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## Teacher Perceptions of Fostering Student Engagement Through The Use of the TPRS World Language Instructional Method

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF FOSTERING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE  
USE OF THE TPRS WORLD LANGUAGE INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

by

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## ABSTRACT

Student engagement among male students in the elementary setting is vital to academic achievement. In the world language classroom, the TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) method's visual and bodily kinesthetic nature have the potential to appeal to the natural learning styles of elementary male students therefore increasing student engagement. In this qualitative study, I construct and analyze teacher surveys in regards to their perceptions of student engagement among elementary male students when the TPRS method is implemented. I identify common themes in the survey results and analyzed surveys for saturation. Identifying the common themes provided valuable insight in regards to providing elementary male students with learning experiences that encourage active engagement and academic success in the world language classroom.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **Student Engagement among Elementary Male Students**

Students engaged in the learning process experience academic gains and develop an interest in acquiring knowledge. According to Chen and Looi (2010), a key stimulus of learning efficacy for students in the classroom is active participation and engagement in the learning process. There is a direct relationship between student engagement and academic success. Students learn best through active engagement with ideas, the environment, and other learners (National Middle School Association, 2010). When students are actively engaged, they are able to acquire the knowledge needed to be active participants in the learning process. According to Bryson and Hand (2007), engagement is likely to result in an improvement in student learning. Learning is hindered when students are not engaged and students are not well equipped for future educational experiences. It is essential to foster learning experiences in the classroom that captivate student interest and draw them into the process of knowledge acquisition. Engaged students obtain the knowledge needed to continue to grow and thrive in the classroom setting.

Research suggests that male students have lagged behind their female counterparts in academic areas. According to Schwabe et al (2014), studies consistently

demonstrate higher levels of reading achievement and intrinsic reading motivation in female students in contrast to male students. Boys make up the majority of students having difficulty with literacy skills (Carroll & Lowe 2010). Boys' notorious relative underperformance in school and their tendency to disrupt the learning process in classrooms has sparked intense academic and public debates about the causes of what many now call the "problem with boys." (Legewie & DiPrete, 2012) Some theorists argue that this phenomenon is a result of the limited amount of learning experiences that appeal to the natural learning styles of male students. In a study conducted by Blair and Sanford (2004) they observed that boys preferred physical activity to activities such as reading and writing. Visual and bodily kinesthetic learning styles are common among male students (King & Gurian, 2006). Students with bodily kinesthetic learning styles learn best when they are given the opportunity to engage in some form of physical activity during the learning process. Visual learners benefit more from instructional methods that allow them to make visual connections to their learning. There are a number of empirical studies with findings that validate the success of implementing visual and kinesthetic instructional methods to increase engagement and achievement among elementary male students.

Gurian and King defend the claim that a vast majority of male students are visual and kinesthetic learners with the case of Douglas Elementary School. There was major a disparity (an average of 13 points) in the achievement gap for literacy among males in comparison to females at Douglas Elementary School (2006). By introducing more "boy-friendly" teaching strategies in the classroom, the school was able to close the gender gap in just one year (2006). After providing more kinesthetic and visual learning



opportunities the boys at Douglas Elementary experienced a 24.4 percentage point gain in reading and writing (2006). Educational personnel at Douglas attribute the significant improvement among the male students to the usage of instructional strategies that appealed more to the learning styles of the male students (Gurian, 2006). The case of Douglas Elementary validates the notion that elementary male students are more engaged in learning when they have the opportunity to participate in activities that have a strong visual and kinesthetic basis.

Carrier's (2009) study in regards to hands-on environmental educational learning experiences for boys also supports the notion of boys benefiting from more kinesthetic learning activities. Carrier (2009) found that fourth and fifth grade boys benefited significantly when given the opportunity to make real life application of their learning in an outdoor classroom. This study focuses on the impact that experiential and kinesthetic learning opportunities have on fourth and fifth grade students in the environmental education classroom. The study measures the academic outcomes for environmental knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and comfort levels. In the study, students in the control group received traditional classroom instruction. Students in the treatment group received non-traditional instruction in the schoolyard. Pre and posttest were administered and analyzed. The findings from the study suggest that schoolyard lessons foster positive learning outcomes for boys and girls. However, the data from the study indicates that schoolyard lessons have more of a significant positive impact on the achievement outcomes of boys in comparison to girls. The implications of the study suggest that the kinesthetic nature of outdoor learning experience appeals significantly to the learning styles of male students, their engagement, and academic outcomes.

A case study conducted by Price (2011) explores a co-educational primary school's experience with a classroom specifically for boys. The primary school implemented instructional method that appealed to the natural learning inclinations of male students. There were a significant number of strategies implemented with a strong kinesthetic and visual basis. The qualitative study consisted of questionnaires and interviews with students, teachers, parents, and school administration. The findings suggest a positive outcome academically and socially for the male students participating in the single gender classroom. According to Price (2011), the most prominent positive outcome in regard to boys' learning appeared to be in their advances in reading skills and enjoyment of reading. The academic gains noted in Price's (2011) study suggest the positive results of implementing instructional methods that appeals to the learning preferences of elementary male students.

Laster (2004) conducted an additional study focusing on the benefits of single sex instructional settings. In this quantitative study Laster (2004) explores test scores in a male single sex classroom, female single sex classroom, and a co-ed classroom at the primary level. The purpose of the study was to identify achievement levels and the level of disciplinary problems in each setting. The findings suggest academic levels to be higher in single sex classes. In addition, the levels of discipline were relatively normal in the co-ed class setting, less discipline problems occurred in the female single gender setting, and the discipline issues were elevated in the male single sex classroom setting. According to Laster (2004), the all-male class was more active than the all-female or co-ed class. The level of activity in the male classroom setting was apparent in this study. Laster's (2004) study substantiates the need to implement more kinesthetically based

instructional methodology. The active nature of boys requires methods of instruction that complement their learning preference.

A study conducted by Hawley and Reichert (2009) results in similar outcomes in regards to increased levels of engagement and academic achievement among boys due to the implementation of instructional methods appealing to their learning styles. The study focused on international single gender male schools. Teachers within these schools were asked to submit a copy of a lesson implemented in their classroom that proved to be effective. The plans were reviewed for common themes. After a careful analysis of the lessons, Hawley and Reichert (2009) noted an element of transitivity throughout the lessons submitted in the study. According to Hawley and Reichert (2009), transitivity refers to the capacity of some element of instruction – an element perhaps not normally associated with the lesson at hand – to arouse and hold student interest. The TPRS methodology, allows students to make spontaneous changes to stories creating new storylines as the lesson progresses. The spontaneity of TPRS lessons provide students with a major element that arouses interest and fosters student engagement.

### **An Overview of TPRS Method**

A brief description of the TPRS method is warranted in the current study to establish a general knowledge base of the elements of the instructional method to be implemented in the study. Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling stems from a previous method of instruction known as Total Physical Response (TPR). James Asher, a professor of psychology and former associate dean at San Jose State University, is the originator of Total Physical Response (TPR). TPR is a method of World Language

instruction designed to enable students to acquire language as they internalize meaning by engaging in physical activity. In this method of instruction World Language teachers may introduce verbs such as run or jump in the target language or World Language taught. The instructor will first provide students with a visual representation of the word. The representation will be written text and or pictorial. Next, the instructor will physically demonstrate the meaning of the vocabulary. Finally, students will model the meaning of the vocabulary as they say and hear the new term in the target language. For example, a group of students learning the Spanish term “corre” (run in Spanish) initially will run in place or around the room with the instructor. Once students have acquired the new term, the instructor builds more and more vocabulary. Students will learn additional vocabulary as a result of incorporating various nouns and adjectives into the series of verbs taught. Students’ surroundings allow them to experience comprehensible input as their brain makes mental connections through physical activity. Students are actively engaged and learn the target language naturally.

Blaine Ray, the creator of the TPRS method, developed this method of instruction to allow world language teachers an additional method that relies heavily on comprehensible input. Students understand what is being said to them when comprehensible input is implemented effectively. With comprehensible input, students develop a clearer understanding of the vocabulary by engaging in associated actions and are able to build a broader understanding of the language that they are learning based upon the vocabulary they have acquired. Students’ interest and comfort levels are maintained due to the familiarity with vocabulary and they are afforded the opportunity to function in the familiar as they build fluency. Once the vocabulary is solidified through the TPR

approach, students utilize the acquired vocabulary within the context of a story which leads them into TPRS. The TPRS method provides students with the opportunity to utilize the vocabulary they acquire through TPR in the form of a story. In most cases the stories are personalized and comical in order to capture students' attention and sustain their interest. Story topics could include a sibling who eats extremely loudly or a baby who attempts to eat the cat's food. Students are given the opportunity to come up and act out the story in a dramatic presentation. Students who do not participate in the presentation have the opportunity to alter the present story by interjecting new vocabulary upon the instructor's request. For example, the instructor may begin the story by stating there is a little girl and students could raise their hands and offer new vocabulary saying, for example, that the object of the story is not a girl, but an elephant. The story evolves and is crafted as a result of the students' creativity and wit. The teacher maintains the authority to utilize or disregard students' request for altering the story. However, students generally provide instructors with vocabulary needed to construct an outlandish story that engages everyone. Students are able to experience language in a non-threatening environment that is interesting and meaningful.

In the world language classroom, Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) is an instructional method that promotes student engagement and has elements that appeal to the learning styles of elementary male students. The TPRS method consists of visual and bodily kinesthetic elements and provides elementary male students with an outlet to utilize their natural talents to engage in the learning process. The method provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary by engaging in movement. The method also utilizes visual supports to

promote learning and comprehension of vocabulary. In this proposed study I focus on analyzing teacher perceptions regarding student engagement using TPRS methods.

### **Contextualization of World Language**

World language is a fairly new term that is used to describe what has previously been referred to as foreign language. As a result, an explanation of the term world language and the rationale behind the shift is warranted. In this section, I provide a brief explanation of the meaning of the term world language and why the term is being used in lieu of foreign language. The term foreign language is widely used to refer to languages other than English. Many educators are not welcoming to the term “foreign” because it suggests a division of the world into the United States and everyone else (Jaschik, 2011). Within the past five years universities, educational organizations, and the public school sector shifted from the term “foreign language” to the more inclusive term “world language”. According to Corbin (2011), the word “foreign” could imply different in a negative sense. The usage of the term “world language” has a more inclusive tone.

### **Problem Statement**

Providing elementary male students with educational experiences that appeal to their learning styles has a significant impact on active engagement. According to Gurian and King (2006), a vast majority of elementary male students have learning styles that are visual and bodily kinesthetic in nature. Movement brings together mind, body and emotion, ensuring that learning is meaningful and retained (Jenson, 2003) Unfortunately, verbal and auditory learning styles are most favored in the traditional school setting. As a result, elementary male students are unable to utilize their natural

learning inclinations to foster student engagement. In some cases, student engagement declines and discipline problems increase among elementary male students. Tate (2007) affirms that when students' brains and bodies are actively engaged in learning, behavior problems are diminished (p. 4). The kinesthetic nature of elementary male students leads them to have a significant amount of physical energy in the classroom. The energy that male elementary students have can be channeled toward engaging learning experiences in the classroom. According to Kercood and Banda (2012), physical activity can promote increased focus for boys. In other words, directing energy towards learning by increasing the amount of physical activity and visual instructional support fosters student engagement among male students.

In addition to the deficit in instructional methods that appeal to the learning styles of elementary male students, the achievement gap of elementary male students in comparison to their female counterparts is an additional problem stemming from a lack of student engagement among male students. According to Henry et al. (2012), The House of Representatives report *Boys: Getting it Right* highlighted the need for improvement in boys' literacy as far back as 2002. Male students at the elementary level have scored significantly lower than female students in a number of academic areas. The trend has surfaced in schools across the country and a movement to close the achievement gap has evolved as a result. The strong relation between student engagement and academic achievement suggests that an increase in student engagement will yield higher levels of academic achievement among elementary male students.

Student engagement is a major component in promoting successful educational outcomes. Students take an active role in the learning process and are motivated to

engage in learning experiences that will have a positive impact on their level of academic achievement. The importance of student engagement rests on the crux of academic achievement. Addressing the learning styles, which are dominant among elementary male students and implementing instructional methods that appeal to male learning styles has the potential to increase student engagement and promote positive academic outcomes.

### **Nature of the Study**

An analysis of the teacher perceptions of the strengths and weakness of the TPRS method provided valuable insights in regards to the element of student engagement that is perceived to be evident in this particular method. The common themes that evolved from the analysis validate the notion that TPRS is a world language teaching method that promotes student engagement among male students. Research Questions:

- 1) How does student engagement impact academic achievement for elementary world language programs?
- 2) What perceptions do elementary teachers have in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of the TPRS method and the links to student engagement for elementary male students?
- 3) How do teacher perceptions support or reject the notion that the TPRS method complements the learning styles of third grade male students and impacts levels of student engagement?
- 4) How teacher perceptions support or reject the notion that the TPRS method impacts student engagement among elementary male students?



