

## **A Study on the Natural Approach (NA) and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS)**

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**Abstract:** This paper is a literature study of the Natural Approach (NA) and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), and tell the origin and development of NA and TPRS, and also introduces advantages and disadvantages of NA and TPRS methodologies, and explains clearly the relationship between NA and TPRS, their tenets and practices fits well with each other, NA is a development of TPRS. Total Physical Response (TPR) stresses the responding to an instructor's verbal commands with body movements, late reading and storytelling adds to it, then TPR becomes TPRS. NA originates from the baby's acquisition of first language and its principles are low anxiety, moderate input, and enough patient waiting.

### **1. Introduction**

During the past two decades, the NA has become one of the most influential methodologies in the United States as well as in other countries (Ariza 2012). While TPRS is a controversial method of teaching a second language because it challenges many years of textbook teaching, it has been implemented by the majority of second language teachers in many countries. Then what is NA and what is TPRS, and what is their research base? And what is the relationship between both are the focus that this paper is discussing.

### **2. The Natural Approach**

The Natural Approach was originally developed in the 1970s by Tracy D. Terrell at the University of California at Irvine for foreign language instruction at the university and high school levels. The foundation for Natural Approach is Krashen's (1982) Theory of Second Language Acquisition.

According to Krashen in 1983, the core of the NA in the early stages is to provide large quantities of comprehensible input and information exchange and the main task is to develop listening strategies, i.e. "rules of interpretation of utterances without depending on an extensive knowledge of syntax and morphology" (Krashen, 1983, P97). For the early stage, no specific activities for pronunciation are recommended, because the instructor is simply to provide an environment where acquisition of phonology can take place and create "an atmosphere where kids can feel comfortable and where the kids will be more likely to perform their competence" (Krashen, 1983, p90).

In the first place, the kids should be given ample opportunities to actualize their acquired competence until they realize their ability to express themselves in the target language is increasing.

Comprehension always outpaces production throughout NA activities. In the early production activities, lowering the affective filter should be bore in mind by the instructors. In NA, beginners are not required to produce complete error-free sentences before they are ready. And abundances of activities can be employed, e.g. content activities, games, reading etc. this kind of immersion "works" for NA provides comprehensible input in which the kids' attention is on the message rather than the form.

For younger children almost all language skills must be acquired directly from natural language acquisition experiences, so the NA is applicable for learners of all ages (Krashen, 1999, Natalie Koster, 2007 ). Krashen and Terrell(1983) encouraged teachers to expand the application of NA, adapting it

to wider audiences and instructional settings. And the process is long, skillful, and it might not produce instant result within short period, but in the long run, it is potential wealthy.

The disadvantage of NA is very clear also. It takes kids and instructor's a great deal of time and patience to input and output, especially the waiting period for the kids to output naturally needs at least half a year or several years. So the instruction only exists in small group size in the classroom or at home. Roger brown said "Believed that your child could understand more than he or she can say, and seek, above all to communicate".(Roger Brown,1977,P15) The principles and techniques of the NA are congruent with five hypotheses (Krashen, 1982;Krashen&Terrel,1983)

### **3. Krashen's five hypotheses.**

#### **3.1 The Acquisition Hypothesis.**

The acquisition-learning distinction is perhaps the most fundamental of all the hypotheses to be presented (Krashen, 1982.p17). The NA and TPRS maintain that acquisition is subconscious process, just like a baby learns his mother tongue, overriding the grammatical rules and pronunciation, just immersing in the meaningful context naturally and learning to communicate from easy degree to difficult. Conversely, learning is a conscious process which involves formal knowledge of the language through classroom teaching, like direct learning grammar rules and being aware of how to use them in communication. Input should be sequenced thematically, not grammatically (Eileen, 2012.p356).

#### **3.2 The Natural Order Hypothesis.**

This hypothesis tells that "grammatical structures" are not acquired "in a predictable order" (Krashen, 1982, P19). The agreement among individual acquirer is not exactly the same, but there are definitely, statistically, significant similarities. Eg, Children tend to acquire certain grammatical morphemes, or functions words, earlier than others. Many linguistics like Kayfetz(1982) all agreed a similar natural order for second language which is not the same as the order of acquisition for first language, that is from ING, PLURAL, to PAST, SINGULAR, to POSSESSIVE, last should be AUXILIARY and COPULA.

#### **3.3 The Monitor Hypothesis.**

The Monitor Hypothesis tells that acquisition and learning are used in very specific ways. Normally, acquisition is responsible for fluency and it "initiates" our utterances in a second language. Conscious learning is available only as a "Monitor", or as "editor" which comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been "produced" by the acquired system(Krashen, 1992). It is applied to adults mostly. To the kids, they are monitor-free, because that they cannot meet the necessary three conditions, sufficient time, are focused on form and know the rules. The monitor-hypothesis reflects the contribution of the conscious grammar, it results in the rise in rank of items that are "late-acquired" in the natural order, items that the performer has learned but has not acquired.

