

THE USE OF A METHOD "TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE" TO TEACH YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract. The article studies the potential of the Total Physical Response (TPR) activities to develop young learners' foreign language skills and knowledge. Being a language teaching method that uses movement/physical activity to teach language, TPR responds to the children's need to be physically active, to learn by doing, and to learn language in meaningful communicative contexts and stress-free atmosphere.

Key words: TPR, physical activity, a method, stress-free atmosphere, young learners and etc.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity. Developed by James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose State University, California, it draws on several traditions, including developmental psychology, learning theory, and humanistic pedagogy, as well as on language teaching procedures proposed by Harold and Dorothy Palmer in 1925.

Let us briefly consider these precedents to Total Physical Response. Total Physical Response is linked to the "trace theory" [1,56] of memory in psychology, which holds that the more often or the more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled. Retracing can be done verbally (e.g., by rote repetition) and/or in association with motor activity. Combined tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity, hence increase the probability of successful recall. In a developmental sense, Asher sees successful adult second language learning as a parallel process to child first language acquisition. He claims that speech directed to young children consists primarily of commands, which children respond to physically before they begin to produce verbal

responses. Asher feels adults should recapitulate the processes by which children acquire their mother tongue.

With TPR, a teacher tries to mimic this process in the classroom. This method is reserved. therefore, also referred to as "The Comprehension Approach", because its gives emphasis on listening comprehension prior to production. According to J. Asher in designing TPR there are carefully considered three principles of first language acquisition: a) listening precedes speaking, b) language learning is associated with body movement, and c) listening skill prepares a child for speaking [1, 62].

When speaking to a kid, parents commonly point to an object and clearly state it labels, e.g. "ball" or instruct the child, "pick up, pet the ball", and show through actions what they mean by utterance. Children are able to show comprehension by responding physically to the parent's utterance. With no pressure, children slowly, but surely learn to respond and eventually try to speak. Second language acquisition follow the same process to child's first language acquisition, that is, the speech addressed to children usually consists primarily of commands which they respond to physically. Adults, therefore, could follow the way children successfully acquire their mother tongue. In other words, TPR is a 'Natural Method' [2,45] in a sense that second language learning follows the naturalistic process of L1 learning.

In the article we try to select TPR activities that cater to young learners' language levels, respect their different physical ability and assist several stages of developing communication skills.

TPR can easily be used in everyday classroom routine. The teacher encourages the children to recognize and respond to simple classroom instructions and gestures, such as; *hands up, stand up, sit down, wave goodbye* and etc. She/he can make visual associations with words that the children can learn and mimic, especially descriptive words. For example: *big, happy, small, sad*. It should be kept in mind that they love to mime professions, animals,

vehicles, weather conditions etc. In such activities children first listen and then understand messages, decide whether they are right or wrong, and finally act accordingly [3, 165].

Games are the most important component in teaching young learners. They like active games. A popular game is *Simon Says* which can be adapted to body words, action words and objects students can touch.

Charades is miming and guessing words using picture or word cards. These games are easy to apply in a language classroom. The learners have enough space to mime.

Songs are also precious while dealing with young learners. When songs accompany actions in a foreign language classroom they will build up TPR element and make children understand the meaning of the songs better. It is useful to choose simple repetitive songs which promote understanding and memorability. Memorable song tunes help enormously in creating mental links to words and meaning. The songs can be about face vocabulary. You would teach them the actions first, introducing the parts of the face by saying and demonstrating "*Point to your nose, show me your ears, etc.*". You would then play the song and encourage the children to do the actions. Repetition of songs and actions is very important for young learners as familiarity brings confidence and will help them remember.

Step-by-step Instructions. After our learners have mastered basic vocabulary, doing a step-by-step activity is a great way to test and encourage them to listen well. We simply give them a set of directions verbally to follow. We don't check in after each step, just let them figure it out as they go. After the directions are finished, we check in on their final product and see if the outcome is correct. Then we review the activity to fix the steps where they might have made a mistake.

This is a great way to teach our students a new skill (origami, drawing a picture, making a specific type of sandwich) and practice their listening comprehension and language development at the same time.

Storytelling is the most authentic and popular activity for all children. Children will pick up the new language easily because stories contain repetition that makes linguistic input more noticeable [3]. If the topic for the class is animals, we have to create a story about going to the zoo and seeing different animals and add a specific TPR action for each animal or action. Using TPR in a story format helps learners practice telling the story in full sentences.

The article concludes that foreign language teaching to young learners is a rapidly growing field all over the world. Very young age in acquiring a language is an advantage unless the presentation is done accordingly. Language development is fast in early years and for the beginning level in a foreign language teaching, TPR is a suitable technique which is built around the coordination of speech and action. Young learners do not know reading and writing yet so they learn through activities, songs, stories and games mostly. There are no texts so the classroom objects can be used easily. The class is full of actions which appeals to those kinesthetic learners.

As we have mentioned, TPR is great for keeping the attention of young learners, and helping them learn faster by pairing the physical, with the language and we have to use this method to make our English classes more enjoyable and engage the learners with the lesson.

References:

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