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2020 Featured Speaker • Beniko Mason

Story Listening and Guided Self-Selected Reading

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The goal in Optimal Input language teaching is to develop “autonomous” acquirers of second languages; that is, to bring students to the point where they no longer need us and can continue to improve on their own (Krashen, 1998). Research over the last four decades has shown that: (a) we acquire language when we understand what we hear and read; that is, when we receive “comprehensible input”; (b) students need to receive a massive amount of rich, compelling (highly interesting), comprehensible language input in order to make good progress in acquiring a language; (c) second language students go through similar stages as first language students; (d) acquiring a language and learning about the language are not the same thing; (e) consciously learned rules of the language are generally only helpful when we take a written grammar or vocabulary test, and sometimes in editing our writing; (g) anxiety and fear hinder acquisition; and (h) when



comprehensible, compelling, and rich input is given abundantly in an anxiety free environment we can expect optimal outcome (Krashen, 2003, 2004).

An Optimal Input language program begins with Story Listening (Mason & Krashen, 2020) with a Guided Self-Selected Reading (Mason, 2019). In a Story Listening lesson, a teacher delivers a story, usually a fairy/folk tale which has stood the test of time. For the parts that the teacher predicts that the students will not understand, the teacher makes the story comprehensible with the help of several different kinds of support, such as drawings, written words on the board, occasional use of the students’ first language, and taking advantage of the students’ background knowledge (Krashen, 1982; Krashen, Mason, & Smith, 2018).

There are no textbooks or worksheets to purchase for Story-Listening lessons. Copyright-free stories are downloaded from the Internet, and books can be checked out from the school library. When the stories that the teacher brings are compelling and comprehensible, students listen. There is no forced output, no targeted grammar or vocabulary memorization, no error correction, and no daily or weekly tests (McQuillan, 2019a, 2019b). Depending on their age, students may be asked to write a brief summary of the story they hear or keep a record of their reading in their native language. Samples of these summaries and the reading record serve as feedback to teachers on their teaching performance, or as guidance for ordering books. Summary writing



could also be used as formative evaluation, and as progress reports. We have discovered that as their English competence improves, students gradually start writing the summary of the story in the target language.

Story-Listening works as a conduit to reading (Krashen, 2018). When the guidance is appropriate, students do enough voluntarily reading to cause significant gains on standardized tests. Providing optimal input abundantly in an anxiety free classroom is not only effective for developing language skills but is also highly efficient: students acquire more per unit time (e.g., per classroom hour) than when using traditional or mixed (“eclectic”) methods (Mason, 2013, 2018).

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JALT Publications at JALT2020 Getting Published in JALT Publications

- Caroline Handley, JALT Publications Board Chair
- Gregory Paul Glasgow, *JALT Journal*
- Nicole Gallagher, *The Language Teacher*
- Peter Clements, *Postconference Publication*

This presentation provides clear and practical information on publishing in one of the JALT Publications journals, which include *The Language Teacher*, *JALT Journal*, and the *Postconference Publication*. Editors from each journal will cover their journal's remit and submission guidelines, describe the various peer-reviewed and not peer-reviewed publication opportunities available, and answer questions. First-time authors and those wishing to publish in Japanese are especially welcome.

Saturday, November 21

12:50 PM - 1:50 PM