USING NOVELS IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Who Am I?

- Spanish 5, 6, 7, 8 at Foundations for the Future Charter Academy
- comprehensible input and TPRS® (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling)
- find me at www.justanothertuesday.ca
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- stay until the end for a novel giveaway!!
What is a charter school?

- public school that functions semi-autonomously but with much less public funding
- its charter declares the school's special purpose and rules of operation
- cannot select its students, charge tuition fees, or have a religious affiliation
- reports directly to the province, bypassing their local district school board
- may not exceed their assigned quota of students without provincial permission
- teachers must be certificated
- curriculum must follow the approved provincial curriculum
- 13 charter schools in Alberta, with 23 campuses
How I Teach

- using a method called TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling)
- based on teaching for fluency rather than accuracy
- students acquire the language rather than learn about it
- activity ideas all come from a community of teachers online that use this method
- goal of activities is to provide as much INPUT as possible rather than having students product OUTPUT
Why Read?

- time spent in reading for pleasure is more valuable for foreign language development than time spent in direct instruction.
- more than 70% of a literate person’s vocabulary in her first language comes from reading.
- comprehension and language acquisition increase when a person reads narrowly, because the reader sees the same words used over and over again.
- gaining vocabulary through reading is 10 times faster than studying word lists alone.
Novels

- good to change things up
- easy-readers have limited new vocabulary
- good plots and relatable characters
- often includes cultural references or takes place in the target language culture
- students feel so smart when they can read (and understand) a whole “novel”
- can build your curriculum for the year around vocabulary required to read novel
- the goal is not to 'finish' or 'get through' a novel; it is to use the novel as a vehicle for providing a language-rich environment
Choosing A Novel

- comprehensible and level-appropriate
- interesting
- culturally authentic
- success = students understand, engage in and ENJOY the reading
Where to Find Easy-Reader Novels

- http://www.fluencymatters.com
- http://tprsbooks.com
- http://miracanion.com
Other Resources

- many novels have extensive teacher’s guides available for purchase
- audio book on CD or digital audio files for downloading
- Pinterest boards with cultural resources and links
- teacher-created activities and handouts
Pre-reading Activities
High-Frequency Vocabulary

- choose useable chunks of language
- choose based on frequency
- good structures are often verb-driven
- “Super Seven”: location, existence, possession, identity, preference, motion, volition
- limit vocabulary
Backwards Planning

- make a list of most used structures in a novel
- narrow the list down to a manageable amount
- useable chunks of language
- choose based on frequency
- good structures are often verb-driven
- animals, colours, weather, etc. are NOT high-frequency structures
Other Vocabulary

- some vocabulary can be taught briefly right before reading each chapter
- some vocabulary may not need to be taught
Background Information

- what information do students need to know in order to understand the plot/storyline?
- build background knowledge and interest about topic, setting, etc.
Culture

- geography
- history
- possible to make connections even if the novel doesn’t take place in the TL culture
Character Development

- do some pre-engagement activities that help students identify with and connect emotionally to characters
Predictions

- create questions in the TL to use as prediction prompts
  - general prompts
  - language-specific prompts (can help you recycle vocabulary, as well as highlight new vocabulary)
Embedded Reading

- can create these for novels
- made up of multiple versions of a text
- each version has the previous one “embedded” within it
- students are exposed to repeated versions of the text and engage in a variety of activities with the text
- create a clear visual
- are “easy” so students feel successful
- offer variety
An ant went to the ocean.
He saw many fish.
The fish swam away.
An ant went to the ocean to find a friend.
He saw many fish swimming in the ocean.
He said, "Hello fish!"
The fish swam away.
The poor ant!
Who will be his friend?
One day a lonely ant went to the ocean to find a friend. He saw many fish swimming around in the deep blue waters of the ocean. The ant thought, "Great! New friends!" He said, "Hello fish!" Unfortunately, the fish swam away. The poor lonely ant was alone again! He walked down the beach thinking, "Why did they swim away?" He was so discouraged. Would he try again another day?
One day a lonely ant decided to make some new friends. He was tired of the ant hill. He was tired of the ant hill and tired of being just like everyone else. He decided to leave the anthill to find a new life. So, he moved to Hawaii. The first day, he went to the beach to find a friend. He saw many fish swimming around in the deep blue waters of the ocean.

