish II students could use Spanish to talk about the Aztec origins of Mexico City and discuss Mexican history and culture in a Spanish/English mix. I was proud of them and they showed pride in their accomplishments.

CHAPTER IV

MAKING THE LANGUAGE-CULTURE CONNECTION THROUGH TPRS

DID I MAKE THE CONNECTION?

“It was cool to learn about an ancient legend and get a little bit of history thrown into Spanish.”

Obstinado

Junior, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

The main idea behind this project was to bring a cultural element to TPRS. I feel it was successful not because I simply presented a Mexican legend to my class, but because TPRS as an approach allowed my students to notice and feel the culture inherent in the legend. Understanding language involves more than what the words alone carry (Agar 1994) and TPRS opens the door to the language-culture connection in a way that a traditional textbook approach is simply not able to do.

Traditional textbooks have cultural excerpts that often include a video set in a country that speaks the language, a reading from a famous author or poet, or perhaps a history lesson. In fact, the legend I chose came from a supplementary activity at the beginning of a chapter of *¡Dime! Dos*. The text recommends various ways to present these excerpts including audio tape recordings, overhead transparency visuals, and suggestions for small group work. What I never understood, however, is how students are expected to understand the heart of the culture when it is presented in such an isolated manner. The vocabulary and grammatical structures in these excerpts are often

unfamiliar and therefore incomprehensible, and they rarely connect to anything else that is supposed to be covered in the chapter. Students may get the gist, but are not given the tools to see past the translation.

Teaching a cultural legend through TPRS allows the time needed for students to first become comfortable with the language structures and vocabulary. When the legend is then presented, students have the necessary tools to comprehend the storyline. Not only does this success abet their personal involvement in learning the material, but it also allows them to see past the words and look deeper into the culture. Since students do not have to focus so much on what the words mean, they have the opportunity to consider how the meaning is significant to the culture at hand. The legend becomes a bridge that lets students see how language and culture are linked.

Because of TPRS, the legend became more than just words on a page; it came alive. Learning the legend through TPRS gave my students a sense of how and where Mexican heritage originated, and why Mexicans may be so proud of their roots. They had the opportunity to see how the Aztecs and their gods are part of what Mexico City is today, seen and felt in the land, people, and language. This led to exploring aspects unique to Mexican culture including the importance of extended family, celebrating the spirits of those who have passed on, and even the concept of time and the pace of life. Instead of looking at these differences as wrong or strange, students had the chance to understand the beliefs that formed them. The culture, language, and TPRS technique worked together to create a new understanding of the country and appreciation for the perspective of its people.

Before this project, many of my students thought of visiting Mexico as a chance to go to a beach resort. They now talk about going to see the pyramids of Teotihuacán and other Aztec ruins. They point to the flag in my classroom and start telling the legend of Huitzilopochtli, and find themselves asking questions about life in Mexico. A curiosity has been cultivated within them that would not be there had they simply read about Mexico in a book. Through this project my students had the opportunity to see past their own American cultural norms and expectations, and open their minds, hearts and eyes to a more meaningful way in which to look at Mexican culture. This is where the true connection to culture lies.

WHERE IT COULD GO NOW

“I like that our main story was a cultural legend because it was meaningful, interesting, and I won’t forget it.”

Princesa

Junior, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

At the start of the 2003-2004 school year I was eager to see how this project would work. I did not want to start teaching with a previously published TPRS text and let it affect the stories I was to create, or get so involved in it that my project would never get off the ground. I began on the first day of school, when I did not even know my students’ names. Although I used the project as a means to get to know them, it was an added pressure to have to work on establishing rapport, community, and classroom rules as I was anxiously teaching my own material for the first time.

Looking back now, it is apparent to me that knowing your students is a fundamental concept in TPRS. I wish I could have spent a couple of weeks using TPRS to simply get to know my students’ names, likes and dislikes, needs and energy, and gain

an understanding of what drives their learning. I would like to create some type of introductory TPRS unit, incorporating frequently used and previously acquired language which allows students to express who they are. I envision using a story that describes a made-up character, and then having each student retell it according to their own personality. In this way I could then start my project with a better sense of who my students are and personalize my mini-stories accordingly. Moreover, students would get a chance to review high frequency language in a naturally interesting context – talking about themselves!

Beyond adding an introductory unit, I feel this project has the potential to become part of something bigger. I have created a culturally rich ten-week TPRS unit using a Mexican legend, and it is exciting to envision doing this again with other legends in order to create a curriculum guide for an entire course. I chose the Aztec legend not only because it was engaging in content, but because it also incorporated high frequency language in the past tenses which was appropriate to my second year Spanish students. Other legends could be utilized with the intention of picking up where I left off or focusing on language appropriate to other levels, and could continue tying in the richness of culture.

