

Capstone Project

TEACHING WORLD LANGUAGE AS A PUSH-IN CLASS WITH TEACHING PROFICIENCY THROUGH READING AND STORYTELLING

by

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This capstone project will describe in detail a world language program that could be offered in an elementary school for those interested in implementing or modifying an existing program. This program is unique in that it depends on two essential components, those being co-teaching and methodology. Working in unison, these components can provide a highly effective and positive world language experience for students and staff. Firstly I'll provide an overview and then get into the details of how this would exactly look for anyone interested in rolling out such a program.

Project Description

One cannot deny the many cognitive benefits of learning languages. It has been concluded that people who speak multiple languages have improved memory, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, enhanced concentration, ability to multitask, and better listening skills. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, multilingualism

is a skill that is more useful than ever before. Besides intellectual benefits, the opportunities for career success by being able to coordinate international manufacturing, shipping, and labor outsourcing give multilingual job applicants a distinct competitive edge in an ever-increasingly competitive job market. I propose to roll out a world language program that would be used in an elementary school that focuses on delivering content using best practice methodology, which studies have found to be comprehensible input strategies, in this case Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) via push-in method (co-teaching).

To give a child a world language experience, many options can provide an array of language experiences like everyday schooling, extra curricular, or private tutoring. If educators want to give everyone's child a world language experience, there too are various educational settings each with a defined set of goals. Some families opt to send their students to language immersion schools, which have gained significant popularity in recent decades. In fact, with immersion being so popular, enrollment in the urban area has declined as families leave to enroll their students in Spanish and Chinese immersion schools. But what if immersion is not an available option? Another popular model has been to offer world language as a specialist, meaning teachers bring their students to world language in a separate classroom on a rotating schedule, as they would bring them to art or physical education while they take their prep. While this option fits in with standard practices for students at the high school and college levels, younger students tend to have more subjects taught by their homeroom teacher in the same classroom.

Although each setting has its pros and cons, I'm going to discuss another option for world language that has been rolled out in a few elementary schools in the midwest. This program deserves more attention due to its success in retaining educator and family support. It's called world language as a push-in enrichment class. In order to make clear expectations on how it works best, I've reviewed what literature says about the essential components of such a program. In this project, I'm going to discuss a world language approach that I would use at an elementary school based on all of the research that has been done on best practices.

This project will discuss the details of implementing such a program in an elementary school. First, I'll be discussing the TPRS methodology used to teach world language as an alternative to more currently widespread models. Then, I'll be describing the mechanics of teaching a push-in class and how to implement the best model with attention to co-teaching and class frequency. This project may be of interest to an audience of educators, administrators, and anyone that is interested in implementing a world language program into their elementary school.

TPRS Methodology Within This Program

The first component is following a methodology called Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling, henceforth referred to as TPRS. In order to engage both students and their language-learning teachers, world language teachers are being encouraged by the district and many like-minded educators to distance ourselves from traditional grammar-heavy approaches for the underwhelming results that they have achieved, especially in the ability to have real life conversations. This is where TPRS

shines. Creating a classroom environment that provides enormous amounts of Comprehensible Input (CI) is the main goal to acquire a new language. If we pay attention to the TPRS findings of Krashen and Ray (2015), its daily use can provide a comprehensible atmosphere that students can effectively engage in. Another goal for the class is for the world language teacher to speak in the target language for about 90% of the time. That may sound overwhelming, but it's very attainable when following TPRS recommendations that have been proven to give students a great experience.

TPRS could be argued to be a continuation of humankind's oldest learning method: story-telling. Before written language was created, stories were used to preserve history, pass along messages, and create meaning. What still holds true in modern society is that elementary students continue to learn the components of storytelling in their core curriculum. TPRS fits under the umbrella of comprehensible input strategies and what better way to continue the practice of core curriculum skills while acquiring yet another language. It not only especially resonates with English language learners, but all learners. Through storytelling, students are able to use skills they are already developing in their core classes, such as character identification, setting, perspective, conflict, and resolution. To be a great storyteller sometimes involves theatrics, improvisation, and embellishment to pull the audience in. All of these elements are encouraged and engage students in the stories. A prop as simple as a sun hat works wonders. Who will be the lucky chosen student to hold the prop? It's so exciting! This way the teacher and their students are able to create a real-life situation in their very own classroom. The use of improvisation also works wonders at including student voice.

In order to create comprehensible input the content should not only be understandable to students, but also hold their interest. According to Blaine Ray and other TPRS advocates, there are three main components of TPRS. In part one, the teacher introduces several words or structures in the target language. The teacher establishes meaning through gestures, interpretation, and games. Students are then given an outline of a situation or story and the teacher goes through a series of questioning techniques to provide personalized, interesting, and comprehensive details to the story. The Circling of Questions is a technique that most closely resembles the Audio-Lingual Method as it involves taking several words or structures and repeating them over and over until students can understand and respond appropriately. When done right, this can be very effective. It should not only be repetitive, but compelling.

Circling done when there is no targeted structure, when the questions are truly interesting, and "forced speech" is not demanded, is a powerful means of providing comprehensible input. When it is done right, students are not aware it is happening, and focus only on the message (Krashen 2015).

