

Sports in Action

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Denise Tanner
Language:	German I
Grades:	9–11
School:	Hightower High School, Missouri City, Texas
Lesson Date:	April 9
Class Size:	15
Schedule:	Block schedule, 90 minutes every other day

Video Summary

In this lesson, students learn new vocabulary about sports. After several warm-up activities, students focus on terms related to Olympic sporting events and make cultural comparisons between Germany and the United States. Next, students listen to and interpret a story presented through Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS), then recreate that story by acting it out and narrating it themselves. They conclude the activity by rewriting the same story in their own words and contributing to a composite class version.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Presentational
- Comparisons: Cultural

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- thematic units
- Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS)

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Profile

“When you’re teaching high school students, you have to keep the intellectual level up so that it maintains their interest while you keep the language level where they can function.” —Denise Tanner

School Profile

Denise Tanner teaches German I–V and world history at Hightower High School in Missouri City, Texas. The school’s 1,968 students come from different communities across the district. The school offers four Career Academies—in medical sciences, engineering, computer and media, and television production—as well as a comprehensive, traditional high school program. Only students living in the area zoned to Hightower School may attend the traditional high school program. However, all students within the Fort Bend Independent School District (ISD) may apply to the four Career Academies.

Lesson Design

Ms. Tanner plans her lessons thematically, drawing on the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English (see Resources). Ms. Tanner also refers to the Fort Bend ISD German Scope and Sequence, which she wrote. When designing lessons within a particular theme, Ms. Tanner considers the different modes of communication, the cultural content, and the learning objectives (for example, expressing preferences) for each lesson. She then adds the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures to support communication.

The Lesson

In the videotaped lesson, Ms. Tanner used numerous strategies during a single class period, including TPR warm-ups, songs, charades, paired discussions, a listening and drawing activity, and TPR storytelling. This was a typical class in that Ms. Tanner often varies instruction every few minutes to meet the different needs of her students. “Every child learns differently,” she says. “The more strategies you use, the more children you teach.”

The activities also build on one another, enabling students to make significant progress and use new vocabulary in just one class. In this lesson, students began with learning and practicing vocabulary, moved to understanding and recreating a new TPR story, and then finished by writing down the story in their own words.

Key Teaching Strategies

- Individual/Group Writing: The teacher provides multiple writing experiences that include individual work as well as group writing activities. Both contexts include opportunities for prewriting, drafting, revising, and sharing.
- Providing Comprehensible Input: The teacher introduces language that is slightly beyond students’ current ability to understand and uses visuals, gestures, rephrasing, and/or props to establish meaning. The goal is for students to comprehend language through context.

Year at a Glance

Getting Started (e.g., numbers, colors, greetings)
Family
Free Time
School
Weather
Food
Clothing
House and Furniture
Visiting and Special Occasions
Going Out
Health and Body
Vacation

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- How do you encourage students' individual expression of ideas, such as voicing their preferences, when dealing with limited content?
- What role does storytelling or extended narrative play in beginning classrooms?
- What kinds of writing activities are appropriate for beginning students in middle/high school?

Watch the Video

As you watch "Sports in Action," take notes on Ms. Tanner's instructional strategies, particularly how she provides students with multiple opportunities to practice vocabulary and to interact. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- What kinds of interactions do students have with Ms. Tanner and with each other? Do they talk about their actual interests? Do they listen to each other's responses?
- During the taped listening activity, how does Ms. Tanner keep the focus on understanding?
- Why do you think the TPR story appeals to this age group?
- What is the value of introducing a current event, such as the Olympics, into the lesson?

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Tanner's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: TPR Storytelling

You'll find this segment approximately 18 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

Ms. Tanner presents new vocabulary and narrates a story for students to perform.