According to Allen (2008), visuals may assist teachers in communicating with students more effectively than words alone because the brain captures and retains visuals for visual learners. In addition, incorporating movement may be beneficial to students during academic tasks (Kercood & Banda, 2012) The TPRS method has both visual and kinesthetic elements and understanding teacher perceptions regarding whether that method will enhance student engagement among male students is an unexplored research area.

The learning styles of elementary male students are crucial to consider when implementing instructional methods that will promote student engagement. Instructional methods that successfully promote student engagement among elementary males students have elements that are comparable to their learning styles. Research suggests that the TPRS instructional method is highly visual and bodily kinesthetic in nature. Visual and bodily kinesthetic learning styles are common among male students (King & Gurian, 2006). Students with bodily kinesthetic learning styles learn best when they are given the opportunity to engage in some form of physical activity during the learning process. I anticipate that teacher perceptions will support the notion that the TPRS method appeals to the learning styles of male students.

The element of student engagement is vital to the success of instruction. Instructional methods that promote student engagement foster academic achievement because student interest is heightened and a foundation for cultivating learning is established. Teacher perceptions of the TPRS method in regards to the impact that method has on student engagement offer the potential of valuable information that may further validate TPRS as an effective teaching strategy that promotes student engagement

for elementary male students. Based upon research reported in chapter two and the components of the TPRS method that mirror the learning styles of male students, I expect that teachers will perceive an increase in student engagement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my study is to develop an understanding of the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding student engagement among third grade male students during the implementation of the TPRS method. I collected data for this study through teacher questionnaires, focus groups, observations, electronic journals, and pre- and post-assessment data. The data gained from this study provides valuable insight regarding to providing elementary male students with learning experiences that encourage active engagement and academic success in the world language classroom.

I provide an in depth description of the TPRS method. The components of the method is identified and expounded upon. Once the method has been explained in detail, I explain how the method of instruction is conducive to the learning styles of male third grade students. I also identify other studies that have focused on the learning styles of male students. In conclusion, I explore the common themes identified from the results of the teacher surveys. I identify common themes regarding the level of active engagement and academic success when the TPRS method is implemented. Based on the findings related to world language teacher perceptions regarding whether the TPRS method of instruction promotes active engagement among elementary male students, I expect to use the research findings to help World Language educators capitalize on this method of

instruction and implement more methods of instruction that are comparable with the learning styles of male students.

### **Conceptual & Theoretical Framework**

The central phenomenon of this qualitative study is student engagement among third-grade male students in the world language classroom. The research paradigm involves qualitative data collection because the purpose of the study is to gain understanding of the phenomena of student engagement through an analysis of teacher perceptions. The goal is to better understand the phenomena of student engagement by gathering information about the experiences of world language teachers. The focus of the study is to view student engagement among male students through the lens of the elementary world language teacher in situations where the TPRS method is implemented. The quest is to analyze these perceptions for common themes and to develop a greater understanding of instructional elements in the TPRS methodology that promote student engagement among elementary male students.

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research seeks to understand how people interpret meaning from their experiences. In the current study, teacher experiences with student engagement among elementary male students while utilizing the TPRS method is the primary focus. Merriam (2009) also suggests that qualitative research uncovers the meaning of phenomena through lived experiences. In this study, the quest is to uncover meaning and understanding regarding student engagement among elementary male students when the TPRS method is implemented. Providing teachers with the opportunity to express their perceptions yields data that is expected to provide world

language educators with insights that are essential for improving student engagement among elementary male students.

A number of research methodologies exist within the qualitative research paradigm. The paradigm most suited for this particular study is a phenomenological research design. Phenomenological studies focus on the notion of describing a particular phenomenon. According to Creswell et al. (2007) in a phenomenological study the researcher describes commonalities among participants as they experience a certain phenomenon. In the current study, the researcher seeks to identify parallels among teacher perceptions of student engagement while implementing the TPRS method. Merriam (2002) asserts that qualitative researchers seek to understand interpretations of an individual's reality at a particular point of time and context. The element of description present in this study and the dedication that the study has to the phenomenon of student engagement among elementary male students is significant. The element of description and the quest to study the lived experiences of a person in relation to a specific phenomenon are evident in this study. In the current study, the researcher is studying the lived experience of teachers and their perceptions of student engagement. The study mirrors the basic components of the phenomenological research design. Questionnaires were dispersed, collected, and analyzed for common themes. The participants in the study provide information describing their particular experience with student engagement while implementing the TPRS method. Interviews were conducted during the research process, transcribed, and analyzed for common themes. In addition, electronic journals from each of the participants describing their experience during the process were analyzed for parallel themes. The goal of the study is to develop an

understanding of the central phenomenon of student engagement holistically. According to Robson (2011), the use of more than one data collection aids in countering threats to validity.

A better understanding of student engagement among elementary male students is the indented positive result of the current study. The insights that result from the study may provide teachers with a greater awareness regarding teaching methods aligned to the learning styles of elementary male students. The research is also expected to promote diversity in teaching practices to enhance student engagement. The enhancement of student engagement may potentially increase student achievement, learning outcomes, and promote higher levels of success within the elementary setting and beyond to impact social change.

In addition to a better understanding of student engagement among elementary male students, the findings of the current study also increase awareness of the importance of embracing various languages and cultures. The study supports the shift from foreign language to world language by promoting world language instruction for elementary students.

### **Operational Definitions**

- **Teachers** in the current study refer to three elementary world language teachers with training in the TPRS method. All of the teacher participants in the study teach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade male students. The teacher participants will come from three major schools within a school district in South Carolina.

- **Elementary male students** in the current study are 3<sup>rd</sup> grade male students receiving instruction in the world language classroom via the TPRS instructional method.
- **Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS)** is an instructional method designed to foster language acquisition through active participation in the creation and performance of short stories.
- **Total Physical Response** is an instructional concept that involves movement and gestures to establish and solidify meaning and the foundational method in which TPRS evolved.
- **Comprehensible input** occurs when communication in the target language is clearly understood by all parties involved.
- **The Target Language** is the world language taught within the classroom setting.
- **World Language** is the term used to describe a particular language. The more inclusive term is used in lieu of foreign language.
- **Student Engagement** is a term used to describe a time when students are on task, actively focused, and participating in learning.

### **Assumptions**

Student engagement is a major concern for elementary male students. According to Bonomo (2010), it is essential for educators to familiarize themselves with how boys learn in all areas of development and to build upon that knowledge with relevant instructional methods. I have fourteen years in the educational system as a world language teacher and fully understand how student engagement can be impacted by instructional methods. I assume the participants in the study also understand the

interrelation of student engagement and instructional methods. I assume the teacher participants in the study will answer questions truthfully during the questionnaire and interview process. I also presume the participants will provide adequate descriptions of the experiences during the process of completing the electronic journals. In addition, I expect that world language will continue to be a relevant and vital program in the public school sector.

### **Limitations**

The study focuses solely on student engagement among male students. Student engagement among female students is not explored in this study. A study focusing on the learning styles of male and female students would provide a significant amount of data to analyze and compare within the study. The lived experiences of teachers, and their gender and race could all be factors that may influence their responses to the interview questions, questionnaire, and journal entries. The element of time is an additional limitation of the current study. The study spanned a full four weeks and consisted of one instructional unit due to the participants' prior instructional obligations. The instructional unit consisted of three full weeks of instruction. The participants also met one week prior to implementing the TPRS method for instructional planning purposes. The study is limited to three research participants in three school settings. All of the research participants teach within the same school district.

### **Scope & Delimitations**

The scope of the current study is limited to the perceptions of 3 participants. The population of teachers participating in the study is limited and the formulation of

generalizations is not possible within a large scope with such a small participating sample. However, the small sample of 3 teachers will allow an in depth analysis of their responses. The rich data will allow me to extract implications from the data that will aide to a better understanding of the phenomenon of student engagement among elementary male students.

The results of the study are not generalizable for a significant population. However, the findings may be applicable within the participating districts (and possibly beyond). The rich description of the experiences of three world language teachers during their process of implementing the TPRS method should allow others to judge the applicability of the findings to their situations. The perceptions of elementary world language teachers within the participating districts provide valuable information regarding student engagement among elementary male students. The information gained from the questionnaires yields data that may assist teachers in the process of providing learning experiences to elementary male students that will enhance student engagement and academic success.

### **Knowledge Generation**

The literature explored in chapter two of the current study support the significance of student engagement and the learning styles of male students in their learning process. Student engagement among elementary male students is a valid area of concern. According to Dobson (2002), authorities on child development recognize that schools are typically not set up to accommodate the unique needs of boys. The current study contributes an additional viewpoint to the literature on student engagement. The current



study provides data from the standpoint of the educator and how they make sense of the phenomena of student engagement among elementary male students while implementing the TPRS instructional method. Current research suggests an increase in the level of student engagement among male students when implementing learning activities that involve a significant amount of physical activity and visual cues. Thus, it appears that elementary male students are likely to benefit from making physical and visual connections to their learning. The findings of this study have the potential to further validate the TPRS method as an instructional practice that promotes student engagement among male students. As a result of an increase in the level of student engagement, academic success is also fostered.

### **Professional Application**

In addition to the world language classroom educator, the general education classroom teacher also benefits from the findings of the study. If the findings support the notion that student engagement is enhanced through the implementation of visual and bodily kinesthetic learning activities, general education teachers will have evidence that validates the presence of visual and bodily kinesthetic learning activities in the classroom. Student engagement contributes value to academic achievement. As a result, the impact that the incorporation of activities that enhance student engagement has on academic achievement will improve the academic performance of elementary male students. The number one goal for students is academic achievement. Academic achievement arises from successful teaching and learning and the element of student engagement is a crucial component to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

## **Social Change**

The current study promotes positive change in the educational sector. The study provides educators with a voice in regards to student engagement. The voice of the educator contributes to the body of literature that supports the notion of the significance of student engagement and instructional practice relevant to elementary male students. The current study illuminates the importance of student engagement and provides a window into the perceptions of the educator. As a result of the current study, educators have the opportunity to glean from the insight of the participants of the study and create positive learning experiences for elementary male students.

## **Conclusion**

The level of student engagement among elementary male students warrants concern for intervention. Research suggests that elementary male students flourish academically in a learning environment rich in visual and bodily kinesthetic learning experiences. In the world language classroom, TPRS is a method with a significant amount of visual and kinesthetic elements. The perceptions that world language teachers have of the TPRS method of instruction will provide data that may identify TPRS as an effective means of teaching world language to elementary male students. In chapter two of this study, I provide detailed research in the areas of student engagement and academic achievement among male students. I also provide additional background information regarding the TPRS method. In chapter three, the research method is presented and validated. In particular, I discuss the method of data collection and the instrument that will be utilized to obtain data. Teacher perceptions will be recorded through

questionnaires, focus groups, electronic journals, observations, and pre- and post-assessment data. Through the analysis process, common themes are identified and studied. Chapter four will consist of the information regarding the actual study and the data collected. The study concludes with a description of the findings and implications of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

The content of this review consists of several components. The first component discusses the significance of student engagement particularly for elementary male students. Following an overview of the relevance of student engagement, a brief synopsis of the TPRS method is presented to establish an understanding of the elements of the instructional method. The review also discusses the literature relevant to the topic to establish a foundation of research. The sources analyzed in this section of the study were retrieved from the ERIC EBSCO database. The parameters of the search range from the years of 1994 to 2015. The search terms utilized for the current study focused on student engagement, how boys learn, and gender in education. Additional sources in the area of qualitative research were obtained from the google scholar search engine. The sources consist of professional journal articles and books relative to the study. The articles and studies are divided into three subcategories. The categories are philosophical research, theoretical research, and empirical studies. In each of the philosophical, theoretical, and empirical sections of the review of literature there is a brief description of articles relevant to the study. The articles are analyzed for content relative to the current study and I discuss any content lacking in the articles that is addressed in the current study.

## **Student Engagement Research**

The philosophical foundation of student engagement among elementary male students has a significant stance in brain research. The philosophy provides valuable information in regards to why theory exists to address the phenomena of student engagement among elementary male students. The structure of the brain and chemical makeup has a strong impact on the manner in which boys learn. As a result, various strategies have been developed based on brain research to appeal to the learning styles of male students. According to Gurian and Stevens (2004), new positron emission tomography (PET) and MRI technologies have enabled researchers to look inside the brains of boys to notate structural and functional differences that profoundly affect learning outcomes.

The PET and MRI technologies have revealed qualities that are reflective of most elementary male brains. Boys tend to have more cortical areas in their brains mainly in the right hemisphere which make them more prone to spatial-mechanical functioning (Baron-Cohen, 2003). The preference to engage in more spatial-mechanical activities increases the need for movement in instructional settings. The cortical trend causes many boys to want to move objects or themselves through space (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). The proposed study capitalizes significantly on the element of movement in the TPRS method. The notion that many boys are biologically wired to require some form of movement further validates the significance of the proposed study. The biological inclination of elementary male students toward the element of movement during instruction in the world language classroom would warrant teachers to implement more instructional methods that have a strong basis in bodily kinesthetic activities.

