

Three-Book Review By Bryce

by Bryce Hedstrom



Bryce has taught Spanish since 1989 at the elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels. He received the Best of Colorado award from the Colorado Congress of Foreign Language Teachers (CCFLT) in 2008, and was elected president of CCFLT in 2015. For more book reviews see <http://www.brycehedstrom.com/free-stuff>

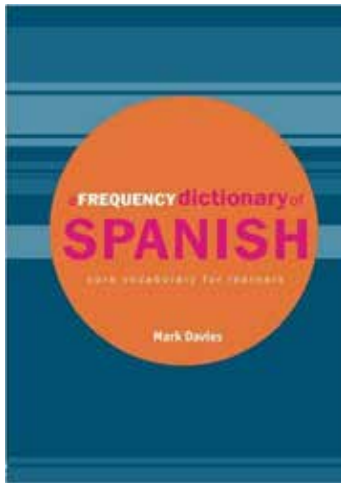
Books every language teacher needs to read

Books on this list meet the following criteria:

1. SLA friendly: Only books that support SLA research and best practice were considered.
2. Useful: Teachers have to be able to apply the concepts in the book readily.
3. Readable: They must not be too difficult for the harried teacher to absorb.
4. Affordable: There are some college-level texts that are valuable, but too pricey for most of us.
5. Lasting: These are not passing fads and have been proven to be valuable.

Great teachers have one thing in common: they read a lot. Some surveys indicate that the average American finishes reading only 1 book a year; others say the average citizen starts to read (but may not finish) at least ten books per year. Teachers undoubtedly read more than that, but we all need to read more and better materials. To think deeply and develop understanding of large movements we need to read books. New York Times bestselling author Grant Cardone claims that, “The average CEO reads 60+ books a year. The average worker reads 1 book a year but finds the time to watch 700 YouTube videos a year.” If teachers want to lead, we need to read; maybe not as much as the CEOs claim to read, but a book every two weeks is within our grasp.

Book every language teacher needs to read #1



A Frequency Dictionary of Spanish: Core Vocabulary for Learners, by Mark Davies

Also editions available in other languages: A Frequency Dictionary of ... French / German / Arabic / Japanese / Mandarin Chinese / etc. (Routledge Frequency Dictionaries)

What It's About: The top 5,000 words in the language, based on a corpus of millions of words from many sources. It offers glimpses into how the language is used. It is easily accessible and intuitive to use. We can use it to make sure we are teaching with the high frequency words that students need to communicate.

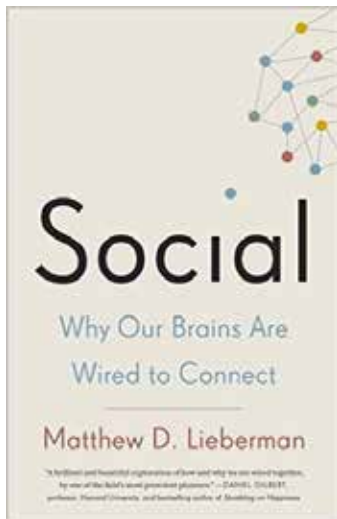
Quotable Quotes: "There is a growing consensus that frequency information has a role to play in language learning. Data derived from corpora allows the frequency of individual words and phrases in a language to be determined. That information may then be incorporated into language learning." "What is the value of a frequency dictionary for language teachers and learners? Why not simply rely on the vocabulary lists in a course textbook? The short answer is that although a typical textbook provides some thematically-related vocabulary in each chapter, there is almost never any indication of which of these words the student is most likely to encounter in actual conversation or texts."

Bonus Points For: Showing us that the nouns associated with the clothing unit are not nearly as valuable for students to acquire as the verbs that are used with clothing. I wasted a lot of time teaching lists of nouns and students couldn't use verbs to explain themselves.

An Image that Could Sum Up This Book Is: A pyramid of words tipped with gold—those are the high-frequency words in the language: the most valuable words for a teacher to use and a learner to acquire.

Read This Book If... You want to help your students by purposefully using the high frequency vocabulary they really need.

Book every language teacher needs to read #2



Social, by Matthew Lieberman

What It's About: Explains the how our brains are made to connect with one another and some stunning implications of recent brain research, particularly in education. Not about language learning, but has important ideas that apply to teaching language.

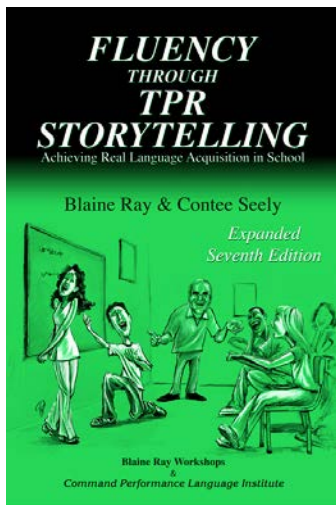
Quotable Quotes: “70 percent of the content in our conversations is social in nature.” p. 20. “Food, water and shelter are NOT the most basic needs for an infant. Instead, being socially connected and cared for is paramount... this restructuring of Maslow’s pyramid tells us something critical about ‘who we are’. Love and belonging might seem like a convenience we can live without, but our biology is built to thirst for connection because it is linked to our most basic survival needs.” p. 43. “I believe the real solution is to stop making the social brain the enemy during class time and figure out how to engage the social brain as part of the learning process.” p. 283. “In study after study, the folks making sense of the information socially have done better on memory tests than the folks intentionally memorizing the material.” p. 284.

