

TPR Storytelling “Circling”

As an activity for unit 1, Paul suggested that we do what is called *circling* in the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) method. *Wikipedia* (accessed 20 Sept 2014) has the following to say on circling in its article on TPR Storytelling:

“Circling” is the practice of asking a series of simple questions about a statement, all in the target language. It is intended to provide repetition of the target vocabulary in context and enable students to learn the vocabulary, grammar and phonology of their new language in a holistic way. There are four basic types of circling questions: “yes” questions, “no” questions, either/or questions, and “wh” questions such as what, where, when, and how many. There are also more advanced circling techniques which teachers can optionally include, such as the “three for one” and false statements. The teacher expects a response from the students after each statement or question, to check whether they have understood. If the teacher says a statement, then the students show that they understand by responding with an expression of interest such as “Oooh!” or “Aaaaah”. If the teacher asks a question, then the students answer the question.

The students can answer the questions with just one or two words. The point of asking these questions is not to force the students to speak; rather, the questions are a method of checking comprehension while simultaneously repeating the target vocabulary in context. Therefore students need not worry about speaking in full sentences, and indeed this would detract from the process of concentrating on the input provided by the teacher. By answering using single words or very short phrases the students can keep their attention focused on the words to be learned.

In this online article, they given an excellent example of how this works. The teacher or facilitator makes a statement in language that the student should be able to comprehend. For example:

Class, Dave wants a Ferrari!

Students should be encouraged to express the fact that they understood it. With “oooh!” or “aaaah!” they respond with comprehension. The teacher then asks a “yes” question about the material.

Does Dave want a Ferrari?

The students respond in the affirmative: “Yes.” There is no need to answer in full sentences, but if they wish, they may express the entire sentence: “Yes, Dave wants a Ferrari.” The teacher goes on to ask an “either/or” question.

Does Dave want a Ferrari or a Mini Cooper?

Students respond with the appropriate one-word answer (“Ferrari.”) or with a sentence (“Dave wants a Ferrari, not a Mini Cooper.”). The teacher then asks it as a “no” question, posing the wrong answer:

Class, does Dave want a Mini Cooper?

They then respond in the negative (“No.” or “No, Dave does not want a Mini Cooper.”). From then, the teacher will ask *wh*- questions.

Class, what does Dave want?

How many Ferraris does Dave want?

Where does Dave want to drive his Ferrari?

Why does Dave want a Ferrari?

We went through this same activity with the sentences in the drills on page 59 of the textbook. Thus, the second sentence in those drills reads:

τὸν Ὀμηρον εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν πέμψω.

Before meeting together, we divided up the sentences and each formed questions in the order of the TRPS circling drill. Thus, we put together questions like the following:

<i>yes:</i>	<u>ἄρα</u> πέμπεις τὸν Ὀμηρον εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν;
<i>either/or:</i>	εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν πέμπεις τὸν Ὀμηρον, ἢ εἰς τὴν νῆσον;
<i>no:</i>	εἰς οὖν τὴν νῆσον πέμπεις τὸν Ὀμηρον.
<i>who:</i>	<u>τίς</u> τὸν Ὀμηρον εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν πέμψει;
<i>where:</i>	<u>τοῖ</u> πέμπεις τὸν Ὀμηρον;
<i>whom:</i>	<u>τίνα</u> πέμπεις εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν;
<i>why:</i>	<u>διὰ τί</u> πέμπεις τὸν Ὀμηρον εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν;

We went through all of the drills on page 59 in this manner. If the drill had been written in the first person (ἔπεμψα), we treated it as a second-person question (ἔπεμψας;) and asked questions that way. If it was originally written as the second-person, we left it that way. Thus, all answers were either first-person or third-person.

<i>drill:</i>	τὸν ἀδελφὸν εἰς τὰς νήσους <u>ἐπέμψατε</u> .
<i>yes:</i>	ἄρ' <u>ἐπέμψατε</u> τὸν ἀδελφὸν εἰς τὰς νήσους;
<i>drill:</i>	τὸν Ὀμηρον εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν <u>πέμψω</u> .
<i>yes:</i>	ἄρα <u>πέμπεις</u> τὸν Ὀμηρον εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν;
<i>drill:</i>	καὶ λόγοις καὶ ἔργοις <u>ἐπαίδευσας</u> τὸν ἀδελφόν.
<i>yes:</i>	ἀρ' <u>ἐπαίδευσας</u> καὶ λόγοις καὶ ἔργοις τὸν ἀδελφόν;

This was the first of our conversational drills prepared for *Greek: An Intensive Course* by Hardy Hansen and Gerald M. Quinn. More will be posted as we work through them.