To demonstrate, here is an example of an interaction using this technique: The teacher chooses a student who is holding a prop, such as a water bottle or thermo, and asks, "In the morning, do you drink water or coffee?" --Coffee. "Do you drink coffee with cream or no cream?" --With cream. Class, point to the student that drinks coffee. Does the student drink coffee or water? The whole class is invited to participate in this small practice to keep them engaged. The teacher goes to another student with a water

bottle. “In the morning, do you drink water or coffee?” --Water. Do you drink water with cream or no cream.” This is sure to spark some reaction. One must include some bizarre details to hold student interest. “Class, what does the first student drink in the morning?” “What does the second student drink in the morning,” And the circling can go on and on until students’ faces become tired or disinterested. Again, if students do not understand what is being communicated, they will disengage. They must be given repeated opportunities to participate. Some students will only be able to respond to “yes” and “no” questions whereas advancing students will be able to provide responses to the open-ended “How?” and “Why?” questions and provide interpretation. This is the perfect recipe for differentiation. It is essential to create a safe and inclusive environment that invites all language abilities.

Comprehension-based classes warmly encourage student speaking, but do not force output, and never require students to speak using aspects of language they have not yet acquired (Krashen 2015).

Having a knowledge of questioning techniques is essential and can be attained through books and workshops. There are also many demonstration videos available online. Another component, sometimes referred to as read and discuss, takes place to check for comprehension. This is also a time that grammar may be discussed as it is linked to the meaning instead of a rule. Know that these components may or may not follow order, depending on the questions and engagement of the students.

Within the major components of TPRS, there are many contributions that have been evolving over the past few decades that specialize a TPRS experience. One

contribution to TPRS is called, “Pop-up Grammar,” wherein a student may ask a question related to grammar. It is important to hear student voices and answer their questions. The question should be answered swiftly and then the class should move on as to not be distracted by the analysis of language. In an elementary setting, these questions may not arise as often as they do in secondary learning.

Another contribution is reading. TPRS heavily embraces pleasure reading. Teachers are currently working together to create an abundance of “easy-readers” in order to supply classrooms with age appropriate and culturally relevant material. Student created stories may help to fill this void and should be included in the activities.

In conclusion, teaching world language using TPRS offers a compelling alternative model to teachers and learners. It is unlike most world language programs offered to students in the Midwest. Implementing such a program could create support by a community’s families and educators who might not otherwise have access to a full immersion program. This gives families an option for their students to take a world language in a society that has an ever-growing need for multilingualism while relieving them from the burden of paying for a private program or the potential stress of removing the student from a more traditional learning environment. This program demonstrates the set of necessary components that work simultaneously to deliver a unique world language program in an elementary school.

Push-In World Language Model

The program is referred to as world language as a “push-in” class. That means world language takes the form of a mobile classroom where a licensed world language

teacher arrives to each room to give instruction. Homeroom teachers may find this very convenient as they lose little to no teaching time due to transitioning and transporting students through the halls to another classroom. It also eliminates the possibility of disrupting other classrooms with hallway movement. It's expected that the world language teacher arrives on-time during their scheduled visit and also exits accordingly when the time ends. The homeroom teacher remains in the classroom with their students and assumes the role of a co-teacher. Although there are many different models of co-teaching, this program follows the one-teach one-assists model. The reason being is that not all homeroom teachers may have world language content/pedagogy knowledge. Sharing content may also require special preparation time between the world language and homeroom teacher. The homeroom teacher (co-teacher) assumes the role of a world language learner. There are a number of reasons why the co-teacher remains in the classroom. Most importantly, especially for elementary aged children, a great trust has already been established with their homeroom teacher. They have had many opportunities to develop rapport at a much faster rate than a specialist or visiting teacher does. They have a better understanding of their students' individual needs and can aide in the continuance of their established learning environment. They also are the key adult between the student and their family, which is important for students that need that extra behavioral reminder (this could be reworded as something positive). The co-teacher models how to be a student, for example how to raise their hand, how to ask a question, how to listen to others, etc. They may even be able to show a connection to other content areas in core curriculum. When students see their homeroom teacher engaged in world

language, it encourages them to act accordingly as they are a highly influential role model. The co-teacher also assumes the role to prevent and manage distractions from the content, such as answering phone calls, helping incoming students or visitors, or managing other requests and even water and bathroom use.

Push-In With High Frequency

World language is not a prep period for homeroom teachers as the classes are delivered to students at a high frequency for short periods, twice or three times per week for 20-40 minutes, depending on the grade level of students. Their assistant role is also essential to create a supportive atmosphere that embraces world language. With increased world language frequency throughout shorter periods of time, it is noted that students retain more content and stay engaged throughout the duration of the class, thus creating a positive experience. Scheduling, especially in a mid-sized to large elementary school may be an extra challenge if not organized early on as this will be a year-long course. Keeping a world language routine is as important as keeping a routine in literacy or math.

I'll be presenting the information gathered in this project to an audience of educators, administrators, and anyone else interested in implementing a world language program into an elementary school. This project speaks to the many factors required to roll out an effective program. It's important that schools adhere to what studies say about world language pedagogy and co-teaching expectations so that everybody is on the same page. Too much flexibility in the program may cause confusion in the expectations for co-teachers and, in turn, their students. Shifting to this model not only enriches the world

language teaching experience, but it offers an innovative experience that can invigorate the content-delivery process.