

TPRS / Comprehensible Input for Mandarin Chinese: An Executive Summary

Basics



The brain acquires language by **matching sounds to meaning**, over and over. There is no other way to acquire language. If the brain cannot understand language, it cannot acquire that language.

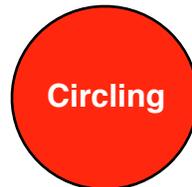
TPRS is language students can **understand** completely, **repeated** in an unpredictable way, and including things that are of **interest** to the students.

As long as students can understand all the language and are willing to listen to it, they will **acquire** it. It doesn't matter whether it's a great story, a conversation, a recording, or the phone book...but it must be understood.

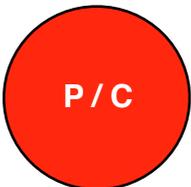
Skills



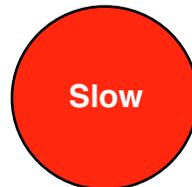
Not using words or grammar the students do not know is called "**staying in bounds**". Doing this keeps the language 100% comprehensible.



Circling is asking many questions about a single piece of information. During circling, that information is "true" and everything else is "false".



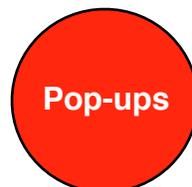
Personalization (talking about the students) or **customization** (talking about student interests) is how TPRS encourages student engagement, to listen to the same language many times.



Speaking very **slowly** helps keep the language 100% understandable to students. There is no evidence that the only way to learn to understand fast speech is by listening to fast speech.



Pausing and pointing to words that have not been mastered yet ensures that all students can understand all the language in class.



Pop-ups are 5-10 seconds of information about a word or structure. They are given in English. There is no evidence that people become "confused" by switching languages.



Cold Character Reading (CCR)

Students learn to read characters by reading long, repetitive texts. The language is all language they have **already mastered** in speech.

Chinese characters are **not pre-taught**. Students have never seen the characters before reading them.

Pop-up explanations (5-10 seconds) in English are used to show students radicals, phonetic elements, and punctuation, and to help them tell the difference between similar characters.

CCR emphasizes first-language **reading skills**. CCR students can do all the traditional beginner reading tasks (picking out information) and can also **read fluently**.

Scaffolded Writing

Students write only what they can **say**.

They go to their reading **texts** to find characters or words they want to write.



Stroke order, strokes, etc. are **pop-ups** when they are needed, not taught separately

Timed writings in Pinyin give a "snapshot" of the language in the brain. Dictation or free writes in Pinyin work on spelling skills.

Helpful Resources

www.terrywaltz.com: Pinyin > TOP converter; downloadable items; video demonstrations; books; TPRS blog.

www.squidforbrains.com: TPRS-friendly Chinese readers, illustrated books, writing aids, Zhongwen Bu Mafan! curriculum for Chinese 1, and card games that coordinate with various textbooks.

groups.yahoo.com/group/moreTPRS: the moreTPRS Yahoo group. With over 7000 members, this is the oldest and best resource for any TPRS or CI-related questions you have.

University of Hawai'i STARTALK: Held each July (pending annual Federal funding), this four-week intensive residential camp held in Honolulu in July is the most extensive Mandarin TPRS training experience available. Observe master teachers, teach actual students, and share with TPRS Mandarin teachers from all over the country.