In addition to the data revealed regarding the elementary male brain structure through brain research, data from the US Department of Education and other leaders in standards-based assessments have provided a strong foundation and driving force behind the movement to explore the specific learning needs of elementary male students to promote student engagement and success. In 1981 the US Department of Education began keeping complete statistics and boys have traditionally lagged behind girls in most categories (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). According to Kauchak and Eggen (2005) boys receive two-thirds of the Ds and Fs in schools, but less than one-half of the As. Taylor (2014) suggest the latest national test scores show that girls have met or exceeded the reading performance of boys at all age levels. The disparity that is evident among male students in comparison to their female counterparts provides historical and current data that substantiates the purpose of the proposed study.

The element of culture is an additional philosophical component to the phenomenon of student engagement among elementary male students. According to Carr-Chellman (2012) boy culture and school culture are not parallel. The traditional school setting is highly structured and appeals to students who are less active physically. Students are required to do what it takes to absorb a highly compressed curriculum in a race to cover all the required standards for a culminating standardized test. Unfortunately, many elementary male students are extremely active in nature and their forced fit into the traditional classroom produces negative feelings about school. According to King and Gurian (2006) boys have lower levels of oxytocin and serotonin which results in an inclination toward a more active nature. In the traditional school setting, there is not a sufficient outlet to release excess energy for instructional purposes.

The incorporation of methods of instruction that appeal to the learning styles of male students is vitally important.

The notion of boy culture is relevant to the proposed study because it demonstrates a need for the implementation of instructional methods that are appealing to elementary male students. Boy culture is a phenomenon in its own right and has a strong significance to the importance of aligning boy culture with school culture. Instructional methods like TPRS with a significant visual and kinesthetic basis are essential to creating a school environment conducive for learning for most boys. The goal of the proposed study is to analyze data from current research to validate the importance of exploring the phenomenon and engage in the study to develop a better understanding.

In addition to the “boy culture” noted in Carr-Chellman’s (2012) study, Whitehead (2006) focuses on gender constructs enforced by parents or guardians and their effects on the first year of traditional schooling for male and female students. According to Whitehead (2006), elementary male students are not encouraged to engage in sophisticated communication skills and intellectual tasks as are their female counterparts. Boys are mainly encouraged to engage in sports and physical activities (Whitehead, 2006). As a result, elementary male students have difficulty early on adapting to a traditional school environment where they are limited in the area of physical activity. The mismatch of school and boy culture creates an aversion to school and decreases levels of engagement among elementary male students. Decreased levels of engagement demonstrated by elementary male students may result in lower levels of academic success (Whitehead, 2006).

The notion of elementary male students beginning school at a disadvantage due to the incompatibility of their interests with curriculum further validates the need to implement instructional methods with a strong kinesthetic basis. The TPRS method has a strong kinesthetic basis and instructional elements to potentially address the inclination of elementary males to engage in physical activity. Whitehead (2006), not only expresses that boys are mainly encouraged to engage in physical activity early on, but as a result disengage in school due to their inability to utilize action for learning. Whitehead's (2006) article exposes the need to promote student engagement among elementary male students and validates the implementation of the TPRS method in the world language classroom.

Whitehead (2006) provides valuable insight to the mismatch between the culture of traditional school and the values instilled in young boys prior to entering their first year of education. However, it is important to avoid formulating generalizations regarding the content expressed in the Whitehead (2006) article. Although many male students are encouraged to focus primarily on sports and additional activities involving physical action, there are boys that have been encouraged to take an interest in more communicative activities. The notion that all boys are geared toward physical activity and sports prior to entering school is invalid and cannot be substantiated. However, a significant number of young boys are highly encouraged to favor sports and other activity involving physical activity which has led to the concerns expressed by Whitehead (2006).

An additional philosophical standpoint to consider in regards to this study is the phenomena of teacher buy in. Teacher buy in is an essential factor to consider when implementing instructional method. The level of commitment a teacher has toward a



particular method of instruction has a significant impact on learning outcomes throughout the implementation process. Due to the instructional method explored in the current study, an investigation of teacher buy in and its impact on instructional delivery is warranted. According to Ambrose (2004), one of the main reasons for studying beliefs is that they can be viewed as disposition towards action. Teachers who believe or buy into a particular instructional method are willing to fully implement the method to foster the most favorable learning outcomes.

One of the major factors to consider in the process of implementing a particular instructional method and promoting teacher buy in is the foundation provided by the professional development provided to teachers. In the current study, teachers have received training in the area of TPRS instruction through professional development opportunities. Teachers received training and engaged in hands-on experiences in implementing the TPRS method. Well-informed teachers are more likely to implement instructional methods comprehensively.

### **Theoretical Research**

The theoretical basis of student engagement among elementary male students provides insight into the methods of promoting student engagement among elementary male students. The methods utilized to foster student engagement among elementary male students equip teachers with the strategies and practices needed to promote an engaging learning environment. Student engagement is the focus of the proposed study and the theory expounded upon in the articles discussed in this section of the study sheds light on the significance of theories relative to student engagement among elementary

male students. In this section, I discuss articles that are theoretical in nature and their relation to the current study.

King, Gurian, and Stevens (2010) discuss several strategies for teaching boys effectively. The strategies promote learning environments that foster student engagement and academic achievement. The strategies that are noted in the article include incorporating the element of movement into instruction and capitalizing on learning activities with significant visual instructional foundations. King, Gurian, and Stevens (2010) claim the incorporation of movement into instruction is vital because it prevents boys from entering a state of neural rest or boredom. According to King, Gurian, and Stevens (2010), visual-spatial activities reach a broader spectrum of learners and harness learner strengths.

The strategies discussed in the King, Gurian, and Stevens (2010) article are major components of the TPRS method. The visual and bodily kinesthetic nature of TPRS has all the elements to promote student engagement and academic achievement among male students. The strategies explored in the article provide evidence that visual and kinesthetic instructional practices are beneficial to boys. According to King, Gurian, and Stevens (2010), incorporating movement into instruction increases brain activity and helps boys to learn. I expected going in to this study that teachers will perceive the visual and kinesthetic elements of the TPRS method as significant components of instruction that engages learners.

In addition to strategies for elementary male students as discussed in King, Gurian, and Stevens' (2010) article, Leopold (2012) provides an additional perspective to

the current study. Leoplod (2012) explores effective strategies for teaching a second language to visual and kinesthetic learners. It is imperative to consider the individual learning styles of students and capitalize on those learning styles to promote student engagement and academic achievement. Strategies that can be implemented to engage students with kinesthetic learning styles are activities with high levels of movement, drama, and role-plays (Leoplod, 2012). The element of competition and the opportunity to handle objects or props are additional strategies to engage kinesthetic learners (Leoplod, 2012). In regards to visual learners, activities involving realistic visualizations, text, and art are all effective methods that can be implemented to appeal to the visual learning style (Leoplod, 2012).

According to Leoplod (2012), students' learning styles differ and numerous instructors teach in ways that reflect their personal learning styles although the differences between teacher-student learning styles may cause a decline in student achievement. The research conducted by Gurian, Stevens, and King (2010) presents claims that identify visual and kinesthetic learning styles as prominent learning preferences for male students. As a result, I went into the study with the expectation that the strategies discussed in Leoplod's (2012) article will benefit elementary male students due to their kinesthetic and visual learning preferences. The TPRS method's instructional basis is highly visual and kinesthetic in nature. The effective methods suggested for implementation in the Leoplod's (2012) article mirrors the foundation of the TPRS instructional method.

Senn (2012) provides additional approaches to engage elementary male students. Senn (2013) focuses on the areas of literacy and student engagement. According to

Fletcher (2006), boys in most literacy classroom settings are “Turned off. Checked out. Disengaged. Disenfranchised” (p.4). Senn’s (2012) article expounds upon several strategies that can be implemented to enhance student engagement in the area of literacy for male students. However, the strategies may also be used in various content areas to improve student engagement among this student population. One of the major strategies discussed in the article was the element of movement utilized as an instructional tool. According to Gurian and Henley (2001), movement stimulates the male brain, helps them to manage impulsivity, and increases communication between right and left hemispheres of the brain.

In addition to movement, Senn (2012) discusses the elements of drawing and humor to enhance student engagement among male students. According to Senn (2010), “drawing is a means of communication boys may be more comfortable with than traditional reading or writing” (p. 219). The visual learning preference of elementary male students gears their interest toward activities that require drawing. The element of humor is an additional strategy that has the potential to increase student engagement. “Boys enjoy both reading and writing humor, and their sense of what is funny is often different from that of girls” (Senn, 2012, p. 219). The humor component in the literacy classroom captures and sustains the interest of most boys and encourages them to engage in learning.

Senn (2012) discusses valid points in the article that are relative to the current study. As mentioned in Senn’s (2012) article, the benefits of incorporating movement into instruction have been expounded upon by King, Gurian, and Stevens (2012). The TPRS method of instruction provides a significant amount of movement through the

incorporation of gestures, drama, and role play. Students become a part of the humorous stories they create. They have an opportunity to engage in learning with movement through dramatic play. The element of humor as mentioned in the Senn (2012) article is also apparent in the TPRS method. Students are given the chance to act out stories that are often humorous and interesting because they are created partially by students.

Senn (2012) sheds a significant amount of light on the importance of incorporating movement, visual components, and the element of humor in general classroom instruction. However, Senn (2012) focuses primarily on the content area of literacy. The strategies can be implemented in various content areas. However, individual subject areas have characteristics unique to their specific content. As a result, the current study will provide data regarding strategies within the TPRS method that promote student engagement among male students in the world language classroom. Senn (2012) highlights instructional elements that enhance student engagement within the literacy classroom setting. Other content areas including world language are able to build upon Senn's (2012) findings to identify instructional methods with similar characteristics that may promote student engagement among elementary male students. The current study will provide world language teachers with content specific data to improve student engagement and achievement among elementary male students.

### **Empirical Studies**

There are a range of empirical studies, which conclude with findings that support the notion of student engagement increasing among male students due to the implementation of instructional methodologies with strong visual and bodily kinesthetic

elements (Gurian & King, 2006; Carrier, 2009; Hawley & Reichert, 2009; Price, 2011) According to Bonomo (2010), research indicates that gender has a significant impact on how children learn. The studies that I will discuss in this section provide data that projects the importance of providing male students with learning experiences that are complementary to their natural learning inclinations. In addition to the studies with implications in regards to the importance of learning activities that appeal to the learning styles of boys, there are several empirical studies that will be discussed in this section that provide data notating the disparity in achievement levels of male students in comparison to their female counterparts.

Laster (2004) conducted a study focusing on the benefits of single sex instructional settings. In this quantitative study Laster (2004) explores test scores in a male single sex classroom, female single sex classroom, and a co-ed classroom at the primary level. The purpose of the study was to identify achievement levels and the level of disciplinary problems in each setting. The findings suggest academic levels to be higher in single sex classes. In addition, the levels of discipline were relatively normal in the co-ed class setting, less discipline problems occurred in the female single gender setting, and the discipline issues were elevated in the male single sex classroom setting. According to Laster (2004), the all-male class was more active than the all-female or co-ed class. The level of activity in the male classroom setting was apparent in this study.

Laster's (2004) research is relative to the current study because the findings suggest a need for instruction that appeals to the active nature of boys. In the male single sex classroom setting, teachers reported high levels of physical activity. According to Laster (2004) boys required more redirection to stay on task than the co-ed and single

female gender class. The increased activity and need for redirection suggest a need for an instructional intervention. Methods of instruction with built in outlets to release excess energy during instruction promote engagement and achievement. The notion of utilizing movement for learning is an essential component to consider when adopting a curriculum. Instructional methods, like TPRS, with a significant kinesthetic and visual basis have the potential to engage male students by capitalizing on their natural learning inclinations. Laster's (2004) study sheds light on the need for instructional method that appeals to the natural learning styles of male students. However, the sample of participants in the article consisted of only three classes of 33 students and six teachers.

A study conducted by Gurian and King (2006) defends the claim that a vast majority of male students are visual and kinesthetic learners with the case of Douglas Elementary School. There was major a disparity (an average of 13 points) in the achievement gap for literacy among males in comparison to females at Douglas Elementary School (2006). By introducing more "boy-friendly" teaching strategies in the classroom, the school was able to close the gender gap in just one year (2006). After providing more kinesthetic and visual learning opportunities the boys at Douglas Elementary experienced a 24.4 percentage point gain in reading and writing (2006). Educational personnel at Douglas attribute the significant improvement among the male students to the usage of instructional strategies that appealed more to the learning styles of the male students (Gurian, 2006). The case of Douglas Elementary validates the notion that elementary male students are engaged in learning when they have the opportunity to participate in activities that have a strong visual and kinesthetic basis.

The study conducted at Douglas Elementary provides data that validates the notion of the importance of addressing the learning styles of male students. The article suggests that engaging in instructional practices complementary to the learning styles of male students' increases student engagement and academic achievement. The current study seeks to analyze teacher perceptions to identify themes regarding the TPRS method's compatibility to elementary male learning styles. The findings from the Douglas study substantiate the importance of an alignment of instructional practices and learning styles among male students. The data collected from pre- and post- standardized testing provides a clear display of academic gains among male students after implementing instructional strategies appealing to male learning styles. The data gained from the Douglas Elementary provides supportive evidence pertinent to the current study. The current study investigates a link between male learning styles addressed in instruction and increased student engagement. The Douglas Elementary study has data that substantiates a link between learning experiences that involve male learning styles, student engagement, and academic achievement.

