

Digital Innovations in TPRS: Harnessing Audiobooks and E-reading for Literature-based Language Teaching

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Abstract

Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) is a learner-centric approach which connects reading and storytelling with the teaching of a second language to enhance the proficiency of the learners. As a second language acquisition method, it was developed by Blaine Ray in 1990 by combining the concepts of Stephen Krashen and James Asher. This method uses reading and storytelling as literary tools to develop the proficiency and provides a way for the trainers to promote and establish the interactive and engaged classroom atmosphere. But, in this modern technological era, learners are facing several challenges in order to acquire a second language even though it is engaging and interesting. While using TPRS, it is necessary to integrate digital innovations into this method of teaching and learning. Some digital platforms such as audiobooks and e-reading can be helpful for the learners and the trainers to develop their proficiency level. This chapter addresses the integration of technology into TPRS, highlighting the significant role of audiobooks and e-reading platforms in making the method more accessible and engaging for modern learners. It also discusses the challenges of implementing TPRS, where it can be a suggestion for future research. Thus, TPRS, when combined with technology, emerges as a dynamic learner-centric method for developing second language proficiency through literature-based practices.

Keywords: TPRS, second language acquisition, audiobooks and e-reading platforms, proficiency, literature

Introduction

Language acquisition in second language classrooms has always been a complex and evolving field, with educators constantly seeking innovative methods to enhance proficiency of the learners. Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) emerges as a significant approach that integrates storytelling and reading as literary tools to facilitate vocabulary development, grammar comprehension, and fluency (Ray & Seely, 2015). This chapter explores the origins, purpose, and effectiveness of TPRS in engaging learners through narratives that motivates and makes the learners to have a deeper connection with the target language. Recognizing the challenges of the digital age, where learners are often more inclined toward technological tools than

traditional methods, this chapter also examines the role of audiobooks and e-reading platforms in TPRS. By adopting technology, TPRS can become even more effective in addressing the needs of modern learners. This chapter underscores the potential of TPRS, particularly when integrated with digital tools, as a learner-centric method for enhancing second language proficiency through literature.

TPRS-Definition & Purpose

In 1990s, Blaine Ray developed a second language acquisition method named “Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling” (TPRS). He was a Spanish teacher who developed this method to provide comprehensive input acquiring a foreign language. The comprehensive input (CI) is a language that can be understandable and meaningful input which the brain needs enormously to detect and produce any language. He was influenced by comprehensive Input based language acquisition strategies given by Stephen Krashen in his “Input Hypothesis” and “Total Physical Response” by James Asher (Fazliddinova, 2022). In Krashen’s “Input Hypothesis”, the effective way of language acquisition can happen with the help of providing an input slightly beyond current proficiency (Krashen, 1985). By combining both of these concepts, Ray focused on the importance of teacher-student interaction in a language classroom, to enhance the ability to acquire the language skills of the target language. To make the class interactive, Ray created and used some stories novels using the common words which are popular and in circulation among the people, which helps the learners to easy and quickly adopt the language. This was significantly better than teaching the vocabularies which are unfamiliar to them. This makes learning intuitive and enjoyable (Ray & Seely, 2015).

Importance of engaging stories and reading in language acquisition

The stories and reading materials shared in the classroom are the context-rich, engaging and comprehensible input which combines listening, speaking and reading skills altogether to acquire the language proficiency in the target language. As a part of literature, stories create an emotional attachment with the readers or the listeners which results in a meaningful, entertaining and engaging acquisition of a language. This engaged process of making the learners acquire a language will increase focus, motivation, and retention of language input (Wright, 2008). Also, the stories reflect the cultural circumstances of the target language which provides a clear picture of the culture of the target language in the minds of the readers and the listeners. This enhances intercultural competence and makes language learning more holistic (Ellis & Brewster, 2014).

Integration of technology in TPRS

In modern world, technology plays a crucial role in the life of every human being irrespective of the culture, gender, economy and so on. The use of electronic gadgets makes the mankind to think in a different perspective unlike the cognitive way of the mankind in the nontechnical era. The integration of technology with learning (Blended Learning), promotes a way for engaging the minds of the students in their way of learning. In other words, it opens a way for learner-centred learning. Thus, the necessity of integrating technology into the traditional way of teaching and learning is more prominent in these days. Therefore, the integration of technology in TPRS is also necessary to enhance and engage the second language learners to acquire a foreign language.