If another teacher chose to create this type of TPRS unit, I would say that the key to success lies in remaining open to the many possibilities it has to offer. The first step is choosing among the many culturally rich legends that are out there. Once the legend has been chosen, however, the door opens even further. There are endless ways in which to combine words and create mini-stories, and I first limited myself by trying to choose three words and write one story at a time. When I finally brainstormed for storylines

using all of the words from my list, the ideas came pouring out and I found myself with a plethora of material. In terms of teaching these stories, I recommend that teachers do not limit their teaching to following a chart of steps. It is essential to base the amount of time spent on any given component in the TPRS process around students' needs. The efficacy of TPRS does not reside in covering a series of steps but rather in providing a great amount of comprehensible input and moving forward only when students are ready. As language teachers we strive to create learning environments in which our students can successfully acquire language, and it is important to remain open to the many ways through which we can achieve this goal.

FINAL THOUGHTS

“This class has changed my mind, and many others, about Spanish. It has turned something that is not usually fun into a very fun and interesting class. I think that everyone who wants to succeed does.”

Poderoso

Senior, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

I feel a sense of accomplishment when reflecting on this project. When I first thought of teaching a cultural legend through TPRS, I was confident I had a worthy idea but was not exactly sure how it would come to fruition. By letting the process run its course and allowing myself to follow wherever it led, I was able to reach my goal. I was also able to deepen my understanding of TPRS and how it strengthens the connection between teacher, student, and subject.

The process of writing and teaching my own stories allowed me to refine my storytelling technique. When I first started teaching with TPRS I tried to plan out every minute of class, wondering how I was going to fill forty-eight minutes working on only

three words. Moreover, I was teaching stories from a TPRS text and constantly found myself trying to remember what was supposed to happen next in the story. I would practice and prepare, but worrying about the storyline often disrupted or distracted my flow of presentation. This problem was virtually eliminated when I started teaching my own stories. Because I had created the idea from scratch, I had a better sense of how I wanted to present it to the class and no longer needed to plan every minute. I always went in with an overview of my plan for the day but then kept myself open in order to meet the needs of my students. I found that the more room I gave it to develop itself the better it became. The stories got more interesting and my students more involved. Instead of rushing through the storyline in fear of an empty, awkward moment of silence, I embraced those quiet moments. This enabled me to focus more on other aspects of TPRS such as making eye contact, asking the story, assessing comprehension, and in my case, dealing with behavior and discipline problems as well.

As my technique moved to this next level, I was able to explore more of what TPRS has to offer. One aspect that has become salient to me is that TPRS does more with less. As language teachers it is easy to forget that our students are hearing new words and sounds for the very first time. They have not studied the language for years like we have, nor have they grown up hearing it. The language is foreign to them and in order for it to be acquired students need to hear the words over and over again. If my TPRS students do not know a word or cannot comprehend part of a story, I know it is because they simply have not had enough time to process it. My students recognize this as well and if they do not understand the language they will tell me it is because they

need to hear it more. TPRS allows me the freedom to continue working on a particular language chunk until I am confident my students have acquired it.

It is easy to see how crucial this concept is for language acquisition when reflecting on my first few mini-stories. I was teaching stories in the past tense for the first time and not totally confident in my approach. At first it did not seem that my students were really grasping the idea, but we continued recycling the new language in stories and activities. The longer we spent working on it the more progress I saw. Now, after six months working on the past tenses, my students can easily write and tell their own original stories in the third person singular and plural using both the preterite and imperfect. Whereas a grammar based text would have suggested I move on after covering the past tenses in a chapter or two, TPRS allowed me the time necessary to do more with smaller chunks of language. With all of this comprehensible input, my students were able to successfully acquire the language.

I often hear people complain about having taken two years of language in high school and not being able to speak a word. I used to say they had set their expectations too high because after such a short and sheltered period of language study they should not expect to be able to speak. At best they should have learned a little bit about how the language works, but speaking it fluently would require much hard work. TPRS has changed my opinion. My students are speaking. They are able to use the language to express themselves without fear of making mistakes and without translating every word from English. It is truly astonishing to see what they can do with Spanish because of TPRS. These students, some of whom flailed in previous language classes, amaze even themselves with their success.

Furthering my TPRS technique and understanding of the theory behind it has deepened my awareness of who I am as a teacher and how I relate to my students. Teaching with TPRS brings the subject matter to life and engages students in learning, and as I become more confident in the method I am able to see how my natural teaching persona fits in the process. I now have a better understanding of how to make the most of my own sense of humor and energy during a TPRS lesson. The jokes I make in class, the way I play around with the language before a story, the way I set up a storyline so the kids laugh at the ending; these aspects are all unique to my own teaching persona and are based around connecting to my students. The positive rapport that is in turn created encourages students to engage in the subject matter. Developing a better understanding of my teaching persona allows for a greater appreciation of how the TPRS method enables me to work with both my students and the language.

When I think back to those first days of teaching, before I even knew what TPRS was, I realize I was simply exploring what came naturally to me. There were moments when I truly felt a connection with my students and their learning, but I could not articulate what it was that made the moment click. I now see that these moments all have their foundation in the theories I believe in now. Exploring new activities in the classroom, teaching with various textbooks at different schools, learning about learning at the School for International Training, and examining TPRS through this project have each helped me understand and develop these beliefs. It makes sense to me now why I was not satisfied with teaching my students to memorize conjugation paradigms or making my Spanish class extremely difficult. I want to give my students the opportunity to realize their potential as learners, and be motivated and inspired by the success they

feel in my classroom. I strive to create a positive learning community by tapping into who my students are and what motivates them, and focusing on what they can do and want to do with language. I find that the further I develop these beliefs that shape my approach to language teaching, the more fulfilling my teaching becomes.