The data gained from Douglas Elementary regarding elementary male learning styles provides the current study with a significant amount of evidence to support the notion of a link between addressing learning styles in instruction, student engagement, and academic achievement. However, the study focuses solely on the areas of reading and writing. The current study seeks to add evidence relative to student engagement among elementary male students in the elementary world language classroom. In addition, the Douglas Elementary study focuses on numerical data gathered from pre and posttest to reveal the relation between boy-friendly teaching strategies, student engagement, and



academic achievement. The current study will engage in an in depth analysis of teacher perceptions to better understand the relation of teaching practices that appeal to male learning styles, student engagement, and academic achievement. Teacher perceptions are expected to yield vital insight in regards to how teachers perceive TPRS to impact student engagement.

A study conducted by Hawley and Reichert (2009) results in similar outcomes in regards to increased levels of engagement and academic achievement among boys due to the implementation of instructional method appealing to their learning styles. The study focused on international single gender male schools. Teachers within these schools were asked to submit a copy of a lesson implemented in their classroom that proved to be effective. The plans were reviewed for common themes notated. After a careful analysis of the lessons, Hawley and Reichert (2009) noted an element of transitivity throughout the lessons submitted in the study. According to Hawley and Reichert (2009), transitivity refers to the capacity of some element of instruction – an element perhaps not normally associated with the lesson at hand – to arouse and hold student interest.

In regards to the current study, Hawley and Reichert's (2009) study promotes the idea of incorporating lessons that involve an element of surprise and spontaneity to engage student interest. The element of surprise noted in the study is one of the major components of the TPRS method. Students engage in drama to relay meaning while they create outlandish stories during the language acquisition process. As mentioned in the Hawley and Reichert's (2009) study in the discussion of transitivity, the elements of humor, novelty, and surprise have a significant impact on the level of student engagement among male students.

Hawley and Reichert's (2009) study, provides valuable insight in regards to instructional lessons that are conducive for male students. Unfortunately, the homogeneity of participants in the study is compromised due to the variety of teachers from several different countries. In addition, the population of students varies between schools. In the current study, I will limit the amount of compromise to the homogeneity of the research participants by selecting teachers who have similar training, years of experience, and geographical location. The teachers in the proposed study will also provide their perceptions solely for the TPRS method for a specific grade level of male students in the world language classroom. The proposed study has a specified method and sample of participants to ensure that the findings are grounded.

Carrier's (2009) study in regards to hands-on environmental educational learning experiences for boys also supports the notion of boys benefiting from more kinesthetic learning activities. Carrier (2009) found that fourth and fifth grade boys benefited significantly when given the opportunity to make real life application of their learning in an outdoor classroom. This study focuses on the impact that experiential and kinesthetic learning opportunities have on fourth and fifth grade students in the environmental education classroom. The study measures the academic outcomes for environmental knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and comfort levels. In the study, students in the control group received traditional classroom instruction. Students in the treatment group received non-traditional instruction in the schoolyard. Pre and posttest were administered and analyzed. The findings from the study suggest that schoolyard lessons foster positive learning outcomes for boys and girls. However, the data from the study indicates that schoolyard lessons have more of a significant positive impact on the

achievement outcomes of boys in comparison to girls. The implications of the study suggest that the kinesthetic nature of outdoor learning experience appeals significantly to the learning styles of male students, their engagement, and academic outcomes.

Carrier's (2009) study provides the current study with additional support in regards to the implementation of instructional strategies that appeal to the learning styles of elementary male students. The kinesthetic and visual nature of the schoolyard lessons in the study engage elementary male students and promote academic achievement. The data from the study notes significant academic gains for elementary male students in comparing pre- and post-test results. Boys demonstrated greater gains than the girls in the study. The findings of the study validate the notion that providing male students with visual and kinesthetic learning experiences will promote student engagement and academic achievement. The notion validated by the Carrier (2009) study mirrors the current study. The visual and kinesthetic elements of the teaching methodologies in the Carrier (2009) study and the current study enhance or potentially enhance student engagement and improve academic achievement. I expect that teachers will perceive TPRS as an instructional method that enhances student engagement due to the visual and kinesthetic nature.

Although Carrier's (2009) study substantiates the importance of visual and kinesthetic elements in the learning activities for elementary male students, the study focuses primarily on outdoor science lessons. The findings of the study suggest that visual and kinesthetic elements will potentially enhance student engagement and achievement among boys in the world language classroom. However, the findings gained in regards to teacher perceptions of the TPRS method in the world language classroom

will provide teachers of elementary world language with a wealth of content specific information to better understand how to enhance student engagement at the elementary level.

The academic disparity that exists among elementary male and female students has led to a surge in single gender schools and classes. The surge of single gender instructional settings validates the need for the current study. There is a need for boy friendly instructional methods. The single gender movement has evolved in an effort to create boy-friendly learning environments to combat the achievement gap. The rise in single gender schools and classes suggests a need for strategic instructional intervention among elementary male students. A case study conducted by Price (2011) explores a co-educational primary school's experience with a classroom specifically for boys. The qualitative study consisted of questionnaires and interviews with students, teachers, parents, and school administration. The findings suggest a positive outcome academically and socially for the male students participating in the single gender classroom. According to Price (2011), the most prominent positive outcome in regard to boys' learning appeared to be in their advances in reading skills and enjoyment of reading. In addition, Price (2011) identifies the development of social skills as another strong feature of children's learning during the year.

Price's (2011) study of a boy's only classroom is relative to the current study because it supports the notion that instructional methodologies that appeal to the learning styles of boys is significant and produces positive learning outcomes when implemented. The boys' only classroom provided students with various learning experiences that were appealing to elementary male learning styles. According to Price (2011), what came

through more clearly in the boys' comments on their subject-based learning was how they were taught. The elementary male participants of the study indicated their enjoyment of hands-on learning activities (Price, 2011). The TPRS method consists of a significant amount of hands-on instructional strategies due to the strong components of drama and performance. The implications gathered by Price's (2011) study validate the importance of boy friendly instructional practices and the value of implementing kinesthetic learning activities to promote student engagement and academic achievement.

Like Carrier's (2009) and Gurian's (2006) studies, Price's (2011) study does not address the area of elementary world languages. There is a significant amount of data demonstrating the impact of implementing instructional methods that appeal to the learning styles of elementary male students in the area of reading. However, research is lacking in the area of elementary world languages. The current study will shed light on the possibility of the TPRS method of instruction having a positive impact on student engagement and academic achievement in the world language classroom. In the previous studies the common element that promotes student engagement and academic success is the presence of hands on learning activities. The visual and kinesthetic elements are evident in the instructional methods within each of the studies suggesting the importance of addressing male learning styles.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are factors in the reviewed literature, which validate the need for and help to frame the current study. The need to identify and implement instructional methods that are geared to the natural learning preferences of elementary male students,

is substantiated by previous studies and articles discussing the theory and philosophical basis for implementing boy-friendly instructional methods. A common theme that surfaces in the reviewed literature is the importance of implementing strategies that have a strong kinesthetic and visual basis to enhance student engagement among elementary male students. In previous empirical studies (Carrier, 2009, King & Gurian, 2006, and Laster, 2004), increased student engagement among elementary male students after implementing teaching strategies with significant visual and kinesthetic characteristics has resulted in academic gains. There is also research geared toward the notion brain research and the biological rationale behind the need for elementary male students to engage in educational experiences involving visuals and movement. The current study analyzes teacher perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the TPRS instructional method with the elementary male student population and presents the implications. I expect that the implications will mirror the research presented and teacher perceptions will be favorable toward the TPRS method in regards to the kinesthetic and visual nature in the case of world language instruction.

The next chapter presents an in depth description of the research method. The research design and paradigm will be discussed and validated through research. Research bias and subjectivity will be explored and the method of validating data expounded upon. In addition, the research participant selection process will be reviewed along with the method utilized to ensure participant privacy. Next, the data collection process will be analyzed and justified followed by a description of the key points of future chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE: DATA ANALYSIS

### **Research Design**

The research design most appropriate for the study is the qualitative methodology. Qualitative research design appeals to studies with the goal of developing a better understanding of particular phenomena. According to Glesne (1999), qualitative researchers “seek to make sense of personal stories and the ways in which they intersect” (p. 1). According to Maxwell (2005), the qualitative researcher is interested in how the participants of the study make sense of physical events and behaviors taking place. The current study seeks to analyze teacher perceptions and develop further knowledge in the area of student engagement among elementary male students in the world language classroom. Teachers provided information to create narrative of their experience and data was analyzed. The issues driving the relevance of the current study include the lack of student engagement among elementary male students within the world language classroom and the level of academic achievement among elementary males. In an effort to address the issues in the current study, a stronger knowledge base in the area of student engagement from an analysis of teacher perceptions point of view is warranted.

In addition to the goal of developing a better understanding of phenomena, qualitative research focuses on cultivating additional knowledge of phenomena through an analysis of the lived experiences of individuals. The current study analyzed teacher perceptions of elementary male students and the common themes that evolved during the analysis of their perceptions. Questionnaires were given to teachers to provide data to

validate or debunk the notion of TPRS as an effective means of teaching world languages to elementary male students. Additional data was collected from research participants through interviews and electronic journals. The themes that evolved from the analysis of teacher perceptions provided data relevant to the phenomenon of student engagement.

The nature of qualitative research coincides with the purpose of the current study. The issues at the crux of the study are student engagement among elementary male students and the degree to which learning styles of elementary male students may be addressed in the world language classroom. The current study analyzed teacher perceptions to identify themes that may or may not reveal the TPRS method as a viable strategy to increase student engagement among elementary male students.

### **Qualitative Paradigm**

The qualitative paradigm of the current study is phenomenological in nature. Phenomenological research focuses on the need to make meaning of the perceptions individuals have of themselves and the world around them (Robson, 2011). The elements of the current study lend themselves to the philosophy of phenomenology. According to Glesne (1999), phenomenological studies focus on descriptions of how people experience and how they perceive their experiences of the phenomena under study. The goal of the current study coincides with Glesne's (1999) description of the primary focus of phenomenological studies. In the current study, the experiences teachers have with elementary male students in regards to engagement throughout the process of implementing the TPRS method are analyzed for parallels to demonstrate how the participants made sense of their experience. Phenomenological research seeks to



describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell et al. 2007) The perceptions of the teacher's experience with student engagement among elementary male students are the foundation of the data for the current study.

An additional qualitative research paradigm with elements suitable for the current study is the case study paradigm. According to Yin (1994), case study research seeks to answer the questions how or why and requires an in depth analysis. The current study does seek to uncover how or why student engagement is effected among elementary male students. The current study seeks to analyze teacher perceptions to find out if the TPRS method of instruction appeals to the learning styles of elementary male students and impacts student engagement. The questions of how and why student engagement is affected by the implementation of the TPRS method are relevant to the current study. Although the how and why of student engagement is relevant to the current study, the primary focus is to develop a better understanding of the phenomena of student engagement among elementary male students.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is the primary tool within a particular study. Due to the significant role of the researcher, it is imperative to address any biases that may evolve throughout the study. According to Glesne (1999), the elements of rapport and friendship play a significant role in the research process in regards to compromising the validity of data due to bias. The subjectivity of the researcher is an additional factor to be aware of during the process of research. According to Lichtman (2006), bias and subjectivity are

both inevitable in the research process and are expected within the qualitative research methodology. However, it is imperative for the researcher to address the issues of bias and subjectivity and uncover any possible bias or concerns regarding subjectivity.

In the current study there is an element of bias that I need to discuss due to the nature of my relationship with some of the research participants. Several of the research participants are fellow teachers within my current school district. It is important for me to avoid discussing my personal philosophy in regards to the TPRS method with the participants and to remain objective throughout the research process. In order to minimize the presence of bias and develop an understanding of my stance in regards to the topic of study, I maintained what Maxwell (2005) refers to as a “researcher identity memo” throughout the study. The memo approach allowed me to engage in an intense reflection of my assumptions and preconceived notions in regards to the topic of study. As a result, I became more aware of my assumptions and beliefs and therefore took them into consideration as I analyzed data from the participants of the study.

In addition to my relationship with the research participants, my professional training and experience with the topic of study is a factor to consider within the current study. I am a world language teacher with training in the TPRS method of instruction. I have also utilized the method within the elementary classroom setting and witnessed students experiencing success. Due to my experiences with the method, it is vital to remain objective and avoid merging past experiences with the current study. As already mentioned I used Maxwell’s (2005) “researcher identity memo” to distinguish my beliefs and perceptions to avoid their interference in the current study. Before conducting the study I wrote write down the assumptions and expectations I have in regards to the

method to surface my personal orientation. In addition, throughout the research process I continued to journal to ensure that my personal assumptions continue to be evident.

### **Context of the Study**

The context of the present study has several components and will be expounded upon within this section. The method for obtaining research participants and establishing a working relationship with them are both relevant factors to consider in regards to the context of study. It is critical to identify research participants with the characteristics most suited for the current study. In addition, the relationship of the researcher with the participants is essential to the overall success of the study.

