

What we learn with pleasure,
we never forget.

— Alfred Mercier

Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	x
1 Essential Questions About TPR	1
What Is TPR?	2
What Can Be Accomplished with TPR? What Can It Not Do?	4
Why TPR Is Effective	4
Explaining TPR to Your Class	7
When to Use TPR, When Not To	7
Steps for Acquiring New Vocabulary	8
Using TPR in Conjunction with a Given Curriculum, Book or Syllabus	10
Using TPR in Vocational ESL	11
2 Four Basic Types of TPR Exercises	13
Single Commands and Descriptions	14
Action Series	17
Procedures for Single Commands and Descriptions and for Action Series	20
Ways and Means of Getting Across Meaning	26
Natural Action Dialogs	28
Action Role-Playing	32
TPR On a Computer	34
3 Fluency and Connected Discourse	35
4 TPR Storytelling	39
How It Works — From the Beginning	40
Learning to Tell a Story — Step by Step	44
Four Key Things	49
Guide Words	57
Why Not to Correct Students	62
Summary — Learning to Tell a Story	62
Follow-up Activities	64
The Day-by-Day Schedule for the First Year	70
Accuracy in Production	72
The Third and Fourth Years	76
The Daily Class Schedule in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Years	78
How to Make Sure All Students Perform Adequately	79
How Many New Words to Teach in a Story?	79
TPR Storytelling Songs	80
TPR Storytelling in Upper Elementary and Middle School	80
Videos on TPRS for Teachers	80
Other High School Materials	80
What Do Students Achieve with TPR Storytelling?	81
Advantages of TPR Storytelling	82
Significant New Developments in TPR Storytelling	84
Three Levels of Stories	84
Steps for Teaching a Personalized Mini-Situation	85
The Steps for Teaching a Mini-Story	87
Developments in TPRS in 2001-2005	87
Chart: The Three Steps of TPR Storytelling	89

5 Acquiring Tenses through TPR	91
Natural Action Dialogs	93
Present Continuous	93
Possessive Adjectives	94
Simple Past	97
Future with <i>Going to</i> or <i>Will</i>	100
Simple Present	102
Present Perfect	105
Future Tenses with <i>If ... will</i>	108
Past "Unreal" Conditional	109
Review of Simple Past, Future With <i>If ... will</i> , Introduction of Past "Unreal" Conditional: <i>If ... would have</i>	110
Japanese Potential Verb Form <i>yō ni naru / -n desu</i>	112
TPR Storytelling	114
Hand TPR	116
Action Series	117
Single-Tense Series	117
Tense Combination Series	118
Jody Klopp's Tense-Acquisition Exercises	119
Berty Segal Cook's Four Levels of Questions	120
"Horizontal" Learning of Verb Forms	122
A Note on the Nesting of Tenses in the Imperative	123
Other Ways of Dealing with the Acquisition of Tenses and Verb Forms	124
A Thorough Demonstration of TPR and Natural Language Acquisition	124
6 Acquiring Other Grammatical Features and Idioms and Expressions with TPR	125
Indefinite and Negative Pronouns	125
Count and Non-Count Nouns and Comparatives and Superlatives	127
Past Participles as Adjectives	133
Adverbs	135
"In the Manner of the Adverb" — the Game	136
"Quickie" Natural Action Dialogs	137
Using Single Commands and Descriptions to Acquire Expressions	138
Acquiring Grammatical Features through TPR Storytelling	139
7 Writing, Pronunciation, Reading and Assessment	141
TPR Dictation	141
Written Exercises and Quizzes	143
Pronunciation and Listening Discrimination	155
Reading	158
Assessment/Testing	159
8 Overcoming Problems	161
Adaptation	161
Classroom Management	163
When Students Are Not Performing as Well as You Think They Should Be	164
TPR Presenters and Sources of TPR and TPRS Materials	165
References and Bibliography	170