I began this project because I believed strongly in the theory and effectiveness of Total Physical Response Storytelling, but felt that something was lacking. Story after story about fictitious and bizarre adventures left me feeling like the method needed substance. I began to envision a more rich content, a culturally rich content, as the glue to hold it all together. As my thoughts and ideas came to fruition, I learned from both the successes and frustrations that the project involved. Not only has the process allowed me to explore the language-culture connection, but it has also led me to further develop myself as a teacher and a learner. The experience has been invaluable.

APPENDIX

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Connecting Language and Culture Through
Total Physical Response Storytelling

Sarah M. Anderson

This TPRS unit was created for high school students in their second year of Spanish study.

This manual includes:

- a vocabulary list and grammatical overview
- ten mini-stories with ideas for how to teach them
- a sample quiz
- a list of possible games
- explanation and rubric of a project on Mexico
- the main story (Mexican legend of the nopal cactus)
- student exercises
- drawings for the legend

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Vocabulario

1

valiente
capturó
quería hacer prisionero

2

abrió
cerró
flores
Dios mío

3

corazón
va a construir
va a viajar

4

viajaron
vieron
les gustaba

5

por eso
tierra
cacto

6

vivían
le dijeron
llegaron

7

vino
quería
regresó

8

águila
de repente
cielo

9

hacía guerra contra
aquí
allí

10

puso
fue a buscar

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Vocabulario temático y gramática

La geografía

la tierra
el valle
la cascada
la isla
el desierto
las montañas
el río
la costa
la ciudad
el lago
el campo

La familia

Palabras de tiempo

mañana
ayer
próximo

La gramática

Repaso del presente
El futuro con 'va a + infinitivo'
La tercera persona singular y plural
del pretérito y del imperfecto

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Mini-stories

*The terms TPR (Total Physical Response), PQA (Personal Question and Answer), and PMS (Personalized Mini-Situation) are used here to describe ways to practice new words. Reference is also made to Acton-Boxborough Regional High School in some stories.

Mini-cuento 1

*Before this story review vocabulary for family and time frame words (la semana pasada, ayer), fue and vio.

*Props for this story include a pocketbook for the old lady, a police badge, and drawing a house on board to establish the first location.

*Because the words for this story are cognates they do not require a lot of PQA.

*It is important to stress the three different time frames in this story so students start thinking in the past.

- valiente- pound chest with fist like you have heart
¿Eres valiente? ¿Quién es valiente? ¿Srta. es valiente? ¿ Hay hombres valientes?
¿Mujeres valientes?

Use pictures of different types of people and ask if they are ‘valiente’.

- capturó- slap handcuff on wrist
- quería hacer prisionero- sad face behind bars

To practice both: ¿Bush capturó a Osama? ¿Quería hacer prisionero a Osama?
¿Capturó a Hussein? ¿Quería hacer prisionero a Hussein? ¿Capturó Ferrero el título del Abierto de los EEUU?

Do PMS about student who skipped class but I captured them.

La semana pasada Pablo estaba en casa y estaba aburrido. Fue al parque y vio a una mujer vieja con una bolsa. Pablo le agarró la bolsa a la mujer. Ella gritó, “¡Policía, policía! ¡Este muchacho me robó la bolsa!” pero no había policía y Pablo corrió rápido a su casa. En la bolsa había cincuenta pesos, y Pablo estaba muy contento.

El sábado por la mañana Pablo estaba en casa y estaba aburrido otra vez. Fue al parque y vio a otra mujer vieja con una bolsa. Pablo agarró la bolsa de la mujer. Ella gritó, “¡Policía, policía! ¡Este muchacho me robó la bolsa!” pero no había policía y Pablo corrió rápido a su casa. En la bolsa había cincuenta pesos, y Pablo estaba muy contento.

Y ayer fue otra vez al parque pero también fue al parque un policía valiente. Pablo vio a otra mujer vieja y agarró su bolsa, pero cuando ella gritó, “¡Policía, policía! ¡Este muchacho me robó la bolsa!”, el policía valiente corrió a Pablo, lo capturó, y quería hacerle prisionero. Pablo no fue a su casa ni estaba contento.

Mini-cuento 2

*This story recycles *fue*, *vio*, and *semana pasada* from mini-story 1.

*It may be necessary to work with *gritó* for this story as well.

- abrió- open hands
¿Cuándo abre Abercrombie? ¿Cuándo abre McD's? Abre la boca / los ojos / ventana / puerta / libro / cuaderno / caja / diccionario-after they do each say that they opened it.
- cerró- close hands
Same idea as *abrió*.
- gritó- yell "Ay"
Make up PMS's when mom would yell at child, teacher yells at student, students yell at students.
- flores- smell flowers
¿Te gustan las flores? ¿De cuáles colores? ¿Quieres flores? ¿Cuándo recibes flores? ¿Cuándo das flores? ¿Hay flores en esta sala? Give, offer, grab, point to, sit on, throw, put flowers around room.
- Dios mío- hand to head as if to say, 'my goodness!'
All of these respond with 'Dios mío': No tiene la tarea/ Habla mucho en inglés en clase/ No viene a clase/ En casa no limpia su cuarto/ No hace ejercicio/ Mira mucha televisión.