Bonus Points For: Describing how emotional pain shows up just like physical pain in the brain. Emotional pain really does hurt, and all the more so because we can't point right at it. Our old childhood taunt was wrong; words CAN hurt us.

Two Images That Could Sum Up This Book: 1) A car on a dark road with dim headlights in front, but disco ball energy pulsating behind the windows. 2) A plastic model of the brain that lights up but the prefrontal cortex at the front of the skull, the part we have assumed to be the most important in learning everything, shines less brightly than the wildly active social nodes throughout the brain which are constantly and wildly pulsating with interconnected messages.

Read This Book If... You want to begin to learn how to use the social parts of your students' brains to get them to earnestly connect with one another, with their learning, and with their world.

Book every language teacher needs to read #3



Fluency through TPR Storytelling, by Blaine Ray and Contee Seely

What It's About: A method to teach language and not kill the teacher in the process. TPRS is thoroughly supported by decades of SLA research and thousands of teachers and their students. Among TPRS practitioners, this book is known as the “Green Bible” because of its authority and ubiquity. Even if you don't teach with TPRS you need to read this book to see what all the fuss is about—especially the first three chapters.

Quotable Quotes: “Carefully limiting the vocabulary, frequent repetition of it, and quick translations (when needed) are the principal ways we use to keep a class totally comprehensible. In order to provide sufficient repetition of targeted grammatical features while simultaneously maintaining interest, we have all students respond appropriately to varying and repetitive questions about a developing story.” p. 9-10. “TPR Storytelling develops fluency with accuracy. Students acquire that language in a fun way that enables them to speak. In the process they develop an “ear” for what sounds right. As a result, they learn to speak the language so that it sounds right to them. This process closely resembles that of first language acquisition. Few other language-learning methods seem to come so close.” p. 333.

Bonus Points For: Showing how to be master and student at the same time. TPRS is a skills-based approach to teaching, rather than a materials-based approach. No app or textbook can do what this book teaches teachers to do. Blaine Ray and TPRS keep growing, changing and getting better.

An Image that Could Sum Up This Book Is: A tightly packed school of herring swimming in the open ocean—constantly reacting and adapting to the changing environment, but remaining one cohesive entity and constantly moving ahead. TPRS is a fluid method, it changes and adapts, but the essence of it remains the same while its practitioners keep moving forward.

Read This Book If... You want your students to become fluent and you also want to have a life. With TPRS your students will be able to speak the language confidently and you will not have to spend all of your free time grading assignments.

List #1

(further book reviews by Bryce can be found at

www.brycehedstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/BOOKS-EVERY-LANGUAGE-TEACHER-NEEDS-TO-READ-1.pdf

- *A Frequency Dictionary of Spanish: Core Vocabulary for Learners*, by Mark Davies
- *Social*, by Matthew Lieberman
- *Fluency through TPR Storytelling*, by Blaine Ray and Contee Seely
- *Reading FAQ*, by Frank Smith
- *The Natural Approach*, by Stephen Krashen and Tracey Terrell
- *Readicide*, by Kelly Gallagher
- *Mindset*, by Carol Dweck LIST #2
- *The Power of Reading*, by Stephen Krashen
- *Free Voluntary Reading*, by Stephen Krashen

- *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use*, by Stephen Krashen
- *Fundamentals of Language Education*, by Stephen Krashen
- *The Talent Code*, by Daniel Coyle
- *Brain Rules*, by John Medina
- *Story Proof*, by Kendall Haven
- *The Language Instinct*, by Steven Pinker
- *Words and Rules*, by Steven Pinker

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NEW SPANISH BOOK!



Don Quijote, el último caballero is a novel for intermediate and advanced beginners in the Fluency Fast series of readers. It uses a vocabulary of fewer than 200 different Spanish words to tell a 1,400 word story in the present tense and the same story also in the past tense. It is repetitive and simple and uses many cognates to make the story comprehensible to adults and children. The stories are intentionally written to be acted out in class, but also to serve as independent reading in either the present or past tense.

Don Quijote, el último caballero is an amusing, ironic and - at the same time - tragic story. Don Quijote is an ordinary Spaniard with an extraordinary imagination who believes the he must achieve great feats to honor a lady. He falls in love with a waitress that he considers to be the ideal lady. He and his companion Sancho Panza have adventures in which Don Quijote is always mistaken about what he finds along the way while Sancho sees what is really there. The story is based on Miguel de Cervantes' *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, published in the 17th Century. Many consider it to be the best book of fiction ever written.

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