- What is the sequence of steps for the TPRS activity?
- How is interest maintained among the seated students?
- What elements of the storytelling activity aid student learning and retention?
- What evidence do you see that students are learning?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

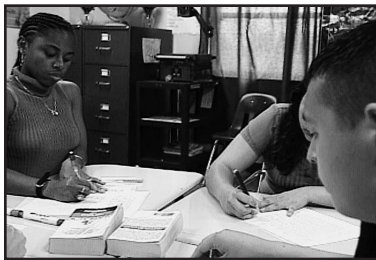


Video Segment: Retelling the Story

You'll find this segment approximately 22 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes.

Jason retells the story while fellow students act it out.

- What is Ms. Tanner's role as Jason retells the story?
- How do the student actors facilitate Jason's retelling?
- Observe Jason's narrative. (You might take a few moments to script what he says.) How many sentences does Jason string together without prompting? How often does he give just one sentence or a fragment? What general observations can you make about Jason's oral skills?



Video Segment: Writing the Story

You'll find this segment approximately 24 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 1 minute and 30 seconds.

Each student attempts to retell the story in writing, and then contributes a portion to a class version.

- By asking all students to rewrite the story in their own words, what might Ms. Tanner learn about the effectiveness of the lesson? About students' writing abilities?
- How does the shared writing activity develop students' written accuracy?
- How do the individual and shared writing activities link to the homework assignment?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- How do you design activities so that students will use new vocabulary and grammatical structures to express authentic personal preferences/interests?
- How do you take advantage of current events such as the Olympics to create a teachable moment of linguistic or cultural relevance? What are some events you have used recently?
- What are some recent examples of lessons in which you saw significant language development during a single class period? (For example, this lesson began with students developing an initial understanding of an oral story and proceeded through a sequence of activities that ended with them rewriting that story in their own words in paragraph form.)

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you’ve just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

“Food Facts and Stories” (Spanish) illustrates the use of TPRS with beginning students, and “Communicating About Sports” (Chinese) features comprehensible input using a character language.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Design a lesson that begins with a TPR story and ends with a writing experience. You can invent a story, as Ms. Tanner did, adapt an existing children’s or young adult story, or use any text that has a beginning, middle, and end. Have students first work on understanding the story and any new vocabulary, then practice by retelling the story, and finally use their writing skills to recreate the story in their own words. Research* has found that students often benefit more from working with longer texts than with sentence-length exercises. The combination of TPRS and writing tasks gives them the opportunity to use oral and written skills with a cohesive narrative.
- Introduce from your target culture’s perspective current events that your students may be following, such as sporting competitions, elections, or holidays. Also, be prepared to adjust lessons (or even entire units) when major current events affect your target culture. For example, Ms. Tanner used her students’ interest in the winter Olympics to introduce them to new sports vocabulary not in their texts and not among the basic sports terms. She used the German medal count to keep the discussion in context and had students record on a worksheet the similarities between the German and American cultures. Adolescent magazines and Web sites are good sources for learning about high-interest topics in the target culture. You can often find surveys, polls, and short articles that students can read to learn about their peers around the world.

*Oller, J. W., Jr., ed. “Reasons Why Some Methods Work.” In *Methods That Work*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1983.
Riley, G. L. “A Story Structure Approach to Narrative Text Comprehension.” *Modern Language Journal* 78 (1993): 199–221.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Sport in Deutschland: Student Work*

Sample worksheet completed by a student about sports preferences in Germany and in the U.S.

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter114/index.html>

Fort Bend ISD German Scope and Sequence

<http://www.fortbend.k12.tx.us/curriculum/curriculumproceduresmanual.pdf>

Denise Tanner's Recommendations

Web Resources:

American Association of Teachers of German

<http://grow.aatg.org/index.html>

Links to German-language, Web-based student exercises; standards-based project ideas; and sites dealing with German history, politics, sports, and other topics

Standards

National Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century defines what students should know and be able to do in foreign language education. This lesson correlates to the following standards:

Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.3: Presentational Communication

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Comparisons: Develop Insight Into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.2: Cultural Comparisons

Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.