Pobre Manolo es un hombre feo. La semana pasada vio a una mujer muy bonita y Manolo fue a su casa con flores. Cuando ella abrió la puerta y vio a Manolo, ella gritó, "¡Dios mío! ¡Qué feo!" Ella agarró las flores y cerró la puerta. Pobre Manolo.

*After doing the story in class, this can be used as an extended reading.

Manolo es un hombre feo. Es gordo porque no hace ejercicios ni juega deportes, sólo come mucha comida todos los días. Tiene el pelo negro, largo, y rizado, y lleva gafas negras.

El lunes pasado Manolo vio a una mujer super bonita que se llama Bianca. Ella tiene los ojos azules y el pelo largo, rubio y liso. Bianca vive en Hawaii. Manolo fue a la casa de Bianca en Hawaii con flores. Fue con cuarenta y ocho flores amarillas y tocó a la puerta de su casa.

Bianca abrió la puerta y vio a Manolo. Ella gritó, "¡Dios mío! ¡Qué feo!", agarró las flores amarillas y cerró la puerta en la nariz de Manolo.

Pobre Manolo estaba triste y lloró por mucho tiempo.

Mini-cuento 3

- corazón- draw heart on chest

Use examples of: corazón fuerte (chico atlético, Tom Brady), débil (hombre viejo, gordo), buen corazón (¿Bush? ¿Oprah? ¿Srta.? ¿Saddam?), generoso (Madre Teresa, el Papa, Dalai Lama), make a paper heart and use around room with TPR commands.

- va a construir- hammer something

Use rods or blocks and they construct: una casa, una flor, un reloj, una puerta; una casa con libros; una casa con cartas.

- va a viajar- arms like airplane

El próximo verano, ¿va a viajar? ¿Adónde va a viajar? ¿Va a viajar a México? ¿Cuándo? ¿Te gusta viajar? ¿Adónde? ¿Te gusta viajar en coche? ¿En avión? ¿En barco? ¿Con quién? ¿Cuándo? PMS about kid who goes to airport but has no money for trip.

Ignacio, Rafa, y Hugo son tres estudiantes en la clase de español. Ignacio es un muchacho muy simpático y generoso, y también es Rafa, pero Hugo es diferente. Hugo es antipático y no es generoso.

Srta., la profe de la clase, es muy simpática y generosa (e inteligente y bonita). Tiene buen corazón. Es de buen corazón.

Un día, la Srta. le da dinero a Ignacio. Ignacio lo toma y dice que les va a dar el dinero a los pobres que no tienen comida. Ignacio tiene buen corazón.

También la Srta. le da dinero a Rafa. Rafa toma el dinero y dice que va a construir una casa para los pobres que no tienen casa. Rafa tiene buen corazón.

Y finalmente la Srta. le da dinero a Hugo. Pero Hugo no les va a dar el dinero a los pobres. No va a construir una casa para los pobres. Hugo toma el dinero y dice que va a viajar a Hawaii. Hugo no tiene buen corazón.

*After doing the story in class, the following can be used as an extended reader.

Ignacio, Rafa, y Hugo son tres estudiantes en la clase de español. Ignacio es un muchacho muy simpático y generoso, y también es Rafa. Pero Hugo es diferente. Hugo es antipático y no es generoso.

Srta., la profe de la clase, es muy simpática y generosa (¡e inteligente y bonita!). Es de buen corazón.

Un día, la Srta. le da unas flores a Ignacio. Ignacio las toma y dice que le va a dar las flores a su madre porque su madre es muy simpática y trabaja mucho. Ignacio tiene un corazón muy bueno.

También la Srta. le da unas flores a Rafa. Rafa toma las flores y dice que le va a dar las flores a su profesora de español porque Srta. es muy simpática y trabaja mucho. Rafa tiene un corazón grande.

Y finalmente la Srta. le da unas flores a Hugo. Pero Hugo no le va a dar las flores a su madre ni a la profesora. Hugo toma las flores y dice que va a viajar a Hawaii y le va a dar las flores a una mujer bonita allí.

Mini-cuento 4

- les gustaba- hand on heart and smile with past tense gesture
PQA ideas: when you were young, te gustaba comer ____, bailar, cantar, besar, mirar, construir, jugar, tirar, beber, estudiar, leer, escribir.
- viajaron- travel gesture with past tense gesture
- vieron- saw gesture with past tense gesture

*After practicing 'les gustaba', go right into the story to practice the others.