The ant thought, "Great! New friends!" He said "Hello fish!" Unfortunately, the fish swam away. The poor lonely ant was alone again! He walked down the beach thinking, "Why did they swim away?" He was discouraged, but he wanted to try again.
During Reading Activities
Read and Discuss

- read aloud in TL
- choral translation
- talk about content by circling important information or sentences with key structures
- personalize content by relating it to the students
How to “Circle”

- easy way to get tons of repetition on target structures
- read a sentence from the novel out loud
- ask a question to which the answer is YES
- ask questions to which the answer is NO by substituting other subjects, verbs, and predicates
- follow them up with either/or questions
- ask open-ended questions to which students know the answers
- ask open-ended questions to add more details that are not known
Bianca Nieves y los 7 toritos

Marcos quería ser un torero. Quería ser un torero como ‘El Julí’, el nombre profesional de Julián Nieves. ¡En España, los toreros son más famosos que los actores! y Marcos quería ser un torero famoso. Admiraba a todos los toreros, pero admiraba más a ‘El Julí’... y a su talentosa hija, Bianca.
Circling Example

- **Statement:** Marcos quería ser un torero.
- **YES:** ¿Marcos quería ser un torero?
- **NO:** ¿Marcos era un torero?
- **EITHER/OR:** ¿Marcos quería ser un torero o quería ser un abogado?
- **OPEN-ENDED:** ¿Quién quería ser un torero? ¿Qué quería ser Marcos? ¿Por qué quería ser un torero? ¿Qué quieres ser? ¿A Marcos le gustan los toros?
Group Activity

- in partners or small groups, come up with a basic sentence in English
- fill out circling template for that sentence
- practice doing it out loud in your TL with a sentence from a novel
Ensure Comprehension

- use L1 when necessary to ensure students understand
- do frequent comprehension checks
  - short, quick questions (in L1) that the teacher presents to students in order to ensure complete understanding of meaning, understanding of grammatical structures and ultimately complete acquisition of specific language structures
- pay attention to their faces
- notice responses or the lack thereof
5 Keys to Comprehension Checks

- Check for comprehension continually.
- Check for comprehension in English.
- Check for comprehension in different ways.
- Check for comprehension quickly.
- Modify instruction as needed based on students’ responses.
Types of Comprehension Checks

- Student Feedback
  - 5 Fingers
  - Signals: I Don’t Understand, Slow Down, Speed Up
  - Gestures with Eyes Closed
  - Yes/No/So-So
  - Choral Response
Types of Comprehension Checks

- What does _____________ mean?
- What did I just say?
- What part of this language means _____?
- How do you say _____ in the language?
- Ask them to repeat or retell pieces of the story or draw it
the barometer student is the student who has the most difficulty understanding the language in any given class, but who is actively trying. Teachers should go slow enough for this student to understand 100 percent.
Making Connections

- Do students personally identify with any of the characters or events?
  - If a student were Character ‘A’, would he/she...
  - If a student were in the same situation, what would he/she do?
- What do students think will happen next?
- What do students WANT to happen next?
Making Connections

☐ What could be a conversation had by characters in the novel with other characters?
  - main character and a distant friend or relative
  - secondary character and a distant friend
  - add an imaginary character
  - write a letter to a counselor/classmate/friend of the main character
Making Connections

- Does a specific phrase in the novel remind students of any other stories/movies?
- Can students describe a scenario in which they would/could use a phrase from the novel?
- What if a different character said ___? Would you interpret it the same? What if you or your mom, friend, etc. said it?
Pop-Up Grammar

- extremely short, contextualized explanations of grammatical concepts
- focus on meaning rather than form
- are frequent and repetitive to aid acquisition
- don’t use grammatical terms (eg. indirect object pronoun, 3rd person plural)
  - If the story says, “She gave him a dollar,” ask for a translation of “him.”
  - Ask questions that get students to focus on verb endings: Class, what does the “n” in “miran” do?
Post-Reading Activities

- draw a 6-square story frame
- answer comprehension questions (in English or TL)
- CLOZE activity
- sequencing activities
  - eg. scramble events in story and students put in order
- silent acting
- students read and put unknown words on Post-It notes
- write alternate version of story; students compare and contrast
Post-Reading Activities

- write erroneous version of story; students identify errors
- students match illustrations with events from story
- fill in the gaps
- reader's theater
- justifying/minimizing the protagonist's or antagonist's actions
- identifying main events
  - eg. identify the four main events of a chapter
- T/F pencil game
- running dictation
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Please visit her website for more information and to purchase some great easy-reader novels.
[www.tprstorytelling.com](http://www.tprstorytelling.com)
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Please visit Martina’s website for more information and her Teachers Pay Teachers store to purchase entire storytelling units in Spanish.

www.martinabex.com
www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/The-Comprehensible-Classroom-By-Martina-Bex
TPRS & CI Websites

- justanothertuesday.ca (My blog)
- fluencymatters.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- tprsbooks.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- miracanion.com (TPRS novels for sale)
- martinabex.com (Blog)
- benslavic.com (Blog and forum - $5/month)
- brycehedstrom.com (TPRS resources and handouts)
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Novel Giveaway!

www.tprstorytelling.com