The research participants of the current study were obtained by distributing a formal letter with a description of the study. I discussed the current study with the elementary world language coordinator of the school district where the study takes place. Following the discussion and permission to disseminate letters of description, I will contact perspective participants with the formal letter describing the current study. The letters will be distributed via email and district mail. All of the participants in the study met the following criteria:

- Participated in training of the TPRS method.
- Teach third grade elementary world language.
- Are currently utilizing the TPRS method within their classroom setting with third grade students.
- Have valid teacher certification in the area of world language.

Once the participants are contacted and agree to participate in the proposed study, the letters of consent were distributed to the participants along with the initial questionnaire. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire within a one week period. The questionnaire was collected at the beginning of the study to identify themes the participants may have considered before implementing the TPRS method in their classrooms. The implementation of the TPRS method spanned a three -week period.

In an effort to establish a working relationship with the research participants and gather additional data, the teachers participating in the study were asked to maintain a journal entry two to three times per week during their implementation of the TPRS instructional method. The participants were requested to include five to ten sentences describing their experiences and perceptions with third grade male students during the process of implementing the TPRS method. The journal entries were submitted to me electronically and I engaged in member checking by retelling each entry to ensure that I accurately interpreted the points that the participants made. The weekly journal entries and member checking (Glesne, 1999) allowed me to maintain regular communication with the participants of the study and gain valuable data. Communication was frequent and validated throughout the study.

### **Selection of Participants**

The selection of viable research participants is vital to the success of the study. Proper selection of participants increases validity of data and provides the researcher with participants who are able to provide the data needed to address the research questions. There were three people who agreed to participate and met the participant selection

criteria. According to Creswell (2002), it is typical for qualitative research to include a small number of cases in order to gain an in-depth, intensive picture of the shared experience of the research participants. There is no set guide that exists for the number of sites or participants to use in qualitative research (Creswell 2002). The number of participants allowed me to engage in an in-depth analysis of the responses to the questionnaires, focus groups transcriptions, electronic working journal entries, classroom observations, and pre/posttest comparisons.

All of the participants are certified world language teachers with training in the TPRS method. I have placed a basic description of each of the research participants in table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1 Descriptions of Research Participants**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Years of Teaching</b>	<b>Educational History</b>	<b>School Data</b> Poverty Index And Setting
Participant One (Pseudonym Nicholas)	Male	Hispanic	21 Years	BA Modern Languages	Suburban School  32.0%
Participant Two (Pseudonym Victoria)	Female	Hispanic	3 Years	BA  Spanish  Presently enrolled in M.Ed. program	Suburban school  56.4%
Participant Three (Pseudonym Veronica)	Female	Hispanic	23 Years	BA Elementary Education  BS  Speech Therapist	Suburban school  22.4%

## Questionnaires

The questions, which were included in the questionnaire, were developed based on in depth literature review regarding student engagement from Chapter Two. There are several themes that arise from the literature review that have constructed the questions for the current study. First, bodily kinesthetic and visual learning styles as promoters of student engagement among elementary male students was a common theme found throughout research in Chapter Two of this study. Participants were queried on aspects exploring student engagement among elementary male students during the implementation of the TPRS method. The questions were based upon emergent themes within the research explored in chapter two of the study. The questions were also reviewed by a district world language coordinator as an additional measure to ensure validity.

- 1) How do you define student engagement?
- 2) What do you perceive are the dominant learning styles of third grade elementary male students?
- 3) How do you perceive elementary third grade students to be engaged in learning while implementing the TPRS method?
- 4) What components of the TPRS method do you perceive are an effective and/or ineffective means of engaging third grade male students in the learning process?
- 5) What impact do you perceive the implementation of the TPRS method has on the level of academic achievement among third grade elementary students?

- 6) What concerns or suggestions do you have in regards to third grade male students prior to the implementation process of the TPRS method in the classroom setting?

### **Measures for Ethical Protection**

The participants from the current study were made aware of all data collection components in order to make an informed decision about their participation in the study. The Institutional Review Board approved the current study and all procedures have been followed to ensure the study is ethically sound. All research participants received a letter of consent outlining all of the components of the study (See Appendix C). The participants signed the consent forms and all questions or concerns were addressed prior to the study. According to Glesne (1999), research subjects must have sufficient information in order to make an educated decision before participating in the study. Participants were assured in the informed consent document (Appendix C) that their data will be confidential. The identifying components of the documents were made unidentifiable. Names were unattached from responses. The identity of the participants of the study will remain anonymous. Pseudonyms were assigned to each of the participants in the study. The questions involved in the current study are not significantly personal in nature and only refer to perceptions of a particular instructional method. However, the discussed precautions were implemented to ensure ethical protection.

## **Data Collection**

The data collection process for the current study consists of five sources: questionnaires, working journals, focus groups, observations, and pre/posttest comparisons. In order to further specify the questionnaires (mentioned above), the first focus group was conducted prior to the study to discuss the participants' philosophy of student engagement and the questions from the questionnaires. Questions from the initial questionnaire were revisited in order to gain additional data that was identified as they engage in focus group dialogue.

The third means of data were electronic journals. The working journals were completed two to three times weekly by the research participants. The participants were asked to write five to ten sentences regarding their experience with the implementation of the TPRS methodology. The data will be analyzed for common themes.

Research participants were observed twice during the implementation of the TPRS method. Notes were taken throughout the observation process and these notes were analyzed for common themes and coded to reflect those themes. According to Robson (2011), the directness of observation allows the researcher to see firsthand what the participants do and say and provides a view of "real life in the real world" (p. 316).

After the TPRS instructional method was fully implemented by all of the research participants, the participants met to participate in the second focus group. The participants were asked the questions from the initial questionnaire. While the questions are the same as for the first questionnaire, the changes in response to the questions after



the implementation will provide valuable insight. I focused on differences that surfaced after implementing the instructional method.

The final means of data collection was pre- and post- assessment. Each research participant provided their students with a pre-assessment before implementing the TPRS method. Following the implementation, each participant obtained a post-assessment from their students. The teacher also provided a general overview of the data obtained from the pre- and post- assessments to the researcher.

The purpose of these modes of data collection was to collect information regarding each teacher's individual perception of the TPRS method. Preliminary data took place in conjunction with data collection. The data collected was analyzed for common themes. The identified themes were organized to parallel the research questions and are tied to the research discussed in the literature review. Again, the research questions for the current study are centered on teacher perceptions of the TPRS method and the alignment or disconnect of the method to the learning styles of elementary male students and the impact on student engagement. The table 3.2 below provides a description of sources of data for the current study.

**Table 3.2 Descriptions of Sources of Data**

<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Details</b>
Questionnaires	Questionnaires were administered at the beginning and conclusion of the study to the three research participants.
Focus Groups	Two group interviews occurred in the study. The focus groups took place at the beginning after the completion of the initial questionnaire and at the conclusion of the study after the final questionnaire.
Electronic Journals	Research participants submitted two to three journal entries weekly over the course of three weeks. The research participants shared their experiences with student engagement as they implemented the TPRS method.
Observations	Each research participant was observed twice during the course of the study. Observations will be recorded and coded.
Pre and Post Assessment	Pre- and post- assessments were administered. The participants were provided a general overview of the pre and post assessment results.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is effective when conducted alongside the process of data collection. According to Glesne (1999) data analysis conducted in parallel to data collection allows the researcher to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. Experienced researchers begin data analysis immediately after finishing an interview or collecting any form of data (Glesne, 1999). In the current study, I will engage in data analysis as I collected the weekly journals from the participants of my study. I also engaged in the process of analysis after receiving questionnaires from the participants in the study. Interview data was also analyzed in a preliminary way after they occurred in order to expand my field notes and annotate my notes with theme codes.

According to Maxwell (2005), collecting data from a variety of sources reduces the risk of generating conclusions that reflect systematic biases. The five means of data collection in the current study (questionnaires, focus groups, observations, electronic journals, and pre and post assessments) enable triangulation. According to Creswell (2002), triangulation occurs when data is obtained from various sources and data from one data source is employed to check and interpret the data from the other sources. Triangulation protects the validity of the study because information is drawn from multiple sources (Creswell, 2002).

As I analyzed the data, I engaged in the process of coding data based on common themes. According to Glesne (1999), coding assists in creating a strong focus. The coding of the data allowed me to organize the data to reveal vital information that permitted interpretation of the data and the specification of findings and the identification of implications.

The remaining chapter discusses the research process and findings. Chapter four will provide a more detailed description of data collection, recording, and the system implemented to effectively organize data. The chapter will also discuss common themes and patterns in the research and substantiate those findings with data. Chapter five will address the research questions, make connections between the current study and the larger body of research, and explore implications for practice.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding student engagement during the implementation of the TPRS method of instruction for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade male students. Teacher perceptions of student engagement during the implementation of the TPRS method provides valuable insight to aid teachers in identifying instructional methods that are conducive for learning among elementary male students. Findings from the study add to the body of knowledge dedicated to best practices for the instruction of elementary male students.

### **Teachers' Initial Perceptions**

At the beginning of the study, the research participants were given a questionnaire consisting of six questions. The questions focused on their interpretation of student engagement, initial perceptions of the TPRS method, and their philosophy regarding dominant learning styles of male students. The initial questionnaire was designed to develop an understanding of the beliefs the participants had regarding student engagement and the TPRS method. There were a number of themes that emerged from the questionnaires prior to the implementation process. I will discuss each question and the themes that emerged throughout the process. Table 4.1 below lists the interview questions in the questionnaire and the rationale for including them in the current study. The table discusses the relationship between the interview questions and the research questions.

**Table 4.1 Interview Question Rationales**

<b>Interview Questions for the Current Study</b>	<b>Rationale of Question Choice &amp; Relevance to Research Questions</b>
1. What is your definition of student engagement?	Designed to establish the participants' understanding of student engagement to create a framework for their responses throughout the study.
2. What do you perceive are the dominant learning styles of third grade male students?	Designed to produce data that will address RQ2) What perceptions do elementary teachers have in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of the TPRS method and the links to student engagement for elementary male students?
3. How do you perceive elementary third grade male students to be engaged in learning while implementing the TPRS methodology?	Designed to foster the emergence of data to address RQ3) How do teacher perceptions support or reject the notion that the TPRS method impacts student engagement among elementary male students?
4. What components of the TPRS methodology do you perceive are an effective and/or ineffective means of engaging third grade male students in the learning process?	Designed to encourage data to address RQ1) What perceptions do elementary teachers have regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the TPRS method and the impact on student engagement for elementary male students?
5. What impact do you perceive the implementation of the TPRS methodology has on the level of academic achievement among third grade elementary students?	Designed to promote data to provide more understanding regarding RQ4) How does student engagement impact academic achievement for third grade male students in the elementary world language classroom?
6. What concerns or suggestions do you have in regards to third grade male students prior to the implementation process of the TPRS methodology in the classroom setting?	Designed to provide the research participants with an opportunity to express concerns and suggestions about the research process.

### **Initial Perception of Student Engagement**

Question one from the initial questionnaire focuses on the participants' interpretation of student engagement. The parallels that emerged from this question were the terms time on task, involvement, and active learning. These terms were used by the participants to describe how student engagement is demonstrated in their particular

classroom. As a measure of ethical protection, pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants of the study.

Student engagement means students are involved in learning. They know what is going on because they are following directions and completing their assignments. When a student is engaged they know what I am saying if I ask them a question. (Nicholas)

Student engagement occurs when students are active participants in the learning process. They are attentive and focused on the task at hand. (Victoria)

Student engagement means students are focused on instruction and involved. When students are engaged in learning, they are on task and paying attention. (Veronica)

### **Teacher Perceptions of Levels of Student Engagement**

Question two of the questionnaire asked participants how they perceived how elementary third grade male students will be engaged in learning while implementing the TPRS method. There was a common theme in all of the participants' responses. The participants' responses reflect the belief that third grade male students will be engaged during the implementation of the TPRS method. The responses of participants one, two, and three contained the terms "will be engaged." All of the responses to question two stated that students will be engaged during the implementation of the TPRS method.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Third Grade Male Learning Styles**

Question three from the questionnaire focuses on perceptions participants have in regards to the dominant learning styles of third grade male students. During the process of analysis, the responses of the participants suggest bodily kinesthetic and visual/spatial learning styles to be dominant among third grade male students.

Movement is a must for my boys. I think any learning style that involves movement would be helpful for boys to learn. (Nicholas)

Bodily kinesthetic and visual/spatial are the dominant learning styles for boys. I notice that the boys are engaged in my room when they are able to use manipulatives, play games, or any other activity involving movement. (Victoria)

The boys in my room tend to be very active and I think they can be classified as bodily kinesthetic learners. They also benefit from moving objects for learning. (Veronica)

### **Teacher Perceptions of the Strengths and Weaknesses of TPRS**

Question four asked research participants the components of the TPRS method they found to be effective and/or ineffective for engaging third grade male students. The responses to the questions had some variation. However, there were two major themes that emerged from the responses to this question:

- 1) The repetitive nature of the method and the element of movement.
- 2) The TPRS method provided a foundation for learning.

That is, students were able to use the story to make connections to the targeted vocabulary. This common theme emerged from Victoria and Veronica.