Preface

The predecessor of TPR (Total Physical Response) did not have a name. It was apparently born in the early 1920s with the work of Englishman Harold E. Palmer (1877-1949) and his daughter Dorothee in Japan, where he was linguistic advisor to the Ministry of Education in 1922-23 and, from 1923 to 1936, Director of the Institute for Research in English Teaching, a department of the Ministry of Education. They published the first known book, *English through Actions*, about this extraordinary approach to language teaching and learning in Tokyo in 1925. Prior to going to Japan, Palmer had developed what he called his Oral Method while working in Belgium and London. The approach he and his daughter describe in *English through Actions* was evidently integrated into the broader Oral Method (see bibliography for some of his principal works). It seems that his ideas were generally respected in Japan but, for "socio-pedagogical" reasons, were little used by Japanese teachers of English. It is not known to what degree the *English through Actions* approach was used outside of Japan. World War II and the socio-political climate in Japan before and during the war were no doubt factors in its apparent disappearance from the language teaching arena for a time. Palmer left Japan in 1936 (Henrichsen, 1989: 123-124). In 1955 the book was reissued in Tokyo, and a slightly revised edition of the same book was published in London in 1959. All editions are now out of print.

Palmer stated, "In view of the fact that the talking activities [of small children] are invariably preceded by a more or less long period of purely receptive work, mostly in the form of reacting physi-

cally to verbal stimuli, it would seem to be no exaggeration to state that the executing of orders is a prerequisite to the acquiring of powers of expression. I will therefore go so far as to suggest that no method of teaching foreign speech is likely to be economical or successful which does not include in the first period a very considerable proportion of that type of classroom work which consists in the carrying out by the pupil or pupils of orders issued by the teacher. Numerous experiments carried out in various countries under classroom conditions have shown with what extraordinary facility pupils become proficient in understanding and in executing orders" (1925: 43 and 1959: 39). He probably wrote this in 1924, since the "general introduction," which bears his name, is dated October, 1924.

In 1960, without knowing of Palmer's work, James J. Asher, Professor of Psychology at San José State University, undertook experiments to solve the conundrum of how to facilitate the acquisition of a second language. Early in his experimentation he hit upon the strategy of giving commands, modeling the physical responses to them and then having learners respond physically to them. Some of the results were immediately and clearly outstanding. This discovery led Asher to delve into why "the total physical response" achieved the extraordinary results that he observed. What was most notable was markedly superior comprehension of the spoken language. From that point on he has devoted a large part of his distinguished career to research on this question and to speaking and writing about it.

After publishing numerous articles on TPR in a variety of academic journals, in 1977 Asher published the first edition of *Learning Another Language Through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook*. When he began his investigations the language teaching environment was rather stagnant. Hardly anyone seemed to be looking for a better way. Professor Asher, however, knew that he was onto something exceptional. He began to carry out pedagogical research in an area in which little research had been done. He was, in fact, a pioneer not only in TPR but also in the broader field of language pedagogy. And he relentlessly pressed forward to get the word out that TPR brought results far beyond the usual.

About 15 years after Asher began his work on TPR, the language teaching environment began to flower — first in English as a Sec-

ond Language, later in other languages. Now, 35 years after he did his first work on TPR, both Asher and his approach are widely known around the world. Asher's efforts have paid off.

While doing research to document the effectiveness of TPR, Asher continuously sought, by means of his deep and thorough knowledge of the field of experimental psychology, to explain *why* it is effective. In the second edition of *Learning Another Language Through Actions* (1982), Asher explained the role of the right hemisphere of the brain in "nature's design" for first language acquisition and how TPR relates to this design. In the third edition (1986) he undertook the unorthodox project — a right brain leap? — of writing a personal history of the development of TPR. In the fourth edition (1993) there were two major additions. One was the exposition of effective means of students' proceeding from facile comprehension of a quantity of the target language to oral production. Blaine Ray has made the major contribution in this significant advance in the realm of Total Physical Response through his work in teaching Spanish and ESL through what he calls "TPR Storytelling." The other major innovation in the fourth edition was the proposal that "brainswitching" is a major solution to the problem of "adaptation" in TPR. Adaptation in TPR is ceasing to respond (or responding grudgingly) to commands after having done so with gusto for a while. Brainswitching is engaging alternately in activities that make use of the right brain and the left brain.

Professor Asher has not stood still after discovering the magic of TPR. He has done varied research and he has spread the word widely. He has made a variety of TPR teaching and learning materials available through Sky Oaks Productions in Los Gatos, California. His work has made language teaching and study far more alive and effective for many thousands of language teachers and hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of language students. He has created an atmosphere that has allowed TPR to grow and flourish in unforeseeable ways. This flourishing has produced the seeds of further understanding on the part of Asher and the language teaching community. No doubt it will continue. TPR keeps evolving. Movement prevents stagnation.