A Beto y Berta les gustaba mirar la tele porque les gustaba ver a personas famosas. Beto y Berta viajaron a Chicago y vieron a Oprah. Pero Oprah no es muy famosa. Beto y Berta viajaron a Los Angeles y vieron a Julia Roberts. Pero ella no es muy famosa. Beto y Berta viajaron a Boston y vieron a Nomar, pero él no es muy famoso. Beto y Berta viajaron a ...(students put in more here). Y finalmente, Beto y Berta viajaron a Acton, a ABRHS! Y allí vieron una persona muy muy famosa – es estudiante en la clase de español – ¡¡¡¡es _____!!!!

Mini-cuento 5

*Bring in at least one cactus as a prop.

*This story recycles 'viajaron', 'vieron', and 'le gustaba' from mini-story 4.

- por eso- hand out and eyebrows up like saying it
PMS ideas: No tiene la tarea, no tiene papel/bolígrafo, habla inglés, por eso tiene detención. Habla mucho, habla mucho en español, hace toda la tarea, por eso tiene una A. No tiene trabajo, por eso no tiene dinero. No tiene dinero, por eso no tiene ropa nueva. No se lava el pelo, por eso huele mal y no tiene novia.
- cacto- make shape of cactus
Toca el cacto, agarra el cacto, señala, mira, pone, etc. ¿Cuántos hay? ¿De cuáles colores son? ¿Dónde hay cactus? ¿En tu casa? ¿En el desierto? ¿En el cine? ¿En el jardín de tu mamá? ¿Te gustan? ¿Huelen bien? ¿Son bonitos? ¿Qué necesita un cacto? ¿Agua? El cacto está en la tierra.
- tierra- rub fingers like picking up dirt
Toca la tierra, toma la tierra, señala, mira, come, ¿cuál color es?, ¿qué pones en la tierra? Plantas, cactus, libros, personas muertas, ¿vivas? Toma un poco de la tierra y ponla en el pelo de ____, ¡no! Tira la tierra por la ventana.

Jaime y Julio son dos hombres que no son inteligentes. Hoy caminan muy despacio. Qué raro. ¿Por qué caminan despacio hoy? Es que ayer Jaime y Julio viajaron al desierto. Viajaron al desierto en Arizona y vieron muchos cactus en la tierra. Vieron un cacto bien bonito y grande que les gustaba mucho. ¡Jaime y Julio se sentaron en el cacto! Por eso caminan muy despacio hoy.

Mini-cuento 6

- vivían- pulse on wrist and signal for past tense
PQA: ¿Dónde vivía Lincoln? (use other famous people), ¿Dónde vivías tu de niño?
- dijeron- quotes in air and signal for past tense
PQA/PMS: mis padres/mis amigos/mis profes me dijeron, “_____.”
- llegaron- open door and hands up in the air
PQA/PMS: fueron a _____, cuando llegaron, vieron (a) _____.

Dos chicos vivían en Acton. No les gustaba. Viajaron a una discoteca en una isla en el Caribe. Cuando llegaron, vieron a unas mujeres bien bonitas. Les dijeron, “Hola guapas. ¿Les gusta bailar?”

Pero a las mujeres bonitas no les gustaba bailar; les gustaba comer. Por eso todos viajaron a McDonald’s en España. Cuando llegaron, las mujeres bonitas dijeron, “45 Big Mac, 37 Coca-colas, y 1 helado por favor.” Todos estaban contentos.

*Extended reader version.

En el año 1988, Britney Spears y Cristina Aguilera vivían en un pueblo pequeño que se llamaba Acton, pero no les gustaba vivir allí. Por eso las dos mujeres viajaron a una discoteca en la Ciudad de México.

Cuando llegaron a la discoteca, vieron a dos hombres guapos. Los hombres eran altos y fuertes, con pelo rubio. Britney y Cristina les dijeron a los hombres, ‘Hola guapos. ¿Les gusta bailar?’

Pero a los hombres guapos no les gustaba bailar, les gustaba comer. Britney y Cristina estaban contentas porque a ellas les gustaba comer también.

Todos viajaron a McDonald’s en las montañas del Perú. Cuando llegaron a McDonald’s, Britney y Cristina dijeron, “45 hamburguesas, 37 coca colas, y 11 helados, por favor.” ¡Britney y Cristina comieron todo en cinco minutos!

Los dos hombres guapos viajaron a Acton porque les gustaba Savory Lane más que McDonald’s.

Mini-cuento 7

- quería- reach hand out ‘ooh ooh’ as if wanting something and add past tense gesture
Use magazine picture cut outs to talk about what people wanted.
- vino- arm motions coming in
Mi novio vino a mi casa con rosas etc. porque yo quería rosas etc. Y regresó a su casa.
Anoche, Mamá vino con nachos, mi hermana vino con refrescos, Brad Pitt vino con un televisor grande y miramos los Calcetines Rojos.
_____ vino con su libro de historia, porque quería estudiar, ¡qué aburrido! _____ regresó a casa.
Put things in their mochilas (candy, rosa, libro de español, pelota, regalo) and say they came to class because they wanted _____.
regresó- arm motion out
Students hold up pictures of various geographical places and walk to one and return to seat, and we say “_____ vino al lago y regresó”.