Audiobooks in TPRS

The integration of technology into TPRS resulted in the usage of audiobooks which is now a popular, flexible, and convenient way of listening to books. These audiobooks make the learners to enhance their listening ability which resulted in the effective way of speaking too. The enhancement of proficiency is also achieved by the pronunciation and fluency uttered in the audiobooks which expose them to authentic language input (Hsieh, 2010). It helps learners to listen to the stories multiple times and they can even repeatedly listen to a particular part of the story as much as they could understand the story clearly. This promotes the understanding of the grammatical structures unknowingly but in an effective and effective way (Ray & Seely, 2015). Another major importance of using audiobooks is that it can be accessed anytime or anywhere where it provides flexibility of learning interestingly. There are few platforms where the audiobooks can be accessed. Some of the popular platforms are listed below:

- Audible: A popular application which offers a wide range of books in audio mode provided by *Amazon*.
- Pocket FM: An application for storytelling and audiobooks available in Google Play and App Store.
- Storytel: Provides a collection of audiobooks in many popular Indian languages.
- Google Play Books: Consists of the various works of Indian especially regional authors.

E-reading platforms in TPRS

While reading a story book or a novel, it is not possible to carry anywhere, where it can be damaged due to various causes. Otherwise, during the time of reading a text, meanings of certain words are to be found in dictionaries, if unknown. To overcome such difficulties, e-reading platforms

are useful to make the readers use multiple tasks such as referring dictionaries, annotations, and text-to-speech tools which support comprehensive (Huang et al., 2019). E-reading can be helpful in multiple ways such as the font size can be increased up to the visibility level of the learners, highlight important words, phrases or sentences without buying an highlighter, bookmarking important sections, which makes the reader to read the text personalizing it. E-reading platforms such as *StoryWeaver* and *Kindle* offer a wide range of engaging and level-appropriate stories designed to cater to language learners, helping them stay motivated (Ray & Seely, 2015). This way of reading in electronic gadgets helps the readers to get the comprehensive input in visual, textual, and auditory input for enhanced language usage and understanding (Mayer, 2005). Among many e-learning platforms, some popular e-reading platforms are listed below:

- Google Play Books: Gives wide range of eBooks in various genres in regional languages and worldwide. “Read Aloud” feature is available in this platform.
- Amazon Kindle: Provides the works of Indian and foreign authors with a feature called ‘Kindle unlimited’ for plans with subscription.
- Kobo: Provides a wide range of eBooks and audiobooks with much focus on reader-centric features.
- Scribd: Provides many eBooks, audiobooks, and magazines of Indian authors.

Challenges & Considerations

Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) provides effective methods for language acquisition, but it also presents several challenges and considerations that can be considered for successful implementation. The need for teachers to undergo specific training to master the techniques of storytelling and, as TPRS demands an in-depth understanding of both language instruction and student engagement (Ray & Seely, 2015). It requires teachers to be skilled in using engaging stories that appeal to students’ interests, which can be time-consuming to prepare and may not always depend on the curriculum’s structure (Hsieh, 2010). Furthermore, classrooms with mixed levels of language proficiency can be a challenge, as students with differing skills may struggle to follow stories or understand new vocabulary (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). This diversity in the needs of the students requires the careful story selection and differentiation, ensuring that each learner is provided with adequate comprehensive input.

Additionally, classroom management is also considered, especially as TPRS encourages active student participation. The possibility for disruptions increases when students are not fully

engaged or if teachers are not prepared to guide interactions effectively (Wright, 2008). Teachers must also be aware of cultural relevance when using stories from different traditions, as inappropriate cultural references could lead to misunderstandings (Mayer, 2005). Despite these challenges, the use of multimedia resources such as audiobooks and interactive storytelling can enhance the learning experience, offering more accessible and varied methods to reach all types of learners (Fazliddinovna, 2022).

Conclusion

This chapter provides an insight on a method named Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) which uses storytelling and reading as literary tools in enhancing the language proficiency of the second language learners. It is a powerful method of teaching and learning for language acquisition to promote vocabulary retention, grammar understanding and overall fluency (Ray & Seely, 2015). In this chapter, the definition and purpose of TPRS in which the roots of TPRS is traced and explained. Stories play a vital role in engaging the learners in a language classroom. Here, the importance of such engaging stories which are shared or read in a second language classroom is explicated. But, in this modern technological age, learners are not interested to read such stories or even listening to them, even though they are interesting and engaging. It's because of the technological development which makes them to explore the world in their own hands. Therefore, the integration of technology in TPRS is justified here in this chapter as the role of audiobooks and e-reading platforms are showcased to the readers for better understanding. Few such platforms are also given for them to use and practice. At last, the challenges and considerations of TPRS method are described to be rectified later in future researches. As a result, TPRS is described as a learner-centric method which uses storytelling and reading as literary tools to develop the proficiency of the second language learners. With the adaptation of technology into it, it can perform even much better in enhancing the language through literature.

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