The stories provide students with a point of reference for them to build on. (Victoria)

The story allows students to make connections and to enhance their learning. (Veronica)

A common theme that emerged as ineffective means of engaging third grade male students was the story topic. Nicholas's and Veronica's responses focused on the topics of TPRS stories. The participants' responses suggest that third grade male students will not be interested and will tune out if the topic of the story is not appealing to their interest.

I noticed when my boys do not like the topics I cover in my lessons they tune out and do not pay attention. (Nicholas)

My boys will not focus on what is going on if the stories I've used in the past do not have enough vocabulary. If the story is too basic they are not as interested. (Veronica)

### **Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of TPRS on Academic Achievement**

Question number five focuses on the participants' perception of the impact the implementation will have on academic achievement among third grade male students. A portion of the research explored in the literature review in chapter two focuses on the link between student engagement and academic achievement, as a result, question five was designed to gain an understanding of the link between student engagement, TPRS, and academic achievement. A parallel emerged from all of the research participants. The common thread was that the TPRS method would have a positive impact on academic achievement.

The stories are repetitive and provide students with an opportunity to hear the words over and over. Students will remember the words well when they hear it more than once. (Nicholas)

The stories help to reinforce vocabulary because of the repetition. Students will benefit from increased levels of comprehensible input and retain more vocabulary. (Victoria)

TPRS will have a positive impact on academic achievement because students will hear the vocabulary within the context of a story. (Veronica)

### **Teacher Concerns**

Question number six focused on questions or concerns research participants have prior to the implementation of the method. Each of the research participants' responses suggested they did not have any questions or concerns.



## Teachers' Developed Perceptions

At the conclusion of the study, the research participants were given a final questionnaire consisting of the six questions they were given prior to participating in the study. The questions focused on their interpretation of student engagement, initial perceptions of the TPRS method, and their philosophy regarding dominant learning styles of male students. Questions similar to the initial questionnaire were distributed a to identify any changes in the participants' beliefs that may have transpired from the beginning to the completion of the study. There were not significant changes to the initial beliefs of the participants. The participant responses further validated their initial responses. Table 4.2 below displays the changes noted in the comparative analysis of the participant responses in questionnaire one and two.

**Table 4.2 Questionnaire Response Themes**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Initial Response Themes</b>	<b>Final Response Themes</b>
Has your definition of student engagement changed throughout the process of participating in the study?	Time on Task Involvement Active Engagement	The responses supported current themes. Participants noted their themes did not change throughout the research process.
How were elementary third grade male students engaged in learning while implementing the TPRS methodology?	Students will be engaged.	Active participation Engaged in learning Enjoyed the learning process
Has your perception of the dominant learning styles of third grade elementary male students changed in any manner?	Bodily kinesthetic learners Visual/Spatial learners Movement	The responses supported the current themes. A new emerging theme was the element of humor in instruction.
What components of the TPRS methodology did you	Repetitive Nature (effective)	The responses supported the current themes. A new

observe as effective and/or ineffective means of engaging third grade male students in the learning process?	Connects to learning (effective)  Topics could cause disinterest (ineffective)	emerging theme was the element of humor encouraging student engagement (effective).
What impact did the implementation of the TPRS methodology have on the level of academic achievement among third grade elementary students?	The implementation of TPRS will have a positive impact on the academic achievement of elementary male students.	The responses supported the current theme. All participants asserted that the implementation of TPRS increased levels of academic achievement among third grade male students.
What concerns or suggestions did you have in regards to third grade male students during the implementation process of the TPRS methodology in the classroom setting?	No concerns or suggestions were noted.	An emerging theme that surfaced was stating clear expectations prior to conducting the TPRS lesson.

### **Initial Teacher Reflection**

The first focus group centered on the questions from the initial questionnaire. The initial focus group occurred after the participants completed their questionnaires. The focus group provided the opportunity to probe for additional information based upon the initial written responses.

#### **Initial Teacher Reflections on Student Engagement**

Question one focuses on the participants' interpretation of student engagement. The parallels that emerged from the dialogue in the focus groups mirrored the written responses. However, participants provided additional details to support their written responses at this time. Nicholas focused on a student he taught who he did not perceive to be engaged, but demonstrated high levels of academic achievement during written assessments. The response of participant one provides insight on the interpretation of

student engagement. For some students time on task may not be visible. Student engagement may not present in the same way for all students and validates the need for the pre- and post- assessment data that will be discussed later in the study.

I taught a student who was very quiet. He was a third grade boy. He appeared to be daydreaming all of the time and I thought he was not paying attention. When I gave the first written assessment to the class, the student got the majority of the answers correct. I was surprised because he didn't seem to be paying attention. (Nicholas)

The responses from Victoria and Veronica were extensions of their written responses. Victoria and Veronica had a common theme to emerge from their verbal response. The dialogue of Victoria and Veronica focused on time on task. The participants expressed visual evidence of student engagement.

I can see evidence of student engagement in my classroom. I observe students completing activities. I see them working in small groups and interacting with their peers to complete assignments that require them to use Spanish vocabulary. I can see when students are not on task. (Victoria)

My interpretation of student engagement is active participation from students. Taking ownership of what they are learning. I think it can be observed. I just went through an observation with my principal. When I looked at the results, it said that active engagement was evident. I guess our administration must judge the level of student engagement by what they see to a certain extent as well. (Veronica)

The dialog from the participants highlights the importance of defining the term student engagement. Student engagement may not be visually observed in some cases. There are some instances where student engagement may be documented through assessments. It is imperative for educators to view student engagement holistically. The current study provides two means of data collection that will provide documentation of student engagement through observations and assessments.

## **Initial Teacher Reflections on Learning Styles of Third Grade Males**

Question two of the focus group focuses on what the research participants perceive to be the dominant learning styles of elementary male students. The research participants provided additional support to their initial questionnaire response. The common themes to emerge from the transcription mirrored the themes obtained from the questionnaire. The responses of the research participants support the notion that the majority of third grade male students are visual and bodily kinesthetic learners. During the focus group research participants expressed a number of personal experiences with elementary third grade students that demonstrated the visual and kinesthetic learning styles.

I noticed that when I provide some type of movement in my lessons the boy's participant more and are more attentive. This year I used a lot of physical gestures to show the meanings of the vocabulary I taught. The boys really liked doing the motions. Sometimes they went a little overboard, but they really did get involved. (Nicholas)

Gestures help them make connections. They are already active so why not use their busy bodies for learning. I really think they benefit from being able to move around. Not just the boys, but all of them. (Victoria)

I had one student who would not do anything and I mean not one thing. I tried really hard to get him to participate and he just would not budge. Finally, I created a basketball vocabulary game. He had a chance to make a shot with a koosh ball every time he gave me the correct word for the picture on the smart board. He loved that activity. I think the movement made a difference but also his love for basketball. Honestly, all the students enjoyed that one. (Veronica)

The personal experiences expounded upon in the focus group provided rich data to support the claims that emerged from the research in chapter two of this study.

Student engagement is positively impacted when bodily kinesthetic and visual based methods are utilized in the classroom setting.

### **Initial Teacher Reflections on Levels of Student Engagement**

Question three focuses on how the participants perceive third grade male students will be engaged in learning during the implementation of the TPRS method. Research participants did not expound on question three and their response was similar to their written responses. The participants all agreed that students would be engaged in learning. The research participants also believe the academic outcomes will be favorable after implementing the TPRS method.

### **Teacher Reflections of the Strengths and Weaknesses of TPRS**

Question four focuses on the components of the TPRS method the participants perceive as effective or ineffective at promoting student engagement. The participants expressed beliefs similar to those written in the initial questionnaire. However, the focus group provided the opportunity to probe for additional details. The themes that emerged throughout the focus groups in regards to the effective components of the TPRS method are the repetitive nature, the stories as a point of reference, and the involvement of the students. The participants expounded upon the identified themes during the focus group. The participants discussed the training and past experiences with the TPRS instructional method. Victoria and Veronica found the repetitive nature of the TPRS method to be one of the major elements that encourages student engagement.

I think students feel more comfortable when they can hear the same vocabulary terms several times in the context of a story. The more the students hear the vocabulary the more confident they will feel about using and reading it.  
(Victoria)

With any language, it is important to hear the terms over and over again. When I learned my second language I remember how important this was. I needed to hear the language and see them used within a particular context. And like you said (Victoria) it does increase your confidence level (Veronica).

Nicholas shared the belief that the repetitive nature of TPRS promotes student engagement and language retention, but participant one also discussed how he felt like his students would benefit from the point of reference the TPRS method provided. He also discussed how the method drew students in to learning and fostered active engagement.

I know our district is very focused on active engagement. I really think this method will help to make our students more involved and they will retain more vocabulary because they have something to build upon. I am really looking forward to it. (Nicholas)

The second portion of the question focuses on the ineffective components of the TPRS method. The participants shared common concerns in regards to the ineffective components. Each of the participants expressed concerns about classroom management and the level of engagement students may have if the stories are not aligned to their personal interest. Victoria suggested that teachers do an inventory to find out their students' interests in order to tailor the stories toward the students' preferences. Participants one and three agreed. The participants also expressed concerns regarding classroom management. Victoria referred to a previous experience she had with a class when she used the TPRS method.

I like the TPRS method, but I really need to be sure I maintain control in my room. The students have been engaged when I have used it in the past, but sometimes they are a little too engaged in the wrong way. They get so excited and sometimes forget about classroom expectations. (Victoria)

The participants agreed that classroom management is a key factor to consider when implementing the TPRS method. Effective student engagement needs to be productive and focused on learning. Focused activity is essential to student engagement.

### **Initial Teacher Reflections on the Impact of TPRS on Academic Achievement**

Question number five focuses on the participants' perception of the impact the implementation of TPRS will have on the academic achievement of third grade male students. The transcription analysis of the focus group reveals a common theme among the participant responses. Nicholas, Victoria, and Veronica agree that the implementation of the TPRS method will promote favorable results to the level of academic achievement in the world language classroom setting. The common theme that emerged throughout the dialogue to support the notion of TPRS having a positive impact on the TPRS method is active learning. Nicholas, Victoria, and Veronica discussed the link between student engagement, active learning, and academic achievement.

I think students increase their chances of increasing academically when they are taking in active role in the learning process. They can't just tune out and expect to do well. (Nicholas)

Engaged students are active learners in my opinion. Academic achievement just stems from that. (Victoria)

As teachers we have to find the best method to cause our students to be more engaged. The more experiences we can give them that will foster active engagement, the more academic achievement we will see. (Veronica)

The participants elaborated on the link between student engagement and academic achievement. According to the participant responses, academic achievement often results in a learning environment that promotes heightened levels of student engagement.

### **Initial Teacher Concerns**

Question number six focuses on questions or concerns research participants have prior to the implementation of the method. The research participants engaged in a discussion about classroom management during this time. The participants shared strategies they could implement that will allow students to be actively engaged, but maintain an atmosphere conducive for learning. Participant one suggested that expectations be reviewed prior to beginning the lesson. Participants two and three agreed that expectations should be reviewed. Participant three suggested that students be provided with some incentive to encourage appropriate behavior during the lessons.

### **Developed Teacher Reflections**

Focus group two occurred at the conclusion of the implementation process. The responses from questionnaire two were utilized to guide the focus group. The focus group responses provided additional data that supported the participants' responses from questionnaire two. Similar themes emerged, but there were a significant amount of reflections shared about occurrences they observed with students in their classrooms.

### **Developed Teacher Reflections on Student Engagement**

Question one requested participants to share their definition of student engagement. The question elicited several stories about students who demonstrated student engagement. Participant two discussed a student who she perceived to be reluctant to participate in class. During the implementation of the TPRS method the student attempted to take a more active role in the learning process.



I can say that the method encouraged engagement. Even my reluctant learners wanted to participate. My shy quiet student raised his hand to be the monster and nailed it. I was so surprised. (Participant Two)

My students were begging for more stories. I even had some students to try to give me story ideas so that we could use them for the next week. They were so excited. (Participant One)

The response from the focus group provides additional validation of TPRS as an effective means of instruction for third grade male students. Participant one expressed the overall excitement he witnessed from his students. He was so impressed with the level of enthusiasm his students had for learning during the implementation of the TPRS method.

### **Developed Teacher Reflections on Learning Styles of Third Grade Males**

Question two focused on what teachers perceived to be the dominant learning styles of third grade male students. The initial themes of bodily kinesthetic and visual/spatial learners resurfaced. All of the research participants agreed that bodily kinesthetic and visual/spatial learning styles are dominant among third grade male students.

Boys like action. They like to move around and do things. I think that's why they seemed so engaged with TPRS. TPRS lets them move and has lots of visuals. (Participant Three)

Providing third grade male students with learning experiences that appeal to their learning styles promotes student engagement in the world language classroom. The responses to the second focus group supports Whiteheads (2006) claim that increased levels of physical activity in the traditional school setting can potentially result in increased levels of student engagement for elementary male students.

## **Initial Teacher Reflections on Levels of Student Engagement**

Question three focuses on how third grade male students were engaged in learning during the implementation of the TPRS method. The research participants observed their students experience favorable learning outcomes after implementing the TPRS method. The pre and post assessments that were administered throughout the implementation process provided data that supported evidence that third grade male students were engaged in learning. The participants also discussed the level of focus third grade male students exhibited during the process of implementing the TPRS method.