En el año 2001 en Acton, había un hospital para personas feas. Pancho era un hombre feo con una nariz grandísima. Pancho vino al hospital porque quería una nariz más bonita. En el hospital había muchas narices extras, y a Pancho le gustaba una nariz especial. Era una nariz extra de Miguel Jackson. Pancho tomó la nariz de Miguel Jackson y regresó a casa muy feliz.

*Students can retell this story and change the body part and the famous person.

*Another option for using these words and adding ‘le dio’.

Britney Spears vivía en una mansión en la ciudad de Los Angeles. El lunes pasado, Alfonso vino a su casa con tres cactus pequeños. Britney tomó los cactus bonitos y le dio tres besitos. El próximo día, Alfonso regresó a la mansión de Britney con 32 cactus grandes porque quería 32 besos grandes.

Mini-cuento 8

- el águila- flap wings and soar
Review other animals. ¿Dónde vive el águila? ¿Vive el águila en una casa? ¿Te gustan las águilas? ¿Caminan? ¿Son fuertes las águilas? ¿De qué colores son? ¿Qué comen/beben? ¿Ven bien? Quieres un águila en tu casa?
Draw one and do TPR commands with it in classroom.

- de repente- snap fingers
Do PMS's with kids in the room, “_____ camina y de repente corre/duerme/tira/señala”.
- cielo- point up to sky
¿De qué color es? ¿Quién vive en el cielo? Cuando hace buen tiempo, ¿qué color es el cielo? ¿mal tiempo? ¿llueve? ¿nieva? ¿Hay casas en el cielo? ¿Qué hay? Aviones, nubes, el sol, la luna, Dios, espíritus. Jordan salta al cielo.
Señala el cielo, mira, grita, dibuja.

*Mention that ‘baja’ will be in the story but can be associated with what they already know.

Lola va al parque y compra un helado de chocolate porque es su helado favorito. Ella está contenta. Ella camina y come su helado pero de repente un águila baja del cielo y agarra su helado de chocolate. Lola grita, ‘Dios mío’.

Lola compra otro helado de chocolate y está contenta. Camina por el parque y come pero de repente, el águila baja del cielo y agarra/toma su helado. Lola grita, ‘Dios mío’ y compra otro helado de chocolate. Ahora está furiosa y mira al cielo. No ve el águila. Por eso, camina y come. De repente el águila baja del cielo y agarra su helado.

Ahora Lola, que tiene mucha hambre, quiere otro helado. Pero no hay más helado de chocolate y por eso compra vainilla. Ella no ve el águila y camina y come. De repente, el águila baja del cielo pero....no agarra su helado....mira el helado de vainilla y regresa al cielo. ¿Por qué? Porque a las águilas no les gusta el helado de vainilla. El águila no quiere helado de vainilla.

*This story can then be retold and practiced in the past.

Mini-cuento 9

- aquí / allí- point to near and far
Put objects close to me and across room and describe. Have students come here and go there. PQA-en el futuro, ¿Quieres vivir aquí en Acton o en otro lugar? ¿Allí es mejor?
- hacía guerra contra- gesture as if fighting
Fill in this frame with many options, “_____ hacía guerra contra _____”.
Use school sports schedule for playing ‘contra’ other teams.

*It is important that students understand the political situation in Colombia before using this story.

Las FARC viajaron a los EEUU y cuando llegaron a Acton vieron la escuela tan bonita con profesores increíbles. Les gustaban mucho los profesores aquí (name some). Por eso, el presidente de las FARC los capturó y les hizo prisioneros a los profesores favoritos de los estudiantes en la clase de español, y regresó a Colombia con los profesores. Los estudiantes de Srta. estaban furiosos y hacían guerra contra las FARC. Viajaron a Colombia y allí vieron a todos los profesores en la playa-tomando el sol y nadando. Los estudiantes dijeron, “Aquí no son prisioneros, están contentos en la playa bonita.” Los profesores no querían regresar a Acton y vivían en Colombia en la playa por muchos años.

Mini-cuento 10

- fue a buscar- gesture with hand at forehead as if looking for something
- puso- do action of putting with past tense gesture

Activity for both- put box of fun objects outside in hall and they go and look for things and put them somewhere in room. We say ‘fue a buscar ____ y puso ____ en ____’. Then start having class close eyes and guess where things are put.

- dijo- quotes in air with past tense gesture

It is not necessary to do that much with this word because students know ‘dijeron’. It is a nice time to do a chart of past tense words with a column for singular and a column for plural, with blanks that students fill in.

*Bring in can of Beefaroni, YooHoo, and cacti.

La semana pasada Paco vio a J-Lo. J-Lo le dijo, “Hola guapo. Yo voy a tu casa esta noche a las ocho para cenar.”

Paco estaba muy entusiasmado pero no había nada en su casa para comer. Por eso fue a buscar comida en el mercado. Compró Beefaroni, regresó a casa, y lo puso en la mesa. También fue a buscar algo para beber, compró un YooHoo, regresó a casa y lo puso en la mesa. Quería flores para la mesa y por eso fue a buscar flores. Compró dos cactus y los puso en la mesa. Paco estaba listo para J-Lo.