#### **3.4 The Input Hypothesis.**

The Input Hypothesis is important in theoretical and practical. It answers the question how we acquire a language. The input hypothesis relates to acquisition, not learning. It tells that we acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence (i+1). This is done with the help of context or extra-linguistic information. When communication is successful, when the input is understood and there is enough of it, i+1 will be provided automatically. Production ability emerges. It is not taught directly, but as the right time comes, the fluency will reach. In other words, with enough natural communication and understanding that i+1 is always provided, the caretaker need not worry about consciously programming structure.

### **3.5 The Affective Filter Hypothesis.**

The affective filter, posited by Dulay and Burt(1977), is a metaphor for negative feelings, such as a lack of motivation, high anxiety, or lack of self-confidence (Krashen,1982;Krashen&Terrell,1983), claims that affective variables do not impact language acquisition directly but prevent input from reaching what Chomsky has called the language acquisition device, the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition(Krashen,2004). In contrast, a confident and motivated student will have higher efficiency in acquiring a language.

To the teacher, a collaborative and noncompetitive environment is ideal for students to receive input.

## **4. The TPRS**

Krashen's thought has influenced some innovative linguists and educators to develop their own teaching strategies that utilize his hypotheses.

James Asher originated Total Physical Response (TPR) in 1960s then he managed to make teaching instructional and fun in 1990s. TPR is based on the model of how the children acquire their first language. In native language learning, the kids are exposed to listening, responding non-verbally or kinesthetically to cues to indicate whether they understand, delaying initial speech. In 1993, Asher pointed out why it remained unsuccessful with teaching foreign languages in school is because there is "silent period ",during which our brain is naturally wired to receive language, then it is possible for the kids or persons to speak.

There are three main benefits to TPR: (a) rapid understanding of the target language. (b) Long term retention lasting weeks, months, even years. (c) Zero stress for both students and instructors. In the early 1990s, Ray, as a classroom teacher, proved TPR successful but he found "TPR wall": after a certain amount of time, students will be got bored by responding to commands repeatedly.

In order to move from the imperative to the descriptive, Ray took Asher's TPR method into what is called today "Total Physical Response Storytelling". Through fun emotional storytelling performance, the learners are lowering their affective filter, getting comprehensible input through actions, relating the action to their own real personal experience, and subconsciously acquiring the second language at the same time.

Blaine Ray (1998), Foster (2011) and the other key instructors of the TPRS method changed TPRS from "Total Physical Response Storytelling" to "Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling."They maintained the fundamental principles of TPRS, and would rather to emphasize the comprehensive input instead of production, to value the reading and listening, the two most important skills in second language acquisition instead of writing and speaking.

TPRS is progressing in practice and form along the world changing. Now, TPRS presenters espouse that reading is the most crucial skill. The TPR component, such as physical acting and gestures has become more downplayed. Acting is really fun but not necessary while reading in context and creative use of storytelling are emphasized and valued in developing sure proficiency in target language ( Garczynski, 2004,p19).

## **5. What is the relationship between NA and TPRS**

First, both NA and TPRS are based on Krashen's five hypotheses. His book *Principles and Practices in Second Language Acquisition*(1987)has influenced teachers and second language researchers since the early 1980s. The principles and techniques of the NA are congruent with five hypotheses that attempt to explain how people reach competence in a second language (Krashen, 1982; Krashen&Terrell, 1983;Elena Webb& Eileen Ariza, 2012). TPRS are influenced deeply by and also based on five hypotheses too ( Garczynski,2004 )

Second, both NA and TPRS comply with the teaching psychology to young kids. Third, both NA and TPRS come from real classroom teaching experience, the researchers are also teachers. Today, very little interaction between Second Language Acquisition theory and Applied Linguistics research

into language teaching practice ( Krashen, 2007,P11). NA is highly transferable to learners of different ages and to various instructional contexts (Eileen Ariza, 2012;Lichtman k, 2015).

Forth, both NA and TPRS have the same soul, which is far away from the traditional approach, such as translation, repetition, practice etc. NA stress the frame construction, it encourages all dances under the basic melody, while the TPRS focus more on the detailed means, such as reading story and retelling, body movement along music and songs.

Fifth, both NA and TPRS stresses that the low anxiety is very important. Under no pressure will be better for the kids to internalize their acquisition subconsciously and the result will be better.

## 6. Conclusion

Last, TPRS is the development of NA, It is used mostly in foreign language teaching in the US, for Spanish and quite a bit for Mandarin. Now, there is a trend that combines NA and TPRS together as one. Such as, Natalie Koster said that TPR is a very useful technique that can successfully be integrated into the elementary school classroom and is an ideal activity choice for NA instructors in 2007. Marissa Garczynski regards the Natural Approach and TPRS together as TPRS in his paper Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling in 2010. NA and TPRS are based on the three things in common: Krashen's five hypotheses, teaching psychology for young kids, function of brain for young kids, real practical teaching experience. NA and TPRS really have great potential power in Second Language Acquisition. Now with development and globalization of economy, the education is under being globalized. Online English study eg, Vipkid, Jiuqu, ABC, 51talk is becoming hot and popular in China currently, which combine the advantages of American professional language teachers with the big market of demand in China. The core of the principles of these websites borrow from NA and TPRS in essence.

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