The boys in my class were so focused and eager to participate. They enjoyed learning and it was evident. I am looking forward to implementing the strategy again. (Participant One)

I am glad to implement a method that actually keeps the attention of the boys in my class. I did not have many behavioral issues because they were so focused on the monster in the story. (Participant Two)

The level of active participation reported by each of the participants demonstrates the strong impact TPRS had on engagement for elementary male students in the world language classroom.

## **Developed Teacher Reflections of the Strengths and Weaknesses of TPRS**

Question four focuses on the components of the TPRS method the participants observed as effective or ineffective at promoting student engagement. The participants expressed beliefs similar to those in the initial focus group. They agreed that the repetitive nature of TPRS and the foundation it provided to anchor additional learning were effective components of TPRS. There were no ineffective components mentioned

during the focus group, but several participants reiterated the importance of reviewing classroom expectations prior to implementing the strategy.

I did not have any major issues with behavior when I used TPRS, but I think it could be an issue for teachers who are weak in the area of classroom management. It is so important to remind students of classroom expectations before using TPRS. (Participant 3)

The participants in the study maintained a level of control in their classrooms. The students were engaged and the atmosphere was conducive for learning.

### **Developed Teacher Reflections on the Impact of TPRS on Academic Achievement**

Question number five focuses on the impact the implementation of TPRS had on the academic achievement of third grade male students. The research participants provided brief descriptions of the academic gains students made during the implementation of TPRS. The findings from the data support the notion that TPRS has a positive significant impact on the academic achievement of third grade male students. The participants in the study notated academic gains in all of their students. The participants referred to data obtained from the formative assessments administered throughout the research process.

### **Teacher Concerns**

Question number six focuses on questions or concerns research participants have after the implementation of the method. The research participants did not have any questions after the implementation process. The participants shared the common suggestion of revisiting classroom expectations prior to implementing the TPRS method to ensure an environment that fosters learning is maintained throughout the TPRS lesson.

## **Observations of Teachers in Practice**

The research participants were observed twice during the course of the study. The participants were observed for a thirty minute period and detailed descriptions of the observations were noted. Each of the three participants was observed in three different school settings. I discuss each observation in this section of the study and provide a synopsis of the observation analysis.

### **Nicholas**

Nicholas had a class of sixteen students. There are a total of six boys in the classroom. The classroom is spacious and decorated with posters consisting of Spanish vocabulary and student work. I sat in a chair located away from the group, but close enough to observe student and teacher interactions. Nicholas informed the students that I was a special guest there only to observe and to continue on with their regular class participation. I maintained my distance from the group and did not interact with the students in order to provide them with a normal learning environment.

Nicholas greeted the students as they entered the door and soon requested the students to sit on the carpet. Students were focused on the teacher and listened to his instructions. As the students entered the room, two boys came in laughing and touching the shoulder of another male student. The boys appeared to be playing some type of game. After being told to sit on the rug the boys quickly sat down. The observation of the playful behavior supports Gurian's (2004) claim that boys favor physical activity. Third grade male students are typically extremely playful and active.

Prior to the presentation of the TPRS story the teacher administered a formative assessment to the students. The students were asked to demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary that would be used in the story. The teacher held up vocabulary picture cards and several plastic fruits to check if students had prior knowledge of the terms. Following this brief formative assessment, the teacher presented a TPRS story to the class. In the story, a monster (played by the teacher) was very hungry and requested food from the children around him. The students had to get up from their seats and bring the correct food to the “monster”. The plastic food was located on a nearby table. If the students did not bring the correct food, the teacher would growl and stomp his feet with anger. All of the students were engaged in the lesson. The six boys in the class were all attentive for the entire lesson. I observed laughter, gazes of suspense, and students raising their hands to gather food for the “monster”. The six male students were all engaged and four of the six raised their hands consistently to gather the appropriate food during the TPRS story. The remaining two students did not raise their hands, but I observed them laughing and smiling as they focused on the story. Their level of engagement was evident.

During the second observation, I observed the same class in the previous location. Nicholas greeted the students as they entered the classroom. Students were told once again to come to the front of the classroom and sit on the carpet. The students came into the classroom, sat on the carpet located in the front of the classroom, and waited for instruction. Students talked quietly amongst themselves as they waited for class to begin. One of the students (male) asked the teacher if they were going to do the story again. The teacher responded with “Yes.” The student turned around and cheered quietly. The

same student told two of his friends (one male and one female) they would be doing a story today and those students also responded favorably to the information. The two students smiled and the male student pulled his arm to himself and said “YES!” The class overall appeared to be excited to come to Spanish class.

Once the students entered the classroom the teacher informed the group that they would be participating in the story today. Nicholas informed them that he would not be the monster, but that he would choose several students to come up and act out the lead role of the story. The students began to raise their hands to play the role of the monster. All six of the boys in the class raised their hands. Nicholas reminded the students of the classroom expectations. Students were told to sit on their bottoms with quiet hands. All of the students immediately complied with the teacher’s instructions. The teacher told the students that he would choose the monster after a brief review of the terms. The teachers engaged in an additional formative assessment with the students. Students were asked to respond with a thumb up (if they understood the term) or a thumb down (if they did not understand the term) to ten of the vocabulary terms from the story.

After the assessment, a male student was chosen to be the monster in the story. The student was excited and pleased that he had an opportunity to be the monster. The student used the term “Tengo hambre.” (I am hungry) and demanded students bring food to him using the term “Quiero” (I want) the students bought him the requested foods. The student stomped and growled as he played the role of the monster. He requested all of the food correctly and the students all bought him the correct food. Several of the other boys and girls in the class had an opportunity to be the “monster” in the story.

Several of the students asked the teacher if they could do a story for the next class as well. Three of those students were male students.

### **Victoria**

Victoria had a class of nine students. There are a total of four boys in the classroom. The classroom is an average size and decorated with posters consisting of Spanish vocabulary and student work. I sat in a chair located away from the group, but close enough to observe student and teacher interactions. Victoria informed the students that I was a special guest there only to observe and to continue on with their regular class participation. I maintained my distance from the group and did not interact with the students in order to provide them with a normal learning environment.

The students entered the room and went directly to their desks to complete a brief questioning activity. The students had to write the answers to several basic questions in Spanish. Victoria provided the students with approximately three minutes to complete the assignment and allowed the students to present their answers to the class. Three of the boys in the classroom talked amongst themselves and did not seem engaged in the activity because they appeared to be finished writing. The teacher addressed the incident by briefly reminding them of classroom expectations. Upon the completion of the written assignment, the teacher asked the students to come to the front of the room and sit on the rug to begin the TPRS lesson. The teacher began the lesson with a brief informal assessment. Students were asked to raise their hands if they remembered the targeted vocabulary terms. The teacher asked the students a total of ten vocabulary terms. The four boys in the classroom raised their hands for 8 or more of the vocabulary terms. The

teacher informed the students that they would be participating in a story about a hungry monster. The teacher placed a handmade monster hat on her head and began to say “Tengo hambre!”(I am hungry) and rub her stomach. Victoria pointed to several students and commanded them to bring her the food of her choice. Victoria incorporated the terms “Quiero” (I want) and several different types of food. The students were all engaged in the lesson. The four boys in the classroom were laughing and actively participating in the story. Their focus remained on the teacher for the entire lesson. At the closing of the lesson, Victoria reviewed the vocabulary with the students to check for understanding. The students demonstrated high levels of comprehension during the informal assessment. Three out of four students demonstrated understanding of all of the terms and one student demonstrated understanding of 9 of the ten terms.

During the second observation, I observed the class in the same location. Victoria greeted the students as they entered the classroom. The students were instructed to come directly to the front of the room and sit on the floor. Victoria informed the students that she would be choosing a student to play the role of the monster for the lesson. The students appeared to be excited about having an opportunity to play the monster. The teacher chose a total of three students to be the monster two of the three students were boys. The first male student came up, placed the hat on his head, and began to act like a monster. The student began to stomp and pound his fist on the carpet. The teacher said “I know you are excited, but Mr. Monster please settle down until the story actually starts.” The teacher reviewed expectations and began to tell the story of the hungry monster. The two male students who were chosen to be the monster were very engaged. They used the correct Spanish terms and maintained character for the entire activity.



The second male chosen to be the monster asked the teacher if he could be the monster a second time.

### **Veronica**

Veronica had a class of nineteen students. There are ten male students in her class. The class was already seated and working when I entered the room. Veronica made the students aware that I would be coming into the classroom and to continue on with their normal lesson when I arrive. The classroom was decorated with Spanish posters, student work, and cultural objects. The students were sitting in the front of the classroom on the rug and the teacher was in front of the class talking about pictures that were on the interactive white board.

Veronica had pictures on the interactive white board that displayed the story of a cat that swallowed an alarm clock and had a stomach ache. Veronica began her lesson with visual gestures that represented the meaning of the vocabulary in the story. Each targeted vocabulary term had a gesture to show meaning. For example, for the word “el despertador” (clock) the students had to move one arm from side to side and say “tic tock”. The students did the movements for each term. There was a total of seven terms. The male students in the class all participated and appeared to enjoy demonstrating the meaning of the terms through movement. One student continued to say “tic tock” after the teacher was finished reviewing that particular term. The teacher motioned for the child to stop with her hand. The student followed directions and focused on the teacher. The occurrence parallels the concern expressed in focus group one regarding the importance of classroom management during the implementation of the TPRS method.

There were a total of four pictures on the interactive white board. The pictures were sequential and told a story. Veronica asked the students about each of the pictures and the students had to respond to several questions about them. Throughout the course of the lesson the ten boys were focused on the teacher and attentive to the targeted vocabulary terms. Throughout the lesson the teacher asked yes/no questions about the story to check for comprehension. The students all responded with a thumb up for yes and a thumb down for no. Eight of the male students demonstrated comprehension of the targeted terms. The male students who did not demonstrate mastery were pulled out for academic enrichment programs and did not receive full Spanish instructional time.

Observation two occurred in the same location, with the same students, and the prior lesson was extended. The students entered the room and were told to sit in the front of the classroom. The students came down and the teacher began to explain the objective of the lesson for the day. The week prior, students listened as the teacher lead the lesson. Veronica informed the students that they would be leading and acting out the story. Prior to allowing the students to come to the front of the class to retell the story, the teacher reviewed the targeted vocabulary with gestures. She stated the targeted terms and waited for the students to demonstrate the meanings through motions. Veronica later demonstrated the correct motion to allow students to see if their answers were correct. Four students were asked to come up to the board and retell the story to the class. During the time the students retold the story they were required to demonstrate the motion for the terms in the story. All of the students retold the story effectively and appeared to enjoy the process. The class also performed the motions to demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary.

## **Analysis of Observations**

There were several themes that emerged from the data during the process of conducting observations. The themes that I identified were student engagement, bodily kinesthetic learning styles, visual learning styles, and the element of humor in instructional practice. The data obtained from the observations support the claims from the research in chapter two of the study. In this section of the study the analysis of the observations will be paired with the research explored in chapter two of the study.

Throughout the process of the observed lessons the boys were engaged. Student engagement was evident in every observation. Students were on task and even requested that lesson be repeated. The male students in the class appeared to benefit significantly from the elements of movement and visuals involved in the lesson. The observations supports King's et.al (2010) claim, that incorporating movement into instruction increases brain activity and help boys to learn. The levels of active engagement that I observed as the students performed and retold the stories provided data that supported the notion of TPRS being an effective method for instructing third grade male students. There were minimal behavioral issues that surfaced in the classroom.

The element of movement was observed in every class. The students were focused on the lesson from start to finish. King et.al (2010) claim the incorporation of movement into instruction is vital because it prevents boys from entering a state of boredom. The classes I observed were lively and the students appeared to take an active role in the learning process. The behavioral issues were minimal in each class and the students had an opportunity to utilize their energy for learning. According to Gurian and

Henley (2001), movement stimulates the male brain and helps them to manage impulsivity. The impulsive behavior of the typical third grade boy has the potential to cause distractions in instruction. During the observations there were minimal distractions noted because students were focused and on task.

The data from the observations also supported the notion that male students benefit when visuals are utilized for instruction. The observed classes had visuals and props to use for all of the lessons. Students were given the opportunity to make visual connections to their learning as they saw the plastic fruit and pictorial representations of the stories. According to Gurian et.al (2010) visual learning styles are prominent among male students. Visual learners benefit significantly when they are given the opportunity to make visual connections to their learning.

The element of humor was evident in each of the observations. The observation notes all displayed laughter from the students and teachers. The enjoyment in the room was evident. Humor existed in all of the stories and the male students responded favorably to the humor. Senn (2012) discusses the importance of humor to enhance student engagement among male students. The observations provided data to support the claim that the level of engagement among male students is heightened when there is an element of humor in the lesson. "Boys enjoy both reading and writing humor." (Senn, 2012, p. 219). The element of humor is paramount in promoting student engagement among elementary male students.