Cuando J-Lo vino a su casa y vio la mesa con Beefaroni, YooHoo, y los cactus, ella le dijo, “¡Dios mío! ¡Qué horror! No me gusta la comida aquí.” Ella salió y Paco lloró por mucho tiempo.

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Sample quiz

*Quizzes can often be simply a list of current vocabulary that students translate to English or an original story that students write using current vocabulary.

Nombre:

- Read the following story carefully, illustrate it (you will not be graded on artistic ability, your pictures just need to show me that you understand what happened in the story), and then answer the questions below.

La Srta. Anderson y su novio guapo vivían en una mansión grande en las montañas de Colorado. J-Lo y Ben vivían al lado de la Srta. y su novio en una casa pequeña.

Un día J-Lo y Ben vieron la mansión y estaban furiosos y tristes. Les dijeron a Srta. y su novio, “¿Por qué tienen una mansión grande?”

La Srta. y su novio les dijeron, “Porque tenemos cactus grandes y altos.”

J-Lo estaba triste y furiosa porque le gustaba la mansión, y por eso Ben le compró una mansión grandísima en las islas del Caribe, y 555 cactus grandes, por \$999 mil.

1. ¿Dónde vivían la Srta. Anderson y su novio guapo?
2. ¿Por qué tienen la Srta. y su novio una mansión grande?
3. ¿Por qué estaba furiosa y triste J-Lo?
4. ¿Qué le compró Ben?

- Circle the best answer.
 1. Ayer, Madonna y Britney _____ al campo.
 a. va a viajar b. viajaron c. dijeron d. va a decir
 2. Cuando llegaron a la discoteca, los dos hombres _____ a dos mujeres bonitas.
 a. vieron b. va a ver c. va a viajar d. viajaron
 3. Los padres de Julio le _____, “¡Estudia mas hijo!”
 a. bailaron b. dijeron c. vivían d. gustaba
 4. Mañana, Oprah _____ helado de chocolate.
 a. va a viajar b. viajaron c. va a comer d. comieron
- El próximo verano, Srta. _____ a la Ciudad de México.
 a. va a viajar b. viajaron c. va a comer d. comieron
- Write any three words/phrases you know in Spanish that are things that already happened or are in the past.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Write any three words/phrases you know in Spanish that are things that are going to happen.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Ideas for games

*Thanks to Susan Michelson for sharing *Manos arriba* and to Mark McDonough for *Dos colas*

- Dos colas

Students form two lines and the two people at the beginning of each line face off. I say a word in English and they compete to see who can say it the quickest in Spanish.

- Tic tac to humano

Arrange desks in a tic tac toe board and students separate into two teams. After answering a question correctly a student may choose a seat.

- Treinta segundos

Students work with a partner to retell a story. Every thirty seconds the teacher shakes an instrument and one partner picks up where the other left off.

- Toca

From a series of pictures on the wall, students try to touch the picture the teacher says before their partner.

- Manos arriba

Working with a partner, students are given slips of paper to spread out on their desks with current vocabulary. The teacher calls out a word in English and they try to beat their partner in finding the correct word.

- ¿Cuál es la oración?

In this game students may act, draw, or use props to get their team to say the sentence. Sample sentences are as follows:

1. El hombre y la mujer vivían en el campo.
2. El águila agarró la bolsa y regresó al cielo.
3. Dos chicos viajaron a una isla.
4. Jlo vino a la casa y bailó.
5. El policía capturó a la mujer vieja.
6. De repente los estudiantes dijeron, “¡Dios mío!”
7. Britney estaba contenta porque Justin le compró treinta y cinco cactus.
8. Los dos hombres llegaron al lago y les gustaba mucho.
9. Mi hermano fue a buscar flores para su novia.
10. Miguel Jackson puso su nariz en la mesa y agarró otra.

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Overview of Mexico project

*The layout presented here gives an overview of a student project. It is important to expand this Mexican cultural unit in various ways as available to the teacher. Videos, music, books, and the internet are just a few ideas for how to expand the unit and bring the cultural element to the next level.

¡MÉXICO!

You will be creating a poster and giving an oral presentation on one of the topics listed below. We will spend two class periods in the library doing research and the rest of the project will be prepared on your time outside of class.

Your poster should be an *artistic and creative representation* of the information you are presenting. It is a visual to ‘catch the eye’ of your classmates and peak their interest to find out more about your topic. You **do not** need to explain your topic in writing on the poster, but any words you use to label pictures or important aspects should be *in Spanish*.

You will give a *5-6 minute presentation*, in English, to explain your poster topic to the class. Each presentation will be different based on the topic you choose, but should outline the important information. At the end you will finish with **at least SIX sentences in Spanish** that may recap or close your presentation. **THESE SHOULD BE SIMPLE SENTENCES THAT USE WORDS WE KNOW FROM CLASS, AND WILL BE PREPARED BY YOU, NOT AN INTERNET TRANSLATOR.** Feel free to ask me for help as needed. Note cards may be used during the presentation *as a guide only*. The class will be taking notes and we will have an open-note quiz when all the presentations are finished. You will earn a test grade for your poster and English presentation, and an oral speaking grade for the Spanish component.

List of possible topics:

- Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo
- Cortez y la conquista española de México (1521)
- La luna de miel de la Srta. Anderson
- Teotihuacán-ciudad de los dioses
- César Chávez (1965)
- Benito Juárez (1858)
- La contaminación en la Ciudad de México
- Una visita a la Ciudad de México
- La rebelión Zapatista-1994
- Los aztecas
- La piedra de sol de los aztecas
- Pancho Villa y la Revolución mexicana (1910)
- Inmigración
- La guerra con EEUU (1848) y el tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo
- Los mayas
- La quinceañera
- Porfirio Díaz (1877)
- Día de la raza
- Cinco de mayo (1864)
- Luis Miguel
- ?????

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

Rubric for project

*Point values to be assigned as appropriate

POSTER

Neatness

Creativity

PRESENTATION

Well-prepared (doesn't need to read from note cards)

Covers useful information and some details

Clear and organized

PRESENTACION EN ESPANOL

Comprehensible (simple sentences that use words the class understands)

Pronunciation (speaker shows effort to 'sound more Spanish')

Well prepared (speaker has practiced and is comfortable with information)

LA BANDERA MEXICANA

La leyenda mexicana

En la bandera de México hay un águila con una serpiente en la boca encima de un cacto, y esta leyenda mexicana explica el origen de este símbolo.

Los aztecas vivían en el norte de México. En el año 800 los dioses de los aztecas les dijeron, “Van a viajar al sur a una tierra muy grande y bonita. Un día van a ver un cacto con flores rojas, y en este cacto van a ver un águila bonita con una serpiente en la boca. Y allí van a construir una gran ciudad.”

Los aztecas viajaron al sur pero el viaje fue largo y difícil. En el año 1300 llegaron al valle de México. Vieron montañas, el lago de Texcoco, y unas islas.

Huitzilopochtli, el dios de la guerra, vino con los aztecas y por eso los aztecas hacían guerra contra los otros que vivían en el sur.

La hermana de Huitzilopochtli y su hijo Cópil vivían en México también. A Cópil no le gustaba la guerra y quería hacer prisionero a su tío. Cópil, un muchacho valiente, guapo, e inteligente fue a buscar a su tío con mil hombres valientes.

Pero su tío, Huitzilopochtli, capturó a Cópil, tomó su corazón y lo puso en la tierra.

Al próximo día donde puso el corazón de Cópil, los aztecas vieron un cacto verde con flores rojas. Y en el cacto había un águila con una serpiente en la boca.

De repente Huitzilopochtli dijo, “Aquí van a construir la gran ciudad que se llama Tenochtitlán,” y regresó al cielo.

Hoy, Tenochtitlán es la Ciudad de México, y allí hay muchos cactus con flores rojas.

Ejercicio 1- ¿Cierto o falso?

- _____ 1. Los aztecas vivían en Guatemala.
- _____ 2. Los aztecas viajaron al norte de México.
- _____ 3. Cuando llegaron al sur de México, los aztecas vieron una ciudad grande.
- _____ 4. El dios de la guerra vino con los aztecas al sur de México.
- _____ 5. A Cópil le gustaba la guerra.
- _____ 6. Cópil quería hacer prisionero a su tío Huitzilopochtli.
- _____ 7. Huitzilopochtli puso el corazón de Cópil en el lago.
- _____ 8. Al próximo año, los aztecas vieron un cacto en la tierra donde puso el corazón de Cópil.
- _____ 9. En el cacto que vieron, había un águila con una serpiente en la boca.
- _____ 10. Huitzilopochtli regresó al cielo.

Ejercicio 2- Complete las siguientes oraciones.

- 1. _____ vivían en México.
- 2. Los dioses les dijeron, “Van a ver un cacto con _____ rojas, y en este cacto van a ver un _____ bonita con una serpiente en la _____.”
- 3. En el sur de México los aztecas vieron _____, _____, y _____.
- 4. _____ vino con los aztecas al sur.
- 5. _____ era el sobrino de Huitzilopochtli.
- 6. A Cópil no le gustaba _____.
- 7. Huitzilopochtli capturó a Cópil y tomó su _____.
- 8. Huitzilopochtli _____ su corazón en la tierra.
- 9. La _____ mañana los aztecas vieron un cacto donde puso el corazón.
- 10. Hoy, Tenochtitlán se llama _____.

Ejercicio 3- Conteste las preguntas con respuestas cortas.

- 1. ¿Dónde vivían los aztecas en el año 800?
- 2. ¿Adónde llegaron los aztecas en el año 1300?
- 3. ¿Por qué viajaron al sur?
- 4. ¿Quién vino con los aztecas al sur?
- 5. ¿Cómo se llamaba el tío de Cópil?
- 6. ¿Por qué fue a buscar Cópil a su tío?
- 7. ¿Dónde puso Huitzilopochtli el corazón de Cópil?

Ejercicio 6- Escriba un cuento según los dibujos siguientes y después cuéntela a un compañero.

Ejercicio 7- Dibuje y escriba un cuento original que empieza y termina con estos dibujos.

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