## Teacher Written Reflections

Prior to the implementation of the TPRS method, research participants were asked to record their experiences in an electronic journal. A Google document was created and the participants were given an invitation to make changes to the document. The invitation to edit the Google document allowed participants to add their journal entries to the group and collaborate about their experiences. The participants were asked to write two to three journal entries each week (over a four week period). The entries could be an average of 5 to 7 sentences. I did not receive a significant amount of entries throughout the course of the study. The total entries received are as follows:

**Table 4.3 Participant Journal Entries**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number of Journal Entries</b>
Nicholas	4
Victoria	8
Veronica	6

The themes that emerged from other data sources were also reflected in the data obtained from the electronic journals. I received 18 total journal entries. The major theme that emerged from the journal entries was student engagement. The participants provided descriptions of incidents that occurred in their classroom relative to student engagement. The participants discussed the level of student engagement observed for males in their classroom.

The boys were engaged and I could see they enjoyed the story. They did not like to get any answers wrong though. They even turned the story into a competition.

When a boy got the wrong answer, one of the other boys said “You are asking the girls to give you the easy fruits and asking the boys the harder ones.” I thought that was interesting. I guess boys can be competitive. (Nicholas)

During the TPRS lesson, I noticed that the third grade boys in class were more attentive. They also appeared to be more interested in participating. In the past only a few of the boys (it typically tends to be one or two of the same male students) would raise their hands to answer question but during the TPRS lesson most of them wanted to be active participants in the story. (Victoria)

I have a new student this year who actually came up to the board and retold the story with little assistance from me. As he retold the story he gestured the targeted vocabulary terms. He focused on those gestures and made connections. (Veronica)

The electronic journal entries provided an additional source of data that was ongoing throughout the research process. The element of collaboration provided the researcher with a window into the classroom of the participants. The electronic journals also provided participants with a platform for collaboration.

### **Pre- and Post- Assessment Data**

The research participants engaged in informal formative assessments throughout the research process. The participants were asked to compose a brief description of the pre- and post- assessment data. The data was reviewed and placed in table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.4 Student Assessment Data**

Students of Participants	Mastered less than 50% of the targeted terms.	Mastered 50% to 79% of the targeted terms.	Mastered 80% or more of the targeted terms.
Nicholas	-	-	6/6
Victoria	-	-	4/4
Veronica	-	2/10	8/10

The results displayed on the table suggest significant academic gains for third grade male students. Eighteen of the twenty students mastered eighty percent or more of the targeted terms. One student mastered 70 percent of the targeted terms and the remaining student mastered 60 percent. The students who mastered seventy percent of the terms are pulled out of Spanish for academic enrichment and did not have the full benefit of the TPRS method. The data obtained from the pre and post assessment support the claim that TPRS is an effective method for teaching elementary third grade boys.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of my study was to develop an understanding of the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding student engagement among third grade male students during the implementation of the TPRS method. Data was collected for this study through questionnaires, focus groups, observations, digital journals, and pre- and post-formative assessment data. The study provides a voice for elementary world language teachers regarding student engagement among third grade male students. The data gained from this study provide valuable insights in regards to providing elementary male students with learning experiences that encourage active engagement and academic success in the world language classroom.

### **Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

The current study addresses the needs of third grade male students in the elementary world language classroom setting. World language teachers in the district observed a decline in the interest level of male students after they transitioned from early childhood to upper elementary world language. The findings from the current study provide data that can be used to identify methods that promote student engagement among elementary male students. Gurian et. al (2010) support the notion that engagement among male students is elevated when movement and visuals are incorporated into instruction. Senn (2012) asserts that elementary male students are more engaged in learning when the element of humor is incorporated into instruction.



The current study is framed around four research questions that address the themes that emerged from the literature review. The themes that surfaced from the literature are student engagement, learning styles, and achievement gaps. The themes that emerged from the research framed the essential questions for the study. The research questions for the current study are as follows:

- 1) How does student engagement impact academic achievement for elementary world language programs?
- 2) What perceptions do elementary teachers have in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of the TPRS method and the links to student engagement for elementary male students?
- 3) How do teacher perceptions support or reject the notion that the TPRS method complements the learning styles of third grade male students and impacts levels of student engagement?
- 4) How teacher perceptions support or reject the notion that the TPRS method impacts student engagement among elementary male students?

### **Research Question One**

Research question one focuses on the link between student engagement and academic achievement. The pre- and post- assessment data provided data to demonstrate the link between student engagement and academic achievement during the implementation of the TPRS method. In addition to the assessment data, observation notes, and electronic journals provided additional data that displayed a link between student engagement and achievement.

The research in chapter two of the study highlights the academic deficits facing elementary male students in academic areas such as literacy. In the case of Douglas Elementary School, boys faced a thirteen point deficit in literacy in comparison to female students (Gurian 2006). The concern expands from the literacy classroom to the world language classroom and beyond. The concern has ignited a movement to address the academic disparity. The assessment data collected in the current study displays academic gains for third grade male students. Eighteen of the twenty boys experienced eighty percent mastery of the targeted terms. The observations also provided data that noted high levels of student engagement among third grade male students. Research participants provided additional data that reported high levels of student engagement in journal entries. Teachers wrote about observing high levels of student engagement and shared stories about students making academic gains. Participants also discussed the academic gains their students experienced in the focus groups. The data gathered from all of these sources identified TPRS as an effective method for engaging elementary male students.

### **Research Question Two**

Research question number two discusses the strengths and weakness of the TPRS method in regards to cultivating an environment of active engagement in the world language classroom. The questionnaires, observations, focus groups, and electronic journals provided data relevant to research question two. During the process of the implementation of the TPRS method, minimal weaknesses were noted. The data obtained from the participants were favorable of the TPRS method.

The questionnaires highlighted the repetitive nature of TPRS and the foundation it provides for students to build learning connections. The participants found these elements to be conducive for learning among elementary third grade male students. The observations also provided data to address research question two. The observation data reflects the strengths of the TPRS method. During the observations all boys demonstrated active engagement. The students were focused and engaged in learning. The focus groups provided a platform for the participants to express their personal experiences with TPRS. The data obtained validated TPRS as an ideal method to engage third grade male students. The electronic journals provided an additional platform for teachers to express the instructional strengths and/or weaknesses of the TPRS method. The participants' journal entries provided data that further confirmed the strengths of the TPRS method.

### **Research Question Three**

Question three focuses on the learning styles of third grade male students and their relation to the TPRS method. The research participants identified kinesthetic and visual learning styles as the primary learning preferences among third grade male students. The questionnaires, observations, focus groups, and electronic journals provided data relevant to research question three. The responses of the participants paralleled Bonomow's (2010) philosophy on teaching boys. According to Bonomow (2010), boys are predominately bodily kinesthetic learners and they can benefit from learning experiences that cater to their learning preferences.

Participants one and two provided responses to support the notion that bodily kinesthetic and visual/spatial are predominate learning styles of elementary male

students. The terms “visual” and “kinesthetic” appeared in two of the responses and descriptions of the terms appeared in the remaining response. The themes that surfaced from the observation notes regarding the level of student engagement among male students validates TPRS as a method complementary to the learning styles of elementary male students. The focus groups and electronic journal entry responses further validated the parallels between the learning styles and the components of the TPRS method. Research participants share the belief that student engagement increases when TPRS is implemented because the method appeals to the learning styles of elementary male students.

#### **Research Question Four**

Research question four focuses on the TPRS method’s level of impact on student engagement among third grade elementary male students. Teacher perceptions support the notion that TPRS has a positive impact on the level of student engagement for third grade male students. The questionnaires, observations, focus groups, and electronic journals provided data relevant to research question four. The data obtained from all of the data sources validate TPRS as a method that fosters student engagement in the world language classroom.

The questionnaires and focus group responses of the research participants reveal their perceptions and observations of the level of student engagement during the process of implementing the TPRS method. The participants discussed observations of students on task, focused on instruction, and involved in the learning process in focus group discussions. The electronic journals and observation notes provided additional validation for the TPRS method. Research participants reported stories of their students’ responses

to TPRS and the experiences of the students further validate TPRS as an effective means of instruction for elementary male students. The observation notes support the stories and observations noted in the electronic journals

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The purpose of the current study is to develop an understanding of the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding student engagement among third grade male students during the implementation of the TPRS method. The study focused solely on teacher perceptions of elementary male students. Future research can focus on the impact TPRS has on student engagement for elementary female students in comparison to male students. The body of existing research in the area of student engagement in world language education at the elementary level can benefit from a comparative analysis of male and female students because it would provide additional understanding of methods for increasing student engagement. Additional research will provide information that can be used to foster an instructional climate that fosters student engagement and promotes academic achievement.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of the study provide a significant amount of data that identifies TPRS as an instructional method that has a positive impact on the level of student engagement among third grade males. Data results and research support the notion that the dominant learning styles of third grade students are visual and kinesthetic. The TPRS method has components that appeal to the visual and kinesthetic learning styles of third grade students. The academic gains provided additional documentation of the positive

impact the TPRS method had on student engagement among third grade males. The data gathered from the current study implies that the level of student engagement among third grade male students is positively impacted by implementing TPRS. As a result, the TPRS method and methods with similar components that appeal to the learning styles of elementary male students should be utilized in the elementary school setting to promote student engagement.

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## APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE ONE

1. How do you define student engagement?
2. What do you perceive are the dominant learning styles of third grade elementary male students?
3. How do you perceive elementary third grade students to be engaged in learning while implementing the TPRS methodology?
4. What components of the TPRS methodology do you perceive are an effective and/or ineffective means of engaging third grade male students in the learning process?
5. What impact do you perceive the implementation of the TPRS methodology has on the level of academic achievement among third grade elementary students?
6. What concerns or suggestions do you have in regards to third grade male students during the process of implementing the TPRS methodology in the classroom setting?

## APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRE TWO

- 1) Has your definition of student engagement changed throughout the process of participating in the study?
- 2) Has your perception of the dominant learning styles of third grade elementary male students changed in any manner?
- 3) How were elementary third grade male students engaged in learning while implementing the TPRS methodology?
- 4) What components of the TPRS methodology did you observe as effective and/or ineffective means of engaging third grade male students in the learning process?
- 5) What impact did the implementation of the TPRS methodology have on the level of academic achievement among third grade elementary students?
- 6) What concerns or suggestions did you have in regards to third grade male students during the implementation process of the TPRS methodology in the classroom setting?

## APPENDIX C – LETTER OF CONSENT

Greetings,

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Cederia Campbell, from the Ed.D in Curriculum Studies Program at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. The results of this research study will be contributed to a dissertation study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an elementary world language school teacher.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The topic I want to explore will be teachers' perceptions of the impact of the TPRS methodology on student engagement. I am interested in exploring how elementary teachers articulate their thoughts and beliefs about the ways in which the TPRS methodology has on the level of student engagement among third grade male students.

### **PROCEDURES**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in the following things:

- I would like to interview you in a group setting consisting of all the participants in the study on two separate occasions, each for thirty minutes. **No individual student, teacher, or school will be the focus of this research project. Pseudonyms will be used.** I would like to audiotape the interview. I will take handwritten notes in addition and only notes if preferred by the participant.
- I would like to conduct one classroom observation. The observation will last thirty minutes.
- I would like for you to complete a brief questionnaire about your perceptions of the TPRS methodology.
- I would like for you to complete two to three electronic journal entries per week during the process of implementing the TPRS lesson in your classroom. The entries can be observations or reflections that you made during the process. Entries can be between 5 to 7 sentences or more. Electronic journals can be emailed to [ckcampbe@lexrich5.org](mailto:ckcampbe@lexrich5.org).

### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Your interviews will be tape-recorded. **I will protect the identities of participants** through the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publications or presentations. You should understand that you might be quoted directly, but that **your name will not be used in any part of the report. All data will be stored in a secure location.** Please understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While you may not directly benefit from your participation, your participation will contribute to the body of knowledge on the TPRS methodology and student engagement. Your insight could contribute to initiatives and professional development recommendations for world language teachers. Lastly, this study could contribute to all teachers being able to reflect upon their classroom practices and interactions to influence their ability to create engaging learning experiences for all of their students.

### **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

If you are chosen to participate in the research study, you will be given two \$20.00 Walmart gift cards for your participation. One gift card will be given after the completion of the initial questionnaire. The second gift card will be given after the completion of the final questionnaire.

In case you decide to withdraw or are withdrawn by the investigator after the commencement of the research study, the incentives of \$20.00 will be given to the participant.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

With your permission, your interview will be audiotaped-recorded. **I will protect your identity through** the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publications or presentations. You should understand that they might be quoted directly, but that our name will not be used in any part of the report. All data will be stored in a secured location. You will be allowed to edit your transcripts. Please understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice.

I, Cederia Campbell, and my dissertation chair, Dr. Rhonda Jeffries, will be the only people who have access to the consent forms, audiotapes, electronic journal entries, transcripts and handwritten notes. The consent forms, audiotapes, transcripts and handwritten notes will be used for research purposes only.

The consent forms, transcripts and handwritten notes will be stored for three years from the date the study is completed. After the three years, all of the research materials will be destroyed by myself and/or Dr. Jeffries.

I will erase the audiotapes after they are transcribed.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation or nonparticipation will not affect your treatment, evaluation, employment status, or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which in the opinion of the research warrant doing so.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, feel free to contact me or contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Jeffries.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the office of Research Compliance, **Osborne Administration Building**, Suite 202, 915 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29208.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date